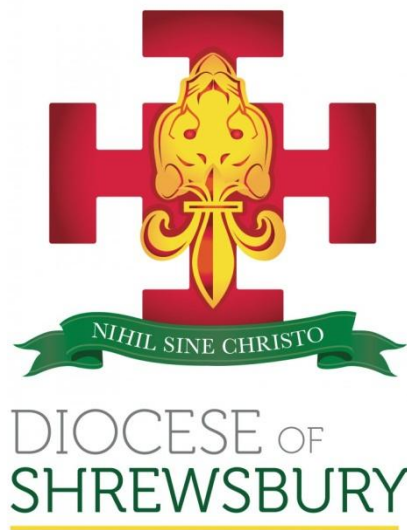


Diocese of Shrewsbury
Department of Education



NEWSLETTER

Autumn Term 2025 No.2



DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2025 No 2

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Pilgrimage of the Jubilee Icons of the Visitation	5
3. The Year of Jubilee – Creative Competition for Schools	5
4. To Love You More Dearly – The Prayer & Liturgy Directory	6
5. To Know You More Clearly – The Religious Education Directory	7
6. Appointment and changes of Headteacher	7
7. Season of Remembrance	8
8. Day of Renewal	8
9. Caritas at Christmas Appeal 2025	8
10. Safeguarding Alert – Children’s Books	9
11. DfE Updates	9
12. Pupil Numbers in Primary Schools	10
13. Diocesan Protocols 2025	11
14. School & Academy Property Guidance	11
15. Governor Information Returns	11
16. Governor Appointments	12
17. Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum	12
18. Admissions	13
19. Ofsted Updates	14
20. New Diocesan Website	14
21. Senior Appointments	15
22. Key Dates this half term including CCRS	16

1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Colleagues

As always, thank you all who were able to join together to celebrate Mass to mark the start of the 2025-26 academic year at St Joseph's in Upton, St Hugh's in Timperley and St Alban's in Macclesfield.

Since our last newsletter, Pope Leo has written and shared his Apostolic Exhortation [*Delexite*](#) – 'I have loved you'. Underpinned by Scripture, Catholic social teaching, and the teaching of his predecessors, *Dilexi te* focuses on the Church's love for the poor and God's special concern for those living in poverty. Bishop Mark has stated "it is a beautiful Christo-centric reflection on love for the poorest, including the new forms of poverty in our world. The letter which takes up Pope Francis's teaching will surely stand together with Pope Benedict's Encyclical Letter "Deus Caritas Est" (2005) as the charter for our work and witness in caritas."

For our work as educators, Pope Leo's words offer us renewed faith and commitment to Catholic social teaching as we serve those within our schools and communities:

'For the Christian faith, the education of the poor is not a favour but a duty. Children have a right to knowledge as a fundamental requirement for the recognition of human dignity. Teaching them affirms their value, giving them the tools to transform their reality. Christian tradition considers knowledge a gift from God and a community responsibility. Christian education does not only form professionals, but also people open to goodness, beauty and truth. Catholic schools, therefore, when they are faithful to their name, are places of inclusion, integral formation and human development. By combining faith and culture, they sow the seeds of the future, honour the image of God and build a better society.'

During the Mass on the Solemnity of All Saints, Pope Leo also proclaimed Saint John Henry Newman a Doctor of the Church, presenting him as a master of "theory and practice of education", who invites us to offer the 'Kindly Light' of faith in Providence. Addressing the thousands of faithful—especially students and educators—gathered in Saint Peter's Square, the Pope invited educators and students alike, "to ensure that schools, universities and every educational context, even those that are informal or street-based, are always gateways to a civilization of dialogue and peace. Pope Leo declared:

'Let us not forget that at the heart of the educational journey we do not find abstract individuals but real people, especially those who seem to be underperforming according to the parameters of economies that exclude or even kill them. We are called to form people, so that they may shine like stars in their full dignity.'

As we journey through the season of remembrance towards the season of Advent, I hope we are all able to mark the start to our Church's year with a renewed spirit of anticipation, joy and celebration for all we do in our schools.

With every good wish and blessing for the remainder of the term.

