

The Maxmilian



Education
Service
ARCHDIOCESE of SOUTHWARK

A monthly newsletter for governors within the
Archdiocese of Southwark

September 2026

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

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>

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](#).

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

Prevent Programme Factsheet - August 2026 - Home Office

The Home Office published an updated Prevent factsheet in August, setting out how the programme works and what the current referral picture looks like. It confirms the national threat level remains SEVERE, and it flags that a significant proportion of referrals now involve no clearly defined ideology.

For more information: <https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2026/08/06/prevent-programme-factsheet-2026/>

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

Student Services Administrative Assistant, Ursuline High School

Closing date: 30th September 2026

School Business Manager, St James' RC Primary School

Closing date: 5th October 2026

Maths Teacher, St Ursula's School

Closing date: 8th October 2026

Teacher of Computer Science, St Ursula's School

Closing date: 8th October 2026

Deputy Headteacher, Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Closing Date: 13th October 2026

Class Teacher, St Mary's Catholic Federation

Closing date: 15th October 2026

Chief Executive Officer, St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 23rd October 2026

KS1/KS2 Full Time Teacher, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Closing date: 23rd October 2026

Events & Training

Details for our upcoming courses and events for this academic year are available on our website.
<https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/governor-cpd/>

Admissions for Governors

Thursday 8th October 2026. 5.30-7pm

Teams

Saint Days in October

Date	Saint
4th October	On the feast of the Birth of St Francis of Assisi, we send prayers and best wishes to all at St Francis Catholic Primary School (Maidstone) and St Francis Catholic Primary School (Peckham)
7th October	On the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, we send prayers and best wishes to all at Our Lady of the Rosary Primary (Blackfen) and Our Lady of Victories Catholic Primary School (Putney)
13th October	On the feast of St Edward the Confessor, we send prayers and best wishes to all at St Edward's Catholic Primary School (Sheppey)
15th October	On the feast of St Teresa of Avila, we send prayers and best wishes to all at St Teresa's Catholic Primary School (Ashford) and St Teresa's Catholic Primary School (Morden)
26th October	On the feast of St Chad, we send prayers and best wishes to all at St Chad's Catholic Primary School (Norwood, South)