

Guidance for Parish Priests

Nomination of Foundation Directors and Governors

Interpretation

In this guidance, unless the context requires otherwise:

- the term school also refers to academies and sixth-form colleges;
- the term foundation governor(s) also refers to foundation directors and foundation governors appointed to local governing bodies;
- the term governing body also refers to academy trust company boards of directors and local governing bodies; and
- the term 'Ordinary' means the Diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf. For ease of reference, in this guidance they are collectively referred to as 'the Ordinary' and, where appropriate, this term also includes their respective representative officers.

Purpose of this Guidance

This guidance has been produced by the Catholic Education Service (CES) to assist Parish Priests in understanding their vital role in the nomination of potential foundation governors across the diocese.

Requirement for skills based governing bodies

Governing bodies are required to ensure that they are no bigger than they need to be to have all the skills necessary to carry out their functions. Those responsible for the appointment of governors must be satisfied that the particular individual has the skills required to contribute to the effective governance and success of the school.

In relation to foundation governors, it is the responsibility of the Ordinary to determine whether a potential foundation governor (or indeed an existing foundation governor) has the necessary skills and commitment to Catholic education.

Nomination and Appointment of Foundation Governors

You are encouraged to ensure that you are aware of the application form being used by the diocese as well as where it can be accessed e.g. on the diocese's website/hardcopy from the diocese. This is so that you are able to encourage suitable persons to nominate themselves and advise where they can access the applicable documents.

Once an individual has submitted their application form, the Ordinary will consider their nomination in three stages:

1. First, the Ordinary determines whether the nominee will make a suitable foundation governor. At this stage the nominee's references and any additional diocesan criteria will be taken into account; and
2. Second, if the nominee is considered suitable, a decision will be made as to which governing body or bodies the nominee's particular skills, knowledge and experience is best matched. DBS checks will be carried out by relevant Trust/school.
3. Third, prospective directors will be invited for an interview, and prospective governors may be invited for an interview.

The procedural flowcharts for the appointment of directors and governors, which are a useful aid to understanding the process at a glance, can be found at **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.

Nomination of Foundation Governors - the Parish Priest's Role

You are encouraged not only to consider persons who may, in your opinion, make good foundation governors, but also to encourage a positive perception of governorship in Catholic schools in the diocese generally. The CES has produced resources to assist you, particularly in respect of Education Sunday, which is a good time to draw attention to the good work carried out by Catholic schools and the need for committed governors from the Catholic community.

Volunteering as a foundation governor is an important act of service which aims to strengthen and further the Church's mission, and we would encourage you to take the time to identify those in your parish who serve in this way and to offer thanks and prayers for their service. We would also encourage you to ask those who serve as foundation governors to encourage other parishioners to consider whether they too might serve, and if they are able, to put themselves forward for nomination.

A person wishing to be considered for appointment as a foundation governor will be required, as part of the nomination process, to provide the name of a Priest who can verify their Catholic practice.

In the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, a Priest Reference Form is provided separately to you by the Diocese following receipt of an Application Form. Nominees are required to ask for your consent to being asked to provide a reference in advance of submitting your details.

If you *are* contacted to provide a reference, your role as referee is primarily to verify that the nominee is a practising Catholic and that they are suitable for appointment as a foundation governor in the diocese. The Diocesan Department for Education will be able to answer any questions that you might have in relation to the practice requirements, and we would urge you to discuss any questions that you have with the Diocesan Department for Education prior to submitting a reference if you are unsure as to whether or not the requirements have been met.

Where you provide a reference verifying the nominee's Catholic practice (or not, as the case may be), you should be prepared to provide any further information or assurances to support your original reference as required by the Ordinary, whether by way of written or oral representations. You will see that there is room on the form for additional information to be included if you would like to do that.

Appointment of Foundation Governors – the Ordinary's role

In making a decision about *where* to appoint a suitable foundation governor, the Ordinary will carry out an exercise to match the skills, knowledge and experience of the foundation governor with the skills needed on a particular governing body/bodies. As part of this process, the Ordinary will liaise with the Headteacher/CEO and Chair of Governors/Board of Directors of a Trust with a vacancy *and* a potential skills match. For governors, the local Parish Priest(s) relating to the particular school(s) will also be involved in these discussions to assist in determining whether the nominee is a

suitable match. For directors, the priest who sits on the Trust Board of Directors will be involved in these discussions. In this context, the parish priest is *not* being asked to verify the nominee's Catholicity; a reference verifying the nominee's Catholic practice will have been provided by the parish priest of the parish in which the nominee regularly worships. Clearly, if the parish priest of the school is the priest of the parish in which the nominee worships, he will be required to verify Catholic practice *and* assist in determining the skills match between the nominee and the particular governing body.

