

Archdiocese of Southwark

Essential Services provided to Schools and Academies

2026 – 2027

“I can do all this through him who gives me strength.” –

Philippians 4:13

Context

Diocesan Bishops hold canonical responsibility for the oversight of all Catholic education within their Dioceses. Their primary objective in relation to Catholic schools is to assist parents by ensuring that:

- there are sufficient places in Catholic schools to meet the needs of Catholic children resident in their areas;
- the formation and education provided by the schools is authentically Catholic; and
- the educational standards are outstanding.

The Diocesan Bishop has the right of supervision, visitation and inspection of Catholic Schools in his Diocese pursuant to Canon law.

‘Diocese’ is the territorial division of the Catholic Church led by a Diocesan Bishop, who is responsible for all Catholic Schools in his area. Each Diocese will have a Diocesan Education Service (sometimes called a Diocesan Education Schools Commission or similar) led by a Diocesan Schools Commissioner (sometimes called a Diocesan Director of Education), who will exercise the Diocesan Bishop’s education functions on his behalf. Dioceses are independent charitable foundations, governed by charity law and their own constitutions, and are not themselves part of State provision of education, rather they are partners with the State.

The Catholic Church expects its schools to promote and uphold the highest academic standards and it is the role of the Diocesan Schools Education Service in each area to assist the Diocesan Bishop in achieving this aim in the context of a Catholic school.

The Archdiocese of Southwark

The Archdiocese of Southwark is divided into five geographic areas consisting of 159 schools and colleges across 14 local authorities. Although not all schools are in a trust yet, they are expected to work with the trust in their area.

Christ the Redeemer Catholic Education Trust	Kingston, Richmond, Wandsworth
Sancta Familia Catholic Academy Trust	Croydon, Sutton, Merton, Lambeth
St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust	Lewisham, Southwark, Croydon
St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust	Greenwich, Bromley, Bexley, Croydon
Kent Catholic Schools Partnership (KCSP);	Kent and Medway

Archbishop John Wilson has canonical responsibility for the Archdiocese of Southwark. The diocese is divided into three Episcopal areas within the diocese, each with either an Auxiliary Bishop or Episcopal Vicar:

Auxiliary Bishop for Kent & Medway	Bishop Paul Hendricks
Auxiliary Bishop for South West London	Bishop Gerard Bradley
Episcopal Vicar South East London	Canon Victor Darlington

The Education Service

Education Service Website: www.rcaos.org.uk

Episcopal Vicar for Education	Canon Victor Darlington eveducation@rcaos.org.uk
Diocesan Schools Commissioner	Colette Doran-Hannon colettedoranhannon@rcaos.org.uk
Trust Relationship Officer	Michael McGarrity michaelmcgarrity@rcaos.org.uk
Trust Relationship Officer	Charmaine Lee charmainelee@rcaos.org.uk
Trust Relationship Officer	Sam Gower samgower@rcaos.org.uk
School Chaplaincy and Formation	Susan Elderfield susanelderfield@rcaos.org.uk
Governance and Compliance Officer	Yvonne Epale yvonneepale@rcaos.org.uk
CSI Co-Ordinator	Leila Coward leilacoward@rcaos.org.uk
Primary RE Adviser	Elizabeth Cahill elizabethcahill@rcaos.org.uk
General Enquiries	Donna Gray donnagray@rcaos.org.uk
Media and communication	Claire Williams clairewilliams@rcaos.org.uk

