Newsletter

8th July 2026

In this Newsletter:

Priest Identification
Sister Anne-Marie
Headteachers' Conference Competition
WorkNest
UNICEF UK's Award
Southwark Singing Programme - Kent
Rise Theatre
Recruitment
Events & Training
News

End of Year Message

Dear Colleagues,

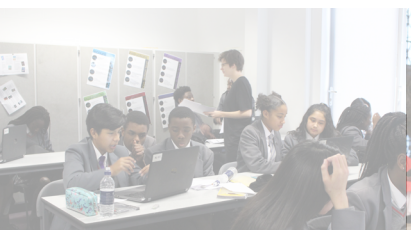
As we reach the end of another academic year, Canon Victor and I would like to express our heartfelt thanks to each of you for your dedication, leadership, and faithful service to the children, families, and communities entrusted to your care.

This year has brought both opportunities and change. Within the Diocesan Education Service, there has been a period of transition, and we would like to thank you for the warm welcome, encouragement, and support that has been shown to us both over the last 6 months of our shared role. The generosity of spirit, professionalism, and commitment to our shared mission that we have encountered across our schools has been a source of great encouragement.

We want to ensure that Christ is placed at the heart of education, ensuring that our schools remain places where young people can flourish academically, spiritually, and personally. This is only possible because of the steadfast leadership demonstrated by you and your colleagues every day.

We wish to recognise the continued commitment of leaders at every level within our school communities—the members of senior leadership teams, middle leaders, governors, directors, trustees, and all those who support and guide our schools. Your collective wisdom, dedication, and generosity of service make an invaluable contribution to the mission of Catholic education.

We extend our particular gratitude to those Headteachers who will be leaving the Archdiocese at the end of this academic year, whether through retirement or to take up new opportunities. Your contribution to Catholic education in Southwark has enriched countless lives. You leave a legacy of service, care, and leadership for which we are deeply grateful. We assure you of our prayers and



best wishes for the future. It was wonderful to see some of you at the Celebration of Service Mass alongside governors who have also given collectively, centuries of service.

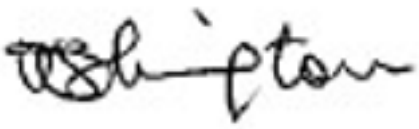
Farewell goes to: Shireen Razey, Kirsty Everson, Ronnie Maher, Angela Kinslow, Will Liddle, Liz Cahill, Marie Baxter, Liz Harris and Diarmuid Skeehan. Some other Heads move onto other schools within the diocese and we wish Hester Seager-Fleming and Louise Chabvuka all the very best with the move to their new schools. Others leave their schools to take on roles within the Trusts, Joanne Hawthorne as Director of Primary for St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust, Felicity Corcoran as Director of Secondary for St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust, Jonathan Sims as Director of Primary for St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust, Martin Jones and Vince Burke who become Regional Trust Leads for Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust.

And we wish Louise Holden all the very best for her Headship with KCSP. While it has only been 11 months, Louise fitted into the team so very well It felt like she was always here. Louise, you will be missed but we know you will not be a stranger!

As the academic year draws to a close, we hope that the summer months will provide an opportunity for rest, renewal, and time with those closest to you. Thank you for all that you have done this year and for the difference you make every day in the lives of children and young people.

May God bless you, your families, and your school communities throughout the summer break.

With gratitude and every good wish,



Canon Victor Darlington
Episcopal Vicar for Education

Colette Doran-Hannon
Diocesan Schools Commissioner
Archdiocese of Southwark

A Prayer for School Leaders

Loving God,
We thank You for the vocation of all who lead within our Catholic schools.
Bless our Headteachers, senior leaders, governors, directors, trustees, and all who serve our school communities with wisdom, compassion, and faith.
Grant them rest and renewal during the summer break.
Strengthen them for the work ahead, guide their decisions, and fill them with hope and courage as they continue to nurture the gifts of the children and young people in their care.
We remember especially those who are retiring or moving on to new chapters in their lives. May they know Your gratitude, peace, and blessing for all they have given in service to others.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sister Anne-Marie

