

Newsletter



In this Newsletter:

24th September 2026

[Directors Message](#)
[CES Model Informal Support](#)
[Academy Trust Handbook Updated](#)
[Catholic Social Teaching Open Afternoon](#)
[School Wellbeing Audit Tool](#)
[CSI Handbook Update](#)
[Headteachers' Conference Competition](#)
[WorkNest](#)
[Important Documents](#)
[NET Retreats – 2027](#)

[Rise Theatre - Treasure Within](#)
[Life to the Full Update](#)
[Bexley Oracy Network](#)
[Build & Conquer Financial Literacy](#)
[The National Conversation: Next Generation](#)
[Oscar Romero Award News Autumn 2026](#)
[LA Representatives - Vacancies](#)
[Recruitment](#)
[Events & Training](#)
[News](#)

Reflection

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As October begins, I want to thank you for the care, patience and dedication you have brought to the first weeks of the school year. By now, you are getting to know one another a bit more: their strengths, their worries, the friendships they are forming and the encouragement each one needs. Your work makes a lasting difference, often in ways you may not see right away.

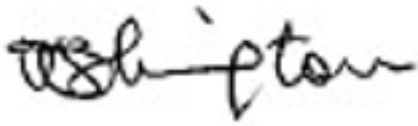
October is traditionally a month of devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary. Amid busy school days, may Mary's example of attentive listening help us pause, pray, and place our pupils and colleagues in God's hands. The month also brings us the Holy Guardian Angels on 2 October, Our Lady of the Rosary on 7 October, St John Henry Newman on 9 October, and Saints Simon and Jude on 28 October. Each reminds us, in a different way, that faith grows through trust, learning and service.

October is also Black History Month. The 2026 theme, "Honouring Our Communities," invites us to recognise people whose contributions sustain the places where we live and learn, including those whose work is too often overlooked. For schools, this is an opportunity to teach Black history with care and accuracy, to celebrate Black achievement, and to help every child see that their story and their gifts matter. It is also a time to listen, challenge prejudice, and strengthen the welcome we offer every family.

As the half-term break approaches, I hope you will find time to rest. Thank you for all you do, including the quiet acts of kindness that no newsletter can fully capture. May God bless you, your pupils and your school communities throughout October.

With every good wish and prayer.





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,

September and the start of a new academic year often brings many unknowns. The hope we may have had for a peaceful start to the year, will have materialised for some and not for others amongst us. The one thing we can be sure about in education is that we really do not know what is coming around the corner and preparing for all eventualities, is one of the crosses that the gift of Headship and Leadership brings. For those of you who have had a heavy cross to bear this term already, please know that the prayers of the Diocesan Education Service are with you and for you.

The Education Service Team makes it a priority to get in touch with all schools and are making visits to as many as possible. Our visits should be pastoral in nature; the operational running of our schools comes to the leadership of the schools: the strategy to the governance. We want our schools to be the best version of education there is to choose from. Where we can help you to achieve this, we will be delighted to do so. We are willing to be sounding boards, supportive and challenging; our role is not that of the inspectorate, and we will not give judgements on your schools on visits. This would not be just or fair. The Diocesan Education Service should inform, guide and support you, fully armed with information for your context to make decisions for your schools and colleges.

The Trust Relationship Officers will be in contact to arrange visits to the schools. We have prioritised the emails, sent out to those who are expecting Ofsted imminently from our records, as this will make the conversations with inspectors much easier. Having a copy of your SEF/SDP (or an abridged version) will also help with these interviews; we want to be on the same page as you, literally and figuratively!

We have had 6 Ofsted inspections this year, with three this week. Our expectation is that 59 inspections should be completed by the end of the academic year. The Memorandum of Understanding that Ofsted has with the Catholic church is that the Diocese should be partners in the inspection process, as a result, we speak to the inspectors and attend feedback. The TRO or designated DES officer will contact you once we have notification; sometimes we get these at 9.30 am at other times it is closer to lunchtime. Getting our heads around the new framework and the new language is something that we continue to work on and we ask that once the dust has settled after inspection, that leaders complete the DES questionnaire so that information and experience about inspections within our diocese can be shared for the benefit of all schools.

