



NEWSLETTER

Academic year 2025 - 2026

Newsletter 3

January 2026

Message from the Director of Education

Dear Colleagues

I very much hope that you all enjoyed some time with your families over the Christmas holidays, and I wish you all a very happy new year.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Anita Bath, Chief Executive Officer of Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust and Brendan Tapping, Chief Executive Officer of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust who have both been awarded OBEs in the King's New Year Honours List for services to Education. This is wonderful recognition for them both and for Catholic education in the North East of England.

We are looking forward to meeting many of our primary colleagues during the course of this half term as you receive vital training in relation to the new Religious Education Directory resource: The Way. We hope these sessions will be helpful and supportive in enabling all those who support our children in their RE learning.

As educators, we pray as we embark upon this new year that we strive to ensure that our communities are joyous, peaceful and Christ-centred. We pray that 2026 will bring increased peace to a troubled world. This is echoed in Pope Leo's homily for the Holy Mass on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God:

'Dear brothers and sisters, ..., at the beginning of the new year, and as we approach the conclusion of the Jubilee of Hope, let us draw near to the Nativity scene in faith. Let us approach it as the place of "unarmed and disarming" peace par excellence – a place of blessing where we recall the wonders the Lord has worked in the history of salvation and in our own lives. Then, like the humble witnesses at the grotto, let us set out once more, "glorifying and praising God" (Lk 2:20) for all that we have seen and heard. May this be our commitment and our resolve for the months ahead, and, indeed, for the whole of our Christian lives.'

[Holy Mass on the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God \(1st January 2026\)](#)

We look forward to seeing you during the coming months.

May God bless you all in your ministries.

With every good wish,

Catherine



Bishop's Day Conference 2026



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle
DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION
'I am among you as one who serves' Luke 22:27

Bishop's Day Conference

Bishop Stephen Wright invites all headteachers, Catholic Education Trust leaders and executive teams to join him at this event.

Thursday 4 June 2026
9.30am - 2.00pm

The Durham Centre, DH1 1TN

To book your place, use the link below
<https://diocesehncourses.org> or by
contacting education@diocesehn.org.uk



Bishop Stephen Wright

For school staff who are retiring in 2026, please RSVP a place by emailing
education@diocesehn.org.uk

Catholic Leaders' Conference 2026

We are excited to share that the Catholic Leaders and Clergy Conference will take place on **Thursday 3 December 2026**. All members of the clergy and education leaders are warmly invited to attend.

For further details, please
contact:
education@diocesehn.org.uk

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle
DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION



SAVE THE DATE

WITH SPECIAL GUEST:
Danny Curtin



CATHOLIC LEADERS and Clergy Conference

03
DECEMBER
2026

**RAMSIDE
HALL**

ONE DIOCESAN FAMILY - WELCOMING - WORSHIPING - SHARING - GROWING



Diocesan Schools Singing Programme

The successful first term of the Diocesan Schools Singing Programme culminated in Jubilate Deo – a morning of shared song at the Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle on Friday 5th December. This event saw over fifty Year 3 and 4 pupils from schools across the Bishop Bewick Catholic Education Trust sing together for the first time, joined by an audience of their families and members of the Diocese and Education Trust. Participating schools included Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School, Fenham; St Bede's Catholic Primary School, Denton Burn; St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School and St Columba's Catholic Primary School, both in Wallsend; St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary School, North Shields; St John Vianney Catholic Primary School, West Denton; St Oswald's Catholic Primary School, Gosforth; and St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Heaton. The children were welcomed to the Cathedral by Director of Education, Catherine Craig, and were led in an opening prayer by Canon Simon Lerche. It was a wonderful opportunity for the children to showcase the work they have been doing in school with our Choral Director, Eimear Hurley, as part of the Schools Singing Programme. They sang two carols they had been learning with Miss Hurley: 'The Little Road to Bethlehem' and 'Star Carol', accompanied by the Cathedral organist, David Allison.



These children have been invited to join the two new children's choirs (one for girls, one for boys) launching in 2026 under the direction of Miss Hurley. As they grow and develop, the choirs will sing during Mass at the Cathedral Church of St Mary, Newcastle, enhancing the liturgy through music. This work is generously funded by the National Schools Singing Programme, which has been running in Catholic and Anglican dioceses across the country since 2021, based on a model introduced by the Diocese of Leeds in 2003. Through the delivery of singing sessions as part of the school day, the programme makes high-quality music education accessible to children from a diverse range of backgrounds. Children who demonstrate particular aptitude in school sessions are invited to become members of the new girls' and boys' choirs, where they will have the opportunity to extend their vocal and musical skills at no additional cost to families.

