

Diocese of Shrewsbury
Department of Education



NEWSLETTER

Spring Term 2026 No.1



DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION NEWSLETTER SPRING 2026 No 1

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dear Colleagues

I hope that you return to your school communities filled with the joy of the Christmas season and renewed for all that the term ahead has to offer.

Since our last newsletter, I am sure that many of you will have taken time to read Pope Leo's recent Apostolic Letter 'Drawing New Maps of Hope.' This beautiful document written on the 60th anniversary of [Gravissimum Educationis](#), gifts schools and colleges a renewed vision for Catholic education, anchored to the riches of past declarations and affirming our work as we seek to navigate and respond to the many challenges we are presented with today.

The Letter reaffirms Paul VI's warning against reducing education to functional training or economic productivity. Education, Pope Leo XIV explains, must serve human dignity and the common good - a person cannot be confined to a set of measurable skills or to a predictable digital profile, but must be recognised as a unique individual with a face, a story, and a calling. He continues *"Education does not measure its value only on the axis of efficiency; it measures it according to dignity, justice, the capacity to serve the common good."*

Pope Leo offers us three priorities: *"The first regards the inner life. Young people ask for depth; they need spaces for silence, discernment, and dialogue with their conscience and with God. The second regards the digital human: let us educate in a judicious use of technology and of AI, placing the person before the algorithm and harmonizing technical, emotional, social, spiritual and ecological intelligence. The third regards unarmed and disarming peace: let us educate in non-violent languages, reconciliation, bridges and not walls. 'Blessed are the peacemakers' (Mt 5:9) becomes the method and content of learning."*

At its conclusion, Pope Leo speaks to us directly as school leaders and appeals for us to *"be servants of the world of education, choreographers of hope, tireless seekers of wisdom, credible creators of expressions of beauty. Fewer labels, more stories; fewer sterile contrasts, more harmony in the Spirit."*

If you have not yet managed to read this letter, I would encourage you to do so – to prioritise some time to reflect on the many inspirational, affirming and uplifting

messages it contains and to share it with your staff, pupils and parents – [you can access the letter here](#).

As we enter this new calendar year, we also recognise and celebrate 175 years since the foundation of our Diocese. In his [November Pastoral letter](#), Bishop Mark reminds us of the hope expressed by Saint John Henry Newman in his sermon known as the “Second Spring” given to the newly appointed Bishops of the Catholic Church in our land. Newman specifically referred to our Diocese, prophesying that Shrewsbury, “If the world lasts, shall be name as musical to the ear, as stirring to the heart as the glories we have lost; and Saints shall arise ...”

We embark upon this new term anchored to the hope of our recent Jubilee year, and renewed by the many hopes we have for the staff and children in our care as we continue our mission of service within the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Richard

2. NEW ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER APPOINTED

For information	✓
For action	

His Holiness Pope Leo XIV appointed the Right Reverend Richard Moth as Archbishop of Westminster on 19th December 2025.

Ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Southwark on 3 July 1982, Archbishop-elect Moth has served as Bishop of Arundel and Brighton since 2015. Prior to that, he was the Catholic Bishop of the Forces from 2009 to 2015.

Archbishop-elect Moth will become the 12th Archbishop of Westminster, succeeding Cardinal Vincent Nichols, who has served in the role since 2009. Cardinal Nichols will now become Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Westminster until Archbishop-elect Moth is Installed at Westminster Cathedral on Saturday, 14 February 2026.

On hearing of his appointment, Archbishop-elect Moth said: “I am moved greatly by the trust that Pope Leo has placed in me, in appointing me to the Diocese of Westminster. As I prepare to move to the Diocese, I am so grateful for the support being given to me by Cardinal Vincent Nichols at this time. He has given dedicated service to the Diocese and will be missed greatly.

3. DEPARTMENTAL STAFFING

For information	✓
For action	

Following a rigorous and robust recruitment process, Mr Kevin Platt has been appointed to the permanent post of Deputy Director of Schools. Kevin is currently Headteacher at St Peter’s in Hazelgrove and is seconded (0.6FTE) as the Acting Deputy Director of Schools. Kevin will take up the substantive post after the Easter break, and we look forward to him joining the team.

4. APPOINTMENT AND CHANGES OF HEADTEACHER

For information	✓
For action	

As we begin the Spring Term, we say goodbye to Claire McManus, Headteacher at St Mary’s in Dukinfield, who leaves the Shrewsbury Diocese to take up a new post in Salford.

