



**St Thomas**  
Catholic Academies Trust

# Half-Term

# Newsletter

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# A Message from our CEO: *Mark McLaughlin*

During this Pentecost term, we continue in the light of Easter and with renewed hope for the weeks ahead. Pentecost reminds us of the gift of the Holy Spirit — the presence of God that strengthens, guides and inspires us in our mission. It is a season of courage, renewal and purpose, reminding us that we are called not simply to work in isolation, but to journey together as a community of faith.

That spirit was powerfully present at our recent One Hope – Fully Alive Day. It was a real joy to gather as one Trust community — colleagues from every school and every role, united by our shared mission and values. The day gave us an opportunity to pause, reflect and reconnect with why we do what we do. Throughout the conference, there was a real sense of energy, encouragement and belonging. It was a reminder that while we serve in different schools and in different roles, we are united by one shared mission and a common commitment to the children and communities we serve.



Throughout the day, there was a strong sense of what makes our Trust distinctive. We reflected on the importance of Catholic education at a time when our schools face real challenges nationally. Yet we were reminded again that what we offer matters deeply. Ours is not simply a mission about outcomes, though they matter greatly. It is about forming the whole person — ensuring that every child is known and loved, supported to grow in confidence and character, and enabled to become the person God calls them to be.

**Our mission remains simple, but profound:**

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

This mission is lived out every day across our schools through our values of Faith, Hope and Love. We see it in classrooms where curiosity and aspiration are encouraged. We see it in the relationships that make children feel safe, valued and cared for. We see it in the quiet dedication of staff across every role who work tirelessly to support our young people and communities. Our One Hope Day reminded us that we are stronger together and that by working collaboratively across our Trust, we can provide greater opportunities, stronger support, and better outcomes for all.

This term has also brought much to celebrate across our Trust. We are delighted that St Michael’s Catholic School has now received a highly successful published Ofsted outcome, including several strong gradings that reflect the sustained hard work and commitment of leaders, staff, governors and pupils. We are also incredibly proud of the recent inspections at St Joseph’s Catholic High School in Slough and Holy Family Catholic Primary School in Slough, and we look forward to being able to share those outcomes more fully in due course.

Alongside this, we are excited to see significant investment continuing across our Trust through new building and development programmes. At St Vincent's Catholic Primary School in Houghton Regis and Holy Family Catholic Primary School in Slough, exciting projects are underway that will provide more nursery spaces, allowing us to serve even more children and families within our communities. These developments reflect our long-term commitment to ensuring that children are able to benefit from an excellent Catholic education from the very earliest stages of their journey.

As we move further into this term, we also enter an important period for many of our pupils as examination season begins. Across our secondary schools, especially, students have been preparing with determination, resilience and focus. Behind this preparation stands the extraordinary commitment of staff and families who encourage and guide our young people each day. We know that examinations can often bring pressure and anxiety, but they are also moments where young people demonstrate courage, perseverance and belief in themselves.

As a Trust, we want every child to know that they are valued not simply for outcomes, but for who they are. Our role is to help them flourish academically, spiritually and personally — equipping them not only for examinations, but for life. We keep all of our pupils, particularly those undertaking examinations this term, in our prayers and wish them every success in the weeks ahead.

As we continue through this Pentecost term, may the Spirit continue to guide us with wisdom, courage and hope. May we continue to live out our values in all that we do. And may we continue, together, to ensure that every child entrusted to our care becomes fully alive.

**MARK MCLAUGHLIN, CEO**

*St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust*



# *Governance:* A Rewarding Way to Make a Difference

Our Catholic schools within the Trust are proud to serve their communities, providing children with a high quality education rooted firmly in Gospel values. Behind every successful school is a strong framework of governance, made up of dedicated volunteers working in partnership with school leaders and staff.

At the school level, governing bodies play a crucial role. While our schools are accountable to external bodies such as Ofsted and the Diocese, governors provide the first and most important level of local accountability. They help set the strategic direction of the school, ensure funding is used wisely for the benefit of all pupils, and hold headteachers and senior leaders to account for standards of teaching, learning and wellbeing. In our Catholic schools, governors also have a particular responsibility for nurturing and protecting the Catholic ethos that sits at the heart of each school community.