Choir rehearsals will begin in the new year on weekday afternoons at the Cathedral Church of St Mary. Adult volunteers are needed to supervise these hour-long sessions. No musical experience is necessary, but DBS certificates are required.



To find out more about volunteering, please contact Eimear: eimear.hurley@diocesehn.org.uk.

Catholic School Inspections - CSI

Catholic school inspections for the autumn term have been successfully completed. During this period, 13 schools have been inspected under the CSI framework: three were graded outstanding, nine were graded good, and one school was graded as requiring improvement. We sincerely thank all staff, students, and stakeholders for their support and cooperation throughout the process.



Leadership Update

December Update and looking ahead

December was a very productive month for us. Our Wave 3 cohort successfully completed their sixth session of the National Catholic Leadership Programme, which proved to be an extremely valuable and engaging day. We are delighted to celebrate the achievement of three graduates from this session, congratulations to them on reaching this important milestone.

As we look forward to the new year, we are excited about two key events in January:

The next session of the Aspiring Deputy Headteacher Course, which will provide practical guidance and leadership development for those preparing for senior roles.

The third session for Wave 4 of the National Catholic Leadership Programme, continuing the journey of professional growth and collaboration.

Spring Headteachers' Meetings

As we move into the spring term, we have several important meetings planned for our headteacher community. These sessions are designed to encourage meaningful discussion, share best practices, and provide updates on key developments across our schools. We strongly encourage all headteachers to attend, as these meetings offer a valuable forum for professional dialogue and support.

Primary Headteachers' Meeting - North

Date: **Tuesday, 3 February 2026 - 9.30 - 11.30am**

Venue: Holiday Inn, Seaton Burn

Primary Headteachers' Meeting - South

Date: **Wednesday, 4 February 2026 - 9.30 - 11.30am**

Venue: Durham Centre

Secondary Headteachers' Meeting

Date: **Wednesday, 4 February 2026 - 1.30 - 3.30pm**

Venue: Durham Centre

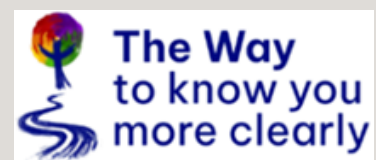


The Way Launch

We are looking forward to welcoming school representatives on Friday 1 May for the launch of the Religious Education Directory resource – The Way. Due to the demand for places, and limited spaces remaining for the launch on **Friday 1 May**, an additional day on **Thursday 21 May** has been organised. This is to ensure all schools are represented and can be given their passwords and access to the online platform.

If you have not already booked a place, please use the course booking site.

Please note due to health and safety, once Friday 1 May is fully booked we will not be able to accept any further bookings including on the day arrivals.



Religious Education Directory

As the new term begins, we are looking forward to meeting all our primary school colleagues during the Religious Education Directory twilight training. This training is for all school leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and practitioners who work with and support the children in religious education lessons within your school. The training will begin at 4:15pm and end by 6:00pm.

If you have a member of staff who is unable to attend your school's allocated date and venue, please get in touch so we can support them with an alternative date.

Date	School
7 Jan 2026	Sacred Heart Catholic High School, Fenham
12 Jan 2026	St Mary's Catholic School, Benton
14 Jan 2026	St Cuthbert's Catholic High School, Newcastle
19 Jan 2026	St Thomas More Catholic High School, North Shields
21 Jan 2026	Cardinal Hume Catholic School, Gateshead
26 Jan 2026	St Thomas More Catholic School, Blaydon
28 Jan 2026	St Robert of Newminster Catholic School & Sixth Form College, Washington
2 Feb 2026	St Paul's Primary School, Alnwick
4 Feb 2026	St Leonard's Catholic School, Durham
9 Feb 2026	St Wilfrid's RC College, South Shields
11 Feb 2026	St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy, Sunderland
16 Feb 2026	St Bede's Catholic School & Byron Sixth Form, Peterlee
18 Feb 2026	St John's Catholic School & Sixth Form College, Bishop Auckland
4 Mar 2026	Our Lady and St Bede Catholic Academy, Stockton
9 Mar 2026	St Michael's Catholic Academy, Billingham
11 Mar 2026	Carmel College, Darlington
16 Mar 2026	St Bede's Catholic School & Sixth Form College, Lanchester
18 Mar 2026	St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy, Bedlington
23 Mar 2026	The English Martyrs' Catholic School & Sixth Form College, Hartlepool
25 Mar 2026	St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Hebburn

Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies- CCRS

The Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies programme for 2025-2026 had a great autumn term; the turnout has been wonderful. Delegates have been enjoying the modules and are progressing well in their studies.