The following colleagues take up new posts at the start of this term:

- Mr Damian Arthur, Interim Executive Headteacher for St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School Sale and St Mary’s Catholic Primary School Dukinfield
- Mrs Rosie Birchall, Acting Head of School at St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School, Sale
- Mr Ashley Jenkinson, Acting Head of School at St Mary’s Catholic Primary School, Dukinfield
- Mrs Nichola Jevons, Headteacher at St Werburgh’s and St Columba’s Catholic Primary School, Chester
- Mr John Sheehan, Headteacher at St Elizabeth’s Catholic Primary School, Wythenshawe

5. TO LOVE YOU MORE DEARLY – THE PRAYER AND LITURGY

DIRECTORY

For information	✓
For action	✓

In our continued commitment to support schools attain the high ideals outlined in ‘*To love You more dearly*’, we have added further online CPDF opportunities in the Spring and Summer term to highlight companion documents to the directory and to offer a safe space for colleagues to ask any questions they may have about implementation. These opportunities will run alongside the in-person formation offered.

Companion documentation:

Considerations for the celebration of Mass, Sacred spaces in schools and Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament – guidance for schools

Online launch 10th February 3.30-5.30pm

Exemplars and guidance on prayer in school

Online launch 12th March 3.30-5.30pm

‘Ask the expert’ – an online drop in where I will be joined by Canon Chris Matthews offering an opportunity for colleagues to ask any questions and clarify any uncertainties about prayer and liturgy in your particular contexts:

Spring term 19th March 3.30-4.30pm

Summer term 10th June 3.30-4.30pm

All the above can be booked through our website [Book a course](#)

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

For information	✓
For action	✓

HUB MEETINGS - ASSESSMENT

Hub meetings this term for primary and secondary will focus on assessment in RE. Overarching principles of assessment and accompanying resources from the national advisers working party will be shared with colleagues at these meetings. It is hoped that all schools will be represented to hear the current key messages regarding assessment of RE in our Catholic schools.

Book online for your geographical hub meeting though if you are unable to attend it for any reason, please do sign up for a hub meeting in a different area.

[Book a course](#)

7. DIOCESAN PROTOCOLS 2025

For information	✓
For action	✓

Following the initial issuing of Diocesan Protocols in October 2024, the Catholic Education Service has provided all dioceses with updated Protocols for 2025. These updated Protocols have now been considered by the Diocesan Education Advisory Board and approved by Diocesan Trustees for issue to schools. A copy has been attached to this newsletter and is available on our [website here](#). Amendments and additions for 2025 have been highlighted for reference.

Going forward we anticipate minor amendments to be issued each year by the CES and therefore we are not requiring an annual return of minutes from governing boards each academic year. However, we request that this important document is placed on the agenda of your governing boards and trust boards following any updates issued to schools.

If there are any queries please contact richard.woods@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

8. CES DRAFT UPDATED APPRAISAL POLICY

For information	✓
For action	✓

The CES have drafted a new Appraisal Policy and are seeking views on this document which will be applicable for both teaching and support staff. The main changes are as follows:

- General re-wording – focus on flourishing, formation and supportive professional conversations
- One policy for all employees (support staff and teachers)
- Less legalistic drafting, whilst retaining the process
- No informal capability – this will all be covered in a revised capability policy with a clear informal support stage
- Revised wording in relation to observations
- Requirement for up to four objectives (one should be Catholic life)
- Flexibility built in to some sections so that schools can tailor the policy to their context (for example in relation to the number and timing of review points).

The CES have provided the document to the national unions for consultation and would also be grateful for any comments or feedback that school leaders and governors have via their Diocese. A copy of the draft document can be found [here](#) and you can provide your feedback by Wednesday 21st January via the following [Microsoft Form here](#).

9. CES ANNUAL CENSUS 2026

For information	
For action	✓

The CES has provided information about the **Catholic Census 2026** which will run from **Thursday the 15th of January to Wednesday the 11th of February 2026**.

On Monday the 12th of January 2026 your school will receive email from CES with the Online Catholic Census Template 2026 and all additional information regarding Catholic Census 2026.

This email will be sent to the person who dealt with Catholic Census last year unless you notified CES about the change of contact. Please make sure your school received this information.

