



St Thomas
Catholic Academies Trust

Half-Term Newsletter

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CEO Update

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Proud of Our Schools: Stewarding Catholic Education Through Times of Transition

As we reach the end of another academic year, I have also reached an important personal milestone: my first year serving as Chief Executive Officer of St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust. It has been a year that has challenged, inspired and humbled me in equal measure.

Looking back, I realise this has been a year defined by transition. Personally, I have made the transition into the role of CEO. Still, across our Trust, I have also witnessed the many transitions that shape the life of Catholic education—children moving through school, colleagues beginning and ending careers, schools growing, communities changing and new chapters beginning.

It has been a privilege to spend time in every one of our schools, meeting children, staff, governors, clergy and families. Wherever I have gone, I have encountered remarkable

commitment, deep faith and an unwavering belief in the potential of every child. Our mission is simple: to ensure that every child entrusted to our care becomes *'fully alive'*—academically, spiritually and personally. Throughout this year, I have seen that mission lived out every day in classrooms, playgrounds, chapels and communities across our Trust.

When I reflect on the year, I do not immediately think about inspections, reports or milestones. I think about our schools. I think about children arriving each morning full of hope and possibility. I think about colleagues, in every role, who quietly go above and beyond each day, often without recognition. I think about leaders making courageous decisions in the interests of children and communities placing their trust in us. More than anything else, I finish this year feeling immensely proud.



Across the Trust, we have much to be thankful for. Inspection outcomes have recognised the quality of education, leadership and care within our schools. We have welcomed St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Luton, into our Trust family, fulfilling a long-held ambition to unite the Catholic schools of Luton within one Trust. We have celebrated exceptional outcomes for children and young people, knowing that behind every success stands a community of teachers, support staff, leaders and families working together to help children flourish. Perhaps most memorably, our One Hope Day brought together colleagues from every school to pray, learn and celebrate, reminding us that whilst each school has its own unique identity, we are united by one mission and one shared vocation.

Throughout the year, I have come to appreciate that stewardship is one of the greatest responsibilities entrusted to us. We are not simply responsible for the children in our schools today; we are custodians of Catholic education for future generations.

Sometimes stewardship is expressed through growth and renewal. At St Michael's, plans continue to progress for a transformational rebuilding programme that will provide facilities worthy of the exceptional children and staff who fill the school each day. At St Joseph's, Chalfont St Peter, we have begun working with the Department for Education to ensure the site continues to serve children and families long into the future.

At other times, stewardship requires us to face difficult realities. This year, we made the deeply painful decision to begin the phased closure of St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Marlow. For generations, the school has faithfully served its community, and we recognise the profound sadness that accompanies such a decision. Throughout this process, our priority has remained unchanged: ensuring every child is supported to make a successful transition into a new school where they can thrive, every member of staff is supported as they prepare for the next chapter of their vocation, and our

remaining Year 6 pupils can complete their primary education in the school they know and love. The dedication of the small staff team, who will continue to serve those children next year, is nothing short of inspirational.

The experience of St Peter's has reinforced an important truth. We cannot simply celebrate the Catholic schools we have inherited; we must also protect them. As demographic, financial and educational pressures continue to grow, we have a responsibility to act wisely, courageously and collaboratively so that every one of our schools remains strong, sustainable and able to serve its community for generations to come. Our ambition must be that no other Catholic community loses its school because we failed to act early enough or think boldly enough.



This year has also reminded me that Catholic education is, above all else, about people.

At our trainee teacher celebration Mass, newly qualified teacher Charlie McCornick reflected on our Trust's mission by saying:

'Being fully alive means embracing every opportunity to learn, to grow and to become the very best version of ourselves. It means seeing the potential in every child who walks through our classroom doors and helping them see it too.'

Those words have stayed with me because they capture so beautifully what our schools seek to achieve every day.

Only a few days later, I received a card from Liz Soton at St Anthony's Catholic Primary School as she prepared to retire after a lifetime of service. She wrote:

'My career has been a vocation of love of teaching children through the values of the Scriptures, and I feel complete and content as my career as a full-time teacher draws to a close.'

Between Charlie's beginning and Liz's retirement lies the story of Catholic education itself. One generation answering God's call. Another passing that vocation on. Both united by the same desire: to help children discover their God-given dignity, realise their potential and flourish.

