

The Maximilian

A monthly newsletter for governors within the Archdiocese of Southwark

December 2025

Christmas Card Winner



The winner of this years Christmas Card competition is Mia Thrush from The Holy Cross School, New Malden.



Reflection

Beloved Friends, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

There is going to be a baby in the Crib. He is coming. He will be here on Christmas Eve, and now we wait. We prepare, we get ready for this baby who is the saviour of the world, the prince of peace, Jesus Christ, our Lord and God.

For the next four weeks, we enter the holy season of Advent, our hearts turn with hope and gratitude toward the newborn Christ in Bethlehem. Amid the flurry of school activities, exams, and preparations, we are invited to pause and rediscover the gentle presence of God who comes to dwell among us, not in grandeur but in simplicity and love. He comes to bring peace to a world that is hurting and in need of healing.

I believe you are now preparing the various nativity scenes in your schools and homes. That familiar nativity scene offers enduring lessons for our school communities. In the humility of Mary and Joseph, the openness of the shepherds, and the generous gifts of the Magi, we are reminded that each of us—students, teachers, and parents—has a role to play in welcoming Christ anew into our hearts and into our schools so that no one feels left behind, or alone.

The four weeks of Advent will lead us gently into the Christmas Season, which begins on that most holy of nights we call Christmas Eve. At the Mass that night, the Priest will approach the crib in the Church and say:

"Hail and blessed be this hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most blessed Virgin Mary, at Midnight in Bethlehem, in piercing cold. In this hour, vouch safe, oh God, to hear our prayer and grant our desires, that those who come to pray before this image of the most Holy incarnation, may be granted all they need for body and soul, through the merits of our saviour Jesus Christ and of His blessed mother. May this crib and all who pray here be blessed + in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Hearty we approach your crib O Lord, to find the one of whom the prophet spoke, and here behold the mighty God lay helpless on the straw, Oh grant us some of this humility, that we may conquer mightily the reign of sin within us and grant us too the protection of your gentle mother whose tender eyes and loving heart attends your every wish. You who live and reign with the Father, and the holy spirit, God forever and ever. Amen."

Make this prayer your own this Christmas. Make it your inspiration when you walk in your school corridors and classrooms. Make it your strength to help those who are lonely or vulnerable, offering the gift of friendship and compassion, as Christ Himself did. In this prayer, we find an invitation to be present to each other this Christmas. Do not stand afar off; come close. Be present to your families and friends. And for those who will be travelling this Christmas, we wish you a blessed and safe journey, with God's abiding presence, protection, and peace as you travel.

As I remind you each year, take time to rest during the Christmas Holiday, as we look forward to a Happy and Blessed New Year 2026, when it comes.

May this holy season renew our joy, deepen our faith, and inspire us to bear Christ's light to all we meet—wishing our entire Catholic Education community a blessed and peaceful Christmas, filled with hope, joy, love and above all: Peace.

**Canon Victor Darlington
Education and Director of Caritas, Archdiocese of Southwark**



School Uniform Policy and The Cost of School Uniform

The DfE has updated the [guidance on school uniform](#), and the statutory guidance on the [cost of school uniform](#), to reflect the changes which are due to be introduced from September 2026. The DfE has urged schools to begin limiting the number of branded items they require. From September 2026:

- Schools should limit the number of compulsory branded items of uniform and PE kit to 3 or fewer
- Secondary and middle schools should limit the number of compulsory branded items of uniform and PE kit to 4 or fewer, if one is a tie

The government is currently pursuing legislation to make this limit mandatory. The DfE has set out some actions for schools to take before parents source uniform for summer 2026.

