



Welcome

Handbook

2026-27



Welcome!



This is a short guide for all staff and governors in Catholic schools, especially those who are new to Diocese of Westminster schools and Catholic Education. It is not a comprehensive document but rather, sets out to describe some fundamental principles of Catholic education, some expectations of new staff and to offer tips on areas such as the Catholic life, Prayer and Liturgy, Religious Education and Relationships, Sex and Health Education.

We respect and value the past experiences and belief system that you bring to the school, and it is hoped you will find the opportunity to grow in your own spiritual way during your time here. Very importantly, whoever you are, whatever your beliefs, values, certainties and uncertainties... You are greatly valued. You are needed and your commitment and service to our schools is appreciated. Help is always at hand from other members of staff, particularly clergy, chaplains, RE leaders and SLT as well as from the young people themselves. All who work in our schools are welcomed and valued and we pray that it is a positive experience for all.

Teachers

Teachers have a central place in the life of a Catholic school. However new you may be to this tradition, you are part of its mission from the moment you begin. Your subject knowledge and classroom skills matter, but so does the way you relate to pupils and colleagues. Children notice how adults treat them, and it is often these small, everyday encounters that make the deepest impression. In a Catholic school those encounters take on an added depth because the life of faith runs through the ordinary fabric of school life.

Support Staff

Support staff play an essential part in the life of every Catholic school. Much of what you do may happen quietly in the background, but it makes a lasting difference. A child will remember the warmth of the greeting at the door. They will draw strength from the patience shown to them when they need help or when they need someone to listen. These everyday moments help them to feel safe and cared for, and they shape the kind of community the school becomes. In a Catholic school this matters deeply, because the faith we share is not just taught in lessons but is expressed in the way people treat one another. Your work helps pupils to feel at home and to know that they matter.

'The young people in our schools and colleges come not as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge, but, through their relationship with you, and each other, to discover what it is to be human and the place God has in their lives.... This doesn't mean that you have to personally assent to every statement of belief, but you must recognise and appreciate the ethos of the school/college, and value it as a place which is underpinned and imbued with a sense of Christian spirituality.'

How to Survive Working in a Catholic School by Sr Judith Russi, Raymond Friel 2013

The Catholic Church

Catholic schools are part of the life and mission of the Catholic Church. The Church is universal, found in every part of the world, and in each place it seeks to share the life and message of Jesus Christ. Education has always been one of the ways the Church lives out this mission. By establishing schools, the Church provides communities where young people can learn and grow, but also encounter the values of the Gospel in a real and tangible way. Catholic schools in the Diocese of Westminster share in this worldwide mission, serving families and parishes while remaining rooted in the universal Church.

The Catholic Church in England and Wales is organised into 21 areas called dioceses. A diocese is simply a local part of the Church, made up of its people, parishes and schools. Each diocese is led by a bishop, who has the responsibility of guiding and caring for the community. Catholics believe that bishops are part of an unbroken line of leadership going back to the first apostles of Jesus. This is what is meant by “apostolic succession”, it connects today’s Church with its very beginnings. Each diocese is led by an Ordinary (a bishop). A diocesan bishop is given the authority by the Pope to exercise his pastoral function over his local diocese.



The Diocese of Westminster

198 SCHOOLS
5000+ STAFF
89,000+ PUPILS

The Diocese of Westminster is part of the Catholic Church, serving a large and diverse Catholic population across London, Hertfordshire and parts of Surrey.

Since the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850, the Archbishop of Westminster has often been a Cardinal, reflecting the importance of this diocese in the life of the Church. Today, under the leadership of Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the Diocese brings together people of many cultures and backgrounds in a community of faith. Catholic schools form a vital part of this mission, helping families and parishes to hand on the faith and to support young people in growing as confident and hopeful members of society.