As I begin my second year as CEO, I do so with great confidence. Education will continue to present significant challenges,

but I have seen first-hand the compassion, professionalism, faith and generosity of the people who make up St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust. Together, we have shown that when we work collaboratively and remain faithful to our mission, we can navigate change whilst continuing to provide an exceptional Catholic education for the children and communities we serve.

During my first year as CEO, I have learned that whilst schools, buildings, roles and communities may all experience transition, our purpose never changes. Our greatest strength has never been our structures, our policies or our strategies. It has always been our people.

Together, we have the privilege of helping today's children become fully alive, whilst ensuring that generations yet to come will enjoy the same gift of Catholic education. I cannot think of a greater responsibility, nor a greater hope for the future.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN

Chief Executive Officer



Staying connected: Why Social Media Matters for Our Schools

Jo Quirke – Marketing & Communications Manager

Across St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, communication and community are at the heart of everything we do. As a family of schools rooted in faith, hope and love, we are united by a shared mission: to ensure every child is **“fully alive”**—flourishing academically, personally and spiritually. Social media plays an important role in helping us bring this mission to life, connecting our schools, families and wider communities in meaningful and impactful ways.

Celebrating Our Schools and Building Reputation

Social media provides a powerful platform to showcase the rich, vibrant life of our schools. From classroom achievements and faith celebrations to enrichment activities and community events, sharing these moments helps demonstrate the high standards, care and opportunity that exist across our Trust.

By engaging with Trust and school social media accounts—following, liking and sharing posts—staff, parents and schools help amplify these positive stories. This collective voice strengthens each school's reputation, presenting a clear, consistent picture of excellence and aspiration. It also reflects who we are as a Trust: inclusive, supportive and committed to helping every child realise their God-given potential.

Supporting Pupil Recruitment and Admissions

For many prospective families, social media is one of the first places they go to learn about a school. A lively, engaging online presence gives them a window into daily life and the values that underpin it. When parents see evidence of happy, confident pupils, strong academic outcomes and a nurturing environment, they are more likely to choose that school for their child.

Every interaction matters. When posts are shared or commented on, they reach a wider audience, increasing visibility within the local community. This directly supports admissions by ensuring that more families see the wonderful opportunities available within our schools – spaces where children are supported to grow, succeed and thrive.



Attracting and Inspiring Staff

Social media is also an important tool for recruitment. Prospective staff want to work in environments where they feel valued, supported and inspired. By sharing stories of collaboration, professional development and staff achievements, we demonstrate what makes our Trust a special place to work.

Our tone of voice—warm, aspirational and professional—helps communicate our ethos clearly, showing that we are a community where people belong and are supported to flourish.

Strengthening Our Community

At its heart, social media is about connection. It brings together pupils, parents, staff and the wider community, reinforcing the sense that we are one family working towards a shared purpose. By engaging with posts, celebrating successes and sharing key messages, everyone becomes part of that story.

This reflects our core values of love, faith and hope. When we celebrate together, support one another and share in each other's achievements, we create communities where every individual feels seen, valued and encouraged to grow – because when we belong and flourish together, we are truly fully alive.

Join Us and Make a Difference

We encourage all schools, staff and families to actively follow Trust and school social media accounts, and to like, comment on and share posts regularly. These small actions make a significant difference – extending our reach, strengthening our reputation and helping more children and families discover our schools.

Together, we can continue to tell the story of St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust: a story of excellence, opportunity and human flourishing, lived out every day across our schools.



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Strong Foundations, Brighter Futures

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Kristian Hewitt – Director of Education

A recent Ofsted report, *Strong Foundations in the First Years of School*, highlights the importance of ensuring children securely master core knowledge and skills before moving on to more complex learning. It warns that gaps in the basics can have a lasting impact on achievement, particularly for the most vulnerable pupils.

At St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, securing strong foundations is central to our mission. One of the clearest examples is our commitment to early reading. For the second consecutive year, 87% of Year 1 pupils across our schools passed the Phonics Screening Check, outperforming the national average of around 80%. This reflects the dedication of our schools to giving every child the very best start to their educational journey.



Developing fluency in learning is equally important. Fluency means being able to recall knowledge and skills accurately and confidently. This is achieved through carefully planned curricula, expert teaching and regular opportunities for practice and reinforcement.