Richard

2. PILGRIMAGE OF THE JUBILEE ICONS OF THE VISITATION

For information	✓
For action	



Our icons continue their pilgrimage around the Diocese this half term. A reminder for schools yet to receive the icon, full instructions concerning the practicalities of this venture are given in the electronic [booklet](#) This is also available on our [website](#).

The recording of the address from Bishop Mark presenting the icon to schools can be downloaded here. [Bishop Mark - Address](#) Please note that the link will expire on the 19th of December.

NB: any changes to the schedule must be shared with Maggie so she can update the master list.

3. THE YEAR OF JUBILEE – CREATIVE COMPETITION FOR SCHOOLS

For information	✓
For action	

Many thanks to those who sent in entries for our competition exploring creative ways to answer the question:

What does it mean to me to be a Pilgrim of Hope?

It was a great pleasure to see the different ways schools and individuals approached this question and the winners are as follows:

Primary

1 st	Shrewsbury Cathedral School	Collage
2 nd	Our Lady Star of the Sea	Dance
3 rd	Year 3, St Joseph's, Birkenhead	Banner

The following schools were highly commended by the judges for their entries: Sacred Heart, Baguley; Sacred Heart, Moreton; St Joseph's, Upton.

Secondary

1 st	Y10 Boys, St Ambrose College	Drama
2 nd	Sienna T, All Saints College	Dance
3 rd	Abigail P, All Saints College	Art

All schools named above will receive certificates and the winners will receive prizes. These will be distributed by schools' officers over the coming weeks.

Look out for the winning entries on our website.

4. TO LOVE YOU MORE DEARLY – THE PRAYER AND LITURGY DIRECTORY

For information	✓
For action	✓

As we enter our second year of CPDF for schools it is important to highlight some of the key messages from the training:

- We are all on a journey to love God more dearly each day. Formation is offered to support schools on that journey
- Schools are Eucharistic communities. The great prayer that is the Eucharist is the beating heart of the Christian life, and of our Catholic schools. Here the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ in the offering of himself to the Father in love (See CPDF S1 2025-26)
- All prayer and liturgical life of the school is ultimately directed towards the Eucharist, even if the actual celebration of the Eucharist is something that the school is only rarely able to offer its pupils (See CPDF S1 2025-26)
- A balance has to be struck in all schools between fidelity and openness. Fidelity to the tradition that gives the school its mission, balanced with the openness to the presence of others who do not share that tradition. Pope Francis made clear in his guidance on dialogue, that openness is more authentic when it rises out of a community that is secure in its own identity, for those whose arms can extend the widest in welcome are those whose feet are most firmly planted on solid ground (See CPDF S1 2025-26)
- Prayer and liturgy in our schools should seek to engage all in the community on a personal, human level (see CPDF S6 2024-25)
- Prayer and liturgy should enable the baptised to participate in a full, conscious and active way (see CPDF S6 2024-25)
- Only those baptised who have been properly formed can undertake a specific ministry in celebrations of the word and liturgy (see CPDF S6 2024-25). *Undertaking a ministry* helps us better understand the roles children and young people can undertake in prayer and liturgy (rather than ‘child-led’)
- Children and young people may plan and evaluate times of prayer or celebrations of the word though only those who have been well formed can undertake specific ministries
- The school day should be marked by prayer at its beginning and end. Other opportunities for prayer could take place e.g. Grace before meals or the Angelus at Midday
- Provision for prayer should allow for encounter with the rich tradition of the Catholic Church *and* it should reflect the liturgical season

- Schools should refer to ‘*To love You more dearly*’ and the Diocesan ‘**Guidance for Prayer**’ when considering their provision
<https://educationshrewsbury.org/religious-education-catholic-life/resources-to-support-prayer-and-liturgy/>
- All schools should have a named prayer and liturgy coordinator
- All schools should have a policy for prayer and liturgy that speaks to their individual context (See CPDF S1 2025-26)
- All schools should have a comprehensive plan of provision outlining provision in the short, medium and long term, *and* beyond (See CPDF S1 2025-26)
- See *To love You more dearly* p16-17 which outlines the duty of governors and directors in the promotion, monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy
- See *To love You more dearly* p17-18 which outlines the responsibilities of leaders and all staff in the facilitating of prayer and liturgy

