

The Maximilian

A monthly newsletter for governors within the Archdiocese of Southwark

May 2025

Reflection

Beloved Friends, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

During this Exam Season for your schools, I am thinking of you all and praying for you.

The Month of June, which sits right in the middle of the year, gives us a time to reflect on the past six months as we look forward to the next six months and what they mean to us. The Summer months are coming, exams will be over, and some of your students are preparing to move to secondary schools, universities, or vocational programmes and skill acquisitions. Some of you may be seeking new opportunities and exploring greater outcomes. I wish you many blessings in all your endeavours.

Liturgically, June is packed with Solemnities: On June 8th, we celebrate Pentecost Sunday, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the Church; with that celebration, the Easter Season comes to end, and the beautiful season of Ordinary Time begins. You will once again notice that the colours in your Church will change to Green. Ordinary time is such a lovely season in the Church. It invites us to focus on Jesus, our Saviour, when no significant ceremonies exist.

We also have the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity on Sunday, June 15th, the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi) on Sunday, June 22nd, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus on Friday, June 27th, and the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles, on Sunday, June 29th.

In June, we will also celebrate the feast day of several Saints, such as Saint Barnabas, Saint Anthony of Padua, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Saints John Fisher and Thomas More, the Birth of Saint John the Baptist, and Saint Irenaeus. In different ways, all these Saints inspire us to lead a life of holiness and speak to us to have courage and keep Hope alive. To never give up.

As a child, my mum registered every one of us in the family as devotees of the Sacred Heart. During our family prayer, we all turn to face the picture of the Sacred Heart and say this prayer: "Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation." I would like to introduce this prayer to you. I always draw strength and feel the love, mercy and compassion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus any time I say this prayer.

Let us continue to draw close to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, especially in this month of June,

PG 1



recognising that He is the head of our schools, of our homes and of our families, and in His heart, we find unconditional and ever-giving love that we so desire. The Sacred Heart of Jesus invites us to have a heart-to-heart conversation with Him.

May we continue to find solace and strength in the Most Sacred of Jesus, Amen.

Canon Victor Darlington
Episcopal Vicar for Education

Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool

The School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 ("the 2025 Regulations") comes into effect on 16 June 2025 and requires governing bodies of maintained schools to publish on their website a link to the specific page on the Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool, that is dedicated to their school.

At present, Schedule 4 to the School Information (England) Regulations 2008 ("the 2008 Regulations") require there to be a link to the Schools Financial Benchmarking website, which is due to be retired. The purpose of the 2025 Regulations then is to amend the 2008 Regulations, so as to replace "Schools Financial Benchmarking website", with "Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool".

[Find a school, trust or local authority - Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool - GOV.UK](#)

Updated - Protective security and preparedness for education settings (DfE)

Updated non-statutory guidance has been released to help schools and other education settings strengthen their preparedness for terrorism and major incidents. It sets out simple, cost-effective steps to safeguard learners, staff, and volunteers through practical planning and a strong security culture.

Drawing on advice from the National Counter-Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO), the guidance includes editable templates, real-life examples, and interactive resources. It is suitable for early years settings, schools, colleges, alternative provision, and out-of-school settings.

Key Actions for Schools:

Appoint a Security Lead to oversee emergency planning and act as incident lead if needed.

Review and test plans for lockdown, invacuation, evacuation, and bomb threats, ensuring they meet the needs of all learners, including those with SEND.

Train all staff to recognise suspicious behaviour (SCaN), assess suspicious items (HOT protocol), and respond to incidents (RUN HIDE TELL).

Use the self-assessment tool (Annex D) to review current plans and identify gaps.



Prepare a 'grab kit' with essential items to support response efforts, especially for those with additional needs.

All staff are encouraged to read the guidance and familiarise themselves with their role in keeping the school community safe. To read the guidance and download the audit documents, go to: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-security-and-preparedness-for-education-settings>

Teacher Pay Award Confirmed for 2025–26

The government has accepted in full the School Teachers' Review Body's recommendation of a 4% pay award for teachers in maintained schools in England. This will bring the median classroom teacher salary to over £51,000, with most teachers seeing an increase of around £1,900.

While the award applies directly to maintained schools, many academies are expected to follow suit. The pay rise is set to be implemented from September 2025, following consultation and updates to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD).

Funding and Productivity

The 4% award will be funded through a combination of:

- 1% from productivity gains
- 1.3% from existing school budgets
- 1.7% from new DfE funding

An additional £615 million has been allocated this year to support this settlement. Schools are expected to make cost savings where possible, and the DfE is promoting initiatives such as its energy savings programme to support this.

Support Staff and Further Education

While the teacher pay award does not cover support staff, additional funding has taken into account the current 3.2% support staff pay offer under negotiation via the NJC. The DfE has reiterated its commitment to reinstating the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB) to improve consistency, progression and pay.

Further education staff are not covered by the STRB but the sector will benefit from £160 million in targeted funding to support recruitment in priority subject areas.

