

# The Maximilian

A monthly newsletter for governors within the Archdiocese of Southwark

**Edition 111**  
**June & July 2024**

## July Reflection - Canon Victor Darlington

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We give thanks to God that this academic year is now winding down and coming to an end. I believe there are many things you would like to thank God for and are genuinely grateful for.

While July may be the Season of Ordinary time, there are still many great Saints we celebrate this Month, such as Saint Thomas the Apostle on 3rd July; Saint Maria Goretti, a Virgin Martyr, on 6th of July; Saint Benedict, Co-Patron of Europe on 11th July; Saint Bonaventure a Doctor of the Church on 15th July; Saint Mary Magdalen on 22nd July, Saint James the Apostle on 25th July; Saint Joachim and Saint Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 26th July; Saints Martha, Mary and Lazarus on 29th July and Saint Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuit on 31st July.

August will also have many great feasts, notable of which is 15th August, when we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. Then in September, we will celebrate the Birthday of the Blessed Virgin Mary on 8th September.

These feasts remind us that we are loved and valued by God, who has inspired so many great men and women before us to continue encouraging and supporting us to this day.

Thank you for all the excellent work you have done this year in your different schools; thank you for all the efforts you have put in this year. I am holding all of you in my thought and prayers during the summer months.

God bless you.

### **Canon Victor Darlington**

Episcopal Vicar for the Southeast Area,  
Commissions for Promoting Racial and Cultural Inclusion,  
Education and Director of Caritas, Archdiocese of Southwark



## Falling pupil numbers

Many schools are facing the prospect of some challenging years ahead, as pupil numbers are dropping in primary schools (which will naturally impact on secondary schools in the future.) Experienced board members will recognise that they have seen 'blips' in pupil numbers before, with the board and the organisation riding out the storm for a year or so until numbers pick up again. This time the downturn looks to be more serious, and sadly does not show any signs of improving, so the hope that numbers will return to their previous 'norm' may be unfounded. The government national pupil projection figures (October 2023) forecast that by 2028 there will be a 412,000 reduction in pupil numbers in primary schools across the country, with some regions being affected more than others. Naturally any projection is not an exact forecast, the analysis explains:

The population attending primary and nursery schools peaked in 2019 and the figures have been dropping since then. This is primarily due to the continued reductions in the birth numbers since 2013, although there was a larger drop in the population in 2021 which may have been connected to the pandemic. Figures have been stable for the two years since then but are expected to drop from 2024 onwards.

The peak in the secondary school population is projected to be in 2024 - 2025, followed by a drop throughout the rest of the projection period.

The population in special schools has been increasing, and is also projected to peak around 2025 before starting to slowly drop. This is primarily driven by the decrease in the overall population from the same point.

The board will want to investigate what the expected admissions numbers are for the setting over the coming years, to help inform longer-term planning and budgeting. There may be opportunities to extend the age range of the setting, to accept younger children and take advantage of additional childcare funding which is available to working families. Collaboration and partnership working will also be important areas for the board to consider.

Points for the Governing Board to consider:

- What is the marketing strategy of the school? (Inc what is the actual experience of a parent contacting the school via phone or email? Are the responses prompt? If they are not, you may be losing pupils before you are even aware of it?)
- Why should a parent choose school X and not school Y?
- Are governors aware of the local view of your school? Can that view be improved/alterd? How?

## School website information

The DfE has made amendments to what maintained and academy schools must, or should publish online. Before the start of the academic year 2024/25 schools are expected to publish details of their music development plan as part of the music curriculum information. An example template has been provided by the DfE, but use of this template is not mandatory. Schools should already have a music development plan in place, the summary of this plan on the school website should set out how the school will deliver high-quality music provision in curriculum music, co-curricular music and musical experiences, considering the key features in the national plan for music education:



- Timetabled curriculum music of at least one hour each week of the school year for key stages 1 to 3
- Access to lessons across a range of instruments, and voice
- A school choir or vocal ensemble
- A school ensemble, band or group
- Space for rehearsals and individual practice
- A termly school performance
- Opportunity to enjoy live performance at least once a year.

The summary should reflect the school's music provision for the given school year and their plans for subsequent years. It should also refer to any existing partnership with the local music hub or other music education organisations that supports the school with music provision.

Also introduced within the section on curriculum information there is an expectation that schools will publish information for parents about removing their child from RE lessons.

Other changes include the removal of suggested wording relating to test and exam results due to the lack of national published results due to Covid-19 and new suggested content for schools around gender pay gap reporting, including for schools with fewer than 250 employees, from which point mandatory reporting is required.

## Cyber security standards for schools

These standards are for all schools and colleges to help build their cyber resilience. They address the core principles of cyber governance, processes and strategy.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/cyber-security-standards-for-schools-and-colleges>

## Sustainability support for education - new website launching in June 2024

The DfE has updated the sustainability guidance for schools, which now includes a link to a new website offering ideas and resources for schools, relevant to their setting. The sustainability and climate change strategy for education states: 'By 2025, all education settings will have nominated a sustainability lead and put in place a climate action plan'. This includes early years settings, schools, multi-academy trusts, colleges, and universities.

The guidance states that, as senior decision makers, SLT and governors should support and drive the school's sustainable activity. They should:

- Provide the authority and support to drive and embed culture change
- Ensure climate change and sustainability feature on the agenda at key meetings
- Be responsible for succession planning, so that commitment to sustainability endures in the setting.

Support is available to schools through Climate Action Advisers, independent experts, who offer free support for schools, colleges, and nurseries across England. They will support schools to understand their carbon impact, make effective plans, and find funding and resources. They work with schools of any size, even those that are just starting their sustainability journey and also spotlight local opportunities for how schools can work together.



Sustainability support for education - new website launching this month  
In depth daily attendance data tool

The DfE have published a new tool to support schools and boards spot trends in pupil attendance. From August there is an additional new responsibility for the board to monitor their school's attendance data with that of other schools.

## Courses & Events

Details for out upcoming courses and events for the next academic year (2024-2025) will be available on our website.

<https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/et/>

## Thank You

Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the end of another very successful academic year for the Diocese, thank you to all staff, governors, parents, clergy and Religious - for all that you do to support the children and young people in our school communities.

With good wishes and prayers for a safe, happy and restful summer holiday.

From the Team at the Education Service.



[This page](#) contains the dates and links to book onto the next series of sessions on Considering becoming a Foundation Governor or Foundation Director. This page also contains 2 A4 posters that can be used to encourage practising Catholics to become foundation governors or directors.