5. TO KNOW YOU MORE CLEARLY – THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DIRECTORY

For information	✓
For action	✓

- Secondary schools should be fully compliant with the expectations of the RED this year
- Primary schools should be using *the Vine and the Branches* in all years from Y1 to Y6 as the primary resource in their RE lessons
- EYFS have the option to continue with *The Way, the Truth and the Life* or use the model curriculum in the RED along with the resources from Liverpool Archdiocese
- *Lenses, Hear, Believe, Celebrate and Live* should be shared with pupils as this reflects the language of the Church (see RED p20-35)
- The Ways of Knowing (Understand, Discern and Respond) describe the skills pupils develop as they progress through the RE curriculum. Care should be taken in planning, delivery and assessment that the skills are age and stage appropriate *and* allow pupils to achieve the end of phase Expected Outcomes (see RED p35-39)

6. APPOINTMENT AND CHANGES OF HEADTEACHER

For information	✓
For action	

We offer thanks to Kathryn Oates who will retire as Headteacher of St Werburgh’s and St Columba’s Catholic Primary School Chester at the end of this term.

7. SEASON OF REMEMBRANCE

For information	✓
For action	

November is a special month dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory. The Church commemorates all her faithful children who have departed from this life but have not yet attained the joys of heaven. St. Paul warns us that we must not be ignorant concerning the dead, nor sorrowful, "*even as others who have no hope ... For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven ... and the dead who are in Christ shall rise.*"

The Church has always taught us to pray for those who have gone into eternity - may the month of November be an opportunity to especially remember all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. It is a wonderful opportunity to open a book of remembrance in school and offer an Eternal Rest daily for the Church Suffering.

Pope Leo's intention for the month of November is to pray that those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts might find the support, care and love they need in their community, and be open to the beauty of life. Further information can be found [here](#).

8. DAY OF RENEWAL – 28th November

For information	
For action	✓

Our annual day of renewal, prayer and reflection will take place on 28th November at The Park Royal, Warrington. The day will be led by Philip Robinson, from the Catholic Education Service and will conclude with Mass together.

You can book your place [here](#).

9. CARITAS AT CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2025

For information	
For action	✓

Bishop Mark has once again written to schools asking you to consider supporting *Caritas Diocese of Shrewsbury* this Advent and Christmas. Fundraising efforts last year have had a real impact on those who have benefited from the support of Caritas since then.

Bishop Mark's letter, the Caritas at Christmas poster, donation form and fundraising ideas are attached to this Newsletter.

10. SAFEGUARDING ALERT – CHILDREN’S BOOKS

For information	
For action	✓

We understand from safeguarding briefings that the book publisher, Puffin, has issued an alert about books by Andy Cope. The books in the Spy Dogs, Spy Cats and Spy Pups series include links to additional content. Unfortunately, the links are no longer owned by the author and if the links are followed, they now contain pornographic content. The books themselves are fine; it is just the additional content which requires caution.

11. DFE UPDATES

For information	
For action	✓

a) Curriculum & Assessment Review

In July 2024, the government commissioned Professor Becky Francis CBE to convene and chair a panel of experts to conduct the Curriculum and Assessment Review. The Final Report is now available, which can be [accessed here](#), includes some significant recommendations for national religious education.

b) Secondary School Progress 8 and Attainment 8

The government has issued proposed changes to both Progress 8 and Attainment 8 for GCSE courses starting in September 2027. They have stated that they will consult with the sector before publishing their response in the summer term 2026. The Proposals can be [accessed here](#).

c) School Uniform Statutory Guidance

[Statutory guidance released by the DfE on 23 October](#), details the proposed limit on the number of branded items of school uniform and PE kit that schools can require. The government intends to make this a legal requirement from September 2026 through the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill and strongly advises schools to take the draft statutory guidance into account now when planning uniform requirements for September 2026.

