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## Education Department Newsletter

**8th December 2025**



**Joan McCarthy**  
Director of Education

As we enter the second week of Advent, we are invited to reflect on its message of *faith, preparation, and intentional hope*. Advent encourages us to pause amidst the demands of leadership and to consider how we create space—within our schools, our communities, and our own hearts—for Christ's peace to take root.

In your schools, this message is lived out each day. Through your guidance, Advent is not only marked in displays and liturgies but embodied in the kindness, generosity, and compassion shown by pupils and staff. Your leadership continues to foster communities where even the simplest acts of care become powerful signs of hope.

I would also like to extend a sincere **thank you** to those schools who have notified us of visits by MPs. It is wonderful to see your work being recognised locally and nationally, and to see our schools building strong relationships with key supporters. Thank you as well to those who have taken the time to send in write-ups of these visits.

You may have noticed that the CES website is now featuring some of these stories—please do take a look at the articles highlighting the visits to **Sacred Heart School, Liverpool, Our Lady Immaculate School, Liverpool, and Carmel College**. It is uplifting to see your work celebrated so widely.

I have also loved receiving your photos and updates of how you are marking Advent across the archdiocese. Your creativity, prayerfulness, and commitment to nurturing Catholic life shine through each one. Please keep them coming—they are a joy to share.

As we continue through this second week of Advent, may its message inspire and strengthen you in your leadership and in the communities you serve.

Joan McCarthy  
**Director of Education**

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**Ben McMullen**  
Deputy Director of Education

**Education Department Calendar 2025-26**

Please find attached the latest version of our calendar of events, including booking links.

**Calendar 2025-26**

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**Michael Boland**  
School Estates and Admissions

**School Based Nursery Capital Grants**

The closing date for applications will be 11th December 2025 and successful schools will be notified by April 2026. Thank you to the schools who have contacted us directly to let us know they are applying. Can we ask that you **send a copy of your application to us for reference**. That will

help us with the schools that are successful and will also help to form a database for future projects if the funding remains and continues into future years. As part of phase 3, local authorities will be invited to develop multi-year funding proposals (2027–2030). The DfE will publish separate guidance to support this process in early 2026.

### **Education Estates Strategy**

Following the successful launch of the strategy with school leaders, governors and business managers we would like to thank all for their attendance and interest in the strategy. As we indicated during the launch, the strategy will roll out in due course and we will keep you notified of any significant milestones as they occur. We are able to share with you the **dates of the meeting of the Education Estates Group** (EEG) which meets regularly to consider projects and approve funding. These dates will follow in due course.

We **do not need to have any extra information** from you at this point as we are working with area surveyors to update them on the strategy and the support they will be able to offer. As we have said at the launch, we do not expect everything to be in place immediately.

### **Admissions 2026 2027**

We will have been in contact with schools in each of the local authorities to advise of any changes we may consider to be appropriate in the light of comments made during consultation. We will be working with those schools who have not yet completed consultation to ensure this will be completed by 31st January. The latest date we advise to allow completion would be to start on **15th December** to allow 6 weeks to pass for consultation. Therefore, any documentation should be sent out on **Friday 12th December**. We will be writing to schools directly in due course.

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**Ged Preston, Steve Coyle and Vikki Borlase**  
Secondary School Improvement Team



## **Exam Results Portal Online Training Sessions**

### **\*\*New sessions added for Pearson/Edexcel\*\***

We have arranged online training with exam boards regarding their portals for results that allow you to see how your school, subject, class and individual students have performed.

Please find below details of upcoming sessions with AQA and Pearson  
Further details will follow regarding sessions with OCR.

### **AQA Data Insights 10.00am on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December or 3.30pm on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December**

An option of two slots,

10.30am until 11.30am on 9<sup>th</sup> December

3.30pm until 4.30pm on 11<sup>th</sup> December

[Please book here](#)

### **Pearson/Edexcel Results Plus 10.00am or 3.45pm on Wednesday 10th December**

An option of two slots:

10.00am until 11.00am on 10th December

3.45pm until 4.30pm on 10th December

[Please book here](#)

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### **December Bulletin**

You can access December's Secondary School Improvement bulletin, shared by Steve Coyle [here](#)

This covers updates for:

Safeguarding Leads  
Anti-bullying Leads  
Behaviour Leads  
Attendance Leads  
Mental Health and Wellbeing Leads

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## **Access Accountancy: Virtual work experience**

### **Grant Thornton Access Accountancy: Virtual work experience**

**(Apply by 12th December)**

Access Accountancy is our virtual work experience programme, designed to provide students and pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds with insight into the world of accountancy and professional services.