The online template is new and will take only between 15-20 min to complete. You can start preparing it for submission from Monday; however, you will not be able to save it on your system or submit it until submissions are open. If you prefer, you can use your MIS system instead of the Template.

On Thursday the 15th of January 2026 your school will receive another notification email from CES with information that CENSUS is accepting submissions.

The deadline for submissions is 11 of February 26, however we would be grateful if your school can submit the data as soon as possible.

In case of any problems please refer to the CES website/Census 2026.

<https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/census>

The Helpdesk will be open from 15th of January-11 February 2026.

In case of any problems during submission your school can also contact me directly.

10. SCHOOL CLOSURES

For information	
For action	✓

We know that for a number of schools, snow and ice at the start of the week meant that a decision to close the school had to be taken. Please can you ensure that the Diocese is informed of any school closure – many thanks to those schools who informed us of any decisions to close.

11. MARTYN'S LAW AND EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS

For information	✓
For action	✓

We have received a number of queries from school leaders and governors regarding Martyn's Law and its implications for Diocesan schools. The [Terrorism \(Protection of Premises\) Act 2025](#) (the act) became law on 3 April 2025. It is commonly known as Martyn's Law, and is named in honour of Martyn Hett, one of the 22 people killed in the 2017 Manchester Arena terrorist attack. An explainer video can be [accessed here](#).

The government intends for there to be an implementation period of at least 24 months before the act comes into force. This period will enable those responsible for premises and events to have sufficient time to understand their new obligations, and to plan and prepare accordingly. The government will publish statutory guidance during the 24-month implementation period.

In the meantime, the DfE encourage all settings to have in place [preparedness plans](#) for the safety of their learners and staff.

Further information from the DfE can be [accessed here](#) and we are currently in conversations with our Diocesan Property Department to determine whether any additional guidance may be required for Diocesan schools. We will update you with any further information.

There is a webinar focusing on Martyn’s Law being held on the 19th February by the Community Security Trust, an organisation which provides security information to faith communities. You can register to attend via the [link here](#).

12. DFE UPDATES

For information	✓
For action	

Net Capacity Assessment Programme for Primary Schools

The department has confirmed that the Net Capacity Assessment Programme (NCA) programme **has been extended to cover all state-funded primary schools** in England between 2025 and 2029. You can find more information, including up to date Tranche Lists showing the first two tranches of primary schools, for assessments between September 2025 and the end of March 2026 by following this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/net-capacity-assessment-nca-programme>

Before March 2026, the department proposes to publish lists of schools in quarterly tranches for the following year (2026/27), with remaining schools listed by the expected year of their NCA visit only. That process will then be repeated on an annual basis.

13. FOUNDATION GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT

For information	✓
For action	

We appreciate that securing Foundation Governors to serve on your board can be a challenge at times. This item has been an item for discussion at a number of our Chair and Vice Chair Forum meetings and workshops at Governor Conferences. We have compiled a number of PowerPoint Presentations that have been used at these events which can be accessed via our website [here](#), and materials and resources from the Catholic Education Service can be [found here](#).

14. CHAIRS & VICE CHAIRS FORUM

For information	✓
For action	

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

Spring Term	18 th March 2026 6.30 – 8.00pm	St Saviour's Catholic Primary School, Seacombe Drive, Great Sutton. CH66 2BD
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15. 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](#)

16. NORTH WEST DIOCESES RETREAT FOR HEADTEACHERS

For information	✓
For action	

The *Formatio* North West Diocese Catholic Training Partnership has organised a two-day retreat led by David Wells in February. Further details are included below and booking is via <https://www.nwcdtp.org.uk/training>

Catholic Headteacher Residential Conference

Drawing a Map of Hope – School Leadership in the Era of Pope Leo XIV

The Wrightington Hotel, Wigan

Thursday 29th January (from 4 pm + residential) and Friday 30th
January 2026 (all day)

Cost £260 – includes overnight accommodation, a 3-course meal on Thursday night, breakfast and a 2-course lunch on Friday.



Led by David Wells

In Pope Leo's recent Apostolic Letter "*Drawing New Maps of Hope*" he reminds us why Education matters. Education he says, "*Is one of the highest expressions of Christian Charity.*" Spend a short time together with other leaders as we reframe the way we think and reflect upon how this might influence the way we lead. As Catholic Head Teachers this conference will help us to navigate some of the complex challenges we face, revive a sense of personal joy, liberate us from creeping cynicism, and help us to make good decisions... and all of this, rooted in the Gospel of Matthew and Pope Leo's recent Apostolic Letter.