The guidance provides actions that schools should take before parents seek to purchase or acquire uniform items in summer 2026. Specifically, they advise that schools should:

- review their uniform policy to determine if they should remove any compulsory branded items to adhere to the limit, or if any other changes are required
- confirm as soon as possible which branded uniform items, within the limit, will be compulsory from September 2026 – other optional branded items can be specified, but schools should keep these to a minimum and permit generic alternatives
- look at their existing supply arrangements, seeking legal advice where necessary, and promptly discuss any changes with their supplier(s) to give them appropriate notice and resolve any contractual implications
- be aware that, to ensure the most cost-effective routes, suppliers plan production 9 to 12 months in advance, with branded uniform stock being ordered by December for the following summer and most sales occurring in the weeks before the start of the autumn term
- publish their revised uniform policy on the school’s website and ensure it is easily understood
- inform parents of any requirements for generic alternatives (such as colour, shade, fabric or fit, ensuring sports leggings are opaque, or any requirements for logos), so they can purchase appropriately
- ensure that all parents, especially those of new starters, are made aware of where second-hand uniforms can be purchased, and that they make this facility available to all parents before the start of the new academic year.

The draft statutory guidance will be updated on completion of the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill’s passage through Parliament.

12. PUPIL NUMBERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

For information	✓
For action	

In response to low birth rates, declining pupil numbers and DfE forecasts, [the NFER have written a useful article](#) on how these trends are impacting schools nationally and regionally. This may be of use to you and your governing boards.

As a Diocese, we continue to work with Local Authorities and scrutinise localised sufficiency data to ensure there is parity for our Catholic schools and no detriment to Catholic provision.

13. DIOCESAN 2025 PROTOCOLS

For information	✓
For action	

The Catholic Education Service have provided updated 2025 Protocols for all schools, academies and trusts. These updated Protocols have been approved by Shrewsbury Diocesan Trustees and will be issued to schools following a forthcoming meeting of the Education Advisory Board.

14. SCHOOL & ACADEMY PROPERTY GUIDANCE

For information	
For action	✓

Existing guidance documentation is currently being reviewed by Mike Rooney the Diocesan Director of Property – the current guidance can be [accessed here](#).

A reminder that for Diocesan schools, the Trustees to the Diocese normally own the buildings and the footprint on which they stand and on and in some instances the full school site. The Local Authority in some instances own land on the school site also. The premises are legally occupied by Governing Bodies for the purposes of conducting a Catholic School in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Diocese.

All building projects, except minor repair projects and general day to day maintenance, on Trustee owned buildings and the wider site, require approval of the Trustees, and need to be carried out under the supervision of the Trustee appointed consultants AtkinsRealis or AHR unless otherwise agreed with The Director of Property. In addition, Governing Boards are to comply with any requirements which the Trustees may from time to time set out for the stewardship and administration of ecclesiastical property occupied or used by the school.

If you have any further queries please contact Mike Rooney via michael.rooney@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

15. GOVERNOR INFORMATION RETURNS

For information	
For action	✓

We are currently asking schools to return information regarding school governors again this term including DBS details. Individual forms are being emailed to schools for return to Julie English at the Diocese. Thank you for returning the information returns for

admissions and staff details as requested - this information will greatly assist departmental staff with timely and accurate communications.

16. GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS

For information	✓
For action	✓

A reminder that all Governors should be using a school email address for all correspondence in relation to their role as a school governor and **not a personal email address**.

Should any parents serve as a foundation, community or co-opted governor, then we would ask that care is taken to ensure that the total number of parents does not make up more than 1/3 of the total number of governors.

As we start the new term, can I remind schools and academies that although we welcome nominations for Foundation Governors from schools and Governing Bodies, potential Governors should not assume they have been appointed as a Foundation Governor until they have received notification of their term of office in writing, as it is the Bishop that makes the final decision on this matter. Particular care needs to be taken if you are considering transferring a Governor from a previous status (e.g. Parent to a Foundation Governor) as they must be formally appointed to the position of Foundation Governor.

Should you have any queries please contact Julie English via Julie.english@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

17. CHAIRS & VICE CHAIRS FORUM

For information	✓
For action	

A reminder that our first Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum meeting takes place this term with details given below. Booking is available via the [Diocesan Website](#).

