

# The Maximilian

A monthly newsletter for governors within the Archdiocese of Southwark

July 2025

## Letter from Angela Cox OBE and Canon Victor Darlington

As we enter the final full week of term I want to thank you all for your commitment to your school(s), for your leadership and the ongoing positive way in which you work as part of the Archdiocese. Thank you for a great year. There are so many highlights that it would be difficult to pull out one or two; so, I thank you all for your work in your context.

For Primary colleagues -before we finally sign off, thank you to all those who helped review the primary RE resources, that have started to become available. Your observations and comments were most valuable. It became clear that proposals were still in need of further work, others were not written with regard to the ways in which children are now taught and others were good because the teachers' books give sufficient information to help those new to the subject. The CES have been reviewing the resources to ensure they meet the requirements of the RE directory and in some cases, Bishops have granted the Imprimatur to confirm the information is correct in terms of Catholic teaching.

As a team we are quite small and cannot support the introduction of a range of different resources but plan to work alongside our Catholic academy trusts to support one programme. One resource stood out above all others and we are asking schools to use the Oxford University Press, Source to Summit: Lighting the Path. Next year we will provide a detailed programme to introduce Lighting the Path including training specific to year group teachers, governors and headteachers from ourselves and OUP. Alongside this will be a series of formation resources that teachers can use whenever they wish to help with their own understanding of the faith in school or personal time. In this way we hope it will ensure that teachers feel confident and renewed in their faith by the time CSI includes it in 2026/27. The resources are being phased in by year groups so it doesn't impact too much on the whole school at any one time. Further information including a 20% reduction offer are available on the OUP website:

<https://global.oup.com/education/content/primary/series/lighting-the-path/?region=uk> If this creates a problem for any school, please do contact Angela.

We wave goodbye to Daniel who from now on will have busy days looking after the grandchildren when they visit him, heading to the beach at Hythe. Daniel has done so much

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for schools in the diocese from joining us as a headteacher and now supporting the MATs. We wish him and Carole a long and healthy retirement together. To those whose service was celebrated at the Cathedral recently and those moving to pastures new in September, we wish you well and send you on your way with our thoughts and prayers.

Many of you have either done or will be doing end of year productions, sports days and other local extravaganzas! The team have attended as many as possible. It really is amazing to see the confidence of pupils when given that chance to perform and receive the positive acclamation of parents, grandparents, carers and friends. We must never let these areas of school life diminish - they are a fundamental part of the education experience. Having said that they are fully reliant on willing staff and we never take that for granted.

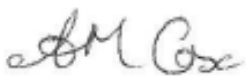
We are grateful to the Education team who have worked tirelessly establishing new roles with a strong focus on families of schools, never more needed than at the present time of low numbers and tight budgets. Thanks to Leila Coward who picked up Sharon's CSI work with guidance from Colette. Please keep Sharon in your prayers as she begins her latest round of treatment as well as others in our community who are unwell at this time.

For our leaders and staff in school, for our governors and our parents, carers and children. May you all experience a peaceful and safe holiday time. There are so many thankyou's regarding the academic year and all the positives across the schools. Finally, to governors and to our directors, everyone a volunteer, we thank you all for your support and challenge over the year. We are blessed to have such faithful, talented and committed people working alongside us.

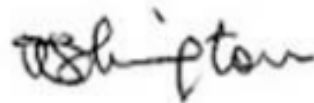
So, a general thank you that God has heard and responded to our many requests as we go about trying to do his will across our schools. We ask for his continued presence in all decisions we take and the wisdom and strength to lead with integrity and openness.

Take care, all of you, and have a refreshing and blessed summer break when we get there. See you all in September and at the beginning of year Mass at the Cathedral on Wednesday 24th September.

God bless



**Angela Cox OBE.**  
**Diocesan School Commissioner**



**Canon Victor Darlington**  
**Episcopal Vicar for Education**



## Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) AI trial

The EEF is inviting primary schools across England to join a new randomised controlled trial of Aila, Oak National Academy's AI-powered lesson planning assistant.

[Read more about the trial](#)

### Growing up in the 2020's

National study, involving pupils currently in year 8 their teachers and families over the next five years which aims to better understand how a young person's environment and experiences during adolescence impact their short and long-term education and wellbeing outcomes.

