

Newsletter



23rd April 2026

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Reflection

Beloved friends, brothers and sisters in Christ,

I wish you all a very Happy Easter as we continue to share the paschal joy of this holy season.

I pray you had a blessed Easter and Divine Mercy Sundays. We now look forward to 14th May the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, as we await his coming again in glory. After that, we will prepare even more fervently for 24th May, the Solemnity of Pentecost—the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and the Church was born.

As we reach the middle of April, many of you are steadily entering the exam season. Please know that I am praying for you and for your revision. Continue to strive for excellence in your own unique way.

The month of May is dedicated to honouring our Mother Mary; we call this period the May Devotion. On 13th May, we celebrate Our Lady of Fatima, and on 31st May, we celebrate the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on Our Lady's life: from her humble beginnings as the daughter of Saints Joachim and Anne, to her betrothal to Joseph, and to her vocation as the mother of Jesus, the Son of God.

We recall the great love and devotion she showed her Son throughout his earthly life—from the crib to the cross—and then to his disciples after his Ascension into heaven. Today, in our own time, Our Lady continues to intercede for us in heaven.

In these times, we continue to pray for Peace in the World. Our Holy Father Pope Leo, addressing global instability, emphasises that the "eyes filled with anguish and hope" of those fleeing violence must not be met with coldness or discrimination. Let us renew our commitment to love everyone,

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and to seek peace in our homes, in our communities and in the world.
May Our Lady Queen of Peace continue to intercede for us. Amen.

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,

Summer term has arrived and with it the lighter days, what a difference that can make to staff and students in the schools. The summer term also brings the exam and testing season for our pupils, from our youngest who have no idea that the assessments are taking place to our Post 16 whose next stages depend on outcomes and every test in between these assessments have the ability to dominate our lives and the lives of our staff. We will keep all the students, staff and leaders in our schools in our prayers and for the parents at home who work with us as the first educators of the children, they too may feel these tense times!

At the end of last term, Peter McCabe retired from St Simon of England in Ashford. We thank him for his service in the Archdiocese over many years and wish him all the very best in this next stage of life with a long and happy retirement.

I would like to give a warm welcome to staff who have started in our schools this term, no matter their role. A special welcome to Kelly Garrett (St John Fisher Erith) and Helen Bryant (St Simon of England, Ashford) who begins their tenure as Headteacher, and Michelle Sparkes (St Joseph's Northfleet who has been appointed Co-Headteacher)

Catherine Mahony has her induction Mass as substantive Headteacher of Holy Cross, she has been Head of School for some years, however we wish her all the very best with the new job title!

We wish all new staff to the Archdiocesan schools a warm welcome.

Be assured of our best wishes and prayers from all your colleagues across the Archdiocese, we have a network of exceptional leaders who are always willing to listen and share best practice, don't be afraid to reach out.

We have worked on our CPD offer for next year and we will be sending out the booklet of courses by the end of May. We have been looking carefully at the numbers on the courses from this year and rationalising, so that we can make our offer what schools/leaders need and want.

In order to achieve consistency in the messaging, briefing will be 30 minutes, meetings 1 hour and sessions/forums up to 2 hours. We hope that in doing so when people book on they will know what they are getting! In briefings we will take questions via the chat option and in meetings we can have open discussions on the topics.

On our last Senior Leaders' Briefing, I requested that the Links Heads become a Heads Reference Group and put out a call to action for any local authorities/deaneries that were not represented on the original group to nominate a colleague to join that group. The next meeting is on 24th June and we believe that the following areas are not represented:

- Bexley
- Greenwich
- Kent Primary
- Kent Secondary
- Lambeth
- Merton
- Southwark



We do not want to waste precious time, so the meetings will be planned well in advance, with an agenda and opportunity for robust discussion which will contribute to the shaping of decisions made. We would like all areas to be represented. Please let [Yvonne](#) know if you have been nominated by your colleagues.

Thank you to the schools who have offered to work with us on our case studies, we know that there are many more schools that are willing to contribute, but we know that time is never on our side, there is no deadline, so please keep them coming.

I wish you a very happy term ahead.



Colette Doran-Hannon

Diocesan Schools Commissioner

Diocese Insurance Contribution

Some schools may receive an invoice regarding unpaid contributions towards insurance taken out by the diocese on the school's behalf. This is something school's may not have paid as they did not know what it was, but it is something that you would definitely appreciate if it became necessary. The insurance is so that, in the event of a major disaster which requires an insurance pay out, you would not be left having to pay the excess. For many premiums this is 10% of the claim.

The insurance you have with the diocese will pay this money. This is particularly important in this time of reduced reserves. This money goes directly to the finance team who manage the policies. Please can you look out for it and action as required. If you have any questions, you can [contact your TRO](#) to discuss, although we may have to find the answers ourselves.

Deputy Headteacher's Conference

We are really looking forward to our Annual Deputy Headteacher's conference this year. The event is being sponsored by ZEN Educate, they are providing a lovely venue with lunch at The Oval. Our morning speaker is Raymond Friel who is quite inspirational and he will be taking about the pillars of servant leadership. In the afternoon we have Jenny Sinclair and Jo Stow from Common Good Schools to look at Catholic Social Teaching and how this fits into your roles, underpinning everything you do in schools. The conference is for deputy and assistant heads or anyone in a similar post. It is on the 19th May and available for bookings at [Diary Dates – Education Service](#)

Pupil Celebration Day

Schools are invited to attend the annual Pupil Celebration Day at Aylesford Priory on 25th June 2026 from 10am until 2pm.

This event is for pupils in Year 4 or Year 5. This will be a fantastic opportunity to gather together to celebrate Catholic education and we are really looking forward to seeing lots of schools there.