The Diocese of Westminster has 214 parishes covering West, Central and North London, the Borough of Spelthorne and Hertfordshire. Although Westminster is one of the smallest dioceses in England and Wales in geographical area, it is the largest in terms of Catholic population and priests. Archbishop Richard Moth is the twelfth Archbishop of Westminster. He is assisted by auxiliary bishops, The Right Reverend James Curry and The Right Reverend Paul McAleenan.

Our Archbishop



ARCHBISHOP RICHARD MOTH

Our Auxiliary Bishops



BISHOP PAUL MCALEENAN



BISHOP JIM CURRY



Westminster Cathedral

The site of the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Most Precious Blood in Westminster, was originally known as Bulinga Fen and formed part of the marsh around Westminster. It was designed in the Early Christian Byzantine style by the Victorian architect John Francis Bentley. The foundation stone was laid in 1895 and the fabric of the building was completed eight years later. The awesome interior of the Cathedral, although incomplete, contains fine marble-work and mosaics.

Catholic Education

This means that a Catholic school is concerned with more than exam results or preparation for work. Of course, academic achievement matters, but so does the kind of person a young person becomes. Catholic schools aim to help children and young people grow in confidence, in wisdom, and in their sense of responsibility for others.

"The glory of God is a human being fully alive." This quote from St Irenaeus encompasses Catholic education - it seeks to bring out the best in every child, not just in what they know, but in how they live and the values they carry into the world.

Catholic schools have deep roots in the Catholic community. They were built and sustained by the efforts and sacrifices of families and parishes so that children could be educated in their faith. Today, Catholic schools continue that tradition, but they do so in a society that is more diverse and more complex. They remain places where faith and culture meet, where dialogue is encouraged, and where young people from many backgrounds are welcomed and supported.

The purpose of Catholic education is clear. It is to support parents, who are the first teachers of their children. It is to provide an education that sees the whole child, mind, heart, and spirit. And above all, it is to keep Christ at the centre of school life, so that young people can discover what it means to live with hope and to share their gifts with the world.

"In your Catholic schools there is always a bigger picture, over and above the individual subjects you study, the different skills you learn. All the work you do is placed in the context of growing in friendship with God, and all that flows from that friendship. So you learn not just to be good students, but good citizens, good people... Always remember that every subject you study is part of a bigger picture ... a good school provides a rounded education for the whole person. And a good Catholic school over and above all this should help all its students to become saints."

Pope Benedict XVI 2010



Catholic Life and Mission

'Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.'

(1 John 4:7-12)

THE DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER EDUCATION SERVICE HAS DEVELOPED A VISION FOR SCHOOL'S CATHOLIC LIFE AND MISSION, BASED ON THESE WORDS FROM THE PRAYER OF SAINT RICHARD OF CHICHESTER 'FOLLOW HIM MORE NEARLY' AND 1 JOHN 4:7-12:

MISSION & CHARACTER

In Catholic schools, the school's mission is the foundation of everything, guiding not only academic goals but also spiritual and moral development. All staff must know and understand the school's mission and promote these values in, and beyond the classroom. By championing the school's mission, you are helping to build a supportive community where pupils grow not only in knowledge but in faith and character, preparing them to make meaningful contributions to society.

WELCOME & DIGNITY - OTHER RELIGIONS

In a Catholic school, teachers are called to uphold the inherent dignity of every pupil, recognising each as a unique individual created in the image of God. This commitment means respecting pupils of all backgrounds, including those from other religions, and ensuring that everyone feels welcomed, valued, and safe. By fostering an inclusive and respectful environment, you model the Catholic values of compassion and empathy, creating a space where pupils learn not only academic skills but also the importance of understanding and appreciating differences. In doing so, you contribute to a community rooted in love, allowing each pupil to flourish as they grow in confidence and feel a genuine sense of belonging.

GOD IS LOVE. WE ARE LOVED. LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Catholic Social Teaching

"The principle of Catholic Social Teaching is that from a 'living faith' comes loving action which brings about a transformation into a civilisation of love."