As pupils progress through school, strong foundations continue to matter. When children have a secure understanding of key concepts, they are better able to make connections, apply their knowledge in new situations and retain learning over time. By regularly revisiting prior learning, our teachers help pupils build confidence, strengthen memory and achieve long-term success.



Celebrating the Completion of ECT Induction

This term, we are proud to recognise our Early Career Teachers who have successfully completed their two-year induction programme.

The completion of induction is a significant milestone, marking the transition from the early stages of teaching to a career of growing confidence, expertise and leadership. Throughout the past two years, our ECTs have embraced new challenges, reflected on their practice and made a positive difference to the children and communities they serve.



As they continue their professional journey, we celebrate not only their achievements but also the vocation they have chosen. In helping every child to flourish, they embody our Trust's belief that

"The glory of God is a human being fully alive."

We wish them every blessing as they continue to grow as educators and inspire the young people entrusted to their care.

Congratulations to all our ECT Year 2 colleagues on this wonderful achievement.

COLLETTE COOPER

Director of Training and Development



Congratulations to Our Newest Teachers!

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We are delighted to celebrate the achievement of our seven Primary Teacher Trainees, who have successfully completed their training and been awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Their hard work, dedication and commitment to serving children and their school communities have been evident throughout their training, and we are incredibly proud of all they have accomplished. As they begin the next stage of their teaching journey, we wish them every success as they inspire, nurture and help young people to flourish.

In the spirit of our Trust mission statement,

*"The glory of God is a human
being fully alive."*

we give thanks for their gifts and vocation, and look forward to seeing the positive difference they will make in the lives of the children they teach.



Let's see what our schools have been up to!

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Cardinal Newman Catholic School

'Memories' Production

Our students worked with Tangled Feet Theatre Company to produce a poignant and emotive piece about 'Memories' on Wednesday 1 July at the Hat Factory in Luton. This devised piece was inspired by visits made by our children to the Dementia Café in Luton. It was a truly sensitive and thought-provoking piece of theatre. Many of the audience were regulars to the Café and thoroughly enjoyed the performance.



Achievements



Damian S in 7A and his team performed exceptionally well in the Juventus Academy World Cup, reaching the final and finishing as runners-up. They were awarded medals and proudly received the Silver Cup. Amazing achievement!

Irish Embassy Visit- Natalia N 9M

On the 16th of June 2026, we, the students of Cardinal Newman School, along with Sacred Heart and St Joseph's, visited the Irish embassy in London. First, we had to take a long coach ride down to London, and when we got there, we first entered the library where we learned about the embassy's history, connected to a renowned Irish author.

After that, we watched a breathtaking solo performance based on the book 'Ulysses' by James Joyce. Later on, we had some lunch before heading back to the coach for our journey home. It was an enjoyable and educational day informing us all about Irish culture and literature and wouldn't have been possible without the help of the Irish Forum, who helped plan the trip!



Our Weekly 'Meet the Priest' Continues



Sporting achievements

Year 7 Mixed Rugby—Twickenham

Year 7 mixed Rugby team were invited by Northampton Saints to attend the Rugby Premiership final match at Twickenham. They finished 2nd in the tournament overall and then were invited to play on the pitch at Twickenham at half-time. A fantastic achievement for all involved!



Luton Schools Town Sports Winners!

Our Year 7 boys and girls Gaelic teams, Year 8 boys and girls Gaelic teams and Year 9 and 10 boys team attended the All Britain Championships in Sunbury on Thames. All teams have made it to the semi-finals! A fantastic achievement! All of our teams were wearing our new Gaelic kits, which have been generously donated by our sponsors.



Gaelic Shirts

We have a new sponsor—Marsh Construction (ex-students).





Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

I recently had the privilege of participating in some fundraising involving students from Our Lady's Catholic Primary School and those who attend youth club and youth Mass at St. Columba's, Chesham.

The chosen charity was Helen and Douglas House Children's Hospice, which supported my family for over 6 years as our son had a life-limiting condition. They were also there for us for his end-of-life care in April 2024.

As a youth club group, we thought it would be good to have a project. This idea quickly grew. Year 5 Mini Vinnies were also keen to be involved and helped make and sell things at two sales, one after Youth Mass, which was dedicated to our son Max and the other at the 'International Evening' at school. St Columba's UCM and parishioners also supported with their local produce sale that week.

