

Newsletter



15th January 2025

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Reflection from Canon Victor Darlington, Episcopal Vicar for Education

Beloved Friends, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

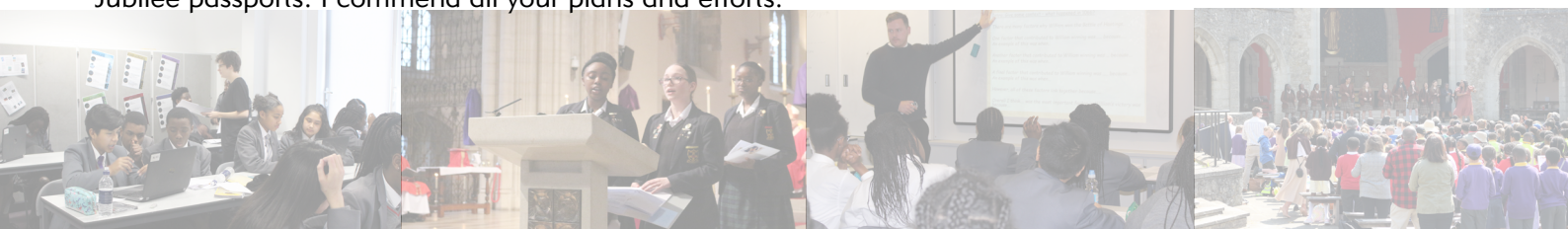
Happy New Year, and welcome back to school after a well-deserved rest during the Christmas holidays. This year is particularly special for us as Catholics because it is a Jubilee Holy Year.

In the Catholic Church, a Jubilee or Holy Year is a time of forgiveness and reconciliation, inviting people to renew their relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. The word "jubilee" is derived from the Hebrew word *jobel*, meaning "ram's horn," as it was this very horn that was used as a trumpet to announce the beginning of the Jubilee Year. A Jubilee Year is celebrated by the Church every 25 years, a tradition established in 1470 when Pope Paul II changed the interval from every 50 years. On Christmas Eve 2024, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica, officially inaugurating the 2025 Jubilee of Hope.

In his Pastoral Letter on the Solemnity of the Holy Family 2024, marking the Opening of the Jubilee Year of Hope, Archbishop John Wilson said:

"Today's Feast of the Holy Family marks the opening of the Jubilee Year in our Archdiocese and across the Catholic Church worldwide. Its theme is 'Pilgrims of Hope.'... In this Jubilee Year, I ask everyone in our Archdiocese to renew our commitment to building a culture of welcome and belonging within our parishes and schools. Let us seek out those on the margins — people who experience isolation, poverty, and despair. Let us be a Church where all feel at home, where the wounded find mercy, where the weary encounter rest, and where we all journey together in faith, hope and love."

I am aware that each school in our Archdiocese has its own unique plans to celebrate the Jubilee. Some of you are organising retreats and pilgrimages to holy sites, while others will be collecting Jubilee stamps in their Jubilee passports. I commend all your plans and efforts.



I would like to encourage everyone this year to embrace the Jubilee as a time for healing and reconciliation. It is an opportunity to mend long-standing quarrels, to reach out to forgotten friends or relatives, and to replace suspicion with trust. During this sacred year, we are called to reflect on our relationships, to let go of grudges, and to extend forgiveness to those who may have wronged us. It is also a time to evaluate how we interact with others, whether in our workplaces or families, ensuring that our expectations and requests reflect fairness, kindness, and understanding. In the spirit of the Jubilee, let us also focus on freeing others from burdens we may unknowingly impose, sharing joy, expressing gratitude, and welcoming the stranger into our lives and hearts.

I reassure you all of my prayers for this Jubilee Year, and I pray that we will truly journey through this time as Pilgrims of Hope, with a renewed assurance that God is always with us, even amidst the ups and downs of daily life.

Canon Victor Darlington
Episcopal Vicar for the Southeast Area,
Commissions for Promoting Racial and Cultural Inclusion,
Education and Director of Caritas, Archdiocese of Southwark

Word on Fire Bible Conference

The forthcoming Bible conference in London next month, organised by Word on Fire, an organisation founded by the Rt. Rev. Robert Barron, Bishop of Winona-Rochester in the United States.

Evangelisation & Culture: The Bible takes place 21-22 February 2025, at the Excel Centre in London, with speakers including Bishop Barron, N.T. Wright, Professor Tracey Rowland, among others.

