

The Maximilian

A monthly newsletter for governors within the Archdiocese of Southwark

May 2026

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 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.

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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

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.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 (ERA 2025)

The Employment Rights Act 2025 (ERA 2025) received Royal Assent on 18 December 2025 to become law. A phased implementation during 2026 and 2027 is anticipated and it is therefore important that schools and CATs start to prepare for the changes.

1. Unfair Dismissal: Reduced Qualifying Period

- A major change introduced by the ERA 2025 is the reduction of the qualifying period for ordinary unfair dismissal claims from two years to six months.
- The implementation date for this change is 1 January 2027.
- This means that:
 - o employees with continuous service of six months or more at the effective date of termination;
 - o who are dismissed on 1 January 2027 or after will be protected from unfair dismissal (including constructive dismissal).
- Crucially the length of service will be retrospective meaning that anyone hired on or before 1 July 2026 who is dismissed on or after 1 January 2027 will acquire protection by the time the law changes.

2. A New Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment

- From October 2026, employers will face a stronger legal duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment — an elevated threshold from the current requirement to take reasonable steps.
- Liability for sexual harassment in the workplace will extend to third party harassment.
- The ERA 2025 will also classify the reporting of workplace sexual harassment as a protected disclosure under whistleblowing law.

3. Other key changes



Change	When?
<p>Extension of Acas Early Conciliation period The maximum period for Acas Early Conciliation (“EC”) has doubled from six weeks to twelve weeks and the intention of this is to reduce pressure on Acas and tribunals, allow more meaningful settlement discussions and increase settlement rates. The consequence is also that claimants have more time in which to bring a claim as the effect of Acas EC is to pause the time limit to bring an employment tribunal claim.</p>	1 December 2025 (already in force)
<p>Statutory Sick Pay Employees will have the right to statutory sick pay from the first day of illness, rather than from the fourth.</p>	6 April 2026
<p>Paternity leave and unpaid parental leave Paternity leave and unpaid parental leave to become a Day 1 right. Previously, 26 weeks’ service was required for paternity leave and 1 years’ service was required for unpaid parental leave.</p>	6 April 2026
<p>Extended Time Limits for Tribunal Claims The standard time limit for most employment tribunal claims will increase from three months to six months.</p>	October 2026
<p>Collective Redundancy Consultation The threshold for collective consultation will apply across the entire business, not just at a single establishment. For CATs, this is an important change to note as redundancies across the entire CAT, rather than individual schools, will be taken into account. Further guidance is expected on this including the number of proposed redundancies across the entire business that would trigger collective consultation obligations. Schools must also consider the two-pronged risk posed by the reduction to the qualifying service required for unfair dismissal, as collective consultation means a set minimum of consultation which could take employees over the six-month mark. It will therefore be important to undertake restructures as soon as possible.</p>	October 2026
<p>Fire and rehire The ERA 2025 significantly restricts employers’ ability to change contractual terms without agreement. Fire and rehire will likely not be possible at all, unless the school is facing severe financial difficulties such that fire and rehire is necessary to avoid business closure, which is a high threshold to meet.</p>	January 2027
<p>Removal of the compensation cap for unfair dismissal claims The ERA 2025 will completely remove the compensation cap for unfair dismissal claims, which is currently capped at the lower of 52 weeks’ gross pay or £118,223.</p>	January 2027
<p>Flexible Working Flexible working rights will be extended. Schools will be permitted to refuse a flexible working request for the existing permitted reasons. However, in addition to the current regime, they will also need to set out in writing why the refusal is reasonable.</p>	2027
<p>Maternity leave Maternity leave and dismissal of Mothers returning from maternity leave will have enhanced protection from dismissal within the first 6 months, extending protection beyond just redundancy to all forms of dismissal. An employer will only be able to dismiss an employee within 6 months of returning from maternity leave in narrowly defined circumstances, which are likely to include gross misconduct and business closure.</p>	2027



Change	When?
Bereavement Leave Extension of bereavement leave to cover the loss of a loved one, rather than the loss of a child.	2027
Zero Hour Contracts Workers on zero hour arrangements will gain the right to be offered guaranteed hours where they have regularly worked a specified number of hours during a reference period (likely 12 weeks). Workers will not be obliged to accept the offer, but employers should consider how this change may affect roles frequently using casual staff — for example, cleaners and exam invigilators.	2027

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>

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.**

The Great Big Green Week 6-14 June 2026

Every June, thousands of events take place in towns, cities, villages and schools across the country. From repair cafés and nature walks to community clean-ups and film screenings.