Catholic School Inspections begin again in October. If you are due for inspection this year or next, please take advantage of the free training opportunities for leaders and governors in your preparations. Your TRO or Leila, as CSI co-ordinator, are happy to help or signpost you to the best source of assistance. We are also looking for new inspectors for CSI, in particular in preparation for the many inspections we will have next year. If you are interested, please contact Leila for a no-pressure discussion (leilacoward@rcaos.org.uk). The commitment would be availability for three inspection dates per year plus training. This can be a considerable commitment, and so the support of your Local Governing Body/Committee is advisable.



The Well has plenty of training online for those who are new to Catholic leadership, it has been updated over the summer and allows delegates to work at their own pace for training. All of our training is free; please encourage staff and governors to book onto courses, but if for any reason they cannot attend please do let the team know. This can happen for all manner of reasons and we do understand that these things can happen.

Our visits to schools are ongoing even for those who are not in an inspection window. It is always good to be uplifted by the work that is ongoing in our schools hearing the passion with which our leaders speak about their schools. Thank you to those who have reached out and booked time. We really do appreciate it and know that there are always a million other things that could be taking your time other than a DES visit.

Our work on Governance continues as we try to ensure that school boards are quorate with foundation governors, we ask you to encourage any practising Catholic staff/parents you may have to consider taking on a governance role at a school, it can be greatly rewarding! Yvonne Epale runs Aspiring to Governance courses and is also willing to call interested candidates.

We look forward to seeing many of you at the Beginning of Year Mass this Friday, it is wonderful to see our Cathedral so full of Southwark leaders and students. Some colleagues have offered apologies as they will be attending the funeral Mass of our esteemed friend and colleague Stephen Beck. We will also remember him and his family as we pray at the Cathedral.



Colette Doran-Hannon
Diocesan Schools Commissioner
Archdiocese of Southwark

CES Model Informal Support and Capability Policy (England Only)

The CES have completed union consultation process for the CES Model Informal Support and Capability Policy and finalised the drafting of the model policy.

Please download the policy from the CES website when needed. <https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/resources/employment-policieschools>

If you have adopted the amended model appraisal and employee development policy, you should seek to adopt this version of the capability policy as soon as you are able to. If you are not able to do this, you will need to ensure that you have appropriate advice about any interaction between appraisal and capability if you are using an older version of the capability policy.

Academy Trust Handbook Updated

Please note that the ATH 2026 takes effect from 1 October 2026.

The DfE has made some additional changes to the ATH 26, to provide clarification for academy trusts



around the procurement requirements covering energy and Management Information System (MIS) contracts. The two further changes are:

- Energy – ‘comparable pricing’ has been replaced with ‘of equivalent value for money’. The DfE have developed guidance to support trusts in undertaking this action which includes example scenarios; this guidance is expected to be published imminently and will be available on the Get Help Buying for Schools website.
- MIS – clarification has been provided around what academy trusts are required to do in relation to MIS procurements, before the framework launches next year.

Further details can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-handbook>

Catholic Social Teaching Open Afternoon - St Fidelis

Catholic Social Teaching at St Fidelis



to be held on Thursday 15th October from 1:30 – 3:00pm
at St Fidelis Catholic Primary School, Bexley Road, Erith, Kent DA8 3HQ



The session will be presented by Thea Whalley, Religion Subject Leader 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 St Fidelis has incorporated Catholic Social Teaching into the daily life, curriculum and ethos of the school.

1:00 - 1:30pm	Tea and coffee on arrival
1:30 - 2:00pm	Thea will explain what our approach to Catholic Social Teaching 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 Catholic Social Teaching.
2:45 - 3:00pm	Question and answer session with Year 5 & 6 pupils about their understanding of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.
3:00 - 3:30pm	Question and answer session with the Executive Headteacher and Religion Subject Leader.

To reserve a place, contact Sam Rushbrook on 01322 337752 or admin@st-fidelis.bexley.sch.uk



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](#).

CSI Handbook Update for Headteachers

I would like to draw your attention to a number of updates contained within the latest Inspection Handbook September 2026 v5.0. Whilst many of the changes are procedural and primarily affect inspectors, there are several updates that schools should be aware of as they have implications for inspection practice.