Within the Trust, governing bodies are made up of different types of governors, each bringing valuable insight. Foundation Governors focus on safeguarding the Catholic character of the school and ensuring decisions reflect our shared mission and values. Staff Governors contribute professional knowledge and an understanding of daily school life, while Parent Governors bring the perspectives of families, ensuring the pupil and parent voice is clearly heard. Together, these roles create balanced, informed and effective governing bodies.

Beyond individual schools, the Trust is also overseen by a Trust Board of Directors. The Directors provide strategic leadership, oversight and accountability across all schools within the Trust. Importantly, like school governors, our Trust Directors are also volunteers, freely giving their time, skills and expertise in the service of Catholic education. Their commitment ensures strong governance, clarity of vision and a shared sense of purpose across the Trust.

We are fortunate to be supported by a thriving governance volunteer community of more than 120 people. They bring a wealth of experience and knowledge from their own working and personal backgrounds, and their numbers include people with experience in education, HR, health and safety, IT and general business knowledge, etc.

This wide network of committed individuals demonstrates the strength of collective service and the powerful impact governance can have when people come together with a shared belief in education and faith.



Those involved in governance consistently describe it as deeply rewarding. It offers the opportunity to support the mission of Catholic education, help shape the futures of young people, and give back to the community in a meaningful way. Many also value the personal and professional development the role brings, including strengthened leadership, strategic thinking and teamwork skills.

Most importantly, whether serving as a Foundation, Staff or Parent Governor, or as a Trust Director, governance offers the chance to make a real difference—supporting our schools today and helping them to flourish for generations to come.

If you would like to find out how you can support governance within any of our school communities, please get in touch: [mgilmartin@stcat.co.uk](mailto:mgilmartin@stcat.co.uk)

## **MAXINE GILMARTIN**

*Company Secretary, Lead  
Governance Professional and Data  
Protection Officer*

# One Hope Fully Alive STCAT Conference

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The plan to bring together the staff from every school in our Trust for a conference was an ambitious one. When it was proposed, two years ago, it is fair to say that none of us quite envisaged the incredible event which took place at the Wycombe Swan Theatre on Monday, 13 April.

We aimed to create a fast-paced day with plenty of variety, where staff could experience a sense of belonging and find space to reflect on their part in our mission, *'The glory of God is a human being fully alive'*, and the values of **Faith, Hope and Love**.

It was important from the start that all staff would be invited and invested in on this day of celebration – both teaching and support staff – because it takes every member of staff in a school to build the culture and ethos that make our schools authentically Catholic.

Both CJM Music and RISE Theatre are well known for their skilled leadership at conferences of this kind. Inviting two former students, Harry Clark and Juhaim Rasul Choudhury, proved to be popular with participants. One member of staff said, *'It was lovely to hear two young people speak so passionately and confidently about their faith.'* The input by David Wells was described as *'inspirational'* and *'poignant'*.

All in all, the day went incredibly smoothly and was a resounding success. We are sure that the effects of the conference will be felt by pupils in every school, as staff left feeling enthused by what they had seen and heard: **fully alive!**

**JANE PORTER**

*Trust Leader of Chaplaincy*





# We Will Rock You

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I had the pleasure of watching the opening night of 'We Will Rock You' on Wednesday, 15 April 2026, at St Joseph's Catholic High School in Slough.

It was nothing short of spectacular, a true Kind of Magic brought to life on stage by an incredibly talented cast and crew. From the moment the curtain rose, the audience was swept away on a Breakthru journey packed with energy, humour, and outstanding musical performances. The lead performers were absolute Champions, delivering powerful vocals and confident performances that had the audience Under Pressure in the best possible way. Every scene was bursting with personality, and the iconic numbers such as Bohemian Rhapsody, Somebody to Love, and Don't Stop Me Now had the audience clapping along from start to finish. By the finale, everyone was ready to Break Free from their seats and join in the celebration.

What made the evening especially memorable was the clear passion and dedication of every student involved. It was evident that These Are the Days of Our Lives that the cast will never forget, and the audience certainly won't either. The production proved that the spirit of Queen is still very much Alive and kicking in this school community.

