

Newsletter



8th October 2026

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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.

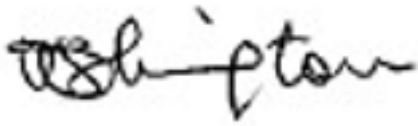
October is traditionally a month of devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary. Amid busy school days, may Mary's example of attentive listening help us pause, pray, and place our pupils and colleagues in God's hands. The month also brings us the Holy Guardian Angels on 2 October, Our Lady of the Rosary on 7 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,

As we move more deeply into the new academic year, October offers us a valuable opportunity to pause, reflect, and recommit ourselves to the shared mission of Catholic education. Across our schools, pupils and staff have returned with renewed energy and purpose, bringing life to our communities through learning, service, prayer, and witness. Some schools have experienced deep tragedy, it is in those times that we often see the best of our Catholic community, with our faith couching our grief. We keep all of the communities in our prayers.

October is traditionally the month of the Holy Rosary and a time when we turn in a special way to Our Blessed Lady. Mary reminds us of the importance of listening attentively to God's call and responding with courage and faith. Her example invites us to reflect on how we continue to nurture the God-given dignity, gifts, and potential of every child entrusted to our care.

This year, we have a diocesan focus on faith, formation and leadership, which continues to guide our work. I was fortunate enough just this week to talk to chaplains and those with responsibility for Catholic Life and Mission in our Trusts, Catholic schools are places where young people and staff come not only to achieve academically but also to grow in wisdom, compassion, character, and holiness. Formation is at the heart of everything we do. It is an intentional and lifelong process that helps each person discover who God calls them to be and equips them to serve others with generosity and hope.

We especially mark Black History Month, harvest festivals and the many opportunities for community outreach that October brings, let us continue to strengthen our commitment to the common good. May we be communities that welcome, include, and inspire, ensuring that every child knows they are loved by God and valued within our schools. May we glory in our diversity, be grateful that we are not all the same and that what we can learn from the past should help us shape a more powerful future.

We are blessed to witness extraordinary examples of our mission every day. In classrooms, playgrounds, chaplaincy teams, parish partnerships, and charitable initiatives, our pupils are learning what it means to live the Gospel in practical ways. Their commitment to prayer, service, and care for one another provides a powerful reminder of the transformative impact of Catholic education. Already this year we have had shared with us the fundraising efforts of schools for charity, it is important not only to do this, but that our young people can articulate why, our contribution to our local, national and global neighbours should remind us that we are all one in God's family.

As Saint Paul encourages us:

"Live a life worthy of the calling you have received."

Ephesians 4:1



Thank you for your unwavering dedication, professionalism, and faith-filled leadership. Your commitment ensures that our schools remain places where excellence and Gospel values flourish together.

Thank you to you all who have responded to the Trust Relationship Officers and welcomed them and me into your schools and Trusts. The relational dimension of our work is one that we hold close. We believe in forming strong relationships with our school leaders and governors that we will be much better off as an educational community in Christ.

I hope that you have placed a holder in your diary for the Headteacher's Conference in Ashford, the theme is All That I Am: Vulnerable Leadership and Our Call to Witness. We are back to our Thursday and Friday event and we have packed in as much as we can so that there is something for everyone with responsibility for Catholic Life and Mission and School Leadership. Bookings are open by clicking [here](#).

May God bless you, your families, and all those whom you serve.



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



SEND and Inclusion Training Courses and Materials

The first sets of SEND and inclusion training courses and materials for early years settings, mainstream schools and post-16 settings are [now live](#).

Developed by Ambition Institute, the new in-house training materials are designed to support settings to develop a shared understanding of inclusion and can be adapted for local professional development activities. The materials are intended to support leaders, teachers and support staff, including teaching assistants, to unite around a shared understanding of inclusion and agree approaches that help learners to belong, achieve and thrive.

The first set of materials includes:

- introductory content on SEND reform and inclusive teaching;
- an introduction to the proposed Areas of Development;
- speech, language and communication development materials; and
- facilitator guidance and supporting resources.

Online training package for early years educators

Dingley's Promise Early Years SEND Training: [Early Years CPD Training - Dingley's Promise](#)

In House Training materials for schools and post-16 settings

- Schools: [SEND and Inclusion Training for Mainstream Schools](#)
- Post-16 settings: [SEND and Inclusion Training for Post-16 Settings](#)

This publication marks the first stage of a wider SEND professional development offer. Further in-house materials will be published during this academic year, with new free SEND training for teachers, leaders, teaching assistants and FE support staff planned from autumn 2027.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults

This course invites non-Catholic staff in Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Southwark to join a bespoke Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) programme, where they are supported within school to be received into the Church. For full details of the programme, [click here](#).

If you are interested in joining our next programme, please contact nicola.adams@ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk at The Avila Partnership by **Friday 30th October 2026**.

