

Newsletter



21st May 2026

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Director's Message

Dear Colleagues,

As we reach the end of May, the month of our Blessed Mother Mary, we give thanks for all that is good.

It has been a short half term, filled to capacity, this upcoming half term break gives us the opportunity to refresh our bodies and minds as we enter into the last half term, filled with the hope of Pentecost.

The hope and joy that Pentecost brings, particularly those who are preparing for transition, reminds us that change is good, transformational whilst also being a time of reaching to the unknown.

Our preparation for them during this time, is the key to their future success.

I hope that the exam season continues to go well for all, teachers, leaders, students and parents.

The Curriculum Assessment Review from the DfE has been responded to by the CES. For those of you who were on the Senior Leaders' Briefing this week, you will have heard Susan remind us that our right to Catholic Education is enshrined in law.

This week we welcomed David Hennessey to the Education Service as our interim Trust Relationship Officer. He will support Louise and Sam over this last half term to provide our service to the schools across the Archdiocese. His knowledge, humour and warmth are welcomed and I know that you will join me in thanking him for stepping in so very quickly!

Claire Williams is putting the finishing touches to our CPD provision for next year. We hope to have PG 1



our offer out to you within the month of June so that you can plan for attendance at training sessions for leaders, staff and governors.

[The Well](#) is regularly updated for those who want to dip in and out of training. As ever if there are requests for training, please let us know using the form on [this page](#) and we will provide.

We are also intending to reach out to other curia partners to extend our offer that little bit more. Hearing other voices is never a bad thing.

Thank you for another term of service. Here is to a welcome half term break for you all.

May the power of the Holy Spirit fill you with grace and peace this Pentecost.

Colette Doran-Hannon
Diocesan Schools Commissioner

NPQ and Flourishing Leadership programmes from The Avila Partnership



NPQ Leading Teaching beginning Autumn 2026 with The Avila Partnership

This 12 month course is for teachers and middle leaders who have, or want to have, responsibilities for leading teaching in a subject, year group, key stage or phase.

The course covers themes including:

- Understanding what good teaching practice is and how to implement it
- Supporting colleagues to design a broad and coherent curriculum
- Planning effective lessons and stimulate your pupils' thinking
- Helping colleagues adapt their teaching to different needs
- Contributing to the design of school assessment systems
- Aligning your professional development with wider school improvement priorities

Complete the 'Early Bird' form below a.s.a.p. to reserve your place for this or any other NPQ:
<https://www.nse.org.uk/npq>

We expect courses to begin in November 2026 and funding details to be announced shortly. If your school is not eligible for funding, the course will cost **£890 + VAT** per participant.

<https://tinyurl.com/AvilaPartnership>

The Avila Partnership is delighted to share details of our NPQ and Flourishing Leadership Programmes designed by the National Society for Education, beginning in November 2026.

The NPQ Leading Teaching is a 12-month course for those with responsibilities for leading teaching in a subject, year group, key stage or phase.

The Flourishing Leadership programmes invite participants to reimagine their roles as stewards of flourishing for all, placing equal emphasis on inner development and the outward impact on school communities.

<https://tinyurl.com/AvilaPartnership>



Getting Grievances Right First Time in Education

Employee grievances in the education sector are rarely straightforward – and getting them wrong can carry serious consequences.

When concerns arise, leaders must balance staff wellbeing, operational pressures, and employment law – often under significant scrutiny. Act too slowly and issues can escalate, impacting staff morale, retention and performance. Act hastily without a fair process and you risk Employment Tribunal claims, union disputes, and reputational damage.

Make sure you're equipped to handle complaints compliantly. Join WorkNest's free webinar on **28th May at 9.30am** for expert guidance on getting grievances right first time in education settings.

[Register here](#)

Preparing for Unfair Dismissal Reform | How to avoid costly claims

Dismissal has never been risk-free, but from mid-2026, employers will have far less room for error.

From 1st January 2027, the qualifying period for unfair dismissal will shrink from two years to just six months. However, in practice, employees will gain protection far sooner than many expect.

New hires who start from 1st July 2026 will reach six months' service by the time the law changes, meaning decisions from that point onwards will need to stand up to scrutiny. Relying on probation periods, 'easy exits', or informal approaches will no longer be enough – without a fair reason and a fair process, claims are far more likely to follow.

Don't get caught out. Join WorkNest's Employment Law and HR experts on the **4th June at 2.00pm** for practical guidance on getting dismissal right from the outset.

