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## Education Department Newsletter

**23rd February 2026**

**Joan McCarthy**  
Director of Education

Welcome back to the new term. I do hope you managed to find some time to rest with your family and friends during the break.

The Lenten season is now upon us, with Lent having begun last Wednesday, Ash Wednesday. I wish you every blessing in your prayer, fasting and almsgiving during this special season.

As we journey through this term, we are invited to walk more closely with Christ as we prepare for the joy of Easter. Lent offers us a precious opportunity to pause, to reflect and to renew our faith. In the busyness of school life, may this be a time of quiet growth - a season in which hope is strengthened, hearts are opened, and our communities are drawn ever closer together in faith and service. May the weeks ahead lead us gently towards the light and promise of the Resurrection.

Thank you to the majority of our schools and colleges who have already signed up for the CAFOD Lent Challenge. It is not too late to do so. We are very grateful for your continued support of the many different charities, and for responding so generously to the many requests you receive each year.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter and for ensuring it is distributed to your staff and governors.

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**Ben McMullen**  
Deputy Director of Education

### **Headteachers' Spirituality Day: 'Space for Grace'**

This year's Spirituality Day for Headteachers is fast approaching. The day takes place on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March at Theodore House at Stonyhurst College in the Ribble Valley.

As a contrast to our cathedral day last year, we are offering a retreat experience rather than a conference, led by Sr Sheila McNamara, RSCJ. Sheila is member of the religious order 'Religious of the Sacred Heart' ([www.societysacredheart.org](http://www.societysacredheart.org)) and works in spiritual accompaniment, supervision, and leading days of reflection.

Please note that there are only 80 places available for this day. A limited number of rooms are available for overnight accommodation – please contact Ben for further details.

Thurs 12<sup>th</sup> Spirituality Day for 9.30am- Theodore House, All schools and [Book here](#)  
 March Headteachers 3.30pm Stonyhurst colleges

### Education Department Calendar 2025-26

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

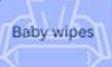
#### Calendar 2025-26

### Lenten Giving Calendar

Please find below a helpful guide for people to gather useful items for their local food bank or SVP this Lent. These are some of the most asked for items at food banks - following this calendar this Lent will provide a wonderful donation ready for your local food bank in time for Holy Week which will really help local families.



The Archdiocese of Liverpool is inviting you to collect items through Lent by following this calendar. The items you collect will then be ready for you to donate to your local food bank ready for Holy Week.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
16 February	17  Shrove Tuesday	18  Ash Wednesday	19  Pasta	20  Cereal	21  Tea bags	22  Shampoo
23  Soup	24  Rice	25  Baby wipes	26  Body wash	27  Pasta sauce	28  Sanitary products	1 March  Beans & pulses
2  Tinned tomatoes	3  Instant noodles	4  Biscuits	5  Toilet paper	6  Fruit juice	7  Toothbrush/ toothpaste	8  Washing up liquid
9  UHT Milk	10  Soap	11  Tinned fruit	12  Hand sanitiser	13  Coffee	14  Laundry powder	15  Squash
16  Deodorant	17  Instant mash	18  Crackers	19  Cereal bars	20  Sleeping bag or roll mat	21  Bag for life	22  Easter Egg
Time to donate - Time to donate						29  Palm Sunday
30 Pray for those receiving your donation			1 April	2  Maundy Thursday	3  Good Friday	4  Holy Saturday
			5  Easter Sunday			

### Update: Archdiocese of Liverpool's presence on X

Thank you to our schools who took part in our communications survey regarding the school's use of X (formally Twitter). The results of the survey demonstrated that a number of our schools have moved or are planning to move away from the channel due to ethical and moral reasons. A high percentage of our schools (79%), would follow us if we removed ourselves from X.

It has been decided that due to these reasons, the archdiocese will no longer be posting on X.

The account will temporarily remain open with a message directing users to our other active social media accounts.

If your school would like any support with moving away from X, or training on how to use other social media platforms, please contact our communications manager Lizzie Williams on: [e.williams@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:e.williams@rcaol.org.uk)

**Gill Donohoe**  
Governance Officer

## ACT [Action Counters Terrorism] Awareness

Two sessions on ACT Awareness for our schools (senior leaders or business managers), have been organised. The session is to consider what 'you' can do to reduce your risk and mitigate against the impact of an attack.

You will be familiar with putting together a plan for your site and will know how to address many of the requirements around safeguarding and safety, but you may not be so familiar with security issues and terrorism.

The advice being shared during this session is intended to be a guide for you to seek to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack at your site, its contents, the people using it and the adjacent public areas.

