



# The 178th Annual Report of the Catholic Education Service

2025



***The Son of Man must be  
lifted up.***

**John 3:13-17  
Liturgy from Education Sunday, 2025**



**Catholic Education Service**  
Since 1847

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# CES Management Committee

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**Chairman**  
**The Right Reverend Marcus Stock**  
Bishop of Leeds  
Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Middlesbrough



**The Right Reverend Mark Davies**  
Bishop of Shrewsbury



**The Right Reverend Philip Egan**  
Bishop of Portsmouth



**Mrs Kate Griffin**



**The Reverend Paul Hewitt**  
Archdiocese of Westminster



**Mr Liam Kelly**  
Ampleforth Abbey



**The Most Reverend John Sherrington**  
Archbishop of Liverpool



**The Very Reverend Monsignor Canon John Weatherill**



**The Right Reverend Alan Williams**  
Bishop of Brentwood



**The Right Reverend Richard Walker**  
Auxiliary Bishop of Birmingham

# Foreword

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I am delighted to introduce the 178th Annual Report of the Catholic Education Service, for 2025. This report outlines the essential work that the CES has undertaken in representing the views of the Bishops to the government and to other national agencies, as well as the incredible support the agency provides to the enterprise of Catholic education across England and Wales.

This has been a year which has seen the further development of new government education legislation and policy. As ever, this requires the CES to continue to work closely and diligently with the government as a partner in education provision, particularly in the framing of legislation and the development of policy.

Throughout 2025 schools have been celebrating the Holy Year of Jubilee year in various and innovative ways, including making a Jubilee Pledge with the assistance of CAFOD. One very significant event which took place in the Holy Year, during the 'Jubilee of the World of Education', on 1st November, the Solemnity of All Saints, when Pope Leo XIV proclaimed Saint John Henry Newman a Doctor of the Church and co-Patron of the Church's educational mission. The Holy Father prayed that "our schools and universities" would always be places of listening to the Gospel and putting it into practice!".

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to diocesan education teams and the staff of the CES who have supported our schools, colleges and universities throughout the year.

I hope that you will find this report informative and that you will continue to aid the work of the CES and to make known as widely as possible the good news about the success of Catholic education.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Marcus Stock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

**The Rt Rev Marcus Stock, Bishop of Leeds**  
Chairman of the Catholic Education Service

# From the Director

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In 2025 the 60th anniversary took place of the proclamation by Pope Paul VI of the Declaration on the Extreme Importance of Christian Education, known as *Gravissimum Educationis*. Much of this Second Vatican Council text became canon law on education, and to consider its continuing relevance St Mary's University hosted a symposium in October as part of celebrations to mark 175 years since its founding. The event was also attended by the General Assembly of European Directors of Catholic Education (CEEC), which held its annual conference at the university over the following days.

An Apostolic Letter, *Drawing New Maps Of Hope*, was published to celebrate the anniversary, in which His Holiness Pope Leo XIV reaffirms the vision of *Gravissimum Educationis* and applies it to the challenges of the present time.

This year the CES Census was automated for the first time, and data shared with dioceses through an online tool.

There has also been continued progress toward academisation, with a further 118 schools becoming academies.

Later in 2025 the government reduced its bursary for new Religious Education (RE) trainee teachers to zero. Following representations from the CES and others the bursary had been introduced in 2024, with a slight but welcome increase in the number of RE teacher training candidates. The CES will continue to make representations in support of the bursary's reintroduction.

The four Catholic universities had a successful 2025, with Birmingham Newman being named University of the Year for Social Inclusion by The Times and Sunday Times. St Mary's marked its 175th anniversary with a programme of events including a Mass of Thanksgiving celebrated by His Eminence Cardinal Vincent Nichols, at which the university was presented with an Apostolic Blessing from Pope Leo XIV. Both Leeds Trinity and Liverpool Hope also rose up through national rankings for university guides, with top ten positions for teaching quality and student experience.

As education policy in England and in Wales continues to evolve, the CES will continue to work with the UK and Welsh governments on behalf of the Catholic sector as proposals emerge.



**Paul Barber**

Director of the Catholic Education Service

# About the CES

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The CES was founded by the Vicars Apostolic of England and Wales in 1847, as the Catholic Poor School Committee. It is the education agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and works with the Bishops' Conference, especially its Department for Catholic Education and Formation.