(‘Our best kept secret – the rich heritage of Catholic social teaching’ - M. Schultheis 1988)

The task of all teachers in our schools is to encourage those we teach to work for positive change in our world. Catholic schools are very actively involved in social justice issues, which appeal so much to young people’s idealism, enthusiasm and innate sense of justice. Catholic Social Teaching (CST), include these principles:

- Care of Creation
- Preferential Option for the Poor
- Solidarity and Peace
- Community and Participation
- Dignity of Workers
- Human Dignity



[CLICK HERE FOR LINK TO WEBSITE](#)

CST must permeate all parts of school life, including in the curriculum and should therefore be very visible in our schools and colleges. It is a guide to our relationships with one another, and to our interactions with the wider world. It is the Common Good: working in a world in which everyone can live their lives to the full.

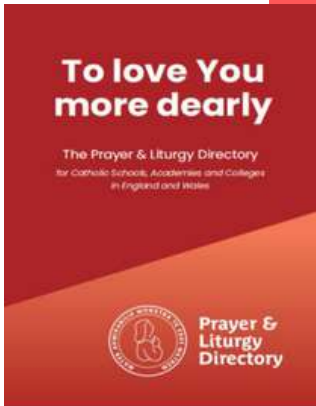
Catholic Social Teaching is deeply linked to social justice and charitable work in Catholic schools, emphasising principles like the dignity of all, the importance of community, and a preferential option for the poor. These values inspire pupils to engage in charitable work, such as volunteering, fundraising, and outreach programs, as concrete expressions of their faith and moral responsibility. Catholic schools encourage pupils to engage in social justice and support charitable work locally, nationally and internationally. Teachers play a vital role in supporting this by fostering discussions on social justice and encouraging empathy and action. By supporting pupils to do charitable work, teachers help instill a lifelong commitment to serve others and work toward a more just and compassionate world. In doing so, they ensure that CST principles become an active and meaningful part of pupils' lives, inspiring them to create positive change both now and in the future. Below are some of the organisations who work in partnership with Catholic schools.

SOCIAL
JUSTICE
AND
CHARITY
WORK



Prayer and Liturgy

CLICK HERE
FOR THE PLD



In Catholic schools, prayer and liturgy lie at the very heart of our mission, shaping the spiritual, moral, and communal life of our pupils. Through prayer, we invite young people into a deeper personal relationship with God, while through liturgy we draw them into the richness of the Church's sacraments and traditions. Together, prayer and liturgy are the lifeblood of our school life, guiding us and our pupils to grow in faith, unity, and service.

Diocesan guidance and support materials have been produced to help schools implement the Prayer and Liturgy Directory and located on the diocesan sharepoint - the DOWES Hub.

*Every opportunity for prayer and liturgy in our schools
offers a meaningful encounter with the living God,
reveals his transformative love and truth,
and leads to a deepening of faith and action.*

OUR VISION FOR PRAYER AND LITURGY

INVITATION

Like Jesus' call, "Come and you will see" (John 1:38-39), we invite every member of our community into prayer and liturgy. Our invitations are never imposed but always welcoming, affirming the dignity of each person, including those of other faiths and none. We seek to ensure that pupils, staff, and families experience authentic opportunities to participate and, where appropriate, to lead.

ACCOMPANIMENT

Inspired by the Emmaus story (Lk24), we recognise Jesus walks with us even when we are not open to his presence. In the same way, we are called to walk alongside pupils and staff, sharing in their joys and sorrows, and gently guiding them towards an encounter with Christ. Accompaniment in prayer and liturgy is more than support, it is an invitation to grow in faith, to recognise Jesus at work in our lives, and to be transformed by him. We seek to accompany everyone, teachers, support staff, catering and site teams, pupils and families. In doing so, we extend pastoral charity to all, respecting and including those of other faiths and none, while always remaining faithful to our Catholic tradition and our mission to make Christ known.