In the end, this wasn't just a school production; it was a full-scale theatrical triumph. To everyone involved: We Salute You. After a performance like that, there's only one thing left to say... Don't Stop Them Now!

**COLLETTE COOPER**

*Director of Training and Development*





**Sarah Dunleavy (Head of Drama) said:**

*“I am so proud of all the students and staff involved. It was truly a One Vision from start to finish, and the show just got better and better over the three nights. Every cast member, stage crew, and member of staff played their part in creating a real Kind of Magic on stage. Thank you to everyone who helped bring the production alive and to our wonderful audiences who really Rocked Us with their support and enthusiasm each evening. Here’s to the next show!”*

# Exams Across Our Trust

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The summer exam series marks the culmination of months of careful planning by the four Exams Officers across our Trust. Working closely with Heads of Department, we begin collating entries in January, and then it's organising logistics, recruiting and training, and invigilators.

In addition to written exams, we plan and oversee a wide range of assessments, including practical exams for Art and Design Technology, Modern Foreign Language speaking assessments, and non-exam assessments (coursework). A great deal of coordination takes place behind the scenes to ensure everything runs smoothly.

With most Year 11 students sitting more than 20 exams, and Year 13 students typically taking around 9 within six weeks, some timetable clashes are unavoidable. We work closely with senior staff and students to resolve them in a way that best

supports the students, while fully complying with exam board rules and regulations.

A significant and growing part of our role is managing exam access arrangements. These are arrangements put in place for students recognised as having additional needs under the Equality Act, ensuring a fair and level playing field. Our priority is always to provide each student with the right support and environment to help them perform at their best and achieve the grades they deserve.

**We wish all our students taking exams this summer the very best of luck.**

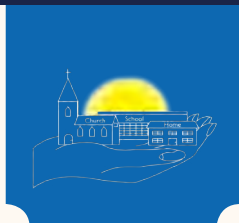
**CHRISTINE EVANS**

*Exams Manager*



# Celebrating Our School Communities

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## A Beautiful New Nursery Provision at Holy Family

### 2-year-olds

On the 14 April 2026, we welcomed our 2-year-old Nursery children into their brand new, purpose-built accommodation. Miss Herring and her team were busy during the Easter holiday getting our 2-year-old Nursery ready and they have created a warm, welcoming and homely environment.

Our new build has a lobby, bathroom with intimate care and potty areas, a staff kitchen and a large play room with free flow access to a small outdoor decked area. This dedicated 2-year-old outdoor space has gated access to our large existing, well equipped 3-year-old Nursery Garden. Children and staff are having lots of fun exploring this new provision.

We admit children to 15 and 30-hour places. 30 hour children attend from 9am-3pm Monday to Friday and 15 hour children either attend from 9am-12noon or 12noon to 3pm.





## Rising Robins & Sleepy Sparrows (Nursery age only)

We are mindful of the pressures that many parents experience in attempts to manage both professional and family commitments and therefore we offer before and after school care, available from 7:45am until 5:45pm. Your child will be looked after by familiar adults in our bespoke newly built Nursery. Breakfast is provided in the morning session until 8:15am, and snacks are available for those attending after school. If you choose to use this service, there is no need to commit to every day, or to both before and after school care. Simply indicate what your requirements are and we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

We are delighted that since September 2025 we have been able to offer parents of Nursery children the same extended provision as has long been available for children from Reception to Year 6.





# Student Talent Takes Centre Stage

Newman's Got Talent took place recently and proved to be a fantastic celebration of student creativity, confidence and talent. It was an amazing show with such a variety of acts, from stand-up comedy to dance, spoken word and much more.

Governors and special guests formed the judging panel and were given the difficult task of choosing a winner from such a strong field of performers. The students' talents truly shone throughout the evening, and the atmosphere was filled with joy, encouragement and a strong sense of belonging.