The programme has been developed in alignment with the organisation Access Accountancy, a collaboration of more than 25 organisations and

professional bodies across the sector that aims to make the accountancy profession more representative of our wider society.

**The programme will run for three days between 16th and 18th February, 2026 and is held remotely to improve accessibility.**

Access Accountancy is a programme specifically designed for students and pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds who are interested in a career in the accounting profession. We understand that access to work experience opportunities can be challenging for individuals from these backgrounds, and we want to address that. That's why this work experience programme is only open to individuals who meet one of the following criteria:

- You are or have been eligible for free school meals.
- You attend a school that is above the regional average in terms of the number of students eligible for free school meals.
- You would be the first member of your immediate family to attend university.

96% of 2025's participants would recommend the programme to other students, with 90% also stating they felt a positive change in their preparedness for the world of work after completing the programme.

By holding the work experience virtually, this means the programme can be accessed by anyone across the UK in both urban and rural environments.

The programme is open to year 12 to 13 and secondary five to six students who attend non-selective state schools and meet one of the above criteria.

You must also be available for all three days of the programme.

### **What to expect on the programme**

As well as meeting likeminded peers and inspirational leaders at Grant Thornton, you can expect to receive:

- Pre- and post-programme support
- Interactive insight into accountancy and building a career in professional services
- Business skills development (teamwork, communication, confidence, networking and presentation skills)
- Employability skills and careers advice

### **How to apply**

**[Applications are now open until 12th December, 2025 to join the three-day programme from 16th to 18th February, 2026 via this link](#)**

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## Physics Partners: What Lights Up Your Love of Physics Competition

Following the success of their inaugural competition, Physics Partners are once again inviting Year 12 students, individually or in teams of up to three, to create a 3-minute video showcasing what inspires their love of physics.

The video could explore anything from tackling Net Zero challenges and uncovering the physics behind gaming, to understanding medical imaging or imagining the future of space exploration.

The top 10 finalist teams will be invited to an overnight visit to King's College, Cambridge for the Prize Event, where they'll present their videos, take part in Q&A sessions, and enjoy inspiring physics talks and activities.

### Prizes

- Each finalist team: £600 in Amazon vouchers (£400 for solo entries)
- £500s worth of physics equipment for their school
- The overall winning team will also receive funding to visit CERN!

**Eligibility:** Year 12 students from state schools and colleges in England

**Deadline:** 24 February 2026, 11:59 pm

For full details and how to apply,  
visit: <https://physicspartners.com/competition/>



**Funded Training Opportunities for Staff in Liverpool Schools**

[You can access resources and all free training here](#)

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Secondary School Improvement Flyer

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**Ged Preston and Sandra Martin**  
Primary School Improvement Team

Dear Colleagues,

On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December we are running day 1 of a 2 day course to support schools in building a school culture that supports disadvantaged pupils in achieving successful outcomes and gaining skills needed for successful education experience.

It will support the production of the pupil premium statement and consider what are appropriate markers for success. Additionally it will support and guide schools in identifying their next steps towards success for their disadvantaged pupils.

Please book your place here:-

Day 1 – Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025, 9.30am – 3.30pm, St Margaret Clitherow Centre - [Disadvantaged Students - Ensuring inclusion, securing outcomes \(day 1\) \(15-Dec-2025\) · ChurchSuite Events](#)

Day 2 – Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026, 9.30am – 3.30pm, St Margaret Clitherow Centre - [Disadvantaged Students - Ensuring inclusion, securing outcomes \(day 2\) \(05-May-2026\) · ChurchSuite Events](#)

*Profile of course facilitator:-*

*Lisa Littler has worked in education for 27 years, including 16 years as a Headteacher. She is a qualified teacher, holds the National Primary Qualification for Headship and has a Masters of Education Degree. During her career, she has successfully led two contrasting primary schools - leading one of these from Special Measures to Outstanding Ofsted judgements. Her most recent school became a National Support School. She was also an Early Years Foundation Stage Moderator for 9 years and a National Leader of Education for 6 years. Her highly successful leadership skills have led to her expertise being sought by schools and Local Authorities from across the north west.*

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**Pat Peel, Julie Rourke and Julia Ashton**  
Primary School RE Advisers





## **Advent Resources**

Please find below links for advent resources:-

### **CAFOD**

<https://cafod.org.uk/education/primary-teaching-resources/advent-for-children>

### **Liturgy Office**

<https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar/Seasons/Documents/AdventPP.shtml>

