

LOVE • FAITH • HOPE

DECEMBER
2025



St Thomas
Catholic Academies Trust

Half-Term Newsletter

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Introducing Our Trust:

A Message from CEO Mark McLaughlin

At St Thomas Catholic Academy Trust, our mission is captured in the words of St Irenaeus: “*The glory of God is a human being **fully alive**.*” As I step into the role of CEO, I want to share who we are as a Catholic community and what we are striving to achieve together.

To be ‘fully alive’ is to flourish personally, academically and spiritually – to become the best person you can be and contribute positively to the world around you. This vision rests on our three pillars: **Love, Faith and Hope**.

Love means that every child and adult is known, valued and feels that they belong. Our schools are places of welcome, shaped by compassion, respect and strong relationships. We believe it is not enough simply to love the children; they must know that they are loved. It is within this nurturing and inclusive environment that our children grow in confidence, flourish as individuals and learn alongside one another.

Faith lies at the heart of who we are and how we serve. Inspired by a relationship with Jesus, our mission calls us to form young people who understand their dignity and are encouraged to use their gifts in service of others. Across our Trust, pupils grow through opportunities for leadership, service and engagement with the wider community. Catholic education is about more than academic achievement alone; it is about forming the whole person, grounded in faith, values and a strong sense of mission.

Hope shapes our commitment to high expectations and the fulfilment of potential. We believe every child deserves an outstanding education and the opportunity to become the very

best of who they are. This year, our outcomes reflect that hope in action. Early Years results far surpass the Government’s 2028 target, our Year 1 Phonics Check reached 87%—well above national averages—and Key Stage 2 outcomes continue to exceed national figures. At secondary level, pupils continue to achieve strong results, opening doors to future opportunities and enabling them to look ahead with confidence.

I am proud to represent our family of schools as CEO; they are beautiful, special places where children and adults learn with joy, grow with confidence and achieve great things together. In these vibrant communities, every person is encouraged to thrive and become fully alive.

MARK MCLAUGHLIN

*Chief Executive Officer,
St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust*



A Message from our Director of Education

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I am proud to be working with St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust as the Director of Education. Prior to starting this role in September 2025, I had already had a chance to work in all of the Trust's schools and get a comprehensive understanding of how our schools function. Our schools are successful and our pupils' achievements at every stage are remarkable!

I have always been so impressed by the commitment staff demonstrate to our shared faith ethos. Our schools are authentically caring and welcoming places, where children truly are at the centre of everything staff do. The dedication and generosity of adults working at every level in our organisation is something that sets us apart from most.

My own commitment to the Trust is rooted in a desire to see education become consistently exceptional. This is about making sure that every single learner who attends our schools is supported to achieve their full potential and be 'fully alive'. We are a great Trust that wants to be excellent. This means we don't need to make many changes; we need to make thoughtful and evidence-informed shifts to refine our work.

I spend a lot of my time listening to what pupils have to say. This helps me in my work with school leaders to make sure our strategies will maximise the achievements of young people and give them all the exceptional start to life that they deserve!



KRISTIAN HEWITT

Director of Education



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

FAITH HOPE LOVE

A Message from our Director of Inclusion

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At St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, we value every member of our diverse community whilst recognising that everyone is unique, yet created equally in the image of God.

As a family of schools, we are welcoming and inclusive, celebrating our differences, cherishing our love and showing our respect for one another. We want everyone to feel that this is where they belong, this is where they are safe and this is where their opinions matter.

This will enable all of our community to feel fully alive and to flourish as God intended.

As Director of Inclusion for St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust, my purpose is to support and challenge our family of schools to strive to be fully inclusive, so that every child and member of staff is able to feel that they are loved, that they belong and are a valued member of our community.

My mission is to provide a service which to some may seem contradictory, for I place great value on both being absolutely child-centred – knowing our children well and focusing on the unique gifts that all of our children possess – whilst also establishing systems, structures and routines that will make our work effective.

As a “systems and structures” person, I work with our schools to ensure that the most efficient procedures are in place to identify potential barriers to learning – including attendance, special educational needs or disabilities, difficult home or family circumstances or financial struggles – and then work with our staff in schools to ensure that appropriate, tangible and effective support is provided to those children and families in a timely manner.