FORMATION

We recognise that confidence to participate and lead prayer and liturgy comes through formation. This formation takes place formally, through teaching and preparation, and informally, as we model prayer and liturgy and answer pupils' questions. We commit to providing formation for our pupils (progressively teaching them how to pray and take part in liturgy) and for our staff (through CPD and leadership development), so that all grow in faith and confidence.

THREE PRINCIPLES FOR PRAYER AND LITURGY

FOUR LENSES FOR PLANNING PRAYER AND LITURGY

SEASON

We plan with the rhythm of the liturgical year in mind, marking Advent, Lent, Easter, and other feasts. We also acknowledge the seasons of school life - beginnings, exams, endings, and the seasons of society, such as Remembrance or Black History Month. Tools such as liturgical colours, the Diocesan Ordo, and our Annual Plan of Provision (APOP) help us structure this rhythm.

Scripture is the heart of our prayer and liturgy. We carefully select passages, especially from the Gospels, so that our pupils encounter Christ, the Word made flesh. We use the daily readings of the Church and embed scripture throughout the life of the school.

SCRIPTURE

SENSES

We plan worship that engages the whole person, reflecting the Incarnation.

- See: symbols, candles, colours, religious art.
- Hear: music, silence, scripture, prayer.
- Think: reflection, links with saints, CST, or current events.
- Do: gestures, hymns, actions.

By engaging the senses, we make prayer and liturgy accessible, memorable, and meaningful for all.

We provide a clear rhythm and structure for prayer and liturgy in our schools. Each school has a Prayer and Liturgy Policy and an Annual Plan of Provision (APOP), ensuring consistency and clarity. We draw on the four-part structure of the Mass - Gather, The Word, Response, Mission, to guide our planning for celebrations of the word (assemblies) and services. We also nurture traditions and rituals unique to our schools, while regularly reviewing them so that they remain authentic and transformative.

STRUCTURE

In our Catholic schools, prayer and liturgy are not add-ons but the foundation of who we are. By embracing the principles of Invitation, Accompaniment, and Formation, and fostering Progressive Participation, we ensure that every act of prayer and liturgy is an authentic encounter with God. Using the lenses of Season, Scripture, Senses, and Structure, we help our pupils and staff grow in faith, unity, and service, so that together we may continue to live out Christ's mission in our schools and communities.

Religious Education

CORE OF THE CORE

It is our vision that in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Westminster Religious Education is at the core of the core of the curriculum, the heart of the school, for the sake of which Catholic schools exist in the first place.

Fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honourable.

(Philippians 4:8)

RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL

In our schools Religious Education is always more than an academic subject and never less than one. It is both Religious and Educational. It is religious because it bonds the whole curriculum, and through the study of the Catholic religion there is the opportunity for formation of faith. It is educational because it is a subject of academic rigour and critical enquiry which includes understanding of others' viewpoints through dialogue and critical engagement. The Religious Education Curriculum will incorporate fully the structural elements of the Religious Education Directory (RED) and fulfil the outcomes as set out in the model curriculum, providing a theologically rigorous, sequential and progressive programme. Wherever possible, resources for teaching should always look to diverse representations from the Universal Catholic Church.

WITNESSES, EXPERTS AND GUARDIANS

Teachers of Religious Education are called to be witnesses to the Catholic faith or committed to its importance, experts in the subject, and guardians of dialogue.

As a result, pupils will become 'religiously literate and consciously engaged young people who have the knowledge, understanding, and skills – appropriate to their age and capacity – to reflect spiritually, and think ethically and theologically, and who recognise the demands of religious commitment in everyday life'

(RED, p.6).

Religious Education

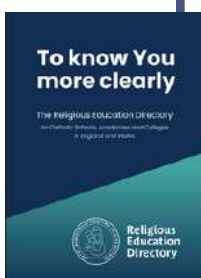
RE IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

In line with the Bishops' requirements, 10% of the taught curriculum in each year of compulsory schooling (and 5% in sixth form) is devoted to RE. This ensures RE is taught with the same academic rigour as other disciplines, while also enriching the life of the whole school.