### **Mission Together**

<https://missiontogether.org.uk/calendar/advent-resources/>

### **Busted Halo**

<https://bustedhalo.com/advent-resources>

### **Bible Society**

<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/search?q=advent>

### **The God who speaks**

<https://www.godwhospeaks.uk/advent/>

### **Book resources**

<https://www.paulineuk.org/browse?Keywords=advent>

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## **Fundraising for Hosanna House and Children's Pilgrimage Trust**

HCPT is a registered charity offering pilgrimage holidays to [Lourdes](#) in the south of France for disabled and disadvantaged people from [around the](#)

[UK](#) and further afield.

Every [Easter](#) around 1,000 disabled and disadvantaged children enjoy a fun and safe week in Lourdes, staying in hotels with their volunteer helpers.

Each [Summer](#) over 1,500 people, many of them with disabilities or life limiting conditions, enjoy a week at HCPT's Hosanna House in Bartrès near Lourdes.

If you are thinking about fundraising for a charity this year or planning ahead, they would welcome any of your support. They are always looking for willing volunteers too.

The main website has a shop with lots of Christmas cards, gift wrap etc... all at very reasonable prices!

There will be a local HCPT group in your area – you can find this on ...

<https://www.hcpt.org.uk/>

<https://www.hcpt.org.uk/fundraise-for-hcpt>

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**Deacon Paul Mannings**  
Secondary School RE Adviser

[p.mannings@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:p.mannings@rcaol.org.uk)

**When booking diocesan CPD events please see the calendar and brochure for details and links.**

**New Leaders of Religious Education**

The next gathering is on Tuesday 13th January, 9.30am-12.00pm and as we only have two new members this year, situated in adjacent schools, we shall repeat the arrangement for a school-based morning.

**Religious Education for Non-Specialists**

This takes place on Thursday 15th January, 1.30-3.30pm. Please send any areas you wish to be covered as soon as you can.

**Religious Education in Key Stage 4**

This is a full day of training on Tuesday 10th March, 9.30am-3.30pm.

**Aspiring Leaders of Religious Education**

Our accredited course has been re-scheduled to begin on Wednesday 25th March: 1.30-3.30pm.

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**CATHOLIC CERTIFICATE IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
CCRS**

**Years 1 and 2**

Sessions begin again in the week of 12th January. All are virtual during the Spring Term.

**Support**

Please continue to send us any questions or queries about forthcoming assignments, or indeed any CCRS matter until 19th December, after which we shall be available again from 5th January.

**CCRS Contacts:**

All academic, attendance, progress  
issues: Dcn Paul Mannings  
[p.mannings@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:p.mannings@rcaol.org.uk)

Finance, registration and all  
contact details renewals: Paul Crilly  
[p.crilly@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:p.crilly@rcaol.org.uk)

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**News from around the Archdiocese**



### **Winners of Christmas Card Competition**

We are delighted that with 204 votes, Yukti from St Alban's Catholic Primary School in Warrington won the Primary section of the competition, meanwhile, Orla from St Edward's College in Liverpool, with 147 votes, has won the Secondary competition. We are notifying the winning schools.

Well done to both of our winners and thank you to everybody who entered. You have contributed to what has been a fantastic competition this year.

We look forward to seeing what next year brings!



Secondary Winner - Orla, St Edward's College, Liverpool





Primary Winner - Yukti, St Alban's Catholic Primary School, Warrington

### Close of the Jubilee Year

As the Jubilee Year of 2025 draws to a close, we invite all schools across our archdiocese to join together and mark the end of this special celebration.

On Friday, 12 December, we encourage every school to pause and reflect on this year of hope. The impact of thousands of young people in our archdiocese taking part in this shared act of reflection on the same day will be a powerful sign of unity and gratitude.

A video message from Archbishop John Sherrington is available. There are two versions – one for [primary schools](#) and one for [secondary](#). We suggest following the video with a short liturgy or prayer service to give thanks for the past 12 months.

If your school cannot participate on 12 December, please consider holding your reflection on the closest possible day.

Thank you to each and every one of you who have helped make this Jubilee Year so meaningful for our young people.

We would love to see photographs of how your school has celebrated the end of the Jubilee Year, including photographs of students watching the video message from Archbishop John Sherrington. Please send any photographs or videos to [communications@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:communications@rcaol.org.uk) or tag us in our socials:

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[X](#)

[TikTok](#)

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### **Survey on X**

As Joan has mentioned in a previous edition of the newsletter, the Archdiocese of Liverpool is considering its presence on X (formally Twitter) due to ethical reasons.