Prayer and Liturgy

The most significant update for schools relates to Prayer and Liturgy, specifically descriptor CW 2.6. This descriptor has been revised to place greater emphasis on:

- how effectively staff help pupils to prepare well-constructed celebrations of Prayer and Liturgy;
- how staff facilitate pupils' engagement and participation;
- how pupils are formed to undertake appropriate liturgical ministries in accordance with the norms of the Church.

This amendment brings the current framework into closer alignment with the Prayer and Liturgy Directory (PLD). An important message arising from recent inspector training is that **pupil leadership of Prayer and Liturgy is not, in itself, a marker of quality or a requirement for an Outstanding judgement**. Inspectors will be looking beyond whether pupils simply lead prayer and will instead focus on the quality of formation provided by staff, the depth of participation and engagement, and the appropriateness of any liturgical ministries undertaken by pupils.

Schools may therefore wish to review their current provision and consider how they demonstrate the formation of pupils for meaningful participation in Prayer and Liturgy, rather than focusing solely on pupil leadership opportunities.

Religious Education Compliance in EYFS and Year 1

The handbook also provides additional clarification regarding curriculum compliance in EYFS and Year 1.

The bishops' requirement that Religious Education constitutes at least 10% of taught curriculum time formally applies from Year 1 onwards. Inspectors will continue to evaluate Religious Education provision in Nursery and Reception but will do so with appropriate regard for EYFS pedagogy, including child-initiated learning and continuous provision.



The guidance further confirms that where continuous provision extends into Year 1, inspectors will consider the totality of planned Religious Education provision and will not expect schools to artificially calculate every aspect of continuous provision as timetabled lesson time. Schools should, however, be able to demonstrate how their curriculum organisation secures pupils' entitlement to Religious Education.

Inspection Reports

There is also a small but noteworthy change to inspection reporting. Previously, inspectors were required to identify at least one key strength from each judgement area when completing the "What the school does well" section of the report. This is no longer the case. Key strengths will now reflect the overall balance of inspection findings and provide a more concise executive summary of the school's most significant strengths.

The update to Prayer and Liturgy is likely to be the most significant change for schools and may be of particular interest to those leading chaplaincy, Prayer and Liturgy, and Religious Education. Schools are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these updates as part of their ongoing CSI preparation and self-evaluation.

If you have any questions regarding these updates, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Leila Coward
CSI Co-ordinator

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](#).

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](#).

NET Retreats – 2027

We are delighted to welcome NET Scotland to the Archdiocese of Southwark from 11 January – 5 February 2027, offering secondary schools the opportunity to host an engaging and faith-filled retreat day.

Led by a trained team of ten young missionaries, NET retreats are designed for young people aged 11–18 and provide an opportunity to encounter Jesus in a meaningful and personal way. Each day is tailored to the age and needs of the pupils and includes engaging presentations, personal testimonies, small-group discussions and prayer.

Retreats can accommodate up to 80 young people per day and the cost for the day is £700.

Dates: 11 January – 5 February 2027

Ages: 11–18

Available to secondary schools across the Archdiocese

To find out more or to book an available date, contact: youth@rcaos.org.uk

Spaces are limited, so early booking is recommended.

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.



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](#).

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.

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

Build & Conquer Financial Literacy

As the Government's stronger focus on financial literacy begins to translate into new curriculum expectations, Build & Conquer Financial Literacy is helping schools turn policy into meaningful practice and improve young people's future life outcomes.

Build & Conquer offer a fully resourced programme providing everything teachers need to deliver progressive financial education from EYFS through to post-16, including detailed schemes of work, ready-to-teach lessons, terminology sheets, teacher subject knowledge and guidance for identifying and tackling common financial misconceptions and baseline assessments to track pupil progression.

Additional lesson scaffolding, extension activities, continuing staff professional development and implementation support reduce planning demands while building teachers' confidence and consistency.

To book a demonstration and explore how the programme could support your school, please contact support@buildconquer.com.



The National Conversation: Next Generation

The National Conversation
Next Generation
YOUNG PEOPLE.
STRONGER COMMUNITIES.
BRIGHTER TOMORROWS.

Help young people have their say
A kinder, more connected UK starts with their ideas.