The CES represents the Bishops' national education policy in relation to the 2,144 schools, colleges and academies and four universities for which the Church is responsible.

It is a public juridic person in canon law governed in accordance with its own Statutes, which are approved by the Bishops' Conference. Governance of the CES under the Statutes rests with the Management Committee, which consists of an episcopal Chairman, appointed by the Bishops, the episcopal members of the Bishops' Conference Department for Catholic Education and Formation, and up to three additional members appointed by the Chairman. The Director, Paul Barber, also attends meetings of the Management Committee.

The CES Trustees are the Catholic Trust for England and Wales (CaTEW). The assets of the CES held by its trustees are a restricted fund for the work of the CES under its statutes. The assets include sites or parts of the sites of the Catholic universities, held by the universities or their trustees.

The CES negotiates with the UK and Welsh governments and other national bodies in order to safeguard and promote Catholic education. It also offers a Catholic contribution to English and Welsh educational debates, seeking to ensure the principles of Catholic teaching are reflected in all aspects of national education policy.

The CES is also a member of the CEEC and is represented at its General Assembly. The CEEC is the European regional secretariat of the International Office for Catholic Education (OIEC) of which the CES was a founder member in 1952; currently the Director of the CES is Vice-President. The OIEC provides permanent representation at international bodies such as the Council of Europe and UNESCO and promotes regional cooperation through its regional secretariats. The CES continues to promote OIEC initiatives, such as Global Catholic Education, in its digital communications.



## Catholic schools in 2025

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Catholic schools make up 10% of state-funded schools in England and Wales, with most owned by diocesan trustees and a smaller number owned by the trustees of a religious order or congregation. Together with Anglican, Methodist, Jewish schools and a few others, they represent about one-third of state-funded provision in England and Wales.

There were 835,632 pupils being educated in 2,144 Catholic schools in 2025, a slight decrease compared with the previous year. In line with non-denominational schools, the Catholic sector experienced a decrease in primary pupil numbers, but an increase in secondary students.

*Photographed above is Mount St Mary's Catholic High School, in the Diocese of Leeds, which celebrated an Ofsted journey from Requires Improvement to Outstanding in all areas.*

**1,735 primary schools**

**349 secondary schools**

**13 sixth form colleges**

**46 all-through schools**

**Catholic schools  
in Wales educate  
double the  
proportion of  
pupils from ethnic  
minority  
backgrounds  
compared with  
the state sector  
average**

**51.5%**  
**more pupils  
from the  
poorest  
backgrounds**  
(compared with the  
England state sector  
average)

**94%**  
**of Catholic  
schools  
provide  
support with  
uniform costs**

**86.2%**  
**of pupils at  
our schools  
from a faith  
background**



# Catholic universities in 2025

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Birmingham Newman was announced as University of the Year for Social Inclusion (pictured) by *The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2026*. The university has a high proportion of students with a disability, mature students, carers, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and who are the first in their family to enter higher education. Nearly half of students are from an ethnic minority background. Vice-Chancellor Professor Jackie Dunne was awarded an MBE for services to higher education.

St Mary's marked its 175th anniversary with a year-long programme of events including a symposium on *Gravissimum Educationis* and a Thanksgiving Mass celebrated by the Chancellor of the university and then-Archbishop of Westminster, HE Cardinal Vincent Nichols. A formal dinner was also held for headteachers of partner schools, many from Catholic schools, in honour of the university's long history of teacher training.

In January 2025 the new, award-winning City Campus at Leeds Trinity University was blessed by Bishop Marcus Stock to mark its formal opening. Leeds Trinity also led a continuing professional development conference of all four of England's Catholic universities, with senior leaders from the Catholic University of Erbil, in Iraq, gathering together to participate remotely.

This year Liverpool Hope was ranked 10th in the country for student satisfaction in the National Student Survey. The university announced that its new Vice-Chancellor and Rector will be Dr Penny Haughan, who will take up her role in April, 2026. Liverpool Hope also welcomed its first cohort of degree apprentices as part of an Office for Students-funded programme.



# Representing the Bishops

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## **Objectives**

The CES represents the views of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales to both the UK and Welsh governments as well as other agencies. Drawing on the assistance of colleagues and partners it assists the Bishops' Conference in the development of education policy.