David Wells will lead us across three sessions (one on Thursday evening and two on Friday). At the conclusion of our time together we will gather as the disciples did around the table of the Lord and celebrate Mass, and in doing so, offer our endeavours in the year ahead to be blessed, broken and shared for all.

17.KEY DATES THIS HALF TERM INCLUDING CCRS

For information	✓
For action	

Date	Time	Course Title	Venue
13/01/2026	2pm-3.30pm	Induction for New Foundation Governors*	Virtual
13/01/2026	6pm-7.30pm	Induction for New Foundation Governors*	Virtual
14/01/2026	1pm-4pm	Prayer and Liturgy CPDF support* - Undertaking a ministry in liturgy and celebrations of the word	Loreto Education Centre, Dunham Rd, Altrincham, WA14 4GZ
15/01/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	New Headteachers' Induction Programme	St John Henry Newman Parish Centre, Knutsford Road, Warrington, WA4 1JE
20/01/2026	1pm-3.30pm	Induction for new RE Coordinators	St John Henry Newman Parish Centre, Knutsford Road, Warrington, WA4 1JE
21/01/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	Exploring the Ways of Knowing in RE with Lat Blaylock	St Columba's Parish Hall, Plas Newton Lane Chester, CH2 1PL
21/01/2026	2pm-3pm	Termly Headteacher Briefings	Virtual
22/01/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	Exploring the Ways of Knowing in RE with Lat Blaylock	St Columba's Parish Hall, Plas Newton Lane Chester, CH2 1PL
22/01/2026	2pm-3pm	Termly Headteacher Briefings	Virtual
23/01/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	Christ at the Centre- A Course for Primary Practitioners - Module 3	St Mary's Caritas Centre, 65 Delamere Street, Crewe, CW1 2JX
27/01/2026	6pm-7pm	Termly Briefing for Governing Bodies*	Virtual
28/01/2026	10am-3pm	COAST	Ellesmere Port Catholic High School, Capenhurst Lane, Ellesmere Port CH65 7AQ
28/01/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	Primary Curriculum Working Party	St John Henry Newman Parish Centre, Knutsford Road, Warrington, WA4 1JE
28/01/2026	2pm-3pm	Termly Briefing for Governing Bodies*	Virtual
28/01/2026	6pm-7pm	Termly Briefing for Governing Bodies*	Virtual
30/01/2026	9.30am-12pm	School support under the CSI Framework*	Virtual

02/02/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	RE Lead Hub Meeting	St Winefride's Catholic Primary School, Mellock Lane, Neston, CH64 9RW
03/02/2026	3.30pm-5pm	Vine and Branches Y5 preparation Desert to Garden	Virtual
04/02/2026	3.30pm-5pm	Vine and Branches Y6 preparation for Desert to Garden	Virtual
05/02/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	RE Lead Hub Meeting	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Floatshall Road, Baguley, M23 1HP
09/02/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	RE Lead Hub Meeting	Our Lady Mother of the Saviour Catholic Primary School, Lapwing Grove, Palacefields, Runcorn, WA7 2TP
11/02/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	RE Lead Hub Meeting	St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Wellington Road Nantwich, CW5 7DA
13/02/2026	9.30am-3.30pm	RE Lead Hub Meeting	Stockport and Tameside Hub: venue TBC

To book, please follow the link to our website [here](#)

18.CCRS

CCRS (Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies) – New Module beginning in January!

The CCRS course resumes this month. New students are welcome to begin the course at the start of any module. Details are available here

<https://educationshrewsbury.org/formation-development/ccrs/> or from ccrs@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

The online study timetable for this term is:

Wythenshawe Seminars for Online students – **The Person of Jesus Christ (Christology)** module: Saturday mornings, 9.30am-10.45am, January (tbc) and 7 February

Birkenhead Seminars for Online Students – **The Person of Jesus Christ (Christology)** module: Thursday evenings, 5pm-6.15pm, January (tbc) and 5 February

CCRS comprises eight modules, which must be complete within five years. It has, for over a quarter of a century, enabled those responsible for passing on our Catholic faith to gain a deeper knowledge and fuller understanding of that faith. CCRS is the only nationally recognised award of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. **New students are always welcome. Please contact ccrs@dioceseofshrewsbury.org for details.**