The aims of Religious Education (Article 2) are:

1. To engage in a systematic study of the mystery of God, of the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the teachings of the Church, the central beliefs that Catholics hold, the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life.
2. To enable pupils continually to deepen their religious and theological understanding and be able to communicate this effectively.
3. To present an authentic vision of the Church's moral and social teaching to provide pupils with a sure guide for living and the tools to critically engage with contemporary culture and society.
4. To give pupils an understanding of the religions and worldviews present in the world today and the skills to engage in respectful and fruitful dialogue with those whose worldviews differ from their own.
5. To develop the critical faculties of pupils so to bring clarity to the relationship between faith and life, and between faith and culture.
6. To stimulate pupils' imagination and provoke a desire for personal meaning as revealed in the truth of the Catholic faith.
7. To enable pupils to relate the knowledge gained through RE to their understanding of other subjects in the curriculum.

CLICK HERE
FOR THE RED



Teachers are well supported in this mission: if you are responsible for teaching RE, you can access guidance from your Religious Education Co-ordinator (REC), Head of RE, Headteacher and through diocesan training and resources.

Relationships, Sex and Health Education

Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) has been a statutory part of the curriculum in England since September 2020. Catholic RSHE is designed to teach age-appropriate, holistic education about relationships, family life, physical development, emotional health and moral decision-making in light of the wisdom of the Church. It supports the formation of the whole person – spiritually, morally, socially, emotionally and physically.

In our Catholic schools, RSHE is taught in the light of the Gospel and is faithful to the Church's teaching on human dignity, sexuality and vocation. It recognises that every person is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). It helps pupils to flourish and live in right-relationship with God, self and others. Catholic RSHE promotes chastity as a virtue, encouraging respect for sexuality as a gift. It recognises family life and marriage as central vocations whilst promoting respect for all regardless of background, orientation or belief. We value parents as the primary educators of their children and work in close partnership with parents and families. RSHE is taught in a safe, inclusive environment with safeguarding at its core and where all pupils are valued and respected.

As a teacher new to Catholic education, you should:

- Familiarise yourself with the Diocesan vision [HERE](#).
- Familiarise yourself with your school's RSHE policy.
- Meet with your RSHE lead to discuss your school's chosen RSHE teaching programme and time-tabling requirements.
- Work closely with your RSHE lead and other colleagues to answer any questions you have regarding teaching RSHE from a Catholic perspective. A frequently-asked questions document is [HERE](#).
- Work closely with parents, ensuring that they are kept informed about RSHE curriculum content, resources and delivery.
- RSHE should form a part of your staff induction programme.

As a Diocese, we offer regular support, guidance, updates and training including regular RSHE sharing sessions.

Catholic School Inspection

Catholic schools are inspected in a way that reflects their special place in the life of the Church.

When an inspection takes place, it is not simply a matter of checking standards; it is the Bishop's way of caring for his schools and supporting their mission.

When an inspection takes place, the inspector is acting as the Bishop's representative.



[CLICK IMAGE FOR LINK](#)

A national framework now guides the process across England and Wales, giving schools confidence that inspection is both consistent and fair. While inspection provides accountability, its deeper purpose is pastoral. It is meant to strengthen schools, to encourage them, and to help them continue to offer an education that is rooted in Christ.

In the Diocese of Westminster, schools are well supported by their diocesan advisors and so inspection is not something to be anxious about. Guidance and training are offered regularly and is part of the ongoing support that helps schools to flourish.