Background

1. Diocesan authorities provide strategic functions which enable their schools, including academies, to continue to provide education through their family of schools. Such functions are essential and cannot be carried out by any third party, since they are fundamental to the continued existence of those schools. The strategic functions carried out by diocesan authorities do not come without cost, recognising that diocesan authorities pool funding on behalf of their family of schools in order to carry out these strategic functions. This includes the exercise of diocesan rights and responsibilities, including those recognised in statute. The DfE has acknowledged that this is a legitimate use of school funding.
2. It is of course the case that the academy trust companies are subject to legal requirements about the way they conduct the financial affairs of the company. One of the primary responsibilities of the Board of Directors is to ensure the company's funds are used only in accordance with the law, its articles of association, its funding agreement and the current version of the Academies Financial Handbook.
3. Any services of whatever nature must be no more than cost and must be used entirely for the functions exercised by the diocesan education service in supporting their schools. The same is entirely true for maintained schools. The contributions that they make to the diocesan education service is also public money and is subject to the same requirements in relation to the schools being accountable for the way that it is spent and that this is transparent.
4. This means that the dioceses must ensure that any funds received from schools or academy trust companies are kept in a separate account which is treated as a restricted fund, and do not end up mixed in with the general funds of the diocese. To do otherwise would be to risk public funding given to the schools for the purposes of education, being spent by the diocese on matters which do not directly support the provision of education by Catholic schools or directly fund the diocesan education service, which would be unlawful. The diocese must be entirely transparent about its accounting practice and be able to demonstrate that the funds received are directly used for the provision of the functions exercised by the diocesan education service in supporting its schools.

Fundamental Characteristics of a Catholic School

There are 4 main functions of the Catholic School:

1: Ensuring that Christ is made known to all by placing Him and the teachings of the church at the centre of people's lives. This is essential in proclaiming the Good News. This means that schools are more than just places of learning, but also communities where they grow as a whole person, with roots of faith which underpin the development of their values and motivation.

2: Assisting parents as the primary educators of their children, in the education and religious formation of their children. In Catholic schools, schools are part of the wider support network for families and it important that they work hard to help the students grow into well-rounded individuals.

3: To be at the service of the local church. This refers to the relationships between the home, school and parish and these should be fully integrated. The school cannot replace the parish as the church forms the basis for the school's mission but should work within its local context to fulfil its ecclesiastical duties.

4: To be of service to society. This refers to being part of the creation of a society which is highly educated and skilled where everyone uses their God-given gifts and talents for the common good. The role of the school is to ensure the world is as God intended and everyone needs to work together, particularly for the vulnerable, to achieve peace and unity.

Catholic schools are distinctive and there are a number of fundamental characteristics that are necessary to achieve this. The most important part of this is the education of all to ensure every person in the school community knows they are made in God's image and likeness and therefore valuable and worthy of respect. This means the teachings of the church and the Gospel values should be integrated into every aspect of school life.

The school should provide a broad and balanced curriculum to enable all young people grow to fulfil their potential and fulfil their role in society for the common good and maintain a clear sense of ecclesial and cultural identity, having the freedom and determination to teach and promote the church's teachings at all levels of the school.

It should serve all people in society, cultivating virtues rooted in Christ which enable all young people to understand their obligation to help others however, whenever and wherever they can.

Building on this there are five key principles that underpin these characteristics that make a Catholic school distinctive.

- **The Search for Excellence** – in all aspects of school life, from the welcome all receive, to standards to pastoral care. *“Catholic education therefore strives to offer students every opportunity to develop their talents to the full through their academic work, spiritual worship and extracurricular activities”*
- **The Uniqueness of the Individual** – Each individual is seen as made in God's image and loved by him. Our schools strive to celebrate the uniqueness of every individual, celebrating their giftedness. All of our work is centered on what is best for the children and young people in our care, their families and the community as a whole including every member of staff. *“It is important therefore that we provide high quality pastoral care throughout our schools and colleges in order to support the individual needs of each student.”*
- **The Education of the Whole Person** – preparing young people for their life as Christians in the community, contributing to the common good of society.
- **The Education of All** – a duty of care for the poor and vulnerable. *“Service to those who are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society has always been central to the mission of Catholic education.”*
- **Moral Principles** – experience of life in a community founded on Christian values. *“Both through religious education and in the general life of the school, young people are prepared to serve as witnesses to moral and spiritual values in the wider world.”*

“God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some works to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.” (St John Henry Newman)

Supporting Catholic Education

Key Aims:

- To promote best practice and provide inspiration for schools to strengthen the mission of the Church, building God’s kingdom.
- To promote excellence in everything we do in support of Catholic Education.
- To provide guidance and a strategic lead in areas of Catholic life (including Relationships and Sex Education), Formation, Inspection, Religious Education, Leadership, Governance and Collective Worship (Prayer and Liturgy).
- To promote collaboration and mutual support between schools and between the Academy Trusts in order to strengthen Catholic Education across all schools in the Diocese sharing a common mission.
- To provide opportunities for formation to inspire and sustain all staff, leaders, Directors and Governors in their roles in Catholic education.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the functions undertaken by the Diocesan Education Service:

