

Newsletter



10th September 2026

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Reflection

Beloved friends, brothers and sisters in Christ,

Welcome back to school.

These familiar words will echo through our classrooms, corridors and staffrooms in the weeks ahead. They will be spoken by old friends reunited and by new colleagues meeting for the first time. Yet they are more than a simple greeting: they are an invitation—to return with grateful hearts, to reflect upon the journey behind us, and to step with renewed hope into all that lies ahead.

The summer months will have held something different for each of us. For some, they brought welcome rest and refreshment; for others, the sorrow of saying goodbye to someone deeply loved. Some celebrated new beginnings, while others quietly carried burdens known only to themselves and to God. Whatever the season has brought, each of us now stands at the threshold of a new academic year: a fresh page, waiting to be written with faith, courage and love.

September possesses a quiet beauty. Summer begins to soften into autumn; the days grow gentler; and creation itself seems to remind us that every season carries both an ending and a beginning. Within the life of the Church, although we remain in Ordinary Time, this month is illuminated by a wonderful procession of feasts and holy witnesses:

- 3rd September — Saint Gregory the Great, Pope and Doctor of the Church
- 8th September — The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 14th September — The Exaltation of the Holy Cross
- 15th September — Our Lady of Sorrows
- 16th September — Saints Cornelius, Pope, and Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr



- 21st September — Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist
- 24th September — Our Lady of Walsingham
- 29th September — Saints Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, Archangels
- 30th September — Saint Jerome, Priest and Doctor of the Church

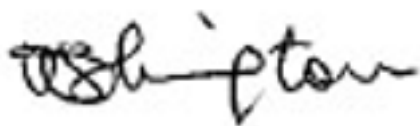
Each of these celebrations offers us a light for the road ahead. Saint Gregory teaches us the grace of humble service; Our Lady shows us how to welcome God's call with trust; the Holy Cross assures us that suffering never has the final word; Saint Matthew reminds us that no life is beyond the transforming invitation of Christ; and the Archangels call us to recognise that God's loving presence surrounds and strengthens us.

Together, Our Lady and the saints encourage us to begin again—not with fear, but with faith; not relying only upon our own strength, but trusting in the grace of God. They remind us that renewal often begins quietly: in a kind word, a patient response, a carefully prepared lesson, a child truly listened to, or a colleague gently supported.

As educators, you do far more than impart knowledge. Day by day, often in ways you may never fully see, you awaken possibility, nurture dignity and help young people discover the gifts God has placed within them. Every act of patience, every word of encouragement and every moment of faithful service may become a seed of hope in another person's life.

As this new academic year begins, may our schools be places where wisdom is cherished, faith is kept alive, compassion is practised, and every person is welcomed as a beloved child of God. May we have the courage to begin anew, the humility to learn from one another, and the generosity to serve with joyful hearts.

Thank you for all that you do—and for the countless lives you touch and transform. Please be assured of my continuing prayers and support throughout the year ahead. May Christ, the Teacher and our companion on the journey, guide your steps, renew your strength and bless the work of your hands.



Canon Victor Darlington

Archdiocese of Southwark, Episcopal Vicar for the Southeast Area; for CARITAS Southwark, Racial & Cultural Inclusion and Justice & Peace, and for Education.

Directors Message

Dear Colleagues,

As we begin a new academic year, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for your unwavering commitment, dedication, and leadership in our Catholic schools across the Archdiocese of Southwark.

The start of a school year always brings with it a renewed sense of hope and possibility. It is a time when our schools once again become places where young people encounter Christ through learning, relationships, service, and community. Your leadership is central to ensuring that every child entrusted to our care is known, valued, and supported to flourish academically, spiritually, and personally.



In particular we welcome those who begin their service as Heads in our schools Sonia Miguez-Jorge, Suzanne Sanders, Stacey Anderson, Katie O'Leary, Louise Holden, Sam Atkinson, Lizzie Hunt, Dr Molly Makota and Maggie Ryan.

As well as those who have moved schools to continue their leadership journey, Hester Seager-Fleming and Louise Chabvuka and Lorraine Flower who has become Executive Head of St Joseph's and St Agatha's Kingston.

