

FAITH • HOPE • LOVE

MARCH
2026



St Thomas
Catholic Academies Trust

Half-Term

Newsletter

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A Message from our CEO: *Mark McLaughlin*



As we reach the culmination of Lent, we are invited to pause, reflect and renew as a community.

Lent calls us to prayer, to service and to a deeper awareness of Christ's sacrifice - one that lies at the heart of our faith and will soon be marked in the joy of Easter. In this season, we are reminded of the enduring gifts of faith, hope and love, and how these are lived out each day through the relationships we build, the care we show and the purpose we bring to our work.

It is in this spirit that I am delighted to welcome you to this edition of our Trust newsletter - a moment not only to reflect, but to celebrate the many successes that continue to shape and strengthen our Trust. Together, we are called not simply to do well, but to be fully alive - living out our mission with conviction and joy so that every child can flourish.

Across our Trust, there is much to celebrate. Each school, each classroom and each colleague plays a vital role in delivering our shared mission: to provide an excellent Catholic education rooted in faith, enabling every child to grow, achieve and realise their God-given potential. What continues to inspire me is how consistently this is lived out - not only in outcomes, but in the culture of care, ambition and high expectation evident across our communities.

This half term has been rich in moments that reflect who we are. It was a privilege to take part in the Headteacher induction Masses for Helen Fay (Cardinal Newman Catholic School) and Joanna Heritage (St. Joseph's Catholic Infant and St. Edward's Catholic Junior Schools), reminding us that leadership in our Trust is grounded in service.

We have also been delighted to welcome St Joseph's Luton into our Trust family,

completing our Luton group of schools and strengthening our collective capacity. As we grow, we do so with clarity of purpose - ensuring every school is supported and challenged to provide the very best for the communities we serve. St Joseph's is a remarkable school, and our future is bright together.



During my visits this half term, I have been continually inspired by what I have seen. In one Early Years setting, staff had constructed a nest from sticks and straw, covered with a cargo net. This simple yet creative provision created a vibrant space where children worked together with care and determination to build something purposeful and shared. In that moment, we saw faith in action, hope in what they were building, and love in the way they worked together - a vivid expression of what it means to be fully alive. These moments are a hallmark of our Trust and a real source of pride for me - I see these joyful, loving interactions in every school and at every stage.

Across classrooms, I have seen students who are focused, engaged and proud of their learning. This has been especially evident in the careful preparation for assessments and examinations. Staff have worked tirelessly to ensure that every child is supported, confident and ready - not simply to succeed, but to achieve their full potential. For many of our oldest pupils, these examinations represent the culmination of their journey through our Trust - one in which they have been known, supported and challenged to grow in faith, knowledge and character. They

leave us as young adults ready to make a difference in the world, living lives that are full and give glory to God.

We are also immensely proud of the performance of our schools in recent inspections at Holy Family and St Michael's. These inspections reflect the strength of leadership, the quality of teaching and the commitment of staff and pupils, and stand as clear evidence of the high standards we set across the Trust. We cannot wait to share these inspection reports when we can.

As we look ahead to the new term, we do so with hope. Our One Hope Fully Alive Day will bring us together once again in reflection and celebration - a reminder that we are a community united in faith, inspired by hope, grounded in love and committed to enabling every member of our Trust to flourish.

As we journey towards Easter, may we carry forward its message of hope, renewal and new life into all that we do, in our schools and in our service to one another. Thank you for all that you do each day to make our Trust what it is.



**Mark McLaughlin, CEO
– St Thomas Catholic
Academies Trust**

Key Trust Update: *Leadership Transition at the Trust Board*

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The Board of the Trust has announced that Catherine Davies, as part of a planned change, has stepped down as Chair of the Board after four highly successful years in the role.

Catherine was also previously Chair of the Luton-based Trust. She will continue working as a Board Director.

We owe an enormous vote of thanks to Catherine for her dedication and hard work during these formative times for the Trust, and we are delighted that she will be continuing her mission of serving Catholic Education in our Diocese.

Replacing Catherine at the helm of the Board on an interim basis is current Board Vice Chair, George Brzyski, who will also continue in his link role among our Slough schools. We wish him every success in his new role.



George has been a Trust Board Director, currently Vice-Chair, since STCAT was formed in 2020 and has worked extensively with our schools in Slough and also with St Michael's. His background is in business, working for large corporations, investment funds and smaller enterprises,

laterally specialising in company start-ups & turnaround in Eastern Europe. Married with three adult children, George is extensively involved in the Slough Catholic community and both locally and nationally in the Polish diaspora. A member of the Catenians, he is a keen gardener and musician, plus an on-call grandad and his family's handyman.

George says, "Catherine Davies will be a hard act to follow, but I am really looking forward to stepping up to lead the Trust Board for this year. Despite the Trust's start being complicated by Covid, we have more than doubled in size since the start, while at the time maturing educationally and organisationally. We are now jostling for leadership among some of the best Trusts in the UK. These are exciting times!"

This is an opportunity too to express our gratitude to all our Board Directors and Local Academy Governors for the selfless voluntary time and effort they dedicate to our schools and staff for the betterment of our pupils in their endeavours to be 'Fully Alive'.

The Role of the Chair: **Guiding Our Mission**

The Chair of the Trust Board provides strategic leadership and ensures strong, mission-focused governance across our family of Catholic schools. They guide the Board in upholding our Trust's Catholic ethos, overseeing educational standards, and supporting the wellbeing and safety of all within the St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust. As well as representing the Board at the Diocese, they also work closely with senior Trust leaders and Local Academy Committees to maintain effective communication, promote collaboration, and to help every school flourish in line with our shared mission.