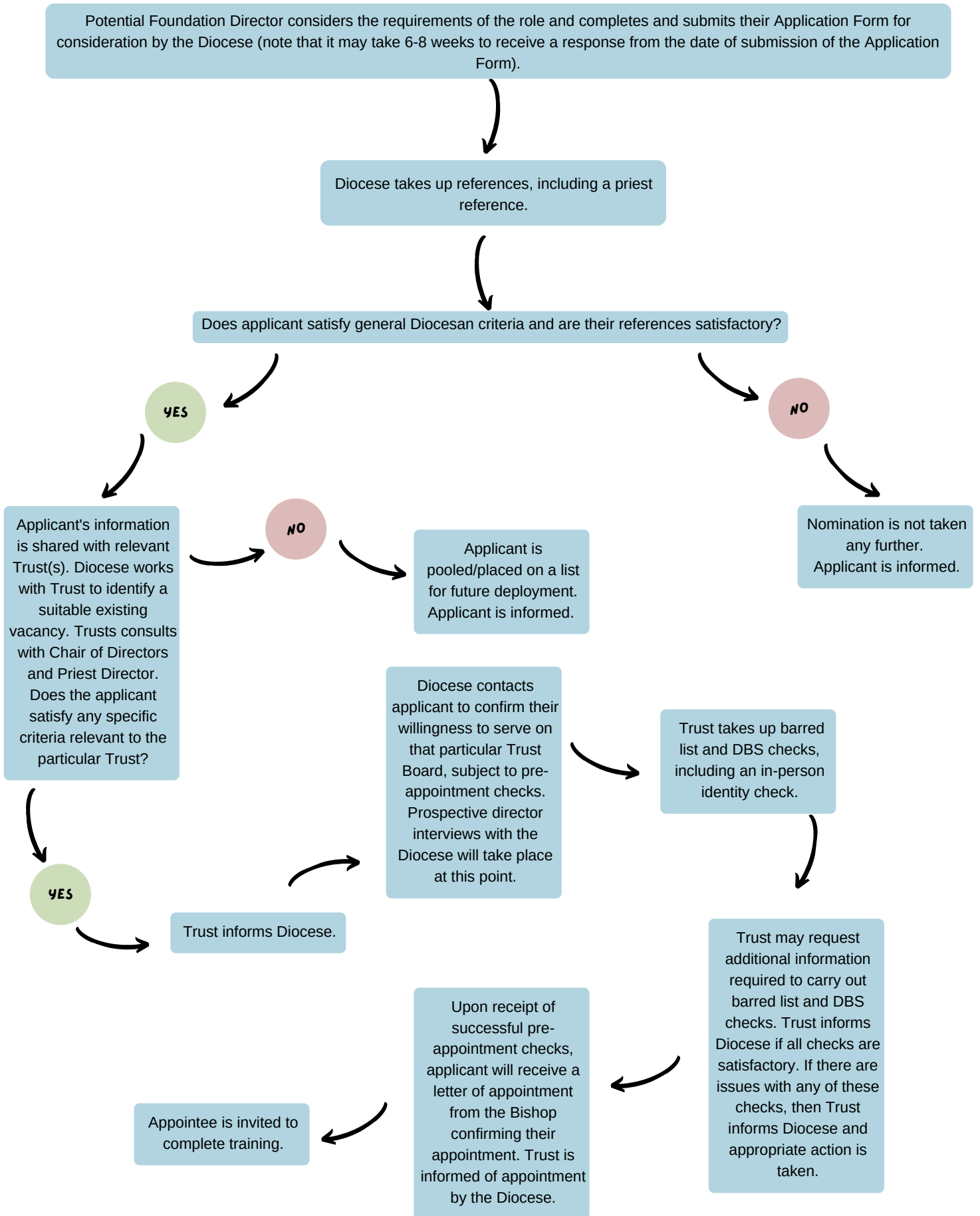
It should be noted that no appointment has any effect until the point at which the Ordinary has formally notified the nominee that the appointment has been made, and to which school/Trust, and the nominee has accepted the appointment. Before that point, no action should be taken which gives the impression that an appointment has been or will be made. Only the Ordinary can make an appointment and it is important that nominees are not under the impression that appointments to specific schools will be made at the point at which a reference is requested.

It is important to understand that the appointment of foundation governors is at the absolute discretion of the Ordinary. Because of the nature of the decision-making process, the Ordinary will not normally be able to engage in any discussion or correspondence with you, or any other person(s) including the nominee and schools, where a nomination has not resulted in an appointment.

If you have any questions relating to the appointment of foundation governors, please contact the Diocesan Department for Education.

APPENDIX A

PROCEDURAL FLOWCHART: FROM NOMINATION TO APPOINTMENT AS A FOUNDATION DIRECTOR



APPENDIX B

PROCEDURAL FLOWCHART: FROM NOMINATION TO APPOINTMENT AS A FOUNDATION GOVERNOR