**Link to sign up - [ACT \[Action Counters Terrorism\] Awareness \(02-Mar-2026 and 03-Mar-2026\)](#)**

**Monday 2nd March 2026 - 10am till 12noon**  
**St Joseph's Parish Hall, Wrightington, WN6 9PA**  
**[To be delivered by Greater Manchester Police]**

**Tuesday 3rd March 2026 - 10am till 12noon**  
**St Margaret Clitherow Centre, Liverpool, L17 1AA**  
**[To be delivered by Merseyside Police]**

The sessions are, 'a facilitated awareness presentation to a general audience, which are designed to raise awareness of the threat from terrorism, and actions which can be taken to protect themselves, and their organisation from, or during an attack'.

It does not matter which session you sign up for as the message is the same from both Greater Manchester and Merseyside Police.

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## Ged Preston, Steve Coyle and Vikki Borlase

Secondary School Improvement Team



### Upcoming meetings

Mon 2 Mar 2026

09:00 – 11:30 **HoD Psychology Workshop**

Venue: The Wrightington Hotel, Moss Ln, Wrightington, Wigan WN6 9PB

[Please book here](#)

13:30 - 16:00 **HoD Art and Design Workshop**

Venue: The Wrightington Hotel, Moss Ln, Wrightington, Wigan WN6 9PB

[Please book here](#)

13:30 - 16:00 **HoD Dance Workshop**

Venue: Saints Peter and Paul Catholic High School, Highfield Rd, Widnes WA8 7DW

[Please book here](#)

Tue 3 Mar 2026

9.00-15:30 **New to SENDCo (Primary and Secondary colleagues) Session 2**

Venue: The Wrightington Hotel, Moss Ln, Wrightington, Wigan WN6 9PB

[Please book here](#)

15:30-17:00 **Aspiring SENDCo Course (Primary and Secondary colleagues) Session 2**

Venue: The Wrightington Hotel, Moss Ln, Wrightington, Wigan WN6 9PB

[Please book here](#)

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**Practical session with  
Kevin Edward Turner, Artistic Director**

This session will equip teachers with a practical toolkit of tasks and choreographic approaches, carefully designed to unlock students' creativity and spark their imagination. Company Chameleon will share their extensive knowledge and expertise, guiding teachers through different creative processes and exploring how these tools and ideas can be applied to specific themes and the wider curriculum. While the workshops do not focus explicitly on the GCSE syllabus, the creative processes explored are transferable and highly relevant to all KS3 and KS4 qualifications and exam boards.

[Please use this link to register](#)

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**Secondary School Choir Competition**

The Schools Singing Programme would like to invite all secondary schools within the Archdiocese of Liverpool to enter their school choir in the Annual Secondary Schools' Choir Competition.

This year's competition will be judged over two rounds:-

**Round 1:** Video Recording of your choir

(submitted by Friday 6th March)

**Round 2:** Grand final, hosted in the Crypt Concert Room at Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, at which each finalist will perform on their own and as part of a collaborative.

(evening of Thursday 21st May)

Since its reintroduction, the competition has seen three different winners.

**2023 - St Bede's Catholic High School, Ormskirk**

**2024 - St Edwards College, Liverpool**

**2025 - St John Bosco Arts College, Liverpool**

Will we see a new winner this year? Or can St John Bosco retain the title?

**Please follow this link for all of the [detailed information you will need to know.](#)**

**And follow this link to [sign up now!](#)**

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

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

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

**Securing Strong Progression for Pupils: Using Assessment Effectively in and Beyond Lessons**

12th March 9:30-12:30, St Margaret Clitherow Centre

A 3-hour session for senior, middle and subject leaders to develop a whole school approach to assessment considering how strategies can be used within lessons and beyond the lessons. Leaders will share and consider examples of good practice so that they can develop new systems and approaches or refine existing good practice.

[Securing Strong Progression for Pupils: Using Assessment Effectively in and Beyond Lessons \(12-Mar-2026\) · ChurchSuite Events](#)

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**Headteacher Quads**

We are inviting expressions of interest for our new Headteacher Quads initiative, launching later this year. Each Headteacher will visit the schools within their Quad. The aim is to create small groups of headteachers from different local authorities so they can visit one another's schools, share experiences, explore different contexts, and support each other's leadership journey. Before the visits begin, we will hold a short virtual meeting in the final term of this academic year to introduce each quad, and give time for groups to agree possible dates, focus areas, and what they would like to see or share during their visits. Please complete this short form if you would like to take part. Your responses will help us match schools in the most meaningful way. Thank you for your interest in supporting this new collaborative opportunity across our Archdiocesan family of schools.