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, the programme is marvellous in supporting all members of staff with their understanding of the Catholic faith, prayer & liturgy, and education, further enhancing the teaching and learning opportunities for the children in our schools. CCRS also offers parishioners and community members an excellent opportunity to deepen their understanding and faith.

As we draw closer to the introduction of the Religious Education Directory, CCRS is especially relevant where the expectations for teacher subject knowledge have significantly increased. CCRS is incredibly useful for staff who are considering leadership opportunities in Catholic schools or who are in pastoral roles.

Whether it is completing all modules for the full certificate or taking individual modules for further personal development, there is an option to suit all. If you have previously embarked on the CCRS modules but have not been contacted about this year's modules, please get in touch.

We are very grateful to the dedicated and committed tutors who generously give their time to deliver this important and invaluable professional development. If you have any questions, then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Registration forms will be accepted until April 2026 so it is not too late to start.

Tel 0191 2433313 or email: education@diocesehn.org.uk

Secondary Education Professional Development

On **Friday 9 January 2026**, we are delighted to be joined by Karen Kilby and six other inspirational Durham University professors, who will be leading a fantastic day of professional and theological development. This is an exceptional offer for all secondary Heads of RE as well as staff within the RE department.

Please do take this opportunity to attend this high-quality professional development.

To book a place please email: education@diocesehn.org.uk

Secondary RE Teachers 'Day'
Friday 9 January 2026
Join us for an inspiring day packed with expert-led and thought-provoking lectures

Speakers include:
Professor Simon Oliver, Professor Karen Kilby, Dr Stuart Foyle, Professor Francis Watson, Gareth Rowe, Professor Alec Ryrie, Dr William Crozier

Lectures include:
'Why Teaching and Learning Through Film is Important'
'Reflections on the 1700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea'
'The making of the New Testament'
And many more!

The Durham Centre
Belmont Industrial Estate, DH1 1TN
09:30-15:30
To book, please email education@diocesehn.org.uk
Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle

School Lay Chaplains

We invite all school lay chaplains to join us for our spring term meeting—a valuable opportunity to come together for discussion, prayer, worship, and professional development to support your role.

Please book your place via our online booking system:

<https://diocesehncourses.org>

School lay chaplains'
Spring Term meeting
Monday 16 March 2026
St Joseph's Catholic Church,
Stanley, DH1 3HL
9.30am - 3.30pm

An opportunity to come together in discussions, prayer and worship and professional development to support your role.

Please book via our online booking system:
<https://diocesehncourses.org>
Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle

Good Shepherd 2026

It was a pleasure to welcome Nicola Milne to speak at the recent Headteachers' meeting and share more about the work of St Cuthbert's Care. For almost 80 years, schools have been instrumental in supporting their work, which spans all ages and needs - from children in care to adults with disabilities and older people in their nursing homes. With your continued support, they can provide vital services to meet the needs of vulnerable people across the North East.

As we approach the Good Shepherd Appeal 2026, schools are invited to participate in celebrating their 80th year through: Fundraising Activities – every penny raised helps vulnerable people in the North East access the care and support they need. 80 Acts of Kindness – a meaningful way for your school community to make a difference and mark this special milestone.

We would love to see your students' acts of kindness in action! You can share them via email:

Nicola.milne@stcuthbertscare.org.uk

To celebrate, there will be two Good Shepherd Masses this year:

Wednesday 27 April at Cathedral Church of St May at 10.00am

Wednesday 6 May at St Joseph's, Hartlepool at 1.00pm

Nicola would be delighted to visit your school to share their work first-hand, if this interests you, please do not hesitate to get in touch.



Rainbows Bereavement GB Wellbeing Programme

Rainbows Bereavement and Wellbeing Programme have received additional funding and are now able to offer their programme for only £50 per school. This is a wonderful new resource which has been trialled extensively across the southeast of England with great success. Roman Catholic school inspections evaluate pupil wellbeing by assessing how school policies and culture foster a safe, caring, and supportive environment; the Wellbeing Programme will support schools achieve this.