The CES also works with the four Catholic universities to promote their Catholic identity and to engage with them on matters of policy which have an impact on Catholic education.

## **Engagement with government**

The CES meets with the Secretary of State for Education on a termly basis and with other ministers as necessary, to discuss issues such as the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, safeguarding, the Curriculum and Assessment Review, and multi-academy trust (MAT) inspection.

Similar engagements take place with DfE officials and civil servants of other government departments where relevant, including the Child Poverty Unit of the Cabinet Office and Children's Commissioner for England.

The CES is a member of the Improving Educating Together (IET) Board, which is made up of

employer and employee organisations, and chaired by the Secretary of State. The IET has established specific sub-groups to focus on workforce, accountability, and SEND issues, and CES staff members attend regular and frequent meetings. The CES has continued to be part of the working group convened by the DfE to set up the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB), scrutinising the legislation underpinning the establishment of the SSSNB within the Employment Rights Act 2025.

The CES provided written evidence to the Public Bill Committee of the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, and in January gave evidence in person to the committee in Parliament alongside the Church of England.

The CES also continued to support the Diocese of Portsmouth in its engagement with the government of Guernsey in the context of the ongoing review by the island of its education legislation.

## **International**

The Director attended the 104th General Assembly of the European Committee for Catholic Education (CEEC) in Tirana during March. The 105th General Assembly was hosted at St Mary's University in October as part of the university's 175th Anniversary, with members attending the previous day a symposium on *Gravissimum Educationis* also held on campus.

The Joint Committee on Catholic Education (JCCE) – colleagues from England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland – organised a pilgrimage for 45 Early Career Teachers from Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales, who travelled to Rome to celebrate the Jubilee Year as Pilgrims of Hope, a unique experience of faith formation for these young teachers. In an audience with Pope Leo, they were each invited to, ‘nurture your relationship with Christ, who gives us the pattern of all authentic teaching (cf Mt 7:28), so that, in turn, you may guide and encourage those entrusted to your care to follow Christ in their own lives.’<sup>1</sup>

## **Joint DSC-Financial Secretaries-COO initiatives**

The CES-facilitated working party of DSCs, financial secretaries and Chief Operating Officers continued to explore further collaborative working opportunities across dioceses. This included in inspection, governance, school estate property functions and training, as schools move towards full academisation.

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1. [To Teachers of Catholic Schools in Ireland, England, Wales, and Scotland; and to the Young People of the Diocese of Copenhagen \(5 July 2025\)](#)



# Supporting our Dioceses & Religious Orders

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## **Objectives**

Catholic schools are provided by diocesan or Religious Order trustees and the CES supports them through the maintenance of national guidance, model documents, technical advice and professional training. The CES undertakes collaborative projects with diocesan and religious order trustees based on agreed policy priorities.

## **Memorandum of Understanding**

The CES has continued to liaise with the DfE over updating the Memorandum of Understanding between the department and the Catholic Church. A revised draft of the document is currently under discussion.

## **National guidance and model documents**

The CES has worked on a number of initiatives which include the development of a draft policy for complaints, publishing guidance on the role of members in Catholic academy companies, and a new model scheme of delegation, the development of guidance on the role of trustees, job

descriptions for MAT estate managers, CEO appraisal and the development of model admission policies and guidance for schools in Wales.

### **Recruitment providers**

The CES worked with 15 online recruitment providers to incorporate CES application forms onto their platforms, which are widely used in the school sector. Seven have so far been approved with the remainder set to be approved when ready. The CES also introduced the suppliers to Churchmarketplace, with one joining the framework so far; it is hoped others will follow.

### **CES Model Directives and Model Diocesan Protocols**

The CES Model Directives were issued to dioceses and, following feedback from the previous year's iteration, the 2025 Model Diocesan Protocols were also revised and provided to dioceses.

### **Independent schools and Religious Order schools**

The CES continued to provide advice to dioceses on governance arrangements of Catholic independent schools and schools within the trusteeship of Religious Orders. It engaged with dioceses on how maintained Religious Order schools, where appropriate, might be incorporated into diocesan academy strategies, developing various models to support mixed trusteeship in Catholic MATs.

The CES worked with the Religious Orders in Education (ROE) to assist The Gaudete Trust, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and Public Juridical Person, to take on the active trusteeship of a number of schools. The CES assisted The Gaudete Trust in exploring an accountability framework. The CES supported ROE and other Religious Orders in the establishment of the Laetare Catholic MAT for schools within the trusteeship of Religious Orders to join, and continues to do so as plans for the schools to join are developed.