We wish all our newly and recently appointed deputies well in their role and look forward to meeting you all in the near future.

We know you will join us as we welcome our newly appointed Diocesan Education Service staff Michael McGarrity, Leila Coward, Charmaine Lee and Elizabeth Cahill. Together we hope that we can support all Trusts and schools across this year.

We all recognise that the challenges facing school leaders continue to be significant. Yet we are continually inspired by the resilience, professionalism, and faith-filled witness that characterise leadership in our Catholic schools. Through your work, our schools remain communities of excellence, compassion, and hope, reflecting the Gospel values that are at the heart of our mission.

This year presents fresh opportunities to strengthen Catholic education across our Archdiocese. Together, we will continue to nurture strong Catholic identity of schools and colleges to ensure that our schools remain places where faith and excellence go hand in hand.

As Pope Francis reminded us, education is an act of hope. Every day, through your service, you help young people discover their God-given gifts and prepare them to contribute positively to society. Thank you for embracing this mission with such generosity and commitment.

Please be assured of the support of the Diocesan Education Service throughout the year ahead. We look forward to working alongside you and your teams as partners in this vital ministry.

As we begin this new school year, let us place our schools, staff, pupils, and families under the protection of Our Lady, praying that God will bless our efforts and guide us in all that we do.

We pray for all those who have died over the last few months, going to their heavenly home with Jesus. We remember especially, Theo Seward, Rebekkah Lynnel-Fairly, Verne Bruce-Sylvester and Stephen Beck. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Each played their part in education in our Diocese and we hold each of their school communities in our prayers also On behalf of Canon Victor and the Diocesan Education Service team, I wish you, your staff, directors, governors and your school communities every blessing for a happy, successful, and faith-filled year ahead.



Colette Doran-Hannon
Diocesan Schools Commissioner
Archdiocese of Southwark



“Let all that you do be done in love.”
1 Corinthians 16:14

Loving God,

Bless our schools as we begin this new academic year.

Guide our leaders, inspire our teachers, support our families, and help our pupils to grow in wisdom, faith, and love.

May all that we do reflect the example of Christ and strengthen our mission as Catholic communities.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Free School Wellbeing Audit Tool

BounceTogether has developed a free Whole-School Wellbeing Audit to help schools evaluate their current wellbeing provision against the DfE’s 8 Principles of Effective Whole School Approaches to Mental Health and Wellbeing.

The online audit provides an instant visual report, helping schools identify strengths, prioritise areas for development and create a clear, evidence-based action plan to support ongoing school improvement. The report can also provide a useful starting point for discussions around wellbeing priorities and future planning.

You can access the free tool [here](#).

Education Sunday

Sunday 13th September has been allocated to Education Sunday by the Church in England and Wales. This is timely with the recent return to schools. In his letter to schools and parishes, Archbishop John recognises the work of all who labour in our schools as well as the parents and carers who support the children laying “the foundations upon which education is built.” Please share it as widely as you can with your school community.

The letter can be read in full [here](#).

Important Documents

As we begin a new academic year you will find the 2026-2027 Protocols and essential services on our website. These can be viewed [here](#).



Archbishops' Appeal Grants Support Faith, Community and Care for Creation Across Our Schools

We are delighted to celebrate the success of a number of schools across the Diocese that have been awarded grants through the Archbishops' Appeal. These awards recognise innovative projects that promote faith formation, spiritual development, service, community engagement and care for our common home.

The grants will enable schools to create new opportunities for prayer and reflection, strengthen chaplaincy and faith leadership, support young people in their spiritual journeys, and develop environments that inspire a deeper relationship with God and one another.

Congratulations to the following schools and their exciting projects:

St George's Cathedral Primary School, London

Award: £1,000

Project: Prayer Garden and Reflection Space

This grant will support the development of a dedicated prayer garden and reflection space, providing pupils with a peaceful environment for prayer, contemplation and spiritual growth.