EOI form: [Headteacher Quads – Fill in form](#)

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**Early Years Conference for Practitioners with Ruth Swailes**

17th March 9:30-15:30, St Margaret Clitherow Centre

Join us for an inspiring conference designed for Early Years practitioners, bringing together the latest research and real-world practice to explore how we can offer the highest quality education for our youngest children in an ever-changing landscape. Ruth Swailes will share valuable insights into child development, current research findings, and a wealth of practical strategies that delegates can implement immediately.

[Early Years Conference with Ruth Swailes for Practitioners \(17-Mar-2026\) · ChurchSuite Events](#)

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



**Lunar New Year LIVE Assembly!** 🏠🔥

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February, 9.15-9.45am

Join us for a special online event as we explore how the Lunar New Year is celebrated. We'll learn about traditions, stories and symbols, and hear from two children who will be sharing their own experiences of celebrating this special time.

A lovely opportunity for pupils to discover how different cultures welcome a new year with joy, family, and hope!

**Suitable for:** Children in KS1 and KS2

**Cost:** Free for Picture News schools

[Register here](#)

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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. Unless otherwise stated most courses take place here at the St Margaret Clitherow Centre, with any exceptions clearly noted.**

**Assistant Leads – Seconds in Department**

We had an excellent session last week based on individual school matters, training needs and CSI matters. Several people who could not be there will receive an invitation to updates online.

### Cluster Meetings for Departmental Leads

The February gatherings were excellent, and minutes will be sent directly to schools. Thanks too for the hospitality from Sacred Heart College, St Mary's Catholic High School Leyland, and of course our own St Margaret Clitherow Centre.

### The God Who Speaks – Additional Lenten Resources

**A Different Perspective: Poems to make you think and pray** - [www.godwhospeaks.uk/different-perspective-poems-to-make-you-think-and-pray/](http://www.godwhospeaks.uk/different-perspective-poems-to-make-you-think-and-pray/)

*Fr Mark Skelton has written 5 beautiful poems inspired by the gospels for Lent.*

**Lent Express: Short Reflections in Busy Times** - [www.godwhospeaks.uk/lent-express-short-reflections-in-busy-times/](http://www.godwhospeaks.uk/lent-express-short-reflections-in-busy-times/)

*Fleur offers simple meditations on the seven Sundays of Lent with prayers and images.*

### Jubilee Year of St Francis - On Love for the Poor

*Use our 'Dilexi Te' Bible Resource in parishes this Lent* - [www.godwhospeaks.uk/dilexi-te-parish-bible-resource/](http://www.godwhospeaks.uk/dilexi-te-parish-bible-resource/)

**All our Lent resources, posters, videos and reflections** - [www.godwhospeaks.uk/lent-and-eastertide-resources/](http://www.godwhospeaks.uk/lent-and-eastertide-resources/)

### From Rainbows/Spectrum (Bereavement Care)

This is the final call. If you are not a Rainbows/Spectrum school and would like to know more about our work, there will be facilitator training on 18<sup>th</sup> March at the Resource Centre, Maricourt, Maghull. If you are a Rainbows/Spectrum school and need additional facilitators trained, please contact me directly. In both cases, please contact Deacon Paul Mannings directly for details.

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## CATHOLIC CERTIFICATE IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### CCRS

- Marked assignments for Hebrew Scriptures and Church have now been sent back to you. Thanks for the massive timely completion which has been matched by our scheduled returns.
- Please keep an eye on the schedule for dates of specialist modules during March.
- Whilst we don't have many absences, in fairness to the majority of 100% attenders, sessions missed will have to be made up to qualify. We are experiencing a rise in notifications about cameras not working or people joining and remaining off camera. These too are classed as absences to be made up. The quality of the course cannot be compromised, and this fact is recognised by so many of you.
- All certificates for completion of CCRS have now been posted. We have held those belonging to candidates who wish to attend our Mass and awards presentation during the summer term.

### 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

### St Joseph CMAT Governor Conference

All governors are welcome to attend the SJCMAT Governor Conference on Tuesday 10th March, 3.30-5.30pm at Notre Dame Catholic Academy. To reserve a place, please book [here](#).

# SJCMAT Governor Conference

**Date:**

Tuesday  
10th March

**Time:**

3.30pm  
-5.30pm

**Location:**

Notre Dame Catholic Academy,  
Great Homer Street,  
Liverpool

**Topics:**



The Renewed Ofsted  
Framework, report cards  
and what this means  
for Governors

Led by Jo Olsson,  
Senior HMI



The SJCMAT Trust  
Self-Evaluation, Improvement  
and Quality Assurance  
Framework

Led by Directors of  
Education & Trust  
Headteachers

 [Click here to reserve your spot!](#)

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 [j.ball@rcaol.org.uk](mailto:j.ball@rcaol.org.uk)

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

[Catholic Pic Newsletter](#)

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

[Education Department Newsletter W.C. 9/2/2026](#)

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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