### **Catholic Sixth Form Colleges**

Meetings facilitated by the CES continued for trustees to discuss with their colleges engagement with the academisation programme in line with their diocesan bishop's vision for education.



# Religious Education

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## Objectives

The CES aims to continue to improve the quality of RE in Catholic schools in England and Wales. It seeks to improve the quality of teaching, examination and assessment at all stages of Catholic education.

## Awarding organisations and the DfE

The process of development by the CES of a Key Stage 4 Religious Education Directory (RED) this year excited keen interest both from examination bodies and from the DfE. The former in particular has sought to consult the CES to ensure the requirements of a KS4 RED are incorporated while reviewing specifications.

## Partnership working

Development of the RED at KS4 has led to the establishment of an advisory panel consisting of dioceses, the National Board of RE Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA), Catholic universities, CAFOD and the Association of Teachers of Catholic RE (ATCRE). At KS5 the development of the RED is being conducted by the CES in collaboration with the Centre for Catholic Studies at Durham University.

## **RED schemes of work**

The CES reviewed schemes of work produced by external organisations aimed at bringing to life in the classroom the KS1-3 RED's model curriculum. Such schemes of work are often presented in phases and so can be reviewed for full endorsement in part only. So far one KS3 secondary scheme by a publisher has completed the process. Six others are in the process of doing so, from a mixture of dioceses, commercial providers and a non-commercial provider, with involvement from further dioceses expected.

## **Godly play and the RED**

The CES has collaborated with the Margaret Beaufort Institute and Godly Play UK to research how the pedagogy of Godly play can assist embedding of the RED in a primary setting. A research grant from the Sisters of the Holy Cross was used to fully fund residential training for 12 teachers from 11 dioceses in September 2025. Initial findings indicate the connection between Godly Play and the RED can be supportive, with a deepening understanding that Godly Play does not replace the RE Curriculum teaching but provides opportunities to enhance it. The project is ongoing with further funding being sought for 2026.

## **RED assessment toolkit**

The RED assessment group, now including primary and secondary advisors from NBRIA, established three working groups to focus on different aspects of assessment, namely: Assessment in RE Principles and Guidance; Questions Stems and Ways of Finding Out What Pupils Know. These three elements are in the final stages of revision and will be made available in the first half of 2026. The toolkit will be a live set of documents, to be reviewed annually.

## **Catholic Life and Mission Directory**

Development of the forthcoming Catholic Life and Mission Directory (CLMD) has commenced this year. Initial thinking was presented at the symposium on *Gravissimum Educationis* held at St Mary's University in October. The directory will be informed by the requirements of the National Catholic Inspection Framework and will reference the recent CES publication *Called to Flourish in Faith and Hope*. In keeping with the latter document, the preliminary structure of the CLMD will be founded on the themes of mission; communion; formation; gifts; and fruitfulness. An Advisory Panel has been convened and writing is under way.

## **Joint Interim Board of Religious Studies / Catholic Certificate for Religious Studies (CCRS)**

The CES worked with counterparts from the Bishops' Conferences of Scotland and Ireland as part of the Joint Interim Board of Religious Studies. Stakeholder engagement commenced, with consensus for the adoption of a joint qualification and approval of indicative module content. Engagement with potential providers across the three jurisdictions is under way and will be used to inform next steps. The initial project phase is expected to complete in early 2026.

*Pictured above is a visit by St Paul's Catholic School, Milton Keynes, in the Diocese of Northampton, to a Sikh Gurdwara as part of an RE lesson.*



# Political engagement and communications

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## Objectives

The CES works with the UK and Welsh governments and the media to raise the positive profile of Catholic education and contribute to national debates. The CES seeks to develop stronger relationships with parliamentarians, to ensure positive promotion of Catholic education news and to educate stakeholders on the work of the CES.

## Parliamentary work

The CES continues to maintain close working relationships with parliamentarians, providing briefings for relevant debates and questions. The CES met with MPs and members of the House of Lords throughout the year to discuss education issues, including at party conferences.

The CES submitted written evidence to the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill Committee which provided the basis for being invited to give oral evidence to the committee in Parliament (pictured) during January, alongside the Church of England.