## 1<sup>st</sup> place

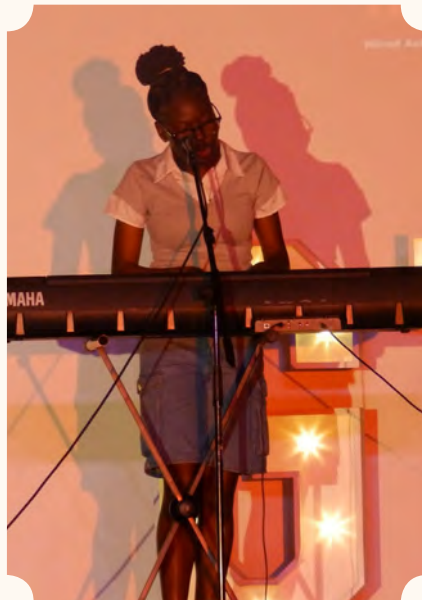
*Omowonuola James,  
Year 10*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> place

*Amelie Kennedy-Fenn,  
Year 9*

## 3<sup>rd</sup> place

*Elizabeth Muili,  
Year 9*





# Faith, Community and Lenten Reflection

## Trust Schools Walked Together for CAFOD

Schools across the Trust came together during Lent to support CAFOD's Big Lent Walk, with at least 15 of the Trust's 18 schools signed up to take part. Members of St Edward's, St Joseph's and St Michael's joined the initiative, showing a strong shared commitment to faith, charity and solidarity.

This was a wonderful example of the Trust community living out its Catholic mission by supporting poor and vulnerable communities. Each school took part in its own way, but together, their efforts reflected the generosity and compassion at the heart of Catholic education.



## Reconciliation at St Louis, Aylesbury

On Tuesday 10 March, St Louis held a special Reconciliation Liturgy in school to reflect on the importance of recognising when we have done wrong, saying sorry and showing forgiveness — a central focus of the Lenten season.

The children listened beautifully, and our Faith Ambassadors delivered a powerful and thoughtful liturgy that helped everyone reflect on how we can grow and improve.

In the afternoon, our new parish priest, Fr Jais, joined us in the chapel for our KS2

children. Those who had already made their First Reconciliation were able to receive the sacrament, while others had the opportunity to speak with him about forgiveness and making good choices.

There was a wonderful response from the children, and a very large number wished to take part. Unfortunately, this meant not everyone who wanted to attend was able to do so, but Fr Jais has kindly offered to return so that more children will have the opportunity to take part.

## Live Simply Award at St Louis

On Wednesday 15 April, members of the Mini Vinnies, School Council and Eco Council led a whole-school assembly to introduce CAFOD's Live Simply Award, which the school will be working towards over the coming year.

To become a Live Simply School, the school will complete nine special actions that encourage everyone to live simply, live sustainably and live in solidarity with others. Through these actions, the school community will aim to reduce waste, care for God's creation and support those in need.

The journey had already begun, as one of the actions was completed last half term through the Big Lent Walk. Throughout the year, the children will take part in a variety of activities as the school continues working towards this award.

## Success in the Maclaurin Mathematical Olympiad

Max Byzdra in Year 11 at Cardinal Newman School, was awarded a Certificate of Distinction in the Maclaurin Mathematical Olympiad 2026.

Only around 1,800 students qualify for the Olympiad each year around the world, with the top 25% receiving a distinction. This was a phenomenal achievement for Max, following his invitation to the UK Mathematics Summer School last year.



*St Michael's:*  
Year 5 students visit local care home, St George's day, Years 1, 2 & 4 school trips, Year 3 assembly





## Andrea Darrie's Edinburgh Half-Marathon Tribute



Andrea Darrie, Deputy Headteacher at St Michael's High Wycombe, will be running the Edinburgh Half Marathon on Sunday, 24 May in honour of her older sister, Alexandra Frew, who passed away suddenly in January 2021 at the age of 42.

Andrea is taking on this challenge to celebrate Alexandra's life and to give back to those in need, reflecting the kindness and generosity that Alexandra showed throughout her life. Alexandra was a dedicated Business teacher who served in Catholic secondary schools throughout her career. She was a testament to the profession and fully represented the virtues of Catholic education.

Through her training and fundraising, Andrea is honouring Alexandra's legacy while supporting others in need.

Anyone who would like to support Andrea's fundraising for Macmillan Cancer Support can do so through the link below:

[Support Andrea's fundraising](#)



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

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FAITH • HOPE • LOVE



**St Thomas**

Catholic Academies Trust

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St Martin De Porres Catholic Primary School,  
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LU4 0PF