Diocese of Westminster Education Service



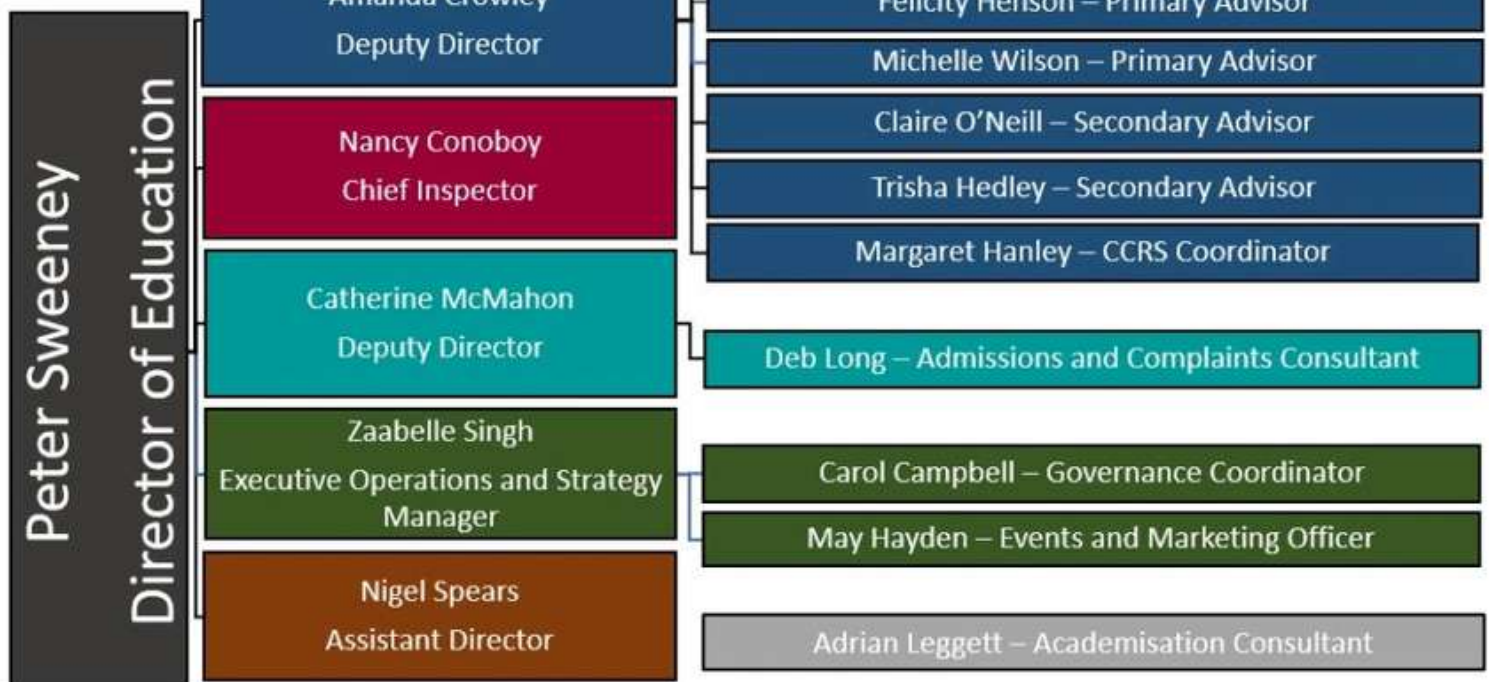
The Diocesan Education Commission is chaired by Canon Michael Dunne and is appointed by the Archbishop as a decision-making body which acts in his name. It is responsible to him in all areas relating to education in schools and colleges set out in canon law and English law. It is responsible to the Diocesan Trustees for the financial aspects of providing and maintaining Catholic education in the Diocese. Through its Chairman, the Education Commission liaises with the Archbishop and his Auxiliary Bishops and the Diocesan Trustees. It liaises with schools and colleges mainly through the Director of Education and the staff of the Education Service.