[Register here](#)

Reflections on the New Ofsted Framework and Inspection Approach

Over recent weeks, there has understandably been significant national discussion regarding the new Ofsted framework and inspection approach. I recently attended the Schools and Academies Show in London, where one of the keynote speeches was delivered by Lee Owston, Ofsted's National Director



for Education. His reflections on the new framework were particularly insightful, and the Department for Education has since published the transcript of his address, which is well worth reading: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/lee-owstons-speech-at-the-schools-and-academies-show>

There has also been considerable debate following questions raised by Schools Week during the event, particularly around the decision to combine behaviour and attendance within a single inspection area. Alongside this, wider discussions at the conference focused on:

- the government's SEND reforms



- the evolving role of Ofsted inspections
- school improvement priorities across the sector.

Speakers from government, Ofsted, schools and trusts from across England contributed to the discussions, while the Schools Week team reported extensively on many of the key themes emerging from the event. Schools Week coverage of the Schools and Academies Show can be accessed here: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/> Many school leaders continue to reflect carefully on the practical implications of this approach.

A Diocesan Perspective of OFSTED inspections

From a diocesan perspective, we are now beginning to build a much clearer picture of how inspections are unfolding under the new framework. To date, nine schools across the diocese have been inspected, and I would like to sincerely thank those leaders who have so generously given their time to support colleagues by sharing their experiences.

As part of our work within the Education Service, we have developed a **diocesan survey** to help collate information and practical insights from inspections. The purpose is not only to identify emerging themes, but also to support schools in feeling as prepared and informed as possible during what can understandably be a high-pressure process.

Through the survey, we are gathering:

- **questions asked by inspectors under each framework area**
- **examples of questions directed towards different stakeholder groups, including senior leaders, governors, middle leaders, class teachers, support staff and pupils**
- **reflections from school leaders on what surprised them during the inspection process**
- **key themes emerging across inspections**
- **advice for colleagues currently within the inspection window**
- **and three key questions schools should ensure they are prepared to answer.**

There is also a growing sense that inspectors are seeking to understand schools more carefully within their individual contexts whilst still maintaining high expectations around standards, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and outcomes.

Over the half-term break, I will be collating the responses we have received so far, with the aim of sharing this promptly next term so that colleagues across the diocese can benefit from this collective insight and support. A copy of this will be shared early next term.

Finally, I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to our headteachers and school leaders who have engaged so positively with this work. Their willingness to support colleagues, share experiences openly and offer guidance to schools approaching inspection truly reflects the strength of our diocesan community.

At a time when many schools are navigating uncertainty and significant change, this spirit of collaboration, professional generosity and Catholic solidarity is something we should be incredibly proud of. It is a powerful example of schools working together in service of one another and, ultimately, in service of the children and communities we are called to serve.

**Thank you for your continued support,
Louise Holden**



Perspective Light – Watchsted

As Colette mentioned in the SLT briefing, for colleagues seeking additional insight into the evolving inspection landscape, the Watchsted platform may also be of interest as part of wider professional reflection and discussion around the new framework.

Archbishop's Appeal 2026 Grant Scheme

The Archbishop's Appeal is a fundraising appeal that takes place across parishes in the Archdiocese of Southwark each year.

Grants of up to £5,000 are available to support innovative projects taking place within the geographical boundaries of the Archdiocese of Southwark and led by parishes, schools, diocesan commissions, or other entities working alongside the Archdiocese, which seek to enhance one or more of the key missionary areas: Youth and Evangelisation or Social Outreach.

Open from **1st May 2026 to 1st July 2026**

Website: <https://rcaos.org.uk/archbishops-appeal-grant>

Application form: <https://forms.rcaos.org.uk/archbishops-appeal-grant-application/>

Eligibility criteria: <https://rcaos.org.uk/media/xamfcf2r/archbishop-s-appeal-grant-guidelines-and-eligibility.pdf>

Recruitment

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

Trust Relationship Officer, Education Service Orpington

Catholic Schools Inspection Co-ordinator, Education Service

Orpington

Closing date: 1st June 2026

Headteacher, St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Beckenham

Closing date: 1st June 2026

School Chaplain, La Retraite Roman Catholic Girls' School

Clapham Park

Closing date: 1st June 2026

Class Teacher, St Saviour's RC Primary School

Lewisham

Closing date: 5th June 2026



Celebrating a Successful DHT/AHT Leaders' Conference at The Oval

Leaders from across the Archdiocese of Southwark came together recently for a highly successful DHT/AHT conference, held at the iconic Oval cricket ground. The day provided an inspiring opportunity for deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers to reflect, connect, and deepen their shared commitment to Catholic education.

The event was generously sponsored by Zen Education, whose support helped create a welcoming and well-resourced environment for professional dialogue and formation.

A highlight of the conference was the keynote address by Raymond Friel, who explored “10 Habits of Gospel-Inspired Leaders.” Drawing on rich experience and deep faith, he challenged participants to root their leadership in Gospel values—calling for authenticity, courage, compassion, and a steadfast focus on service. His reflections offered both inspiration and practical guidance, resonating strongly with leaders navigating the complexities of modern school life.