The study will also provide insights into the transition period from education to employment or other post- 16 routes, allowing researchers to track trajectories from adolescence into young adulthood.

### Use of AI in schools-DFE guidance

Within the guidance the DfE has provided a leadership presentation, aimed to support and facilitate discussions between governors/trustees and senior leaders. Within the presentation a number of questions are suggested, which governors and trustees may find helpful when considering the use of AI within the setting.

What steps is the school taking to ensure that AI tools used comply with data protection laws, including UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act and respecting Intellectual property while maintaining transparency?

What processes does the school have in place to handle AI-related safeguarding incidents?  
Are staff confident in their ability to respond effectively?

Do they know they must follow Keeping Children Safe in Education and the school safeguarding procedures?

How is the school engaging parents and carers in discussions about AI risks and online safety to ensure a whole-school approach?

Has the school conducted a risk assessment on the AI products being used?

How could AI be used to provide personalised support for SEND and EAL learners in your context?



What are the key differences between AI-driven tools and non-AI digital tools for supporting students with SEND, and how can educators ensure the right tool is chosen for supporting in individual contexts?

How can teachers, lecturers and support staff integrate AI tools into their practice while ensuring compliance with data protection guidelines and ethical considerations?

What opportunities do AI tools offer for improving the way pastoral decisions are made at a strategic level?

How will the school integrate the teacher toolkit into their CPD programme?

How will the school effectively choose AI tools? How will staff use AI and other digital tools in teaching and learning?

How could an EdTech framework support the schools' thinking about AI use?

How could AI support business, operations, and support staff in the setting? Does the school have a plan for infrastructure and cyber security that is reviewed annually?

Is the school meeting the filtering and monitoring standards, and compliant with Keeping Children Safe in Education?

How will the school develop and deliver CPD programmes looking at the safe and effective use?

How is the school assessing the safety of AI products?

Generative AI: product safety expectations from the DfE Is there a clear structure of roles, responsibilities, and governance of EdTech and AI?

What is the schools current progress against the digital and technology standards DfE "Plan technology for your school" Do policies and strategies align with the DfE guidance?

Does online safety teaching follow best practice?

Teaching online safety in schools - Are the existing online safety and safeguarding policies up to date?

What training and support will staff receive?

What is the context of your setting in terms of digital equity and literacy?

Does everyone have access to the same hardware or tool?

Can all users access them in the same way with the same degree of competence?

View the full range of resources and accompanying videos on the GOV.UK website





## Reduce water usage

Let's Go Zero has published 10 innovative strategies that can help school's minimise water usage while promoting eco-friendly practices. Governors and trustees may wish to ask if these measures are embedded into the school's Climate Action Plan.

[Read more on the Let's Go Zero website](#)

## Social media use in under 16's

The British Medical Journal and the Children's Commissioner have commented on the possibility of restricting smartphone and social media use for children under 16 to support wellbeing. This report considers the views of teens who would be affected.

Read a summary of the findings and access the [full report](#) on the Internet Matters website.

## DfE report on mental health and absence

Research into the extent to which students' mental health contributes to school absenteeism for pupils aged 13 to 16.

[Read the report findings](#)

## New approach to school sport

The Government has announced new 'School Sport Partnerships' and a new 'Enrichment Framework' for schools to ensure all young people have equal access to high-quality sport and extracurricular activity. The initiative aims to ensure that girls will be given the same opportunity as boys to play sport at school, as well as equal access for those with special needs and disabilities. The measures are intended to help deliver the Governments 'Plan for Change'. A national network will be developed to build strong partnerships between schools, local clubs and National Governing Bodies to identify and break down barriers to sport for children who are less active, primarily girls and pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The government has also committed to publish information about every school's sport and



enrichment offer, so parents can see what their children can play. The information will be included in new ‘school profiles’ – a one stop shop for parents to see information about their local schools, with further detail to come in the autumn.

## Staff and governors leaving in the academic year of 2024/2025

With deep gratitude, we thank all the staff and foundation governors in our Catholic schools for your unwavering dedication, faith-filled service, and commitment to nurturing the hearts and minds of our young people. Your work is a true ministry, and your impact is immeasurable. May God continue to bless you in all that you do.

## 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/>