NPQ Leading Teaching

The Avila Partnership is delighted to be delivering the NPQ in Leading Teaching, a 12-month course for those with responsibilities for leading teaching in a subject, year group, key stage or phase. Limited funded places are still available for those schools with a high proportion of PP50 students. The deadline for applications is Friday, 16th October.

For further information and an application form, [click here](#).



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

Discover SBCAT Through DfE RISE Fortnight

Thursday 5th November 2026

St Benedict Catholic Academy Trust is delighted to invite education professionals to join us for a day of shared practice, collaboration and school improvement.

The day will include:

9.30am–11.30am, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School: Phonics, Oracy and Maths

12pm–12.45pm, St Michael's Catholic College: School Improvement Session with Giles Osborne, Director of School Improvement

1pm–3pm, St Michael's Catholic College: Driving and sustaining above-national attendance

Join us for the full day to visit our schools, meet our team and discover our collaborative approach to school improvement.

To book the full day, please email s.stone@sbcats.co.uk.

Individual RISE sessions can also be booked separately using the existing registration links.

St Joseph's Morning Session. Click [here](#).

St Michael's Afternoon Session. Click [here](#).

Probation Periods for Employers: Live Q&A | 70 Days to Go

The countdown is on. From 1 January 2027, employees will qualify for ordinary unfair dismissal protection after six months' service instead of two years.

That change puts probation processes firmly in the spotlight. Should six months become your standard probation period? Can you extend probation when someone has been absent or you need longer to assess them? What happens if you miss the six-month point? And are your current review processes robust enough for the changes ahead?

With just 70 days to go, join WorkNest's Employment Law and HR experts on the 22nd October at 2.00 pm for a live, interactive Q&A dedicated to probation periods and the upcoming changes to unfair dismissal rights.

[Register here.](#)

Primary Advent Service

Would your school like to perform at this year's Primary Advent Service?

We have a few spaces left for various parts of the advent service. 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 Wednesday 21st 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 **16th October 2026**



The National Conversation: Next Generation

The National Conversation Next Generation

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 teachers and young people
- 2 Hold the conversation**
In lessons, tutor time, school council, clubs, assemblies or other suitable opportunities
- 3 Upload your feedback**
All submissions must be received by **23 October**

National Conversation Week 5 - 9 October

A national week for schools and youth settings across the UK for the conversation. Debates can be held on any topic across this time.

DIFFERENT VOICES
DEEPER UNDERSTANDING
STRONGER COMMUNITIES
BRIGHTER FUTURES

See the accompanying email for links and further information.

The National Conversation

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

Maths Teacher, St Ursula's School

Closing date: 8th October 2026

Closing date: 13th October 2026

Teacher of Computer Science, St Ursula's School

Closing date: 8th October 2026

Teacher of Art, St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls

Closing date: 13th October 2026

Class Teacher, St Mary's Catholic Federation Carshalton

Closing date: 15th October 2026

Chief Executive Officer, St Oscar Romero Catholic Academy Trust

Closing date: 23rd October 2026

Deputy Headteacher, Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Bromley

Closing Date: 13 October 2026

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

Closing date: 23rd October 2026

Pastoral Assistant Headteacher and DDSL, St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls

Head of Year, St Catherine's Catholic School for Girls

Closing date: 2nd November 2026

Events & Training

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

Autumn 2026

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

Learn More About the Rights Respecting Schools Award and Embedding a Rights-Based Approach in Your School

Tuesday 3rd November 2026. 4-5.30pm
Teams

Directors Keeping in Touch (KIT)

Wednesday 4th November 2026. 8-8.30am
Teams

Primary RE Leaders Meeting

Tuesday 10th November 2026. 4-5.30pm
Teams

Governors Gatherings

Thursday 12th November 2026. 4pm-5pm
Teams

New to Leading Religious Education in Secondary Schools

Thursday 12th November 2026. 9.30am-4pm
Cowderoy Room, SE1 6HR

Headteachers' Conference

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

News

St Augustine's Celebrates St Francis of Assisi's Feast Day



Reception class at St Augustine's Catholic Primary School in Tunbridge Wells celebrated the Feast Day of St Francis of Assisi (4th October) by learning about his love for God's creation and the importance of caring for the world around us.

[Continue reading](#)

Challoner Community Urged to Focus on Their 'Calling'

Over thirteen hundred people filled the stunning interior of St George's Cathedral last week as the Richard Challoner School community celebrated its annual Challoner Day Mass. Bringing together students, staff, parents and friends for a highly emotive and celebratory service, this year's exceptionally high turnout highlighted the enduring strength of the school community. The milestone event also celebrated fourteen years of hosting this beautiful tradition within St George's Cathedral.

[Continue reading](#)