Find out more: <https://events.wordonfire.org/the-bible-event>

Aspiring Leaders- New to leadership

Over the spring and summer term, I will be running another leadership course, this one is aimed at those new to leadership. This will support leaders to understand how to be an effective leader, including how to write an action plan, carry out, and give feedback for, monitoring, analysing data and leading CPD sessions. It would be ideal for middle leaders or anyone in a shadowing role. There will be seven twilight sessions at the St Edwards House (Education Service office) from 3:30 to 5:30pm. I know it is hard to release teaching staff which is why I have made it afterschool, but leaders may need to leave a little earlier than the end of the school day to arrive on time and I would really support your support with this. I would really appreciate it if heads could identify delegates and then book on the [aspiring leaders page](#).

The Well - Learning Platform

To support governors and school leaders, we aim to keep you up to date with relevant information via The Well (learning platform).

If you can think of anything else that would be useful to include or any courses you would like us to offer, please let me know and I will do what I can. Emails can be sent to samgower@rcaos.org.uk.



Admissions Clarification

You may recall that in the last newsletter we gave an update of the diocesan position regarding admissions and the Certificate of Catholic Practice.

We would like to offer further clarification on this matter.

As set out in the newsletter, the Certificate of Catholic Practice should only be on the school's website so as to make those applying aware of the document, as it is part of the admission arrangements. This is a certificate signed and stamped by the priest and should reside with them. This document should not be downloaded from the school's website and taken to the priest for signing.

- Those wishing to apply to a school that have chosen to adopt the CoP, as part of their admission arrangements, will need to collect the certificate from their parish priest or an appropriate representative of the parish.
- This original, signed and stamped certificate, can then be presented to any school where an application is made.
- The school will retain a photocopy and hand back the original.

Work will continue to be undertaken to ensure that all members of the clergy are fully cognisant of the process and their responsibilities. We will be engaging with our priests to ensure that the most effective means are used to ensure that those wishing to apply are able to access the certificate

Headteacher Induction

Just a reminder, the next Headteacher Induction session is next Tuesday, 21st January at St Edward's House (the Education Service Offices) from 9:30 to 11:30. I am looking forward to seeing you all as it has been a while since our last session. We will be looking at HR policy and practice so I think you will find it both interesting and beneficial. So we can keep a record of who is attending out courses, please can you book this session via our [Headteacher induction page](#).

Update on RE Scheme of Work

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered to look at the options for a RE Scheme of Work with me. These sessions will be taking place over the next month; an email has been sent to Heads or Heads of RE to confirm dates for attendance. As part of this work, we will create an evaluation document for the Archbishop, so he can make an informed choice about which one we will adopt. I will give more information about this once I have it.

Ten Ten Resources Response to the Voice of the Family Report

Please see Ten Ten Resources response to the Voice in the Family report here: [Statement from Ten Ten Resources – Ten Ten Resources](#). On Tuesday 21 January 2025 at 3.30pm Ten Ten Resources are hosting a live Zoom Q&A for teachers, priests and governors.



This is an opportunity to ask questions of the Ten Ten team regarding this report. If you are unable to attend but would like access to the discussion, please sign up using the link below and we will send you a link to the recording.

[Discussion – Ten Ten Resources](#)

School Early Years and Childcare Provision

As the government moves toward extending the child care provision for parents. We are keen to know which of our schools has a nursery or pre-school provision, either run by a PVI or school staff and which of our schools has before and after school child care arrangements already set up. We would ask that schools complete the form (link below), to give us an overview so that when schools come to Diocesan Property Team for a change in use, we have the overview of the local area provision already in our Catholic school sites.

Should your school not provide these services already please indicate if you signpost families to other providers.

Please complete this form by the 31st January 2025: <https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/school-provision/>

Save the Date!

The Headteachers' Conference 2025 has been booked for 20th and 21st November 2025. Please hold this date in your diary.

Upcoming School Grants

[Kellogg's Breakfast Club Grants](#)

£1,000 grant - Priority for schools with over 40% of pupil premium eligibility - No deadline

[Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust](#)

£100 - £100,000 - Project schemes directed towards capital expenditure - No deadline

[Foyle School Library Scheme](#)

Up to £10,000 - Grant to help buy books, e-readers, library software, IT equipment and furniture - No deadline

Invite your MP to Visit your School

The CES have produced a new online template for schools to invite their local Member of Parliament for a visit. A school visit is a great way to demonstrate to an MP the achievements of Catholic education, and for the MP to become more involved in supporting education within their constituency.