Autumn Term	13 th November 2025 6.30 – 8.00pm	St Wilfrid’s Catholic Primary School, Greenbank Lane, Hartford. CW8 1JW
--------------------	---	--

18. ADMISSIONS

For information	
For action	✓

As you are aware, the Governing Body in a Voluntary Aided School, or the academy company of a Primary Academy are the admission authority and therefore responsible for drawing up its own admission policy for the school, ensuring that this complies with legislation and the School Admission Code.

Catholic maintained schools are permitted to give priority first and foremost to Catholic children. The School Admissions Code provides for the admission authority of the school to follow any guidance issued by the Church or Religious Authority where preference is given based on faith criteria. The Bishop expects his requirements to be followed including the requirement that priority is given to Catholic children.

Thank you to everyone for your support and co-operation with regards to 2026-27 admissions policies. Most schools reviewed their policies in line with diocesan requirements and subsequently entered into the appropriate consultation if this was needed. We have recently revised our supporting documentation for schools, and this can be found on our website, with direct links below to model policies.

[Link to Diocesan Admissions Documentation](#)

Governors can use these guidance documents to determine the required action needed for their particular school. To ensure your admissions policy is in line with the diocesan model policies, we would ask that the model documents are used for your admissions policy for 2027-28 rather than using a previous policy. These will ensure that the correct amendments are included. In addition, we are asking that schools ensure that both the Supplementary Information Form and parish boundary map is included within the policy as appendices wherever possible.

Governors have an additional responsibility each year to review their admissions policy, even if they do not need to make any changes. Fundamentally, Governors need to review their Planned Admission Number (PAN) and their over subscription criteria. Any school making significant changes or who hasn't been to consultation within the past seven years, must do so. The consultation must take place for a 6-week period between 1st October and 31st January. Please include the Diocese as part of the consultation by sending the policy to our dedicated admissions email address alongside details regarding the consultation dates and a link to any additional information provided e.g. website link. Further details to support the consultation process can be found on the diocesan website.

Agreed final policies should be determined and minuted within a governor meeting by 28th February and subsequently published on the website and a copy sent to the Diocese by 15th March.

We would ask that schools use the dedicated admissions email address to share policies and with regards to any queries or support they may need: admissions@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

If any school is considering a change to their PAN please contact Richard Woods or Kevin Platt in the first instance.

19. OFSTED UPDATES

For information	✓
For action	

Following our online webinar with Ben Hill, Ofsted Senior HMI, Ofsted have produced further information and guidance regarding arrangements for monitoring visits. This new guidance can be accessed here: [School monitoring operating guide for inspectors: for use from November 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

Guidance has also been issued for inspectors on inspecting protected characteristics and separation by sex on school inspections. Further information can be found here: [Protected characteristics and separation by sex on school inspections](#)

20. NEW DIOCESAN WEBSITE

For information	✓
For action	✓

The Diocese is looking to have a new website in the near future, and a key element is that we would like to visually capture life in the whole diocese – our communities, our churches, our schools, and more. ***We'd like to invite all of our parishes and schools to share any photographs they have so we can use them to realise this vision.***

It's important to note that we can only use imagery of people's faces when we have explicit permission from them. So, if you don't have permission, you can send us photographs of people gathering where they are not clearly identifiable.

We have also made it very easy to send them in; simply upload them at the link below. Please ensure that the appropriate parental permissions are in place.

[Photography Upload](#)

21. SENIOR APPOINTMENTS

For information	✓
For action	✓

A reminder once again that the Diocesan Department of Education **MUST** be involved in Headship, Deputy Headship, Heads of RE and Chaplain appointments. In addition, if schools and academies are seeking to appoint to posts that have a responsibility for Catholic ethos, then again, the Diocese must be involved.

The updated 2024 *Bishops' Memorandum on the Appointment of Teachers* also extends Diocesan involvement to all **temporary** positions, including Executive Headships and Heads of School. If schools are making **temporary leadership arrangements**, they must also have these approved by the relevant Diocesan officer and have gone through an approved recruitment process.

If schools are wishing to extend any temporary arrangements beyond existing timescales agreed with the Diocese, then please contact us at the earliest opportunity.

Please ensure that the Diocese is contacted prior to any recruitment process commencing.

