



All Saints
Catholic Academy Trust

An outstanding Catholic Education for all

Autumn/ Winter
Newsletter 2023

WELCOME

As you will see, it has been a very busy but very successful start to the 2023-24 Academic year across our ASCAT family of schools. With two visits by Ofsted and one further visit by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate, it has been wonderful to see the strength and the successes of Catholic Education across the Trust reflected in the glowing comments of inspection teams and the very positive outcomes for the schools visited. We celebrate the individual achievements of these schools later on in this term's newsletter, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the leaders, teachers and members of support staff from across our schools for the dedicated service that they continue give, day in and out, to the families of the communities that we serve.

Two personal highlights of the term, also covered elsewhere in this newsletter, have been our ASCAT development day for all teaching staff within our Trust schools and our celebration Mass for the feast of All Saints at the beginning of November. As the Trust continues to grow it has been so pleasing to see staff and pupils from across our schools meeting one another and sharing in work, discussion, training and celebration, that further strengthens our Trust and our individual school communities. There is definite truth in the phrase 'stronger together', something which we see replicated across the Trust time and again. The success of the Trust also continues to attract others that wish to work with us and other Catholic schools that wish to be part of the ASCAT journey. It has been our pleasure over recent months to work with the leaders and governors at St Bernadette Catholic Primary School in London Colney, St Cuthbert Mayne Catholic Junior School in Hemel Hempstead and St Rose's Catholic Infant School, also in Hemel Hempstead, who have recently been approved by the Diocese and the DfE to hopefully join ASCAT in due course. Finally, as we approach the end of Term, may I take this opportunity to wish you and your families all a very happy and joyful Christmas, with every good wish for 2024!



Stephen Wheatley
CEO

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- School Inspections
- Trust Development Day
- Chaplaincy Retreat Day
- The Feast of All Saints
- Buildings and estates update
- Governance update
- Prayer at Home
- Happy Birthday St Albert the Great!



Inspections everywhere

It may not come as a surprise that, given that our Trust is growing in size, the number of visits by inspectors to schools within the Trust is increasing also. Since the end of the summer term, we have had four different visits to Trust Schools. Catholic schools are part of two separate inspection cycles. The first of these are the Ofsted inspections that all state funded schools are required to participate in roughly once every four or five years. The second is an inspection into Religious Education and the Catholic Life of the School, which is carried out by the Catholic Schools Inspectorate (CSI), on behalf of the diocese, again once every four to five years.

In recent years, both types of inspection (Ofsted and CSI) have undergone revision and changes making them far more challenging and exacting for schools. In addition to this, the impact of Covid, during which all inspections were halted, means that for many of our schools, it has been a while since their last inspection.

As a Trust whose aim is an 'Outstanding Education for All', we recognise that there are many important measures for what makes for a successful school; the happy smiling faces and the polite, courteous students that I meet in our schools being high up on the list of these! Nevertheless, in an education system

in which there are such external validations of the work that takes place in our schools, it is important that these reflect the placing of Christ and the child at the center of all that we do and that our schools are recognised for being places in which all students are enabled to flourish in their God given gifts and talents. It has been wonderful therefore to read some of the following comments about schools in our Trust this term:

'Pupils enjoy their learning. They come to school looking forward to the exciting experiences that await them. Pupils want to do their best. They rise to the high expectations of teachers. They are encouraged to ask questions and show curiosity from when they start in the early years. Pupils achieve well'

'All of the school's values are woven into everyday school life, though it is 'love and solidarity' that shine most brightly'

'Pupils feel happy, safe and valued, whatever their background, within the Catholic identity of this school. The school prioritises the well-being and personal development of pupils. They receive high-quality guidance and care which helps them to become better citizens. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy their lessons.'

'Pupils and their families feel very welcomed and well supported. This is an inclusive school that fosters respect for other faiths. As a result of the deep respect shown by adults for each other and for the pupils, behaviour is good in lessons and throughout the school'

An Inspector Calls

Or more accurately, some inspectors called a number of times across the Trust!



Divine Saviour Catholic Primary School

Divine Saviour received a visit from Ofsted in June at the end of the Summer Term. It was a routine, two day 'ungraded inspection', which is the most common type of Ofsted inspection that schools, previously judged to be Good or Outstanding now receive. In such a visit, inspectors visit schools to meet with and hear from Leaders, Teachers, Pupils and Parents to check that the school has maintained high standards since its previous inspection. Following a very thorough two days, the school and Trust were delighted with the finding that Divine Saviour has indeed maintained these high standards and remains a good school. The inspector was impressed with all aspects of children's education as reflected in the final report:

'Pupils are confident and articulate. They know what it means to be a good friend and how to resolve conflict when their peers are being unkind. Pupils know what bullying is. They say that it does not happen in their school because leaders deal with behaviour issues swiftly. Adults help pupils to make better behaviour choices. Pupils know how to resolve disagreements sensibly.'

'Divine Saviour is a happy and welcoming school. Pupils enjoy their learning. They come to school looking forward to the exciting experiences that await them. Pupils want to do their best. They rise to the high expectations of teachers. They are encouraged to ask questions and show curiosity from when they start in the early years. Pupils achieve well.'