Children who attended the youth club got creative and made a variety of items for the events. They were joined by children from across the school, who also helped create items and assisted on the stalls. Of course, many of them enjoyed purchasing items on the day as well.



We were all delighted with the outcome of our efforts, having raised £636.31 for the hospice in Max's memory.

Ella Bowdery (Community Fundraiser from Helen and Douglas House) came to school to receive the cheque and present the children with a thank-you card and certificate for all their efforts.

It was a great opportunity for school and church to work together for an amazing charity—a real team effort.

KAREN WALDER

Our Lady's Catholic Primary School





St Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery

St Ethelbert's Celebrates a Fantastic End to the School Year

Pupils and staff at St Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School and Nursery have enjoyed a series of memorable events as the school year draws to a close, showcasing achievement, creativity and community spirit.

The school's annual Sports Day was a tremendous success, with pupils demonstrating teamwork, determination and enthusiasm throughout the day. After a series of exciting events and competitions, John House emerged as the overall winner, with many pupils proudly receiving medals for their achievements. The day provided plenty of memorable moments and was enjoyed by the entire school community.



Another highlight of the term was the school's first-ever Colour Run, organised to raise funds towards a new KS2 Trim Trail. The event proved to be a huge success, bringing together pupils and staff for an afternoon filled with fun, laughter and plenty of colour. Not only did the event help support future improvements to the school grounds, but it also created lasting memories for everyone involved.



The celebrations continued with a wonderful Art Exhibition, which showcased the exceptional talents of pupils across the school in both Art and Design Technology. The exhibition featured an impressive range of creative work and was a powerful demonstration of the imagination, skill and dedication of St Ethelbert's young artists and designers.

These events perfectly reflect the vibrant and nurturing community at St Ethelbert's, where pupils are encouraged to flourish academically, creatively and personally. As the school year draws to a close, the achievements and experiences of recent weeks provide much to celebrate and look forward to in the year ahead.





St Michael's Catholic School

We've been very busy!

School trips, St George's day celebrations and Race for Life.



St Michael's New Build, High Wycombe – *Project Update*

Work on the St Michael's new build project continues to progress well, with the initial site establishment now underway within the EFAC building. We expect our mobile IT systems, welfare facilities and office furniture to be fully installed next week, enabling the site team to become fully operational.

As part of the agreed site arrangements, a skip will also be positioned adjacent to the EFAC building. A gateman has now been appointed to support site operations, helping to coordinate deliveries and the removal of waste materials.

Significant progress has already been made on preparing the area for the new playground. Existing play equipment has been removed, and topsoil and surface materials have been cut back and levelled to allow construction works to begin. Spoil including topsoil, concrete and tarmac surfacing has been removed from site, making way for the stone foundations and playground build-up.

Looking Ahead

Over the coming week, the project team will focus on:

- Completing the temporary site office set-up.
- Commencing deliveries of stone for the new playground build-up.
- Beginning construction of the drainage system and kerb edging for the new playground.
- Reviewing and progressing the planning of service diversions through the school site.

The project remains on track, and we look forward to sharing further updates as work progresses.





St Martin De Porres Catholic Primary School

Trips, Activities and Exciting Adventures

World Art Day

Y4 - Egyptian workshop

KS1 trip to
Hertfordshire Zoo

Keeping cool in the
heatwave

Culture Week

SEND trip to the park

Singing Spectacular

Y3 trip to Veralanium

Y6 Residential to
Caldecotte Lakes

Mini Vinnies planting in
the prayer garden









St Peter's: *A Legacy That Lives On*

As St Peter's enters the final chapter of its history, there is naturally a sense of sadness. While the school will not formally close until next year, the end of this academic year marks a significant transition as many pupils, staff and families prepare to begin new journeys elsewhere. Yet alongside that sadness is a deep sense of gratitude for all that St Peter's has been and continues to be.

The true legacy of St Peter's has never been found in its building alone. It is found in the lives of the people who have been part of its story.

At the heart of St Peter's has always been a desire to help children encounter and understand the love of Jesus. Through worship, prayer, relationships and daily life together, the school has sought to nurture not only academic achievement but character, faith, hope and compassion.