Chair: Canon Michael Dunne

Mr Paolo Camoletto, Mr John Asgian, Mr Edward Conway, Mrs Kate Griffin, Ms Tracey Peters, Mr Gianluca Marcato, Ms Jane Heffernan, Mr Simon Bunce

THE EDUCATION COMMISSION

The Team – At a Glance



The Advisory Team



ADVISORY TEAM

S E W O D



Michelle Wilson and Jo Browne

- Brent
- Camden
- Islington

- Barnet
- St Albans
- Watford

- St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Harrow
- Pope Paul Catholic Primary School, Lea Valley

Flic Henson and Jo Browne

- Stevenage
- Upper Thames
- Hounslow

- Hillingdon
- St Catherine of Siena Catholic Primary School, Watford

Tony Hall and Flic Henson

- Hammersmith and Fulham
- Kensington and Chelsea
- Westminster

- Harrow
- Ealing

Tony Hall and Michelle Wilson

- Hackney
- Haringey
- Tower Hamlets

- Enfield
- Lea Valley

Trisha Hedley

- All Saints Catholic College
- Bishop Challoner Catholic Schools
- Bishop Douglass Catholic School
- Cardinal Pole Catholic School
- Finchley Catholic High School
- John F Kennedy Catholic School
- Loreto College
- Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School
- Sacred Heart High School
- St Charles Catholic Sixth Form College
- St Claudine's Catholic School for Girls
- St Columba's College

- St George's Catholic School
- St Gregory's Catholic Science College
- St James' Catholic High School
- St Joan of Arc Catholic School
- St Mark's Catholic School
- St Michael's Catholic Grammar School
- St Michael's Catholic High School
- St Thomas More Language College
- The Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School
- The Douay Martyrs Catholic School
- The London Oratory School
- The Saint John Henry Newman Catholic School

Claire O'Neill

- All Saints Catholic High School
- Gurnley House School FCJ
- Gunnersbury Catholic School
- La Sainte Union Catholic School
- Maria Fidelis Catholic School FCJ
- More House School
- Newman Catholic College
- Pield Heath School
- Salvatorian College
- St Aloysius' College
- St Anne's Catholic High School for Girls
- St Augustine's Priory

- St Benedict's School Senior
- St Catherine's Senior School
- St Dominic's Sixth Form College
- St Edmund's College
- St Elizabeth's School
- St Ignatius College
- St Mary's Catholic School
- St Paul's Catholic College
- St Richard Reynolds Catholic College
- St Thomas More Catholic School
- The Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School
- The Sacred Heart Language College

PRIMARY

SECONDARY

The Advisory Team



As an advisory team, our role is to work alongside schools and colleges across the Diocese of Westminster. We help them to live out diocesan policies on Religious Education, Catholic Life, and Prayer and Liturgy in ways that are both faithful and practical. Much of our work is focused on strengthening Religious Education, which means supporting subject leaders, so that they feel confident in their role. We also help teachers to deepen their own understanding of faith so that they can pass it on with clarity and enthusiasm. We also provide training and professional development so that staff and governors know what is expected of them and feel ready to respond. Alongside this, we produce resources and guidance that serve the wider mission of the Church in schools, including areas such as Relationships, Sex and Health Education and Racial Justice, Equality and Diversity.

Our support is practical as well as pastoral. We want schools to feel part of a wider diocesan family and to know they are not working in isolation. There is a large network of Catholic schools across the Diocese and our team are a great way facilitating collaboration and sharing.