Lead Professionals Programme *by Michelle Chappell*

We were very lucky to host Victoria Marley and Richard Allwright from Norfolk County Council for four days so that they could train our staff on their Norfolk Steps Step on and Step up Lead Professionals Programme.

It was fantastic seeing so many of our schools working together and their passion and commitment to promoting positive behaviour within our schools.

Testimonial; Excellent CPD training

We are delighted to have invested in the "Steps Lead Professional Training Step On and Step Up" training delivered by Norfolk Steps Advisers to further upskill our key staff.

The training helps us reflect on our approach to early intervention, prevention, and de-escalation across the school. It ensures that any restrictive intervention used is lawful, necessary, and proportionate. The pace and delivery were

excellent, the experience was consistently positive, professionally enriching, and highly impactful.

As a result, we now feel fully confident in delivering this training internally, ensuring consistency, clarity, and high standards in behaviour support throughout our school community.

We would highly recommend this CPD training to all schools committed to inclusion and best practice in behaviour support.

Maria Ryan
SENDCo

St Joseph's Catholic Primary Luton



A Warm Welcome to St Joseph's Catholic Primary School , Luton



School Spotlight

As Interim Headteacher, I am delighted to share that St Joseph's Catholic Primary School has joined the family of schools within the St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust. This is an exciting step for our school community and one that strengthens our shared commitment to Catholic education for the children and families we serve.

At St Joseph's, our school mission statement reminds us that "In the Light of Jesus we Learn to Shine."

By becoming part of the St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, we join a wider community that supports this vision and helps our children grow fully alive - academically, spiritually and personally.

For our staff, this partnership brings opportunities to collaborate, share expertise and continue developing excellent teaching rooted in Gospel values.



For our parents and carers, it offers reassurance that our school is supported by a strong Catholic family dedicated to the flourishing of every child.

Pope Francis shared 'Education is above all a matter of love and responsibility handed down from one generation to another' so starting this new relationship with St. Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, we look forward to continuing our mission so that every child at St Joseph's can truly shine!

Sinead Killian
Interim Headteacher



Sacred Heart Celebrates World Book Day

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School Spotlight



St Joseph's & St Edward's: *Creating Our New Mission Together*



We proudly present the new mission for St Joseph's and St Edward's Catholic schools

With St Joseph's Infant School and St Edward's Junior School federating, one of the first things we had to do was to agree on a joint mission.

With two such distinctive schools, each with its own strong Catholic identity, this was not going to be an easy task. Staff from both schools were invited to join a working party, and with 9 staff members volunteering to be on board, we set about discussing the strengths of both schools and looking at how other schools had created their Mission Statement.

Then, in our second meeting, one of the team members suggested a beautiful piece of Scripture that all of our previous ideas supported. Essentially, one thing was clear: LOVE was at the heart of both schools. 1 John 4:19, 'We love because God first loved us' seemed perfect. Within a short time, we had come up with multiple suggestions of values that could be hung on the word LOVE. The governors were consulted, and they loved the direction we were moving in.

The next thing was for us to hear the thoughts of the children, staff and parents. Over the following ten days, Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, and a good old tally chart at Parents' evening were all employed to gather the views of these three groups.

The result came back fairly unanimous from all stakeholders, and our mission statement, 'We love because God first loved us,' with values attached to help us live this out, was born.

An incredible journey and we proudly present the new mission for St Joseph's and St Edward's Catholic schools is:

**We love because God first loved us
1 John 4 :19**

And to help us do this we:

- **L**ove and Respect
- **O**pen our minds and hearts
- **V**alue everyone equally
- **E**ncourage peace.

Lenten Reflection: *Walking the Stations of the Cross*

As we move through Lent together, children in our schools have been walking through the Stations of the Cross. At each station, they pause to reflect on Jesus' love, compassion and sacrifice.

The children look at the moments when people showed compassion to Jesus. They also look at how He felt sadness and struggled. Through prayer and quiet reflection, children think about how these moments connect to their own lives. This helps them to understand that Lent is not only about remembering the past. It is about choosing to show compassion every day and recognising Jesus understands our struggles and sorrows .



By following Jesus' journey, our pupils are learning what it means to bring faith, hope, and love to the world around them.

St Margaret of Scotland: *Big Lent Walk*



School Spotlight



St Michael's Shines 'Grease' Takes Centre Stage

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School Spotlight

I had the pleasure of visiting St Michael's Catholic School on Wednesday, 11th March 2026, to watch their fantastic school production of 'Grease'.

"I couldn't be more thrilled with our school's dazzling production of Grease."

- Georgie Hardiman, Head of Performing Arts

I was truly moved by the joy it brought to the students involved and by how inclusive the production was. As a former drama teacher, I know how much time, dedication, and effort go into staging a school show, and I wanted to congratulate the Performing Arts team at St Michael's on such a wonderful achievement.

Georgie Hardiman said: "Since October 2025, our incredible cast have been rehearsing several



nights a week to bring Rydell High to life. Their dedication meant every moment, from the slick swagger of Danny Zuko to the sweet sincerity of Sandy, shone brighter than Greased Lightnin'! The Pink Ladies were as sharp as ever, the TBirds had style to spare, and the whole cast proved they were truly "born to hand jive." Whether delivering high energy showstoppers or those "Hopelessly Devoted" hearttugging scenes, our students worked so hard and supported each other every step of the way. They didn't just perform Grease, they owned it, and I couldn't be prouder of this team."

I look forward to attending the next production and am certain there are many more great things to come!

Collette Cooper
Director of Training and Development



Events this Term at St Peter's Catholic Primary School



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

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