To book please [click here](#)



Statutory RSHE Updates

Please see below the link to latest diocesan briefing from Ten:Ten Resources. This provides a comprehensive update on the statutory RSHE updates that come into force in schools in September 2026. [Read the briefing here.](#)

Training Opportunities

We know how busy you all are in school and the Education Service are keen to help and support where we can. Sometimes this is passing on information to give you options, reducing the time spent talking with sales teams.

We have put some information on The Well about Zen Educate and Best Practice Network showing you what they can offer in terms of staffing and training, including apprenticeship level qualifications. [Log In - The Well.](#)

Oscar Romero Award Trust Newsletter

Please click here to read the latest Oscar Romero Award Trust [newsletter](#)



BAs in Primary and Secondary Education

Offered by the University of Buckingham in partnership with Anspear - three-year degrees that aspiring teachers can complete while working full time in school, at a fraction of the cost of a conventional university route.

The application deadline for the 2026 cohorts is 8th May 2026.

The programmes are particularly well suited to:

- teaching assistants and other support staff who aspire to qualify as teachers
- sixth form leavers who want to teach but are put off by debt or do not want to leave home.

Find out more at the webinar at 4pm on 21st April 2026 - [click here to register.](#)
For further information please [click here.](#)



Superb Gap Year Opportunity

For anyone finishing Year 13 this summer, or age 18-23 from September: Be part of the Walsingham House Team 26/27. Applications are now open! Being on the team is a wonderful opportunity to work with young people, gain life skills, live in community and to share and deepen your faith. For more information please see the website www.bcys.net/whabbotswick/be-on-team or email michaelkearns@brcdt.org

WorkNest

Middle East Uncertainty

A Workplace Implications' guide that covers:

- What to do if an employee is stranded abroad
- How to manage the impact of rising travel and fuel costs on your workforce
- Practical ways to support employee wellbeing during uncertain times
- Guidance on handling conflicting political views in the workplace

[Download the guide here](#)

Employment Rights Act Roadmap

A clear, practical guide that cuts through the complexity, summarises the key reforms, and maps out exactly when changes are expected to take effect, so school's can plan ahead with confidence, not react under pressure. [Read the roadmap here.](#)

Review of the National Framework for the Inspection of Catholic Schools

The Catholic Schools Inspectorate 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.

The deadline for responses is 1st May 2026.

[Invitation letter](#)

[Complete the survey](#)

Length of Service as a Foundation Governor/Director in One School

Please be aware Foundation Governors/Directors can only serve a maximum of three terms of office i.e. 12 years in one school. After 12 years you are welcome to become a Foundation Governor/Director at any other school in the Diocese.



DBS verification

The Education Service is ensuring that DBS certificates are obtained through the Safeguarding office of the Diocese. Verification checks may be undertaken by either a Verifier in the school or by the Parish Safeguarding Representative. A DBS 3c form must be completed <https://forms.rcaos.org.uk/identity-verifier-dbs-3c-form/>. **If this form is not completed by the Verifier, the Safeguarding office will be unable to process the application.**

RISE Theatre

Thanks to generous funding, RISE Theatre is delighted to offer primary schools 50% off our "Treasure Within" day, now just £299.50! This immersive theatre experience explores the 7 principles of Catholic Social Teaching combining drama, music, and meaningful reflection to enrich your CST curriculum. Selected dates are available for the summer term and bookings are now open for the Autumn Tour too! Get in touch - admin@risetheatre.co.uk - to reserve a date for this inspiring adventure at your school.

Save the Date!

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

Recruitment

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

SENDCO, St Mary's Catholic Federation

Carshalton

Closing date: 24th April 2026

Lewisham

Closing date: 3rd May 2026

Class Teacher, St Saviour's RC Primary School.

Lewisham

Closing date: 26th April 2026

Full Time Class Teacher, St Anne's Catholic Primary School

London

Closing date: 8th May 2026

Teacher, St Thomas' Catholic Primary School

Canterbury

Closing date: 27th April 2026

Full Time Class Teacher, St Anne's Catholic Primary School

London

Closing date: 8th May 2026

Deputy Headteacher, St Richard's Catholic Primary School

Dover

Closing date: 1st May 2025

Music Specialist Teacher, St Fidelis Catholic Primary School

Erith

Closing date: 18th May 2026

Deputy Headteacher, St Saviour's RC Primary School



Events & Training

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

Summer 2026

Good Shepherd Mass

Tuesday 28th April 2026. 1.45pm
St George's Cathedral

Estates Reporting and Planning

Tuesday 28th April 2026. 5.30-7pm
Zoom

RE Leaders Meeting

Thursday 30th April 2025. 4-5.30pm
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.

Induction for New Foundation Directors,

Governors and Clerks

Thursday 14th May 2026. 5.30-7pm
Zoom

Deputy Headteachers' Conference

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

Senior Leaders Briefings

Wednesday 20th May 2026. 8-8.30am.
Zoom

Drop in Session for Parish Priests

Thursday 21st May 2026. 2-3pm.
Zoom

Directors Keeping in Touch (KIT)

Wednesday 3rd June 2026. 8-8.30am.
Teams

Pupil Celebration Day

Thursday 25th June 2026. 9.30am-4pm
Aylesford Priory, Kent ME20 7BY.

News

National Recognition for Richard Challoner School Outstanding Performance



Members of the Richard Challoner School community are delighted that the school's excellent outcomes, once again, have been recognised by SSAT (Schools', Students' and Teachers' Network) in this year's Educational Outcomes Awards.

[Continue reading](#)

Mass at St Anthony of Padua Church

A whole school Mass was held at St Anthony of Padua Church for St Anthony's Catholic Primary School in Anerley. Pupils and staff were delighted to have Canon Victor celebrate Mass and help the entire school community to prepare for Holy Week.

[Continue reading](#)



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**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!

