

Newsletter



25th March 2026

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Reflection

Beloved friends, brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we approach the Easter break, we pause as staff across our Catholic schools to enter the mystery of Holy Week and Easter. These days lie at the heart of our faith and speak deeply to our vocation as educators.

Palm Sunday – Joy and Challenge

On Palm Sunday, Jesus is welcomed into Jerusalem with joy. Yet very soon, the cheers turn to rejection. School life can be similar: moments of success and encouragement, alongside times of pressure, criticism, or discouragement. As we look back on this term, we bring both our joys and our struggles to the Lord, trusting that He walks with us in each.

Holy Thursday – Service and Vocation

On Holy Thursday, Jesus washes the disciples' feet and shares the Last Supper. He shows that true leadership is humble service. In our schools, this service is often hidden: patient listening to a student, support for a colleague, long hours of preparation and administration. In all of this, Christ dignifies our quiet work. Nothing done in love is lost.

Good Friday – God in Our Suffering

Good Friday reminds us that Christ is present in our difficulties: in heavy workloads, complex pastoral situations, and the personal burdens our colleagues or we may carry. At the foot of the Cross, we can lay down our worries, our failures, and our regrets from this term, and pray simply: "Jesus, I place my trust in you."



Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday – People of Hope

Easter proclaims that love is stronger than hatred, and life stronger than death. Our Catholic schools are called to be places of Easter hope: where every young person knows they are valued, where forgiveness is possible, and where new beginnings are real. As staff, we are invited to let the light of the Risen Christ touch our own hearts first, so that we can reflect that light to our pupils and one another.

I encourage you to use this break for rest and renewal: to pause, to pray, to reconnect with what Jesus gives us each year to transform us. We ask the Lord to bless our school communities and to renew us in the mission He has entrusted to us. May he continue to give you the strength you need to carry on.

Canon Victor Darlington

Archdiocese of Southwark Episcopal Vicar for the Southeast Area; for CARITAS Southwark, Racial & Cultural Inclusion and Justice & Peace, and for Education.

Director's Message

Dear Colleagues,

By the end of this week many of you will be entering into your well-deserved Easter Break. The short term between February and Easter break brings its own challenges. Always a much longer to do list than one can ever go through. The time to recharge with family and friends cannot be taken for granted. I know that it is hard to switch off completely, being the headteacher comes at a cost in terms of switching off, knowing that when you switch back on again, there is rarely time to ease back in. However, the importance of that switch off cannot be underestimated. Think of the advice you give your staff, and take it yourself.

In this newsletter you will find a link to the Essential Services document, now ready for reading and delivery. The Education Service Team are committed to providing the service to you and our schools. It isn't an extensive list and we will always do what we can to help and support. At times that will be signposting to the experts. Those experts may well be within our schools and I hope to be able to know the strengths of our schools and trusts so well that we can confidently direct colleagues to peers for support in particular situations. At our White Paper Roundtable last month, I spoke about the case studies within the publication. Our schools have the evidence of strong and exceptional practice. We would like to collate and publish these areas of exceptional practice creating a directory for schools. If you feel that you have areas of strength that you would be willing to share, please talk to your TRO.

As we journey into this Easter season, I'm struck once again by the extraordinary sense of hope, renewal, and joyful anticipation that Easter brings. It is a time when the story at the heart of our faith reminds us that light breaks through darkness, new life emerges from quiet places, and God continues to work transformative grace in ways both seen and unseen.

In our schools, we witness echoes of resurrection hope every day—in the curiosity of our pupils, the compassion shown in our communities, and the steadfast commitment you and your staff offer so generously. Your leadership creates the conditions in which children can flourish, discover their God-given potential, and grow in wisdom, dignity, and love.

As we step into this new term, my prayer is that the excitement of Easter renews your energy, strengthens your spirit, and fills your school communities with a deep sense of purpose and joy.



May this season be a reminder that even in demanding times, hope is our anchor and Christ's presence our constant companion.

Thank you, as always, for the remarkable work you do and the faith you live out.



Colette Doran-Hannon

Diocesan Schools Commissioner

Census Data 2026

Thank you for all your hard work ensuring we had 100% census return. A huge amount of data is requested, and we thought it might be interesting for you to see the information and how it compares to national figures. Please [click here](#) to view the data.

Are you prepared for the April 2026 water price increases?

Join Churchmarketplace on **Friday 27 March at 10:00am** for a free focused 30-minute webinar in collaboration with our official suppliers Wodr and Business Stream, where we'll break down exactly what's happening in the water market, why prices are increasing, and what practical steps your school can take now to protect budgets. Tailored to Catholic schools, this session will help you understand what's changing, and what it means for your budget.

What we'll cover:

- How to mitigate the impact of April 2026 price increases
- An introduction to the Wodr Water Framework and how it supports schools
- Sustainability and social value in the water market
- Testimonials from framework customers already seeing the benefits
- With rising operational costs already putting pressure on school budgets, this is an essential conversation for bursars, finance leads, and decision-makers.