The programme is:

- Suitable for all ages from EYFS to Year 6
- To be used with the whole class or targeted groups
- Run by adults the children know and trust
- Designed to meet many of the PSHE association objectives

It uses games, story books, activities and discussions as these enable exploration of children's worries and anxieties; they develop coping strategies when things do not go their way and at the end of the programme children have their own coping toolbox.

We will provide overview training for groups of schools at no additional cost and expect this offer to be very popular so do not delay.



To register your interest contact Ruth Higginbottom at: **rainbows.northeast@btconnect.com**

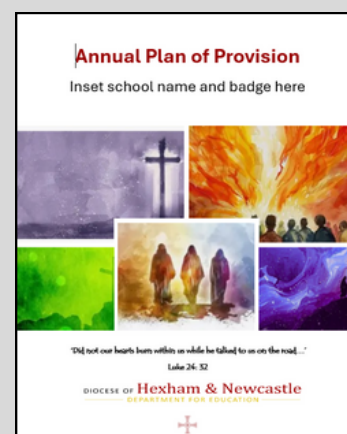
Annual Plan of Provision

Following the introduction of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory in September, all schools need to clearly document how prayer and liturgy is organised, led, monitored and evaluated. An Annual Plan of Provision should be developed by all schools to show how a school's prayer and liturgy policy has been translated into practical outcomes across the school year. To support schools with this, we have developed a model Annual Plan of Provision which includes examples of prayer and liturgy which may take place during the year.

This can be accessed via the Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle SharePoint and edited to reflect the provision within individual schools.

If you have any questions regarding the Annual Plan of Provision, please contact

Michelle Ross michelle.ross@diocesehn.org.uk



CES Annual School Census 2026

The CES annual school census remains the most accurate report of Catholic education in England and enables the CES to compile precise data. We are extremely grateful to Catholic schools for returning their data in a prompt and timely manner. The census starts on **15 January** and closes on **11 February 2026**.

Please note that there are no significant changes to the process undertaken by schools from the previous return, and all guidance on submitting the Census can be found at www.catholiceducation.org.uk/census

Schools requiring support using the CES census system can request support from CES using the online helpdesk only, which will be available from **15 January to 11 February 2026**.

Schools requiring additional support using their own MIS please contact: viv.fawcett@diocesehn.org.uk

New Governors Welcome

This session will welcome new foundation governors to their role and discuss the statutory and canonical responsibilities of the foundation governors in a Catholic school.

It is expected that all new governors attend this training session.

If you would like to attend our Foundation Governors welcome session on **20 January 2026**, please contact **Rebecca Daglish** at education@diocesehn.org.uk who will be happy to book your place.



The poster features a background image of children in a school hallway. At the top, it reads 'DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle' and 'DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION'. The main text says 'New Foundation Governors' Welcome' and 'Welcome Session for New Foundation Governors Tuesday 20 January 2025 5.00pm - 6.00pm Online'. At the bottom, it says 'Register Now' and provides the URL <https://diocesehncourses.org>.

Governance Conference 2026



The poster has a geometric pattern background. At the top, it says 'As we wait in Joyful Hope Wisdom, Accountability and the Governance of Catholic Schools'. Below this, it says 'Members, Directors, Governors, Catholic Education Trust Executive teams are invited to attend the Diocesan Governance Conference Mass will be celebrated by The Right Reverend Bishop Stephen Wright'. The date and time are 'Wednesday 1 July 2026 at 9.30am (Refreshments served from 9.00am)'. It also says 'Lunch will be provided. Day closes at 2.30pm'. The location is 'The Durham Centre, Belmont Industrial Estate, Durham DH1 1TN'. The RSVP information is 'RSVP education@diocesehn.org.uk by 17 June 2026'. On the right, there is a circular photo of a man, identified as 'David Wells'. At the bottom, it says 'For any enquiries please contact us; education@diocesehn.org.uk 0191 243 3313' and 'DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle' with a cross logo.

Heavenly Father,

As we step into this new year, we thank you for the gift of life, for the blessings of the past, and for the lessons we have learned.

Guide our hearts to walk in your ways, our minds to seek Your truth, and our hands to serve with love.

Bless all our schools, staff and children, that we may live in peace, unity, and compassion.

Grant us the courage to face challenges, wisdom to make righteous choices, and the humility to trust in Your perfect plan.

May this year be a journey closer to You, filled with grace, mercy, and joy in Your presence.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.