Actions include:

- Review the uniform policy to determine if any compulsory branded items need to be removed to adhere to the limit, or if any other changes are required
- Confirm as soon as possible which branded uniform items, within the limit, will be compulsory from September 2026 – other optional branded items can be specified, but schools should keep these to a minimum and permit generic alternatives
- Look at existing supply arrangements, seeking legal advice where necessary, and promptly discuss any changes with their supplier(s) to give them appropriate notice and resolve any contractual implications (the recommendation is that single suppliers should be avoided, except in certain circumstances.)
- Publish the revised uniform policy on the school's website and ensure it is easily understood
- Inform parents of any requirements for generic alternatives (such as colour, shade, fabric or fit) so they can purchase appropriately
- Ensure that all parents, especially those of new starters, are made aware of where second-hand uniforms can be purchased, and make this facility available to all parents before the start of the new academic year. Information on second-hand uniforms should be published on the school website

Compulsory branded items

From September 2026, the government is seeking to make it a legal requirement that [schools should limit the number of compulsory branded items](#) they require pupils to have.

A branded item is compulsory if a pupil is required to have or wear the item:

- for general use at the school
- to travel to or from the school
- to take part in any lesson, club or activity facilitated by the school.

This also applies to any after-school activities.

The limit on branded items includes any branded bags, such as book bags or rucksacks, and any items required only at particular times of year, such as summer dresses. If a school allows pupils to choose between different branded items, such as being able to choose between wearing a branded skirt or branded trousers, this would only count as one item, as the pupil is only required to have one of those items to be compliant with the school's uniform policy.

Optional, loaned and gifted branded items

All loaned or gifted branded items will be captured within the limit if they are required to be worn.



However, schools can continue to lend, give out or make available for sale additional branded items, as long as wearing those items is optional. If a school offers optional branded uniform items, it should also ensure that wearing an equivalent unbranded version of that item is also permitted. For example, if it permits an optional branded woollen hat in winter, it should ensure it sets out any requirements for unbranded woollen hats that would also be acceptable, such as that they should be plain and black.

Schools can require that generic items meet standards of modesty and are fit for purpose. Any such requirements should form part of the published uniform policy.

Schools can also still lend or give out for free additional branded uniform items such as a netball or rugby kit for activities, such as sports competitions. However, schools should not require pupils to wear branded items to take part in an activity unless these items count towards the limit on such items. If a pupil does not want or is unable to wear a loaned branded item – for example, for medical or health reasons – schools should allow them to wear a suitable alternative, such as a plain sports shirt in a similar colour or a different branded item that is already part of their usual PE kit or school uniform.

School Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) Guide

This guide provides an overview of the inspection data summary report (IDSR) for primary and secondary schools, including schools with a sixth form, and gives guidance on how to interpret the data. As governors you may choose to ask your headteachers to share the IDSR with you.

[Guide](#)

Clerks to Governors Forum

The next date for the Clerks to Governors Forums is Thursday 26th February 2026. 2-3pm. Further details can be viewed here: <https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/clerks-to-governors-forum-topics/>

Courses & Events

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

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

Effective School Visits for Governors

Tuesday 13th January 2026. 5.30-7pm. Zoom

Finance for Governors

Tuesday 20th January 2026. 5.30pm-7pm.
Zoom

Employee Procedures and Hearings; the role of the Governor

Tuesday 27th January 2026. 5.30-7pm. Zoom

Handling Complaints for Governors

Thursday 5th February 2026. 5.30-7pm
Zoom





Kent Catholic Schools' Partnership



‘Academies in Christ’
‘the Archdiocese of Southwark’



KCSP GOVERNANCE CONFERENCE 2026

JOIN US

17 MARCH 2026: ST SIMON STOCK CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL, MAIDSTONE, ME16 0JP

Session 1: CSI Inspections, Catholic Education, and the updated Religious Education Directory (RED) - KCSP

Chair of the Trust Board Q&A

Session 2: Supporting disciplinary panels and the legal requirements - HR Connect

25 MARCH 2026: ST ANSELM'S CATHOLIC SECONDARY SCHOOL, CANTERBURY, CT1 3EN

Session 1: SEND strategy and the changing landscape - KCSP

Chair of the Trust Board Q&A

Session 2: The new Ofsted framework and its implications for governance - NGA

Book your place [here](#) or via the QR code



PG 5