School Rebuild Programme

We are pleased to see a school rebuild programme has been released which most of you will be aware of. We are happy for eligible schools to apply for the school rebuild programme. If you are planning to apply for a school rebuild, please can you notify the property team via email ecbuildings@rcaos.org.uk

This programme aims to replace/refurbish school buildings in poor condition, providing safe,

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modern and sustainable learning environments that support high quality education and improve outcomes for pupils.

The deadline for submission is 23rd April 2026. Here is a link for further guidance and how to apply [About the school rebuilding programme - GOV.UK](#)

The Big Lent Walk

I successfully completed my final challenge for the Big Lent Walk today, which began with a special blessing at St George's Cathedral. Deacon Javier Elderfield blessed 40 enthusiastic students from Christ the King's St Aquinas, Emmanuel, and St Mary's campuses before they began their journey. Led by Lead Chaplain Nick Wibberley and staff, the group walked to Our Lady Help of Christians in Blackheath, proudly wearing their T-shirts and waving CAFOD flags in support of this charitable cause. It was a real pleasure to be part of this and I thank them for their invitation.



April Q&A drop in – Judaism – 21st April 2026

Anna Silver's monthly Q and A 'Any questions' zoom session to support teachers in their teaching of Judaism will take place on: **Tuesday 21st April, 2026 at 3:45-4:45**. It's free and informative and no question is a silly one! Do pass the zoom link on to any teachers who may find it useful.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82876672045?pwd=kTnWIRJ7a15v8aRec8cbHPwGx36qgp.1>

View meeting insights with Zoom AI Companion: <https://us02web.zoom.us/launch/edi?moid=add314ff-57c3-4f1d-9533-6faa0e9efff5>

Meeting ID: 828 7667 2045 Passcode: 970723

Review of the National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic Schools

The Catholic Schools Inspectorate is beginning a review of the National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic Schools, Colleges and Academies, with any changes to be implemented from September 2027. We are inviting a wide range of stakeholders, including school and trust leaders, as well as inspectors and diocesan officers, to complete the survey to inform our structured review process of our inspection framework.

This survey is open to everyone, parents, school staff and leaders, governors, academy Trust staff and directors. Please encourage your school community to share their views.

[Invitation letter](#)

[Complete the survey](#)



Essential Services 2026

At the beginning of the year, Colette Doran-Hannon mentioned an essential services document which would outline for schools and trusts, the functions of the Education Service. As with many education establishments, there will be functions that are not listed. Some schools and academies will lean heavily on some of these functions and at other times less so, this is the nature of education. It is hoped that this document will underpin the partnership between schools and the Diocesan Education Service. We are hopeful that the document will provide transparency about what we can invest in our schools and an equity that all schools can access the core entitlement.

Please [click here](#) to view the essential services document.

SEND White Paper Discussion – 26th February 2026

Following the publication of Every Child Achieving and Thriving by the Department for Education on GOV.UK, diocesan school leaders met on 26th February 2026 to share initial reflections. The discussion welcomed the strong focus on inclusion and high-quality teaching, while also raising questions about implementation, funding, workload, and the proposed Individual Support Plans (ISPs).

You can read the full meeting notes [here](#).

Thank you to all of our schools for their thoughtful input and for giving their time to contribute to this important discussion.

Primary Religious Education Adviser, Education Service

Secondment – 2 Days per Week

Are you passionate about Religious Education and committed to strengthening the Catholic mission in our primary schools? Do you have the expertise and enthusiasm to support colleagues in delivering high-quality RE that inspires, forms, and deepens understanding for all pupils?

We are seeking to appoint an exceptional Primary Religious Education Adviser on a seconded basis (2 days per week) to support the implementation of the Religious Education Directory (RED) and Lighting the Path across our primary schools.

Further details can be viewed [here](#)



Recruitment

To advertise any school [vacancy](#) with us for free, please email clairewilliams@rcaos.org.uk

Director of Education (Primary), St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 26th March 2026

Director of Education (Secondary), St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 26th March 2026

Class Teacher, St Fidelis Catholic Primary School. Erith

Closing date: 27th March 2026

English Teacher, Ursuline High School.

Wimbledon

Closing date: 10th April 2026

Director of Education, Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 13th April 2026

Assistant Headteacher, St Mary's Catholic Junior School. Croydon

Closing date: 13th April 2026

Chief Education Officer, St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 13th April 2026

Director of Primary Education, St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 13th April 2026

Deputy Headteacher, Coloma Convent Girls' School & Sixth Form. Croydon

Closing date: 14th April 2026

Headteacher, St Edward's Catholic Primary School. Sheerness

Closing date: 15th April 2026

Headteacher, St Augustine's Catholic Primary School. Tunbridge Wells

Closing date: 20th April 2026

Chief People Officer, St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 20th April 2026

Chief People Officer, St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 20th April 2026

Class Teacher, St Saviour's RC Primary School. Lewisham

Closing date: 26th April 2026

Events & Training

All sessions are available to book on our website: www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/et