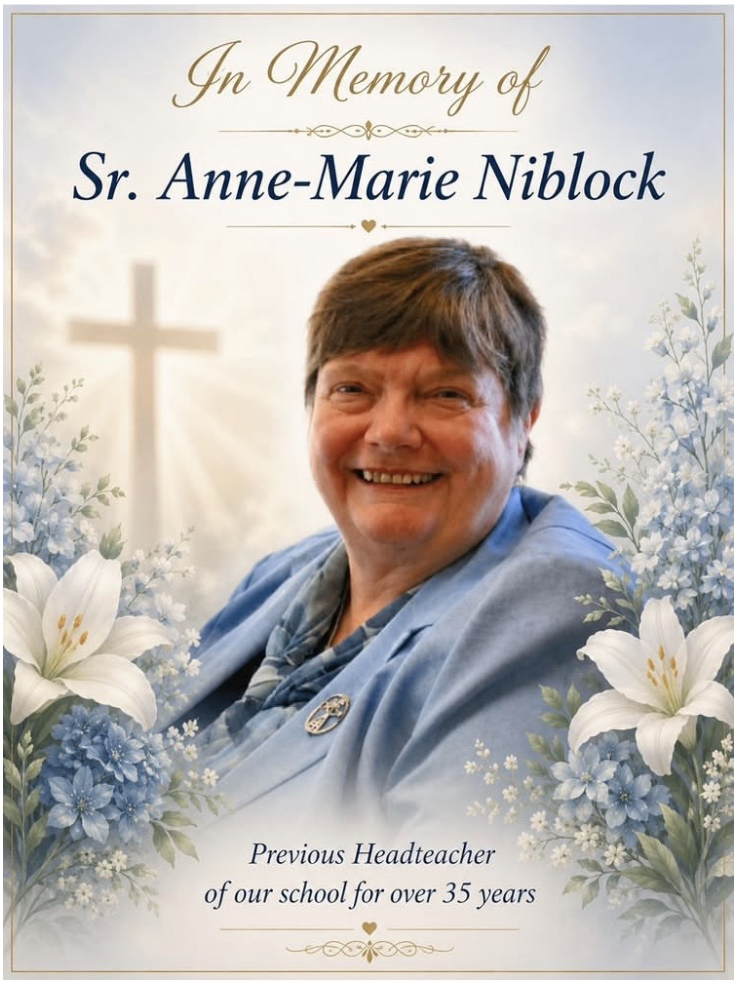


Photo credit to Notre Dame Catholic Girls' School

Sister Anne-Marie will be lovingly and gratefully remembered for her extraordinary legacy in Catholic education—a life poured out in faithful service, wisdom and devotion to the young people entrusted to her care. At the time of her retirement, she held the singular distinction of being the last Religious Sister in the Diocese to serve as a headteacher, a quiet yet profound testament to her dedication and vocation.

Her witness, both as an educator and as a Religious Sister, has left an indelible mark on countless lives and on the wider diocesan community. May her years of tireless service bear lasting fruit in the generations she helped to form.

May she now rest in the peace of Christ, whom she served so faithfully, and rise in the fullness of His glory.

Headteachers' Conference Competition

Last year we were fortunate to have an original piece of artwork from Max Brown, The John Fisher School, as our focal point for our Headteachers' Conference.

This year the conference is theme is "All that I am"

We are opening up a competition for all artists from Y7- Y13 to provide us with an original work of art, painted, graphic design or alternative media. The piece should be A3 or larger so that it can be displayed on the focal point at the Headteachers' Conference. An Amazon voucher will be presented to the winner and the original artwork will be turned into a prayer card for the conference delegates.

The artwork will be the focal point for the rest of the year at St Edward's.

Original artwork should be delivered or posted to the Education Service's office by Friday 23rd October. Computer-generated images should be sent as either a JPEG or PDF to clairewilliams@rcaos.org.uk

WorkNest

Tackling Toxic Workplace Behaviour: Practical strategies for employers

Every workplace has difficult personalities from time to time - but when negative behaviours are ignored, excused or poorly managed, they can quickly begin to damage morale, productivity and workplace culture. Often, the warning signs are subtle at first. A high performer who intimidates colleagues or persistent gossip and negativity within a team. Left unchecked, these behaviours can create conflict, increase employee relations issues, drive good employees away and expose employers to significant legal and reputational risk.

Join WorkNest's practical webinar on the **30th July at 2.00 pm**, where they will help employers and HR professionals understand how to identify toxic workplace behaviour early, intervene confidently and create a culture where harmful behaviours are less likely to thrive.
Register here

RIDDOR Reporting | What employers get wrong and how to get it right

Worried that reporting an incident could trigger HSE scrutiny? Many employers struggle to determine whether an incident is reportable under RIDDOR. Others worry that reporting could attract unwanted HSE scrutiny. However, failing to report a qualifying incident - or reporting it incorrectly - can create far greater compliance and legal risks.

Join WorkNest's Health and Safety experts for a practical webinar on the **6th August at 2.00 pm** that will help you navigate most common areas of uncertainty, make confident reporting decisions and strengthen your incident management processes.
Register here

UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award

Start the new school year with belonging, voice and respect

How can every child feel they belong, are listened to and have the confidence to thrive?

UNICEF UK's Rights Respecting Schools Award gives schools a clear, practical framework to strengthen belonging, inclusion, wellbeing, pupil voice and global citizenship through children's human rights. In London, state-funded schools can access free Rights Respecting Schools Award membership until March 2028, including training and resources.

Sign up today and get the next school year off to a strong start.

Southwark Singing Programme - Kent

The Southwark Singing Programme is the diocesan sacred music programme for schools, operating at primary and secondary level. Diocesan choral directors visit schools each week for 30 weeks of the year running whole-class singing sessions and choirs based on liturgical music, building confidence among pupils and broadening the musical offering in school liturgies. This work is subsidised by the diocese and comes at a low cost to schools.

The programme is expanding into Kent and we would welcome enquiries from schools in West Kent and Medway in particular. Please contact the Diocesan Director of Music, Jonathan Schranz, on singing@rcaos.org.uk for further information or to arrange a trial session.