The following documents are available on our website:

- [The Bishops' Memorandum on the appointment of staff In Catholic schools \(2024\)](#)
- [Appointing a new Headteacher – Guidance for Governors & Directors](#)
- [Appointing a new Deputy Headteacher - Guidance for Headteachers & Governors](#)
- [Appointing a new Head of Religious Education - Guidance for Headteachers & Governors](#)

22.KEY DATES THIS HALF TERM INCLUDING CCRS

For information	✓
For action	

Date	Time	Course Title	Venue
05/11/2025	9.30am-3.30pm	Primary Deputy & Assistant Headteacher Forum	The Park Royal Hotel, Stretton Road, Warrington, WA4 4NS
06/11/2025	9.30am-3.30pm	ECT Induction Primary - 1st Year	St Columba's Parish Hall, Plas Newton Lane Chester, CH2 1PL
06/11/2025	9.30am-12pm	Secondary Deputy & Assistant Headteacher Forum Quality of Education	St John Plessington Catholic College, Old Chester Road, Bebington, CH63 7LF
08/11/2025	9.30am-3.30pm	Governors' Annual Conference*	Blessed Thomas Holford Catholic College, Urban Road, Altrincham, WA15 8HT
12/11/2025	9.30am-12pm	Secondary Deputy & Assistant Headteacher Forum Catholic Life and Mission	Ellesmere Port Catholic High School, Capenhurst Lane, Ellesmere Port CH65 7AQ
13/11/2025	9.30am-3.30pm	ECT Induction Primary - 2nd Year	St Columba's Parish Hall, Plas Newton Lane Chester, CH2 1PL
13/11/2025	9.30am-12.30pm	New Headteachers' Induction Programme	Virtual
13/11/2025	6.30pm-8pm	Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum*	St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary School, Greenbank Lane, Hartford, CW8 1JW
14/11/2025	9.30am-3.30pm	Primary RE with Margaret Carswell	St Hugh's Parish, 314 Manchester Rd, West Timperley, Altrincham, WA14 5NB
14/11/2025	9.30am-12pm	Secondary Deputy & Assistant Headteacher Forum Personal Development, Behaviour & Attitudes	St Mary's Catholic College, Wallasey Village, Wallasey, CH45 3LN
17/11/2025	9.30am-3.30pm	Christ at the Centre- A Course for Primary Practitioners - Module 2	Our Lady and St Christopher Parish Hall, 52 Barrack Hill, Romiley, SK6 3BA
21/11/2025	9.30am-3.30pm	RE Lead Meeting - Primary-Maria Hall	St Columba's Parish Hall, Plas Newton Lane Chester, CH2 1PL
26/11/2025	1.30pm-3pm	COAST HUB 2 (Cheshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin)	St Nicholas Catholic High School, Greenbank Lane, Hartford, CW8 1JW
27/11/2025	1.30pm-3pm	COAST HUB 1 (Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Manchester)	St Ambrose College, Wicker Lane, Hale Barns, WA15 0HE

28/11/2025	1.30pm-3pm	COAST HUB 3 (Warrington, Halton, Wirral)	Cardinal Newman Catholic High School, Bridgewater Avenue, Latchford, WA4 1RX
28/11/2025	9.30am-3.30pm	Day of Renewal	The Park Royal Hotel, Stretton Road, Warrington, WA4 4NS
01/12/2025	3.30pm-5pm	Vine and Branches Y5 preparation for Galilee to Jerusalem	Virtual
02/12/2025	3.30pm-5pm	Vine and Branches Y6 preparation for Galilee to Jerusalem	Virtual

CCRS

There is an on line Module this half term: ***New Testament*** with 2 in person seminars. Please contact ccrs@dioceseofshrewsbury.org for more details and how to register.

Date	Time	Course Title	Venue
13/11/2025	16.45-18.15	New Testament Seminar 1	Our Lady's Presbytery, Cavendish St, Birkenhead
15/11/2025	9.15-10.45	New Testament Seminar 1	St Anthony's Parish Centre, Wythenshawe
11/12/2025	16.45-18.15	New Testament Seminar 2	Our Lady's Presbytery, Cavendish St, Birkenhead
13/12/2025	9.15-10.45	New Testament Seminar 2	St Anthony's Parish Centre, Wythenshawe