Provision of a Diocesan Education Service

- Maintaining an effective and professionally staffed Diocesan Commission to oversee the provision of education in the Diocese, including ensuring that there are sufficient places at Catholic schools to fulfil the Diocesan Bishop’s Canonical and statutory responsibilities.
- Routine Diocesan advice and support which may include, but is not limited to:
 - Telephone advice;
 - Advice by email;
 - Visits from named advisers with specialisms in primary and secondary education;
 - Provision of relevant information and guidance via an intranet platform;
 - Classroom observation and scrutiny of pupils’ work;
 - Advice on the general conduct and overall leadership of schools, including responsibilities of the governing body and headteacher;
- Additional support from specialised advisers for schools.
- Support during the denominational inspection cycle to ensure schools meet the statutory responsibilities for RE and Collective Worship, including support with the process of self-evaluation and advice on the requirements of the Bishops of England and Wales.
- The provision of advice to schools as required by Canon law.
- Provision of advice in relation to RSE along with model policies and guidance.

- Advice on strategies for fostering relationships with the Wider Catholic community, including home and parish.

School Organisation

- Support for school organisation: liaison with local authority, School Improvement Partnerships and Regional School Commissioner, in line with the Memorandum of Understanding agreed with the DfE.
- Assistance with place planning, reorganisation and academy strategy.
- Assistance with interventions (IEB).
- Advice on and support with CAT development, expansion and statutory responsibility.

Catholic School Monitoring and Improvement

- Support is provided to schools by a dedicated team of experienced officers with significant experience of Catholic Senior Leadership, and denominational inspection. Support is tailored to the needs of each school.
- Diocesan Officers act as a first point of contact with the DfE including RSCs and local authority officers when performance data is under scrutiny.
- Supporting schools with school improvement on a school by school basis including brokering additional school improvement support where necessary.
- Liaison with Ofsted.
- Diocesan attendance at Ofsted Feedback and contact with HMI in support of the school.

Support with statutory responsibilities

- Stakeholder engagement with Ofsted and contact with HMI in support of schools.
- Ensuring executive action, advice and support to governing bodies following Ofsted inspection, where school is in special measures and/or notices to improve have been issued.
- Coordination and quality assurance of denominational inspections and publication of denominational Inspection Reports.
- Representation on local authority committees etc.
- Equalities advice in a Catholic context.
- Supporting schools with complaints.

Director/Governor recruitment, training and support

- Recruitment and appointment of suitably skilled foundation Directors/Governors.
- Appointment of suitably skilled foundation Directors/Governors.
- Liaison with schools regarding skills requirement to ensure placement of appropriate foundation Directors/Governors.
- Induction training for Directors/Governors, to enable them to undertake their roles and responsibilities in a Catholic school.
- Ongoing Director/Governor training to ensure they can carry out their duties in the context of a Catholic school in addition to maintaining standards in RE and more generally.
- Induction training for clerks in Catholic schools.

- Academy Directors' training to ensure they understand how a Catholic CAT is operated.
- Support for Directors/Governors as employers in a Catholic school, including model documents and legal advice.
- Briefings on statutory changes relevant to Directors/Governors of Catholic schools.
- Ensuring that Directors/Governors are fully aware of their Canonical duties.
- Support for Directors/Governors in dealing with complex or challenging issues in Catholic schools.
- Support for Directors/Governors in relation to the Catholic character and mission of schools including ensuring that schools adhere to Catholic Social Teaching.
- Telephone, online and email advice for Directors/Governors.
- Development training for Chairs and prospective Chairs.
- Training for Directors/Governors on the promotion of Catholic Education and the provision of effective RE and Collective Worship.
- Intervention and removal of Directors/Governor(s) where appropriate.
- Keeping governance under review to ensure that either a new Director/Governor is appointed or an existing Director's/Governor's term is renewed when a Director's/Governor's term comes to an end.
- Monitoring compliance with governance codes of conduct.
- Ensuring use of CES model documents as required by the diocese.