There was also engagement with the Home Office and members of the House of Lords to prevent the unintentional dual regulation of Catholic schools in new legislation.

A child poverty-themed survey of Catholic school headteachers at the end of 2024 was published in report form in January 2025, with findings subsequently highlighted to ministers, civil servants and parliamentarians.

The CES developed tools and resources to support diocesan education services and schools to engage with their local MPs, such as a parliamentary constituency mapping database.

Following on from the above-mentioned child poverty survey, in October the CES, Bishops' Conference and CSAN brought Catholic school and charity representatives together with parliamentarians at an event held in the House of Lords to highlight work undertaken to tackle child poverty.

Following a meeting with the Shadow Minister for Education the CES arranged for Catholic sector experts in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) from the Diocese of Clifton to attend a round table event on the issue hosted by the Shadow Education team in Parliament during December. A visit to a SEND school and Birmingham Newman University by a Shadow Minister is also being planned.

The CES conducted a survey of Catholic schools in England related to significantly increasing requirements for SEND provision, with a report of the results published early in 2026 and data highlighted to ministers, civil servants, MPs and members of the House of Lords.

An event in Parliament for diocesan schools commissioners to meet MPs with Catholic schools in their constituencies was arranged to take place in early 2026.

## **RE campaign**

Toward the end of the the year the DfE reduced the RE teacher training bursary to zero, and conditionally accepted a Curriculum and Assessment Review recommendation that RE become part of the National Curriculum. In response the CES has published a statement expressing concern at these developments and launched an e-action campaign to encourage Catholics to raise the matters with their local MP.

## **Media and social media**

The CES continues to maintain an active press office and regularly responds to requests from journalists as well as promoting positive stories about Catholic schools to the media. This year there have been enquiries on issues including the government's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill; academisation plans in various dioceses; admissions; and Catholic independent school closures. Proactive coverage included actions taken to tackle child poverty; the annual CES Census; A-level and GCSE results; and the new Chartered Teacher (Catholic Educator) specialism developed by the *Formatio* partnership and the Chartered College of Teaching.

A large quantity of case studies of the work of diocesan education services and Catholic schools was added to the CES website. This was to provide examples for sharing across the Catholic education sector and also for parliamentarians, other stakeholders and the media.

The monthly schools newsletter and fortnightly news and policy digest newsletter were redesigned to feature the new CES branding. An active social media presence was also maintained, on X (Twitter), Facebook and Instagram.



# Professional development & faith formation: *Formatio*

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## Objectives

Commissioned by the Bishops in 2017, *Formatio*, the national strategy for leadership and governance, works to form, nourish, and sustain leaders of Catholic education by establishing a vision for Catholic school leadership and by providing opportunities for professional development, collaboration and Catholic formation. It comprises a partnership between dioceses, Catholic multi-academy trusts (CMATs), the four Catholic universities and the CES.

## CEO / CSEL formation and professional development

The fifth CEO / CSEL national conference, *Shaping The Future*, was held in November with more than 100 delegates in attendance from CMATs; diocesan education teams; and the Catholic universities. A keynote address was provided by Dr Vanessa Ogden, leader of a DfE-commissioned group to oversee any potential introduction of RE to the national curriculum, as recommended by the Curriculum and Assessment Review. Earlier in the year the CES had participated in a round table discussion on the place of RE in the curriculum facilitated by Dr Ogden.

The conference co-occurred with the Jubilee for Education and the publication of Pope Leo's Apostolic Letter, 'Drawing New Maps of Hope'<sup>2</sup> in which he reflects on the challenges facing Catholic schools today. Keynote speakers emphasised various aspects of the letter in their presentations. The first Catholic CEO retreat took place in July with a small group reflecting on the Jubilee Year theme of Hope.

## **National projects**

The national projects include an internship programme, building on existing work from the South West region and the Archdiocese of Westminster; a national strategy and resources to encourage Catholic teachers into Catholic education; a review and update of governance modules and resources, along with a conference to focus on faith formation; a national chaplaincy apprenticeship programme at Liverpool Hope University and promotion of a chaplaincy apprenticeship programme at St Mary's University; a national induction and accompaniment programme for teachers new to Catholic education; and spiritual accompaniment initially for academy trust CEOs.