St Gregory's Primary School, Margate

Award: £1,000

Project: Chapel

St Gregory's will use the funding to enhance its chapel provision, creating a welcoming and sacred space at the heart of school life where pupils can encounter Christ through prayer and worship.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Rotherhithe

Award: £1,000

Project: The Prayer Garden of Peace

The Prayer Garden of Peace will offer children a meaningful space for quiet reflection, prayer and reconciliation, fostering wellbeing and spiritual development throughout the school community.

St Columba's Catholic Boys' School, Bexleyheath

Award: £1,000

Project: St Columba's Raphaelites

Inspired by faith, creativity and service, the St Columba's Raphaelites project will provide opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of Catholic values while contributing positively to school and community life.

SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, Mitcham

Award: £1,000

Project: Flower Block Garden: Growing Together for Our Common Home

This imaginative project reflects Pope Francis' call to care for creation. Pupils will work together to develop a garden that promotes environmental stewardship, biodiversity and a growing appreciation of our responsibility for God's creation.

St Simon Stock Catholic School, Maidstone

Award: £1,500

Project: Play & Pray – A Youth Sports, Mentoring and Faith Formation Programme



Receiving the largest award in this round, St Simon Stock Catholic School will deliver an inspiring programme that combines sport, mentoring and faith formation, helping young people to grow in confidence, leadership and discipleship.

Richard Challoner Catholic Secondary School for Boys, New Malden

Award: £750

Project: Local Catholic Schools Chaplaincy Days

This grant will support chaplaincy days that bring together young people from local Catholic schools, strengthening faith, fostering fellowship and encouraging a shared commitment to living out the Gospel. Investing in Faith-Filled Futures.

Together, these projects represent a significant investment in the spiritual, personal and communal development of children and young people throughout our diocesan family. From prayer gardens and chapels to environmental initiatives, chaplaincy programmes and faith-based mentoring, each project reflects the creativity, commitment and vision of our schools.

We offer our warmest congratulations to all grant recipients and look forward to seeing the lasting impact these projects will have on pupils, staff, families and local communities. Through the generous support of the Archbishops' Appeal, our schools continue to nurture young people who are rooted in faith, inspired by hope and motivated to serve others.

Well done to all involved, and thank you for your commitment to building communities where faith can flourish.

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 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



Contracts & Compliance | Minimising Employment Risk

Employment contracts and employee handbooks are more than just administrative documents. They form the foundation of the employment relationship, helping employers set clear expectations, meet their legal obligations and protect their organisation when workplace issues arise.

Join WorkNest's webinar on the 30th September at 2.00 pm to learn how robust contracts and employee handbooks can help minimise employment risk, support compliance and give your organisation greater confidence when managing employees.

Register [here](#).

Avoiding 5 Common Absence Traps in Education

Managing employee absence has never been straightforward, but for schools and trusts, the challenge is becoming increasingly complex.

Join WorkNest's education employment law expert Jane Hallas on 24th September at 9.30 am as she brings these common challenges to life through five engaging fictional case studies, each revealing a different absence trap that can lead to unnecessary absence, operational disruption or legal risk if not recognised and managed effectively.

Register [here](#)

Preventing Harassment at Work: What Employers Need to Know

Workplace harassment continues to present a serious challenge for employers, with potential legal, financial and reputational consequences for organisations that fail to take appropriate action.

Employer responsibilities have increased significantly in recent years. The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 introduced a new proactive duty to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace from October 2024, while further changes under the Employment Rights Act 2025 are due to come into effect from this October.

Join WorkNest on the 24th September at 2.00 pm for an informative and practical session designed to help employers understand their responsibilities, identify potential areas of risk and take meaningful steps to prevent workplace harassment.

Register [here](#)



Life to the Full Update

The updated RSHE guidance becomes statutory in September 2026. As the guidance has been updated, much of it remains unchanged however there have been some adaptations and additions which will need to be reflected in school's curriculum design and teaching.

Ten:Ten have taken the opportunity to fully review the resources so that the additional content is seamlessly integrated, rather than added on the end. Not all content is available yet but there is an expectation that the resource will be fully updated and released by the end of August. Full details of changes are on the portal.

The full update can be read [here](#).