The template is available online here: Invite your MP to visit your school - [Catholic Bishops' Conference](#)



Sharing content from the CES website

It has been brought to our attention that some schools have uploaded to their own websites previously downloaded versions of old resources from the CES website. We would strongly suggest that if a diocese or a school wishes to promote items from any external website (including the CES) that they do so through a link.

We regularly update items on our website and remove other items when they are out of date. By sharing resources through a link rather than a static upload, the accuracy and ownership of the material is more guaranteed. This is particularly important in relation to copyright and intellectual property.

Ofsted Pilot Schools Spring 2025

The CES have asked for Catholic schools to be included in the pilot for the new Ofsted framework. If you are interested please do let us know.

Ofsted will be consulting on their new framework early in the new year. As part of this process, they will be seeking to test the framework through pilot school inspections. We raised with Ofsted the importance of including some Catholic schools in the piloting process, and they have asked us to invite schools volunteer to be included. If you are interested in being part of the pilot please let your Trust Relationship Officer, (Sam, Daniel or Colette) know that you wish to be included. Volunteers are not guaranteed to be included in the pilot process, but it is important that Catholic education is not overlooked by the inspectorate when they are making critical decision about the future of accountability. We appreciate this request is landing at a busy and stressful time of year, but we do need to know as soon as possible so we can share the list of volunteers with Ofsted before the launch of the consultation in mid-January.

Any piloting of the framework would not occur until after the consultation has concluded (which would be in mid-April 2025 if the timescales remain as currently planned). Any involvement in the pilot would not replace an inspection and would have no 'real world' consequences; it would simply be testing out the new framework, on Ofsted's behalf, before publication.

Please communicate your willingness to be involved by the end of the first working week in January (10 January). Earlier responses are welcome, if possible.

Samgower@rcaos.org.uk (SW) danielcoleman@rcaos.org.uk (SE) colettedoranhannon@rcaos.org.uk (Kent and Medway)



Recruitment

Vacancies can be viewed in full here: <https://www.rcaoseducation.org.uk/recruitment/>

Deputy Headteacher, St Anne's Catholic Primary School

London

Closing date: 24th January 2025

Headteacher, St Aidan's Catholic Primary School

Coulsdon, Croydon

Closing date: 27th January 2025

Headteacher, St Anselm's Catholic Primary School

London

Closing date: 26th January 2025

Events & Training

CSED Writing

Thursday 16th January 2025. 10am-12pm
Education Service, St Edward's house, St Pauls
Wood Hill, Orpington, BR5 2SR

[Book](#)

Recruitment Process and Selection of Senior Leaders for Governors

Thursday 23rd January 2025. 5.30-7pm.

Zoom

[Book](#)

Diocesan Chaplains Day

Tuesday 4th February 2025. 9.30am-4pm
£40. Amigo hall, Lambeth Road, SE1 6HR.

[Book](#)

Handling Complaints for Governors

Wednesday 5th February 2025. 5.30-7pm

Zoom

[Book](#)

Religious Education Conference

Thursday 13th February 2025 & Friday 14th
February 2025. The Kairos Centre, Mount Angelus
Rd, Roehampton, SW15 4JA

[Book](#)

Buildings Termly Update

Tuesday 25th February 2025. 2pm-3pm.

Zoom

[Book](#)

Effective Support and Challenge for Governors

Tuesday 4th March 2025. 5.30pm-7pm

Zoom

[Book](#)

Prayer and Liturgy – Part 2

Multiple dates & venues

[Book](#)

Diocesan Chaplaincy Day

It is with great pleasure that this year's Chaplaincy Diocesan day's guest speakers are **Tom Baptist** and **Greg Finn**. Tom previously delivered an amazing session on 'Digital Chaplaincy' and explored the use of social media and tech to support Chaplaincy in schools. This year he will be 'breaking open prayer and liturgy' to explore the breadth and depth of prayer and liturgy within our schools in line with the CSI expectations. We welcome all Chaplaincy, Chaplaincy supports staff and Catholic life and mission to hear this inspirational speaker. Gregg Finn will be demonstrating the celebration of the word throughout the day, and support us in our outreach to young people.



St Fidelis Catholic Primary School Homeless Sleepover

It was a busy December at St Fidelis Catholic Primary School in Erith, Kent. 62 children from Years 5 and 6 attended a Homeless Sleepover where they learnt about homelessness and gave up their bed for the night, sleeping in the school hall.

[Continue reading](#)



Hope Week at Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Sixth Form College



As we lit the first candle of the Advent wreath, the candle of hope, the community of Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Sixth Form College observed Hope Week, in preparation for being Pilgrims of Hope during the Jubilee Year.

[Continue reading.](#)