## **Collaboration with the Chartered College of Teaching**

The *Formatio* partnership and the Chartered College of Teaching worked together throughout 2025 to design content for the Chartered Teacher Status Catholic Pathway, a first of its kind professional accreditation programme based on Catholic Social Teaching.

Candidates will complete tailored assessments in evidence-informed practice; teaching practice; education research and inquiry; and professional knowledge, with the support of an experienced Catholic educator mentor. The new specialism is scheduled to launch in April 2026.

## **Collaboration with the Church of England and Confederation of School Trusts (CST)**

The CES meets regularly with counterparts at the Church of England and the CST to collaborate on strategic responses to governmental and other education policy. This year discussions have focused on inspection, particularly of academy trust boards, and work is under way towards alignment of the three organisations on this issue.

In response to a request from the DfE Faith Team the CES hosted a meeting to discuss emerging ideas of academy trust board inspection with a group of CEOs representing medium to larger CMATs.

## **Catholic Academy Trust Training Collaboration (CATtColl)**

Following discussion and review, CATtColl was renamed The CMAT Network, to better describe its role and purpose, which has evolved over the last four years, and it will also become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

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<sup>2</sup> [Apostolic Letter "Drawing new maps of hope" on the occasion of the LX anniversary of the Conciliar Declaration "Gravissimum educationis" \(27 October 2025\)](#)



# Digital engagement

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## Objectives

The CES aims to support and maintain the IT, data and digital needs of schools, dioceses and other stakeholders. Key areas of work include: management of the CES schools census; website maintenance and development; software, database and digital development.

## New website and systems

Content from the former CES website was migrated to its new website. Copies of the 2024 CES Census digest reports were sent to the Bishops; UK and Welsh government stakeholders; think tanks; and journalists. The CES Census was automated and maintained its 100% return rate. The 2025 data will be published in digest form early in 2026. Dioceses were provided with an online tool enabling access to live data and updating of the system with the latest schools information to ensure accurate records are kept.

An improved main CSI web presence has enabled dioceses to upload inspection reports directly. Data from inspection reports can also link automatically to the schools directory and other databases, saving major administrative tasks.



# The CES in Wales

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## **Objectives**

The CES liaises with Members of the Senedd (MSs), Welsh Government and other ecumenical and interfaith stakeholders to ensure that Catholic education is fully represented. The CES's relationship with the Welsh Government's education team continues to develop positively and regular meetings have been held with the Education Minister.

## **Model contracts and admissions policies**

The CES continues to assist Welsh dioceses in improving the use of CES model contracts and employment policies by schools in Wales. The agreed strategy was to issue the CES model protocols in Wales first and then move forward with the implementation of the policies. The protocol document was launched in Wales and the CES continues to assist the Welsh DSCs in implementing the protocols and ensuring that compliance is monitored.

Each Welsh DSC has been in discussion with their local authorities as the providers of HR services about the implementation of the model contracts and policies.

The CES has completed model admission arrangements for schools in Wales and associated guidance and the Welsh dioceses are now in the process of ensuring these are implemented in their schools.

## **Senedd event**

The CES led preparations for an event scheduled to take place in the Senedd in January 2026, which will bring together MSs, ministers, government officials, and ecumenical colleagues to highlight the contribution of Catholics to Welsh society, particularly Catholic schools. The Most Rev Mark O'Toole, Archbishop of Cardiff-Menevia, will be the main speaker along with representatives from the dioceses, Catholic education and others from Catholic charities.

## **Buildings and refurbishment**

The CES in Wales collaborated in discussions between Education Wales, the Catholic dioceses of Cardiff-Menevia and Wrexham, and the Church in Wales, on a new approach to Welsh Government funding. The result was a multi-million-pound investment, including for 22 Catholic schools, the largest since devolution in 1999.

The dioceses coordinated their approaches together with councils in bidding for funds from the first phase of the Welsh Government's Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme (SCLP). The SCLP provided the majority (85%) of the funding with the remainder coming from the dioceses themselves, local authorities and the schools, which are voluntary aided. Ten of the Catholic schools are set to benefit from much-needed new roofs, a major structural investment.

*Pictured is the Cross of Wales, by the Goldsmiths' Company, and which incorporates a relic of the True Cross given by Pope Francis. It is shared for use in Wales by the Anglican and Catholic Churches.*



# Catholic Schools Inspectorate

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## Objectives

The CSI ensures every pupil of Catholic schools in England and Wales receives an outstanding Catholic education through rigorous, objective, and consistent inspection, providing accountability oversight and accountability of inspection for the Bishops and the DfE. It facilitates greater collaboration between dioceses regionally and nationally as part of a one-Church approach to inspection.