One former pupil and member of staff reflected:

"I have spent two-thirds of my life at St Peter's, and throughout that time I have felt part of a beautiful family. One of the greatest comforts is knowing that these relationships will continue long after we move on. It has been a joy to see former pupils grow and flourish within our community, still reflecting the values they learned at St Peter's. Many speak of the school as a family they will always belong to. As both a past pupil and a member of staff, that is exactly how I feel."



That is why the story of St Peter's does not end with the closure of the school. The seeds that have been planted in young lives continue to bear fruit. At St Peter's, the aim has always been to follow Jesus' example. This is reflected in former pupils who serve others, act with compassion and integrity, and make positive contributions to their communities.

These are eternal investments. Every act of kindness, every word of encouragement and every opportunity to live out Christ's example has helped shape lives in ways that extend far beyond the school gates. As members of the St Peter's family move into new schools, workplaces and communities, they carry with them the faith, hope and love that have been nurtured here over many years.

For this reason, St Peter's does not simply end when its doors close. Its legacy continues in the people who have been part of its story.



Children's Q&A

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To mark the end of this academic year, we have asked some of our Year 6 students about their time at our primary schools before they move on to secondary school.

1. What is your favourite memory of being a student at St Peter's?

Making lots of new friends when I joined in the spring of 2025 from Our Lady's.

2. What have you enjoyed about your time at St Peter's?

Really challenging myself at PGL, Book Club and being in the school play.

3. Who is your favourite teacher and why?

I have two! Miss Eaves and Mrs Thomas. They have taught me since I started. They are both so kind and have really helped me (and the other pupils) a lot.

4. What are you looking forward to about moving to St Michael's in High Wycombe?

Making even more new friends!



1. What is your favourite memory of being a student at St Louis?

My favourite memories are some of the school trips I have been on. I particularly liked visiting the Roald Dahl Museum and our Year 6 residential—laser tag and rock climbing were my personal highlights. I have enjoyed learning about different religions in RE and watching and performing in the school plays. This includes the KS1 Nativities and our Year 6 production, 'Grimm'. Reading in assemblies and Masses are some more of my favourite memories.



2. What have you enjoyed about your time at St Louis?

I have enjoyed all the learning I have done at St Louis, from the science experiments throughout the years to learning about life in Aylesbury during WWI and WWII in our history lessons. Visiting the chapel has been something I have always looked forward to. It is a calm place with a bright candle lighting up the room, reminding us that Jesus is the light of the world. I have also been fortunate enough to be a librarian during my time at St Louis. It has been great moving on from picture books when I started in nursery to chapter books in Year 6.

3. What are you looking forward to about moving to St Michael's in Aylesbury?

As I move on to St Michael's, I am looking forward to meeting my new teachers, making new friends and joining the after-school clubs. I hope to have more opportunities to contribute during assemblies in Year 7 and beyond.

1. What is your favourite memory of being a student at St Martin de Porres?

Being with my friend at break and lunch time.

2. What have you enjoyed about your time at St Martin de Porres?

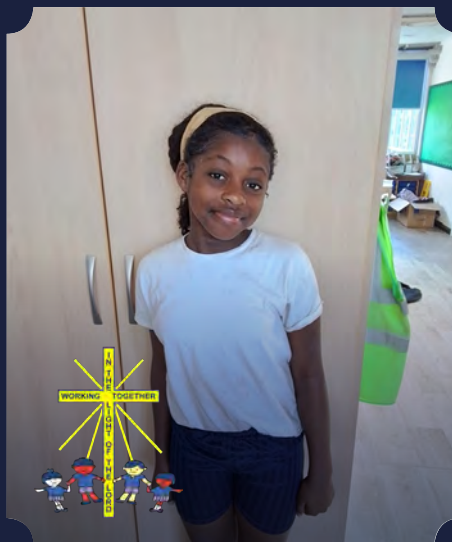
Learning different subjects and finding friends.

3. Who is your favourite teacher and why?

Miss Williams because she is supportive, kind and funny. Miss Joseph because she is supportive and helps me in class. Ms Newton because she would always show courage and kindness.

4. What are you looking forward to about moving to Cardinal Newman?

Meeting new people and learning new subjects.



*The glory of
God is a human
being fully alive!*

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