We are aware that a number of our schools are active on the social media platform, so we wanted to gather feedback from our schools on this before we came to a conclusion.

We would welcome you to complete this survey so we can gauge the opinions of our schools. [Survey for schools on their use of X \(Twitter\) – Fill out form](#)

If you have any further questions, please contact communications manager Lizzie Williams on [e.williams@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:e.williams@rcaol.org.uk)

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### **Christmas Card Appeal**

The Archdiocese of Liverpool's Justice & Peace Commission is once again

inviting parishes, schools, and individuals to take part in the Christmas Card Appeal for Christians in the Holy Land. This simple act of sending a card offers hope, solidarity, and a reminder that these communities are not forgotten.

Archbishop John Sherrington has warmly encouraged participation this year, noting that receiving a card can bring “hope and joy to a family, especially where the Christian community is small and fragile.”

Find out how to get involved: <https://archdioceseofliverpool.org/4ou8m1g>

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### **From Widnes to Westminster: St Bede’s pupils craft card from Metro Mayor to PM!**

Pupils at St Bede’s Catholic Junior School, Widnes, have been invited to design the Liverpool City Region Metro Mayor’s official Christmas card for 2025 — a card that will be sent to dignitaries across the UK, including the Prime Minister.

Headteacher Faith Housley explained that the invitation follows a previous success six years ago, when one of the school’s pupils won the original competition.

“Six years ago, one of our children won the Metro Mayor’s Christmas Card competition, and since then Steve Rotheram has kept in touch with the school,” said Miss Housley. “I’ve also met with him to discuss education in the northwest, alongside another Catholic headteacher from Knowsley.”

This year, pupils in Key Stage 2 (ages 7–11) are busy designing their own festive cards, inspired by both the joy of Christmas and what makes the Liverpool City Region special.

“We’ve asked the children to think about everything that makes our area unique, as well as the true meaning of Christmas for families,” Miss Housley explained.

The school staff will shortlist entries down to their top 10 designs before Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Chief Executive Katherine Fairclough select the final winner.

The winning design will be used as the official Metro Mayor’s Christmas card, which is sent to dignitaries across the UK — including PM Keir Starmer.

Mayor Rotheram will visit St Bede’s on Thursday 18 December to announce the winner in person and congratulate the children on their fantastic work.



This special project highlights not only the artistic talent of St Bede's pupils, but also the strong link between Catholic education, community, and civic life across the Liverpool City Region.

Congratulations to St Bede's Catholic Junior School students – we can't wait to see your designs!

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### **Congratulations to Deanne!**

Warm congratulations to **Deanne**, School Business Manager at **Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School, Seaforth**, on winning the *ChurchMarketplace Hamper* at our recent School Business Managers' meeting.

Well done, Deanne — a lovely and well-deserved surprise!



### **Christmas communications - we need your help!**

The archdiocesan communications team would like your help with their social media content this Christmas.

As per previous years, we would like to show Christmas through the eyes of

our students, so we are asking schools to send in any questions that their pupils may have about Christmas or Advent e.g. what is Advent, why are the candles on the Advent wreath different colours, why do we have midnight Mass etc.

These questions will then be answered by clergy and will be used in a video for our social media channels.

The questions can be in two formats:

**1. Video of the pupil asking the question (videos can be filmed vertically on a smartphone. Don't worry about editing the clip, we can do that before publication if needed)**

or

**2. Written format**

All questions should be sent with the name and school year of the pupil and include parental permission that the video and/or the child's name can be used on our social media channels.

Please send any questions to [communications@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:communications@rcaol.org.uk). The content will be used throughout Advent and we will tag your school into the post.

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To view current school vacancies, please click on the link below:-

**Vacancies**

If you would like to add a vacancy or a news article to the newsletter, please email [aes@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:aes@rcaol.org.uk)

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**Catholic Pic Newsletter**

If your school would like a hard copy of the Catholic Pic Newsletter please contact [communications@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:communications@rcaol.org.uk)

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Missed the last newsletter? Click on the button below to view it!

**Education Department Newsletter W.C. 01/12/2025**

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Thank you for taking the time to read the newsletter. Wishing you every blessing for the week ahead.



## St Margaret Clitherow Centre

Liverpool Archdiocesan Office | Croxteth Drive | Liverpool | L17 1AA



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