THE DOWES HUB - DIOCESAN SHAREPOINT SITE



Diocese of Westminster Education Service

Home The Team CPD + Training Support Resources Find it! Tasks Edit

★ Following Site access

+ New Page details Preview Immersive reader Analytics

Published 12/08/2025 Share Edit

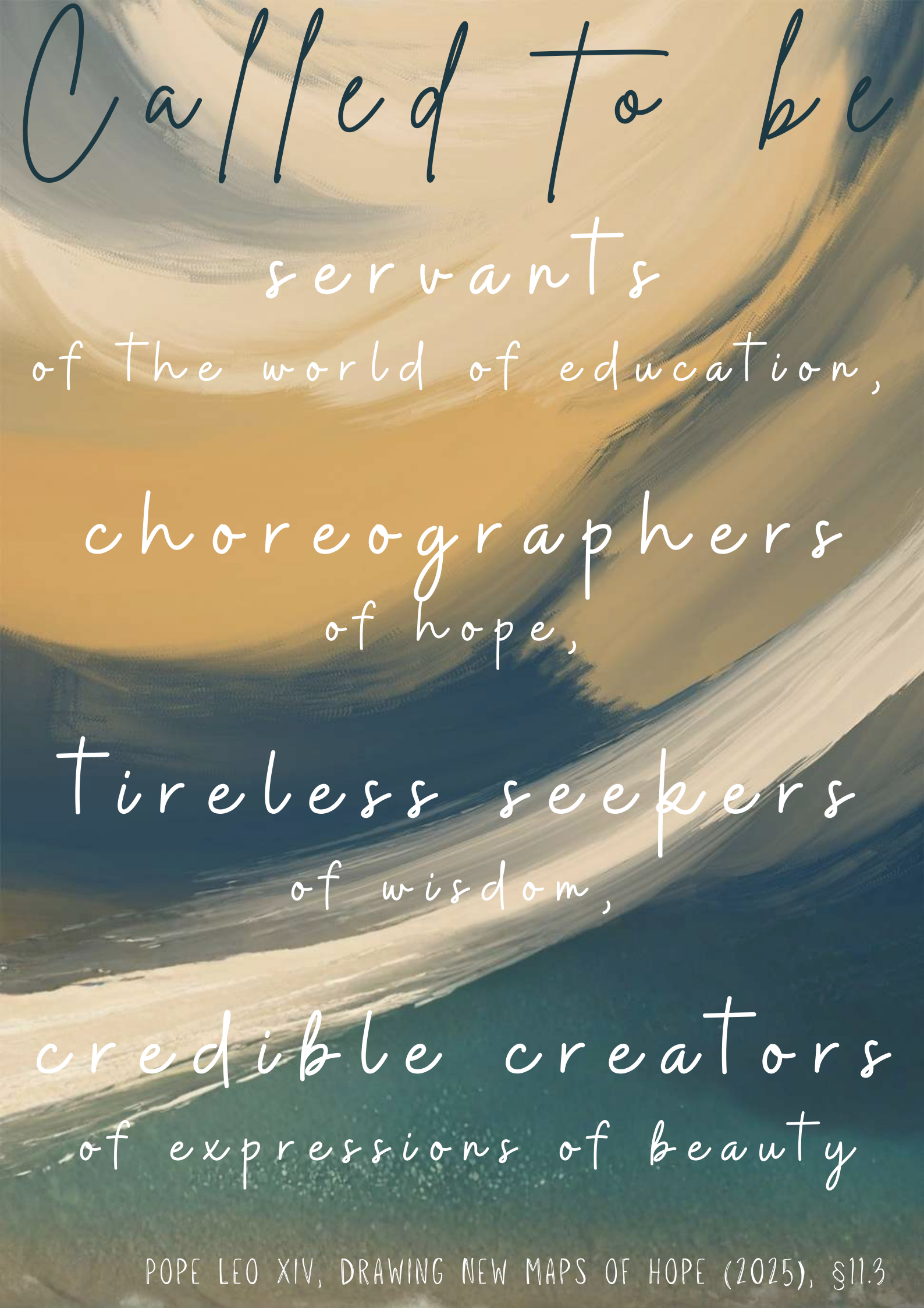


EDUCATING IS an act of LOVE;
IT IS LIKE GIVING LIFE.

POPE FRANCIS

The majority of the resources that may be useful for teachers and support staff in our schools relating to Religious Education, Catholic Life and Mission, Prayer and Liturgy and RSE can be found on our sharepoint site, the DOWES Hub. If you require access to this site, please email amandacrowley@rcdow.org.uk with your school email address and you will be sent an invitation to access the site.

Governors should use the Education Service website to access key information www.education.rcdow.org.uk.



Called to be

servants

of the world of education,

choreographers
of hope,

Tireless seekers
of wisdom,

credible creators
of expressions of beauty