Big Green Week has free resource packs available for primary and secondary schools, linked to the national curriculum, and packed with activities for all ages.

[Read more and download the free resources](#)



Climate change

The DfE School and College Voice survey shows variable progress across schools in establishing sustainability leadership and climate action plans. While some settings have formal leadership and plans in place, others remain at an early stage, citing workload, capacity and competing priorities as key barriers.

The findings highlight the importance of clear leadership and effective governance oversight to ensure climate action moves from intention to implementation. 67% of primary schools were found to have a Climate Action Plan (CAP) either in place or in development, with the figure dropping to 59% in secondary schools. Typical CAPs include a focus on teaching pupils about climate change, reducing energy use and carbon emissions and increasing green spaces on the school estate.

The DfE expectation was that all schools would have a sustainability lead and a Climate Action Plan in place by December 2025. Resources and support are available to help schools on their journey.

Questions for the board:

- How does Catholic Social Teaching inform the school's/CAT's approach to sustainability and climate action plans?
- Has the school/CAT formally identified a sustainability lead?
- Does the school/CAT have a published or draft climate action plan?
- How does the governing board/Trust board monitor progress against sustainability commitments? What barriers has leadership identified, and what mitigation is in place?
- How is sustainability embedded into strategic planning, rather than treated as a standalone initiative?

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.



Consultation on School Food

The consultation proposes updating the 'Requirements for School Food Regulations 2014', which have been in place for over 10 years and are no longer aligned with current nutritional advice. The aim is to ensure that food provided in schools supports children's health, learning and long-term well-being, particularly by reducing sugar, increasing fibre, and limiting foods high in fat, sugar and salt. The proposals would apply to all state-funded schools in England, covering breakfast provision and food served across the whole school day.

The proposed changes would come into effect in September 2027 in primary schools. Most changes for secondary schools will also begin in September 2027, with some areas phased in by September 2028, including: adding pulses to menu options, limiting cheese-based main dishes, restricting sweetened baked products and desserts, and introducing the healthier drinks list.

Breakfast standards

A portion of fruit or vegetables must be available (not juices or purees)

Milk should be skimmed or semi-skimmed, unsweetened and unflavoured. Plant milks must also be unsweetened and contain a defined range of micronutrients.

Controls on sugar content for yoghurts (no sweetener permitted)

The portion size of fruit spreads and savoury spreads limited to 10g, reduced sugar/salt (no sweeteners). Chocolate spread, honey and syrups banned

Limited range of drinks to be offered, with free, fresh drinking water always available.

Whole school day standards (excluding breakfast) Starchy foods:

Changes to starchy foods requirements, around the provision of brown, wholemeal or higher fibre pasta, rice and bread, which will help contribute to pupils' fibre intake

At least one portion of pulses should be included within or alongside all menu options once a week, to increase fibre consumption

One or more portions of high-fibre bread, pasta, couscous, noodles, rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, millet, bulgar wheat or cornmeal to be served every day, and three or more different starchy foods each week. (No brioche, focaccia, ciabatta or other bread containing fat or oil permitted.)

Fruit and vegetables

'Grab and go' options must contain or be accompanied by vegetables or salad and all second courses should be accompanied by or contain a portion of fruit. At least three different fruits or vegetables to be offered each week

One or more portions of vegetables or salad must be served as an accompaniment every day to all main meals. All savoury grab and go items must be accompanied by or contain one or more portions of vegetables or salad whenever served

Vegetables do not include pureed vegetables, potatoes, canned pasta in tomato sauce or baked beans

Fruit does not include fruit juice, smoothies and fruit purees. Canned fruit must not be in syrup. Fruit to be the only available dessert option in primary schools once a week.