1 Download the resources
A free, ready-to-use toolkit for schools and youth settings.

2 Hold the conversation
In lessons, tutor time, school council, clubs, assemblies or other youth voice activities.

3 Upload your feedback
All submissions must be received by
23 October

National Conversation Week
5 - 9 October
A shared week for schools and youth settings across the UK to run their conversations. Sessions can be held at any point before then.

DIFFERENT VOICES
BIGGER UNDERSTANDING
STRONGER COMMUNITIES
BRIGHTER FUTURES

See the accompanying email for links and further information.

Supported by
Culham St Gabriel's
EXCELLENCE IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Next Generation, an opportunity for children and young people aged 16 and under to have their say on the country they want to see and how we can live well together.

Schools and youth settings can take part using a free, ready-to-use toolkit, with flexible activities that can be used in lessons, tutor time, school councils, clubs or assemblies.

National Conversation Week takes place from 5–9 October, although conversations can be held at any point before the submission deadline. All feedback should be submitted by 23 October 2026. To contribute to the work of the Independent Commission on Community and Cohesion, See links below.

Download the toolkit and resources: www.thenationalconversation.org.uk/young-people/

Hold your conversation with children and young people.

Submit their feedback by 23 October: www.thenationalconversation.org.uk/conversation-feedback-young-people/

Oscar Romero Award News Autumn 2026

The Oscar Romero Award ([Resources | Oscar Romero Award](#)) has launched a new set of SEND and Inclusion resources to help schools make Catholic Social Teaching accessible and meaningful for a wider range of learners. Covering all nine CST principles, the resources are designed particularly with pupils with SEND in mind, while offering flexible ideas that can be used across primary and secondary settings.

The resources can be used flexibly in RE, Catholic Life and Mission, prayer and liturgy, class or tutor time small-group or 1:1 work, or as part of a school's wider Oscar Romero Award journey. Above all, they aim to help ensure that every pupil can participate, understand and respond to Catholic Social Teaching — and discover ways to put faith into action.

The Oscar Romero Award Newsletter can be viewed [here](#).



LA Representatives - Vacancies

We require Catholic representatives from our community for the Archdiocese of Southwark to attend 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

Headteacher, St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

Dulwich

Closing date: 25 September 2026

Student Services Administrative Assistant, Ursuline

High School

Wimbledon

Closing date: 30 September 2026

School Business Manager, St James' RC Primary

School

Petts Wood

Closing date: 5 October 2026

Deputy Headteacher, Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Bromley

Closing Date: 13 October 2026

Chief Executive Officer, St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 23 October 2026

Events & Training

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

Autumn 2026

Beginning of Year Mass

Friday 25 September 2026. 11am.

St George's Cathedral

Induction for New Foundation Directors, Governors and Clerks

Tuesday 29 September 2026. 5.30-7pm

Teams

PG 10



CSI for Leaders

Thursday 1 October 2026. 4pm – 5.30pm
Teams

Catholic Life and Formation Day

Tuesday 6 October 2026. 9.30am-4pm
St David's Room, Amigo Hall, £25

Increasing Admissions – Primary Marketing Workshop

Wednesday 7 October 2026. 4-5.30pm
Teams

Admissions for Governors

Thursday 8 October 2026. 5.30-7pm
Teams

Equality and Inclusion in Education
Monday 12 October 2026. 4-5.30pm
Teams

New to Leading Religious Education in Primary

Schools

Tuesday 13 October 2026. 9.30am-4pm.
Education Service, BR5 2SR

Virtual Rosary for Schools with Archbishop John Wilson

Thursday 15 October 2026. 9.45am
Teams

Senior Leaders' Briefings

21 October 2026 8-8.30am
Teams

Headteachers' Conference

Thursday 19 and Friday 20th November 2026.
Ashford International Hotel

News

Mr Paul Robinson From St Fidelis, Erith – Winner of Classic FM's Award for Primary School Music Teacher of the Year



St Fidelis Catholic Primary School in Erith recently received exciting news: Mr Robinson, the school's specialist Music teacher, has been awarded Primary School Music Teacher of the Year by Classic FM.

[Continue reading](#)

New Reception Class at St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School

The Reception children at St. Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery in Ramsgate are already in school full time from Monday 7th September, after just two half days, and they have settled in incredibly well!

[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.



**Education
Service**
ARCHDIOCESE of SOUTHWARK



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