Participants also benefited from a thought-provoking session led by Jo Stow and Jenny Sinclair from Together for The Common Good, who invited leaders to consider how schools can be places of transformation, promoting dignity, justice, and flourishing for all. Their contribution encouraged attendees to think more deeply about their role in shaping communities that reflect Catholic social teaching in action.

Throughout the day, there was a strong sense of collegiality and shared purpose. Opportunities for networking and discussion allowed delegates to exchange ideas, celebrate successes, and support one another in their leadership journeys.

The conference stands as a testament to the vitality and dedication of school leaders across the Archdiocese. It was a day marked by inspiration, practical insight, and renewed commitment—equipping leaders to continue their vital work with confidence and Gospel-centred vision.

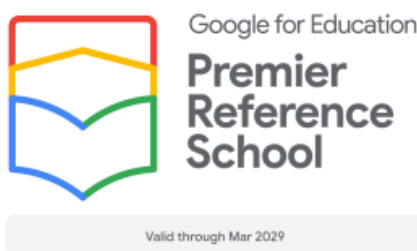


Teaching with Chromebooks at St Fidelis



Integrating Google in practice

to be held on Thursday 25 June 2026 from 1:30 – 3:00pm
at St Fidelis Catholic Primary School.



The session will be presented by Ben Kennor, Assistant Head Teacher and facilitated by Mark Hannon, Executive Head Teacher at St Fidelis Catholic Primary School.

The afternoon is open to anyone who wishes to find out more about how Chromebooks and the Google Workspace for Education can be implemented into a primary school or to those who want to see how another setting is addressing implementing new technology into school.

1:00 - 1:30pm	Tea and coffee on arrival
1:30 - 2:00pm	Ben will explain what our approach to leading, planning and teaching with Chromebooks looks like at St Fidelis and the reasoning for the approaches we use and the impact of these.
2:00 - 2:45pm	Visitors explore different classes and year groups teaching their lessons using Chromebooks.
2:45 - 3:00pm	Question and answer session with Year 5 & 6 pupils about their experience of using Chromebooks and technology at school.
3:00 - 3:30pm	Question and answer session with the Executive and Assistant Headteacher.

To reserve a place, contact Sam Rushbrook on 01322 337752 or admin@st-fidelis.bexley.sch.uk or sign up directly on the School website: St-Fidelis.Bexley.sch.uk



Catholic Education Webinars



Summer 2026 Series of Catholic Education Webinars

Seminar 2: Thursday 4 June | 4pm UK time

Hidden realities: researching the life of a Catholic school leader through autoethnography and auto/biographical narrative

Speaker: Dr Louise McGowan

This seminar will examine the lesser-known qualitative methodologies of autoethnography and auto/biographical narrative as a means of researching the lived reality of contemporary Catholic school leadership. Despite there being a wealth of theory relating to school and Catholic school leadership available, there remain aspects of the leadership life that are not always exposed, discussed or understood, and that prospective school leaders may enter headship unprepared to navigate.

Dr Louise McGowan has been a Headteacher for 15 years, including nine as Headmistress of St Claudine's Catholic School for Girls in north west London. She is also a researcher, writer and speaker, and an honorary scholar at the National Institute of Christian Education Research at Canterbury Christ Church University with a focus on qualitative research methods.

Summer 2026 Series of Catholic Education Webinars

Seminar 4: Thursday 18 June | 4pm UK time

Before you open the Bible... what to feel confident about!

Speaker: Dr Margaret Carswell

The Bible is the sacred text of Christianity. In it we read of the human desire for a God who takes on human form, the potential, but brokenness, of the human person, and the search for a way of being in the world which embraces a vision of life in its fullness.

But the Bible is a complex 'book of books'. With God as its constant character, and as the source of fundamental beliefs about life, death, heaven and hell, how we read and teach this text matters.

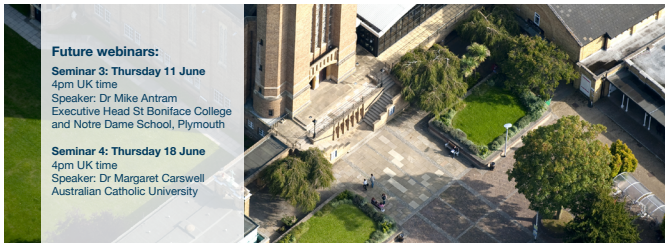
Using principles of Catholic Biblical scholarship, this session will explore the nature of the Bible, identifying 5 'before you begin' features, in the hope that they provide a foundation from which you can begin.