Rise Theatre - Treasure Within

Rise Theatre's 'Treasure Within' is a dynamic, all-day experience for the whole school (Rec-Year 6) that creatively brings the 7 principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to life through live theatre, music, classroom activities, and immersive workshops.

Subsidies towards the cost of the day and selected dates are available in September and October - get in touch to find out more!

Contact: admin@risetheatre.co.uk or www.risetheatre.co.uk for more information.

Bexley Oracy Network

The Bexley Oracy Network is the legacy programme of the Talk Matters Project, bringing together educators from across Bexley and beyond who are committed to strengthening oracy in their schools. Our shared vision is to ensure that every child has access to rich, purposeful opportunities to develop their spoken language and communication skills, essential foundations for learning, life and future success.

The network is open to all schools, including primary, secondary, all-through and special schools, both within and beyond the London Borough of Bexley. We already have over 30 member schools from Bexley, Kent and Greenwich, with growing interest from schools as far afield as Bristol and New York. By joining the network, schools become part of a collaborative community that shares best practice, engages with the latest research and works together to continually improve the quality of oracy education.

Futher details can be found [here](#).



LA Representatives - Vacancies

We require Catholic representatives from our community for the Archdiocese of Southwark to attend the **Kingston People Committee** and the **Richmond Education and Children's Services Committee**.

You would need to attend 3-5 meetings in person a year. Meetings can last between 1-3 hours on average and are on weekday evenings.

This role is voluntary.

You would also need to attend 3 virtual meetings a year with the Education Service. These are on Teams and the dates are:

10am on 21st October 2026

10am on 10th March 2027

10am on 23rd June 2027

These meetings are led by Yvonne Epale and attended by the reps for each local authority. You would need to feedback any education matters.

If this is something that may interest you please email Yvonne Epale yvonneepale@rcaos.org.uk

Recruitment

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

Deputy Headteacher, St Saviour's RC Primary School

Closing date: 15th September 2026.

Headteacher, St Anthony's Catholic Primary School Dulwich

Closing date: 25th September 2026

Events & Training

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

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.

Risk Management for Directors

Tuesday 22nd September 2026. 5.30pm-7pm

RSHE Updates

Thursday 24th September 2026. 4-5pm
Teams



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

CSI for Leaders

Thursday 1st October 2026. 4pm – 5.30pm

Teams

Catholic Life and Formation Day

Tuesday 6th October 2026. 9.30am-4pm

St David's Room, Amigo Hall, £25

Virtual Rosary for Schools with Archbishop John Wilson

Thursday 15th October 2026. 9.45am

Teams

Headteachers' Conference

Thursday 19th and Friday 20th November 2026.

Ashford International Hotel

News

Welcome Mass for St Thomas More Catholic Primary School and St Benedict Catholic Primary School



Staff at St Thomas More Catholic Primary School in Medway were delighted to celebrate a special Welcome Mass on Thursday 3rd September with the staff and governors of St Benedict's Primary School, marking the beginning of this new academic year.

[Continue reading](#)

Students at St John Bosco College Celebrate Superb GCSE Grades

St John Bosco College in Battersea is celebrating another outstanding year of GCSE results. Headteacher Paul Dunne commented, "We are immensely proud of our students and all they have achieved."

[Continue reading](#)



Feedback for The Well



As you may be aware, the Education Service have a learning platform called The Well. The platform has been in operation for approximately 18 months, and we would greatly value your feedback and insights on your experience using it.

THE WELL
Education Service Training – Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark

Home > All Courses

All Courses

Search courses...

Popular

An Introduction to Curriculum for Governors

by Colette Doran-Hannon
in Governance

5 Lessons 30 Students

Free

Continue Learning

Appointment of a Headteacher to a Catholic School or Academy

by Education Service
in Governance

22 Lessons 24 Students

Free

Continue Learning

Catholic Social Teaching in a Nutshell

by Sharon Docherty
in Catholic Life & Mission

9 Lessons 22 Students

Free

Enrol Now

Catholic Academy Trusts

by Education Service
in Governance

1 Lesson 19 Students

Free

Enrol Now

This QR code will take you to The Well.



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This QR code will take you to the feedback form. Feedback is anonymous.