Spring 2026

St Oscar Romero Feast Day Mass

Thursday 26th March 2026. 12.30pm

St George's Cathedral

What Should you Expect from your CEO Reports

Thursday 26th March 2026. 5.30-7pm

Zoom

Summer 2026

Marketing Training with AmplifiED Schools Marketing

Wednesday 15th April 2026. 4-5.30pm. Zoom

Good Shepherd Mass

Tuesday 28th April 2026. 1.45pm

St George's Cathedral



RE Leaders Briefing

Thursday 30th April 2025. 4-5.30pm. Zoom

Effective Support and Challenge for Governors

Tuesday 21st April 2026. 5.30-7pm. Zoom

Safeguarding for Governors

Thursday 30th April 2026. 5.30-7pm. Zoom

New to Religious Education Leadership – Day 3

Monday 11th May 2026. 9.30am-4pm

Education Service, Orpington, BR5 2SR

Deputy Headteachers' Conference

Tuesday 19th May 2026. 9.30am-4pm. £60
West Indies Room at The Kia Oval

Induction for New Foundation Directors, Governors and Clerks

Thursday 14th May 2026. 5.30-7pm. Zoom

Save the Date!

Pupil Celebration Day - 25th June 2026

Lighting the Path - 29th June & 6th July 2026

Primary Headteacher's Retreat - 15th July 2026

Beginning of Year Mass - 25th September 2026

Headteachers Conference - 19th & 20th November 2026

News

1st Place in Columban Missionaries Media Competition for The Holy Cross School



Gabriela Cardemil in Year 9 from The Holy Cross School in New Malden has been awarded 1st place in Britain in the image category of this year's Columban Missionaries Media Competition, themed "Becoming a refugee is never a choice. But how we respond is." [Continue reading](#)

St Fidelis Catholic Primary School Recognised by Google

St Fidelis Catholic Primary School in Erith, is proud to be recognised as a Google for Education Premier Reference School, joining a global community of leaders in educational innovation.

[Continue reading](#)





Secondary School Retreats & 90 Minute Sessions

Immersive & interactive retreat days & shorter session options for whole year groups, delivered at your school/college to support your Catholic Ethos



COMING SOON
A 90-Minute Session on Catholic Social Teaching!
Launching 2026/27

What can you expect from RISE Theatre

- Original RISE Theatre film or live theatre performance
- An immersive theatre experience
- Group discussions
- Short sketches
- Art Activities
- Prayer & Reflection
- Testimonies



Book now for 2026/27!

Discounts available for schools booking multiple Rise Theatre Retreat Days in an academic year!

Visit: www.risetheatre.co.uk/secondary or Email: admin@risetheatre.co.uk

The Happiness Show Years 7-9

Based around a live theatre performance of a quirky fictional TV show - 'The Happiness Show' - this fun & energetic day explores how each of us is invited by God to experience life to the full, with a thought-provoking mix of short sketches, videos, interactive classroom sessions & reflection.



"[The day was] pitched just right for the year groups - ...the Year 7's were having the best time, dancing along to the music and generally participating with enormous enthusiasm"
Holy Family School, Walthamstow

The Room Years 9-11

Based around a dramatic RISE film - 'The Room' - students follow the story of the central character, Daniel, as he navigates his way through a captivating game show & explores The Bible's salvation story through 6 unique rooms. In this interactive retreat day, students are invited to reflect on their own life story.



"RISE Theatre's visit to Bishop Challoner School was an unforgettable experience. Their RE retreats were engaging, thought-provoking, and spiritually uplifting. Through powerful drama, and personal testimony, they inspired students to reflect deeply on their faith and relationship with God. The team's energy, creativity, and authenticity truly connected with everyone. It was an amazing opportunity for spiritual growth and community building."
Bishop Challoner, Bromley

The Masterpiece Years 11-13

Students are taken on an immersive journey based on the RISE film - 'The Masterpiece' - an intriguing story of three strangers brought together by a mysterious commissioner. Each student is given the opportunity to creatively explore themes around their God-given identity as a unique masterpiece.



"Not only was 'The Masterpiece' entertaining and engaging, it was powerful, thought-provoking and moving. Students were given time to reflect, discuss, get creative and think more about their passions, future, self-worth and identity"
St Francis Xavier, North Yorkshire



90 Minute Sessions

Perfect for mission weeks or school events!

All of our retreat days can be delivered as 90-minute interactive sessions, making it easy to accommodate **multiple year groups** within a single day. We're happy to tailor the programme to your requirements, including offering shorter sessions if needed.

Cost & Booking

Full day retreats - £950+travel
90 minutes sessions - from £600+travel

Discounts available for schools booking multiple Rise Theatre Retreat Days in an academic year

admin@risetheatre.co.uk



Year 5 Transition Events

- Maths Challenge**
30th June
- Science Fayre**
6th July
- Key Stage 2 Literature Quiz**
8th July

At: St Ursula's Convent School

Contact Miss Groves on: mgroves@stursulas.com
Book your place by Thursday 21st May at the latest!

St Ursula's School - Events