Admissions and Appeals

- Provision of Diocesan guidance, sample documentation and templates for use in Catholic schools.
- Formally review governing bodies' admission policies in Diocesan schools.
- Provide advice and support to governing bodies and Headteachers on admissions.
- Maintain an overview for schools and academies on LA admission committees, school place planning forums and other relevant bodies.
- Advice in relation to exclusions.
- Respond to the Schools Adjudicator in relation to Catholic admissions queries.
- Strategic support with pupil place planning.
- Provide advice and support to Governors/Headteachers on admission appeals.
- Provide updates on the law relating to appeals, where appropriate, in relation to Catholic schools.
- Respond to the Local Government Ombudsman and Education and Skills Funding Agency as appropriate on behalf of the Bishop.
- Updates on changes in the Codes where relevant and their impact on Catholic schools.
- Support for appeal panels, including provision of training and advice on appeals to Catholic schools.

Catholic Senior Leadership Appointments

- Providing oversight of the recruitment process for senior leadership positions in order to ensure compliance with the Bishops' Memorandum on the recruitment of senior leadership.
- Providing support through the recruitment process of any protected posts.
- Provision of CES model recruitment documents including application forms, contracts and employment policies.

- Providing guidance on employment issues as they relate to Catholic schools.
- Support with the application and implementation of the Catholic Education Service's employment protocols and procedures.
- Providing telephone and email advice in relation to staffing issues, for example, disciplinary and grievance matters.
- Attendance by diocesan officer(s) at shortlisting, interviews for CEO/(Exec)Headteacher/Principal/Head of School/DHT/AHT and all similar posts including Head of RE and Chaplains.
- Induction and succession planning for Catholic school leaders.
- Strategic oversight of staff development including the provision of Catholic leadership training events, CPD and coaching.
- Providing general and specific recruitment and staffing advice which often includes HR and employment law advice.
- Support for head-teacher and staff wellbeing, including ongoing support for their spiritual formation within a Catholic context.

Resources

- Guides and documents including documentation which is suitable for a Catholic context.
- Access to a range of online resources that relate to Catholic governance, RE, Ethos and the distinctive Catholic nature of Diocesan schools.
- Provide advice on Catholic pupil population trends in a Catholic Context.
- Providing regular newsletters to schools regarding current issues.
- Providing advice and support on academisation, and statutory responsibilities.
- Signposting access to Church Marketplace.
- Signposting to Diocesan Property Team on issues regarding buildings, premises and land.

Additional Functions and Diocesan Education Service Communications

- Pastoral and spiritual support for senior leaders.
- Supporting governance responsibility for safeguarding and welfare support for pupils, including working with relevant school teams and local authorities (multi-agency working).
- Provision of resources to support RE and chaplaincy services in schools.
- Provision of a network for Chaplains.
- Provision of training resources for Chaplains.
- Ensuring schools have access to Catholic Education Service resources and services through the support of the Diocese including in relation to the appointment and dismissal of staff.
- Diocesan representation at National Religious Education conferences and through local SACRE bodies and with planning decisions and consultations, such as at scrutiny committees, early years and school forums.
- Provision of Diocesan meeting facilities.
- Signposting to CCRS course.
- Support for teachers through Catholic ECT programme.
- Access to Religious Education training events and other events on education and personal relationship programmes.
- Coordination of Annual Catholic Headteacher and DHT conferences and regular networking opportunities within the Catholic family of schools.
- Training for RE Co-ordinators and Heads of Department.

- Access to bereavement support training.
- Information bulletins and updates from the Diocese via email for senior leaders and governors as appropriate.
- Briefing papers and updates on national policy changes and impact for Catholic schools.
- Notification of Diocesan special initiatives and opportunities for Catholic schools.
- Providing advice for parents on Diocesan school provision.
- Responding to Government, CES and local authority consultations.

Support from the Catholic Education Service (CES)

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- Model documentation for use in schools.
- National guidance.
- Representation of Catholic Education at a national level.
- Specialist advice, including legal, on Catholic specific issues.
- Facilitation of appropriate networking and professional development for diocesan officers, and staff in Catholic schools.

This document will be reviewed annually and re-issued to schools and academies each September.