1. Expect teaching the Bible to be an engagement of head and heart.
2. Know about the world the authors write about.
3. Recognise the gap between event and writing.
4. Respect the authors as curators, not archivists, as interpreters not reporters.
5. Remember, at its most basic the Bible is literature!

Dr Margaret Carswell is a Senior Lecturer in the faculty of Theology and Philosophy at Australian Catholic University. In 2006 she completed her PhD on the placement of scripture in religious education curriculum documents, and this remains the area of her formal research. Margaret has extensive experience in Catholic Schools and the teaching of Religious Education in both the United Kingdom and Australia.

During her time with the Diocese of Westminster from 2009 to 2011 she wrote a series of exemplar units to model a changed view of religious education curricula, in line with the liturgical year. This remains in use today. Margaret was a consultant in the writing of the new Religious Education Directory, *To Know You More Clearly*.

Margaret is passionate about bridging theology and the classroom by promoting improved religious education practices and approaches to teaching scripture. She is well known for developing teacher resources, classroom strategies, and methods that make teaching the Bible engaging for both head and heart.



Future webinars:

Seminar 3: Thursday 11 June
4pm UK time
Speaker: Dr Mike Antram
Executive Head St Boniface College and Notre Dame School, Plymouth

Seminar 4: Thursday 18 June
4pm UK time
Speaker: Dr Margaret Carswell
Australian Catholic University

To attend this online webinar please contact **Mary Mihovilovic at MAEducation@stmarys.ac.uk**

26-133/MAY26



To attend this online webinar please contact **Mary Mihovilovic at MAEducation@stmarys.ac.uk**



Summer 2026 Series of Catholic Education Webinars

Seminar 3: Thursday 11 June | 4pm UK time

Catholic educational mission: To proclaim or protect?

Speaker: Dr Mike Antram

Dr Michael Antram is Trust Secondary Executive Headteacher for Plymouth CAST, and additionally, until recently, the Headteacher of an 11-18 joint-church school. He recently completed his doctoral studies in Catholic Educational leadership at St Mary's University, Twickenham.

Future webinar:

Seminar 4: Thursday 18 June
4pm UK time
Speaker: Dr Margaret Carswell
Australian Catholic University



To attend this online webinar please contact **Mary Mihovilovic at MAEducation@stmarys.ac.uk**

26-134/MAY26



Save the Date!

Primary Headteacher's Retreat - 15th July 2026

Beginning of Year Mass - 25th September 2026

Headteachers Conference - 19th & 20th November 2026

Events & Training

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

Summer 2026

Directors Keeping in Touch (KIT)

Wednesday 3rd June 2026. 8-8.30am.

Teams

Finance for Governors

Tuesday 9th June 2026 5.30-7pm

Zoom

Governors Gathering

Thursday 11th June 2026 4pm-5pm

Zoom

Role of the Local Governing Body in your Trust

Thursday 11th June 2026. 5.30-7pm

Zoom

ECT Celebration Event

Tuesday 16th June 2026.

Amigo hall, Lambeth Road, SE1 6HR

What Does Good Prayer and Liturgy Look Like?

Thursday 18th June 2026. 1-4pm.

Zoom

Clerk to Governors Forum

Thursday 18th June 2026. 2-3pm.

Zoom

Directors & Governors Retreat

Saturday 20th June 2026. 9.30am-4pm

Education Service, BR5 2SR. £20

Secondary RE Leaders Meeting

Tuesday 23rd June 2026. 4-5.30pm.

Teams

Safeguarding for Governors

Tuesday 23rd June 2026. 5.30pm-7pm.

Zoom

Pupil Celebration Day

Thursday 25th June 2026. 9.30am-4pm

Aylesford Priory, Kent ME20 7BY

Lighting the Path KS2 Year 3

Monday 29th June 2026. 9.30-11.30am

Teams

Lighting the Path KS2 Year 6

Monday 29th June 2026. 12-2pm

Teams

Diocesan Chaplaincy Day

Tuesday 30th June 2026. 9.30am-4pm

£25. The Friars, Aylesford, Kent ME20 7BY

Lighting the Path KS2 Year 5

Monday 6th July 2026. 9.30-11.30am

Teams

Lighting the Path KS2 Year 4

Monday 6th July 2026. 12-2pm

Teams



Double Celebrations at St Fidelis Catholic Primary School in Erith!



The 108 members of the St Fidelis Catholic Primary School KS2 choir are celebrating, having been named the winner of the annual Bexley Corpus Christi Partnership Choral Festival two weeks ago!

[Continue reading](#)

Pentecost: Go and Tell the Good News

This week pupils in Year One at St Augustine's Catholic Primary School in Tunbridge Wells, learned about Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit came to Jesus' friends like a bright, holy spitfire — filling them with courage and joy.



[Continue reading](#)

St Ursula's School - Events

**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!