Recruitment and Retention

There are signs of improved teacher recruitment, particularly in STEM subjects. The DfE continues to invest in workload reduction strategies, financial incentives, and professional development to make teaching an attractive long-term career.

For full details, visit: [Teacher Pay: Everything You Need to Know About the 2025 Pay Award](#)

Flexible Working Programme

The Department for Education has extended its Flexible Working Ambassadors Programme until March 2026, expanding support to help more schools implement effective flexible working practices. The programme enables schools to explore arrangements such as:

- Lesson planning from home
- Job sharing



- Part-time and flexible hours
- Phased retirement and remote working

Led by Capita and delivered in partnership with organisations including Flexible Teacher Talent and selected ambassador schools (FWAMS), the programme provides free training, webinars and peer support to school leaders, HR teams and governing boards.

New resources include:

- A flexible working self-assessment tool
- Case studies across all career stages
- Recorded sessions exploring diversity, inclusion and workload

Flexible working is recognised as key to staff wellbeing, recruitment and retention. The programme is aligned with the DfE's wider strategy to reduce teacher workload and make the profession more sustainable.

Boards are encouraged to:

- Champion flexible working in their schools
- Support school leaders in embedding whole-school approaches
- Attend training or webinars where relevant to strategic planning

Further information and free resources are available via the DfE's flexible working hub:

[Flexible Working in Education – GOV.UK families to access further support and services.](#)

Mental Health and Wellbeing in Education

As part of Mental Health Awareness Week 2025, the Department for Education has announced a £49 million investment to expand mental health support in schools and colleges across England.

Key developments:

- By April 2026, 6 in 10 pupils will have access to a Mental Health Support Team (MHST), reaching an additional 900,000 pupils and 1,700 schools and colleges
- The rollout is part of the government's ambition for full national coverage by 2029–30
- Support is also being extended through:
 - o A growing online resource hub and toolkit for mental health leads
 - o New RISE Attendance and Behaviour Hubs, backed by £1.5 million, to tackle persistent absence and behavioural challenges
 - o AI-powered attendance reports to help schools identify trends and compare with similar settings
 - o National research studies (e.g. Five to Twelve and Growing Up in the 2020s) to inform long-term policy on pupil wellbeing and belonging

For staff, over 4,100 schools have now joined the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter, and schools are encouraged to access the DfE workload and wellbeing improvement service, which offers peer-led advice to support leadership teams in reducing pressure on staff.

- Boards should ensure:
- The school's mental health provision is aligned with this national offer
- Governors receive regular updates on pupil wellbeing, attendance trends and staff workload
- The charter and MHST access are considered in relevant strategic discussions

Further details can be found on the Education Hub: [How we're helping children and teachers with their mental health and wellbeing](#)



Academy Updates

Trust Reserves Under Scrutiny

The Department for Education has reiterated its position on academy trust reserves following recent analysis highlighting several trusts holding savings well above their annual income. While no direct interventions have been made, the issue continues to prompt sector-wide debate about what constitutes an appropriate reserve level and how funds should be used to benefit pupils.

Government guidance issued in 2023 defines “high reserves” as those exceeding 20 per cent of total income. While trusts are permitted to maintain reserves based on their own risk assessments and financial strategies, the DfE expects clear justification where balances are significantly above this threshold — particularly in the context of increasing pressure on school budgets.

Many trusts report that their reserves are committed to essential infrastructure projects, financial risk management, or long-term service development. However, concerns remain about whether such funds are being deployed quickly enough to support the current needs of pupils and staff.

The DfE has confirmed that its engagement with trusts holding high reserves is designed to ensure those funds are aligned to pupil benefit, strategic investment and responsible financial planning, rather than general contingency.

Guidance for Trustees:

Trustees are advised to regularly review their trust’s reserves policy, ensuring it clearly outlines the purpose and intended use of any surplus funds. Financial plans should demonstrate how reserves are aligned with the trust’s strategic priorities, including investment in teaching, learning, and school improvement.

Boards should be prepared to justify their reserve levels, particularly where they exceed 20 per cent of income, and ensure that decision-making balances financial prudence with the obligation to deliver educational value for current pupils. Transparent reporting, including how reserves support risk management, capital planning or service sustainability, will remain a key aspect of effective financial oversight.

Courses & Events

Details for our upcoming courses and events for this academic year are available on our website.

<https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/governor-cpd/>

School Building Responsibilities as a Governor

Thursday 12th June 2025. 5.30-6.30pm. Zoom
[Book](#)

Finance for Governors

Tuesday 24th June 2025 5.30-7pm. Zoom
[Book](#)

Induction for New Foundation Directors,

Governors and Clerks

Thursday 26th June 2025 5.30-7pm. Zoom
[Book](#)

Foundation Directors of CAT’s Training Session: Catholic Social Teaching

Monday 7th July 2025 5.30-7pm. Zoom
[Book](#)



Clerks to Governors Forum

The next date for the Clerks to Governors Forums is Wednesday 15th October 2025. Further details can be viewed here: <https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/clerks-to-governors-forum-topics/>