Rise Theatre - Treasure Within - Autumn Tour 2026

What is Treasure Within?
Treasure Within is a dynamic, all-day experience for primary schools that creatively brings the 7 principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to life through live theatre, music, classroom activities, and immersive workshops. You can find out more and watch the trailer here!

Dates are already filling quickly, early booking is encouraged. Schools can email admin@risetheatre.co.uk

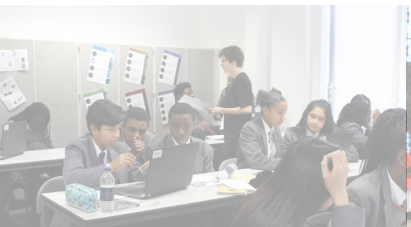
Costs for the day (based on school size):
£549 – under 125 pupils, £599 – under 325 pupils, £649 – under 450 pupils, £699 – over 450 pupils
Group discounts are available when 3+ schools book together in the same area or within an academy trust.

Advent Service Participation

The Advent Service for Primary Schools will be held at **1:30pm on Wednesday, 9th December 2026 at St George's Cathedral**. As in previous years this Advent Service is being held as part of our ongoing support of the work carried out by the Catholic Children's Society and the Southwark Crisis Fund.
We are seeking schools who are able to lead on the various sections. There is no specified age range for the performing schools. Before volunteering your pupils, and staff, please consider the following requirements for all performing schools:

- provide a class/choir to lead on the hymns agreed and be able to arrange for sufficient in school rehearsal time;
- provide readers for the assigned act (you can decide how to allocate);
- provide actors, and costumes/props, for the silent acting for the assigned act;
- must be represented, preferably by the lead adult who will be there on the day, at an online **meeting on Tuesday, 13th October 3:45-4:45pm;**
- **be at St George's Cathedral by 10am on Wednesday, 9th December with your pupils as this is the only opportunity, we will have for a full rehearsal before the main event.**

If your school wishes to participate through leading on a hymn, reading and acting, please inform susanelderfield@rcaos.org.uk by the 1st September 2026.



Priest Identification

During a recent meeting with clergy, it was noted that some schools have been asking priests to present official identification, such as a celebret, before entering school premises. This has caused some concern, as many priests do not routinely carry this documentation.

It is not necessary to request identification from parish priests. They are formally appointed to their roles by the Archbishop, and all required safeguarding checks and vetting have already been completed.

The only exception would be in cases where a visiting priest from overseas is present, or where an unfamiliar priest arrives without prior notice and those who are from outside the Diocese. In such instances, it may be appropriate to seek verification.

Recruitment

To advertise any school vacancy with us for free, please email clairewilliams@rcaos.org.uk

Trust Relationship Officer, Education Service Orpington

Estates Manager, St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust
Closing date: 5th July 2026

Caretaker / Premises Officer, St Anne's Catholic Primary School
Closing date: 8th July 2026

Premises Manager, St Peter's Catholic Primary School
Closing date: 31st July 2026

Deputy Headteacher, St Saviour's RC Primary School
Closing date: 15th September 2026.

Save the Date!

Headteachers Conference - 19th & 20th November 2026

Events & Training

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

Summer 2026

Senior Leaders Briefings
Wednesday 15th July 2026. 8-8.30am
Teams

Directors Keeping in Touch (KIT)
Thursday 16th July 2026. 8-8.30am. Teams

Governors Gathering
Thursday 16th July 2026 4-5pm. Teams

Autumn 2026

Senior Leaders Briefings
Wednesday 15th July 2026. 8-8.30am
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Thursday 16th July 2026. 8-8.30am. Teams

Governors Gathering
Thursday 16th July 2026 4-5pm. Teams

Autumn 2026

Aspiring to Governance
Thursday 10th September 2026. 5.30-6.30pm.
Teams

CSED Writing
Monday 14th September 2026. 10am-12pm.
Education Service

Academisation for Governors
Thursday 17th September 2026. 5.30pm-7pm
Teams

New to Catholic Schools
9.30am to 4pm.
Multiple dates and venues.

Beginning of Year Mass
Friday 25th September 2026. 11am.
St George's Cathedral

Induction for New Foundation Directors, Governors and Clerks
Tuesday 29th September 2026. 5.30-7pm
Teams

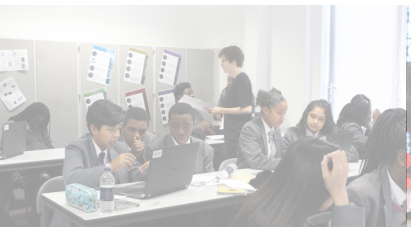
News

Feast of St Thomas the Apostle and 60th Anniversary Celebration

On the 3rd July 2026, the Feast of St Thomas the Apostle, past pupils and staff joined Canon Victor Darlington for a Mass celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the founding of St Thomas the Apostle College in Nunhead.

Continue reading

International Mass at St Augustine's Catholic Church

On Saturday 27th June, children and families from St Augustine's Catholic Primary School in Tunbridge Wells were delighted to take part in the International Mass at St Augustine's Catholic Church.

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