Reducing sugar

Proposals include removing fruit juice and fruit-juice-based combination drinks from the list of permitted drinks

All schools – free, fresh drinking water to be available at all times

Primary schools - Plain water (still or carbonated). Plain unsweetened and unflavoured semi-skimmed or skimmed or lactose free milk. Plain soya and oat drinks. (Must be unsweetened or no sugar and fortified with each of these micronutrients: calcium, iodine, vitamin D, riboflavin, vitamin B12.)

Secondary schools (from September 2028) - Plain water (still or carbonated). Flavoured water that is sugar free (still only). Fruit-flavoured still drinks with no added sugar and a maximum of 0.5g total sugar per 100ml as diluted (can include sweeteners). Plain unsweetened and unflavoured semi-skimmed or skimmed milk or lactose free milk. Plain soya, oat and rice drinks. (Must be unsweetened or no sugar and fortified with each of these micronutrients: calcium, iodine, vitamin D, riboflavin, vitamin B12.) Tea, coffee, without additions such as syrups, sprinkles, cream etc.

Milk, dairy and plant-based products

Cheese can only be used as a main ingredient on up to two days a week

Dairy yoghurt to be less than 10g/100g total sugar and not contain non-sugar sweeteners

Plant based yoghurts to be less than 7g/100g total sugar and not contain non-sugar sweeteners and are fortified with specified micronutrients.

Reducing foods higher in fat, sugar and salt

No deep-fried foods

No confectionery, sweets, chocolate (except for cocoa powder), chocolate coated products, chocolate containing products, chocolate spreads, cereal bars and processed fruit bars

No food or drinks containing non-sugar sweeteners

No more than one portion of sweetened baked products or desserts (manufactured or homemade) can be served each week, these must contain at least 50% fruit or vegetables and no confectionery or chocolate (phased in for secondary schools – two portions permitted until September 2028.)

A 'meal deal' must include at least one portion of vegetables and/or salad and at least one portion of fruit. Meal deals must not include drinks.

Protein

The current regulations require schools to serve meat or poultry on three or more days each week, The consultation proposes updating the requirement to include either meat, poultry, or pulses on three or more days each week, which can include beans, lentils, and chickpeas, but excludes baked beans. Oily fish is to be served at least once every three weeks.

The DfE expects schools to consult parents and carers when adopting any changes to their school food policies, considering any difficulties these policies could cause, and ensuring that the policies are clearly communicated when implemented. They also recommend that a lead governor or trustee is appointed with designated responsibility for school food.

The consultation closes on 12th June.



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/>

Directors Keeping in Touch (KIT)

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

Governors Gathering

Thursday 11th June 2026 4pm-5pm
Zoom

Directors & Governors Retreat

Saturday 20th June 2026. 9.30am-4pm
Education Service, BR5 2SR. £20

Safeguarding for Governors

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

Directors Keeping in Touch (KIT)

Thursday 16th July 2026. 8-8.30am.
Teams

Governors Gathering

Thursday 16th July 2026 4-5pm.
Teams

Clerk to Governors Forum

Clerks to governors are encouraged to join our forums. These are held once per term and the dates and booking forms are detailed below. These forums provide an important opportunity to receive key updates directly from the diocesan team, as well as a valuable space for clerks to share information, exchange ideas, and learn from one another's experiences.

The next forum is on **Thursday 18th June 2026**.

Please [click here](#) to view more details and book.

Directors & Governors Retreat

Saturday 20th June 2026. 9.30am-4pm

Education Service, St Edward's House, St Pauls Wood Hill, Orpington, BR5 2SR. £20

**A Retreat Day for Directors and Governors of Catholic Trusts and Schools
They found them in the Temple; Teaching and Listening to them (Luke 2:46)**

Retreat director; Father Valentine Erhahon

This retreat day offers Directors and Governors a rare and valuable opportunity to step aside from the demands of governance and leadership, and to reflect prayerfully on their vocation in Catholic education. Grounded in Scripture, the teachings of the Church, and the lived experience of Catholic schools and trusts, the day will invite participants to reconnect with the mission that underpins their service.

Please [click here](#) to view more details and book.