I am committed to working collaboratively across our Trust, encouraging both staff and children to be empathetic and compassionate, hold high expectations of themselves and to work hard towards their goals.



MICHELLE CHAPPELL

Director of Inclusion

A Message from our Deputy Director of Education

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It is a privilege to serve the St Thomas Catholic Academies Trust community as Deputy Director of Education. The role brings many opportunities to work with colleagues in schools, predominantly primary, to develop teaching and learning and to support the mission of the Trust. With a strong focus on literacy, my role supports STCAT's desire for all our pupils to be confident speakers, listeners, readers and writers who are prepared for the next steps in education and beyond.

Alongside colleagues in primary schools, we work to ensure all pupils have every opportunity to develop and hone their literacy skills. Children and young people are taught how to use their voices to communicate their opinions (verbally and in writing) and feel the value of being heard, becoming "fully alive".

Through Catholic Social Teaching, pupils understand the importance of speaking up for the most vulnerable in society and speaking out against injustice as they put their faith into action.

As a school improvement team working together with colleagues across our family of schools, we not only pursue excellence in teaching and learning but seek to nurture the gift within each child that they would know that they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14) and that the words of Cardinal John Henry Newman would be a reality for each young person:

"God knows me and calls me by name. God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another."



RUTH GREEN

Deputy Director of Education

“It’s because the teachers love what they do!”

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How issues with concrete strengthened a school community

Parents have praised the team at St Joseph’s Catholic Primary School in Chalfont St Peter for turning an unexpected challenge at the start of the school year into a cause for celebration and community cohesion.

In September, the school had to delay children returning after the holidays after remedial work undertaken in 2018 to support parts of the school built using a type of aerated concrete, known as RAAC, was found not to meet current standards. As a result, KS2 children spent around ten weeks of term learning in marquees while a semi-permanent building was constructed.

Caroline Lovegrove, Headteacher, said: “The issues we faced with RAAC were frustrating, but we can only control what we can control. We decided we needed to make the very best of the situation and ensure that a change of classroom did not impact the care, learning and happiness of our brilliant pupils.”

“Not only have our team of staff worked tirelessly, but the support we have had from our parents has been nothing short of phenomenal. Despite the situation, they have stood alongside us every step of the way.”

The children finally moved into the semi-permanent building in mid-November – which will now be their home while longer-term plans are progressed.

One parent even went to the local paper, the Bucks Free Press, to acknowledge the lengths the school's staff have gone to.

Hazel Lawrence, who has two children at the school, said: "I see a school that has had the most challenging situation to deal with. Their top priority always is keeping our children safe. They have worked as a team tirelessly, relentlessly, to make this absolutely incredible change happen. The children throughout this whole process remained happy."

“

“They have continued to learn even while in marquees, and why is that? It’s because the teachers love what they do! It’s because there is so much passion to nurture our children the right way.”

“Words cannot even explain the excitement I saw and heard when the school community was able to get together to see inside the new building.”

“It was incredible. Well done, St Joseph Catholic Primary School. The feeling it has created is galvanising.”

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St Joseph's Theatre Company Brings "Hairspray" to Life

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From Wednesday 15th to Friday 17th October, St Joseph's Theatre Company took to the stage with their spectacular production of the West End and Broadway hit Hairspray.

The cast, made up of talented students from Years 8 to 10, delivered three incredible performances that wowed audiences. Friday's show was a complete sell-out, and all three nights played to enthusiastic, packed houses.

At St Joseph's, our dedicated Theatre Company offers students the unique opportunity to audition and remain part of the group throughout their school years. This experience gives them a real taste of what it means to work as a team and bring a full-scale production to life – from the first rehearsal to the final curtain call.





This year's production was no small feat:

- 45 students took to the stage as part of the cast.
- 20 students formed the backstage crew, running everything behind the scenes entirely on their own.
- The team rehearsed for six months to perfect every detail.

The result? A major success that showcased not only incredible talent but also the dedication and teamwork of everyone involved.

St Joseph's stages two major productions each year, and preparations for the next show are already underway. Watch this space for more details!



Christmas at St Michael's

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Early Years pupils at St Michael's Catholic School marked the season with warm and joyful Christmas activities, sharing the spirit of the celebrations with our school community.



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