## Overview

In the 2024-25 school year, the third year of the National Framework, there were 438 CSI inspections, bringing the total since 2022 to 1,153. The majority of these have been either Good or Outstanding. The review process is concerned with three areas of Catholic education: Catholic life and mission; RE; and collective worship; and from the three perspectives of pupil outcome; provision; and leadership management.

Handbooks and other inspection materials have been available from the old CSI website, which during this year was transferred to the new CES website. The inspectorate continues to provide updates to the annual data dashboards, schedule of inspections, and report templates for dioceses. These systems are being automated, along with a database of inspectors.

This will also allow inspectors to be provided with CSI email addresses, rather than them having to rely on work-based or personal ones.

The CSI continues to provide training for inspectors, administrators and quality assurers, and also on the RED, Prayer and Liturgy Directory and safeguarding.

Work on the draft framework for the inspection of joint denominational schools has continued with SIAMS, with a consultation on the draft framework launched early in 2026. With the publication of a new Ofsted framework in September, the CSI is undertaking a review of its own framework, which is expected to take two years, and allows for all schools to be inspected under the existing framework.

### **Strengths of the best-performing schools**

Overall, based on the 2024-25 inspection reports taken together, in the best Catholic schools there is abundant evidence that Catholic identity is explicit and lived; pastoral care and inclusion are strong; and there is pupil formation for service, putting Catholic Social Teaching into action. Prayer and liturgy are also marked by an increasing confidence among pupils and variety in prayers; there are effective school-parish partnerships, with weekly class Masses, attendance from families, and priests regularly in schools; and RE cultures of learning.

There has also been a progression during the past three years in Overall Effectiveness judgements, with a gradual increase in the proportion of schools assessed as Outstanding in 2025, and a corresponding decrease in the number judged as Good. Similarly, in the last year nine schools were rated as Requires Improvement, half that of 2022.

### **Areas for improvement**

However, to varying degrees across schools rated either as Good, Requires Improvement or Inadequate, there needs to be more stretch and challenge within RE, particularly for the most able pupils; greater consistency and adaptation of scaffolding provided for support; assessment should feed more into pupil learning; a greater degree of staff formation; a deepened understanding of Catholic Social Teaching, and the immediate and wider contexts of solidarity and subsidiarity; and a focus on the next steps for prayer and liturgy.

### **In conclusion**

The witness of Catholic schools remains a source of profound encouragement. Headteachers, clergy and governors have shown deep commitment and leadership has been most effective when mission is central to decision-making. In the best Catholic schools mission statements are sung, referenced in assemblies, formed in pupil promises and embedded into behaviours and relationships, and there is an understanding among pupils that their education is forming them for service. Inspections this year have revealed schools that, in their great variety, share a common mission to place Christ at the centre. The CSI, in turn, remains committed to serving that mission with honesty, rigour, and compassion.

# Finance

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The CES is funded by a Bishops' Conference-approved annual levy on each diocese to support the work of the CES. The levy is based on the number of pupils in Catholic schools per diocese.

Funding from dioceses is supported by the CES annual collection which is taken throughout the country on Education Sunday, a collection first established by the Bishops in 1848. Since 1849, a plenary indulgence has been available to all subscribers to the CES who fulfilled the usual conditions within the Octaves of the Feasts of the Sacred Heart, of St George, or St Edward the Confessor.

Full accounts for the CES are consolidated with those of the Bishops' Conference, with which trustees are shared, as part of the statutory accounts of CaTEW. The CES continues as a distinct organisation alongside the Bishops' Conference.

A brief summary of expenditure:

Staff costs: £986,080

Specific projects: £73,230

Office expenses: £66,076

Administration: £202,146

Legal and professional: £15,453

Total: £1,342,985

Images: Birmingham Newman University; CAFOD; Mazur / CBCEW; Catholic Schools Inspectorate; *Formatio*; Mount St Mary's Catholic High School, in the Diocese of Leeds; Parliamentlive.tv; St Joseph Catholic Multi-Academy Trust, in the Archdiocese of Liverpool; St Mary's University.

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