Stephen Wheatley, ASCAT CEO:

'On behalf of the Trust I want to offer warmest and well deserved congratulations to Mrs Wilson, Miss McKinstry and all of the staff, pupils and parents of Divine Saviour Catholic Primary School. Receiving an 'ungraded' inspection can be a double edged sword for schools - before the inspection you are aware that your inspection grade cannot be changed, but schools still undergo a very thorough and rigorous two day inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate. It is pleasing therefore to see that although the grade remains the same, the body of the report contains so many fantastic examples of the progress that the school has made since its previous inspection in March 2018. Divine Saviour is a wonderful Catholic Primary School, that puts a lot of careful thought and consideration, not to mention an awful lot of hard work into ensuring that all pupils have the very best experience of their time at school.'

Helen Wilson, Headteacher:

It seems like such a long time ago that Divine Saviour School experienced our Ofsted visit – but I never tire of saying how proud I am of all the pupils and staff of our wonderful school.

There is no doubt that in any inspection there are going to be nerves and anxieties, but I could not have asked any more of staff or pupils – they shone - and the final report reflects many of the things that we know make Divine Saviour so special to all of us.

There is the temptation, when you know how hard you are working, to be disappointed by a 'good' grading. But instead, we must remind ourselves of the dictionary definition of good: to 'be desired or approved of and having the required qualities; of a high standard. Therefore we are rightly proud to be a good school! And together we will continue to work tirelessly as a community to be creative, innovative and aspirational, and give our children the very best start that we can on their educational journey.'



Holy Rood Catholic Primary School

Only two weeks into the current academic year, in mid September, Holy Rood received its first visit from Ofsted in more than 10 years, with the school having previously been exempt from routine inspection as a school with a 'historic outstanding judgement'. In these 10 years, the school has seen many changes including changes to teaching staff, school leaders and governors, not to mention the fact that the school inspection framework has become substantially more challenging over time. In spite of all of this, Holy Rood more than rose to the challenge of a very thorough two day graded inspection with a team of three inspectors who were able to consider all inspection outcomes from inadequate to outstanding. The Trust were delighted to partner in this process with the school and to be there to witness the school awarded the grade of 'Outstanding' across all areas. A huge achievement for any school!



'Across the school, there is a palpable air of peace and kindheartedness. It filters down from leaders to staff to pupils and parents. There is consistency in how adults form positive relationships with pupils. Pupils then want to look and listen, both to learn from and to show respect, to adults and peers in school.'

'Year after year, pupils achieve very well. The subject-specific learning ignites pupils' interest in academia, sports and the creative arts. Pupils happily talk at length about all that they learn... What is most impressive is how much pupils recall from lessons learned in years gone by.'

Stephen Wheatley, ASCAT CEO:

We are delighted for all in the Holy Rood community that this exemplary Ofsted report captures the very special nature of the school and expert work of leaders, governors and staff over many years to maintain the highest educational standards. Our huge congratulations and thanks to Mrs Braund, Mrs MacLabai, Mrs Willis, the Holy Rood staff, pupils, parents and Governors on this remarkable achievement. There is often a view that in order to attain and Outstanding grade in an Ofsted inspection that a school must somehow be solely results driven and focused exclusively and ruthlessly on this above all else. What is wonderful to see in this report is the way in which the warm, caring, loving nature of the school, as well as the undeniable fun and enjoyment that pupils find in the school day is captured so clearly, reflecting something of the true nature of what it means to be an Outstanding Catholic School.

Emma Braund, Headteacher:

'Everyone here at Holy Rood including staff, pupils, parents and governors are all feeling incredibly proud of our recent Ofsted Inspection outcome and report. The report reflects everything that is held in high esteem for our children and families, and emphasises a focus on the 'whole child' being nurtured and loved by the adults and children around them, whilst also aspiring for high academic and personal development outcomes for them as well. It is so incredibly humbling at a time like this to see how everyone comes together as a team to support one another and to bring out the very best in everyone involved - and this was definitely the case before and during the inspection, which was commented on by the lead as being evident in everything they say across our very special 'Holy Rood family'.





St Joan of Arc Catholic School

Only a couple of weeks after the Inspection Team had left Holy Rood, Mrs O'Hanlon and her team at St Joan of Arc received the phone call that they too were to be receiving a visit from Ofsted. Like at Divine Saviour, this was a routine 'ungraded' inspection, with three inspectors carrying out two days of work to assure themselves that standards continue to be high at St Joan of Arc and that students continue to receive high standards of care, education and personal development. The inspectors spent a very full two days meeting with leaders, staff, students, Governors and the Trust, visiting lessons and reviewing the school curriculum. It was very pleasing, at the end of this, to hear inspectors firmly agree with the school's own view that it continues to be a good school that seeks the very best for each and every student.

'Teachers and pupils share very positive relationships. Teachers use the behaviour policy consistently. This helps to provide a calm and respectful atmosphere between the different members of the school community.'

'The school has high expectations that all pupils will learn and remember the curriculum. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are well supported to meet these expectations. They work very hard as a result. They typically remember and can recall the knowledge and concepts studied.'

Stephen Wheatley, ASCAT CEO:

'It was a pleasure to be able to be part of the inspection process for St Joan of Arc and to celebrate with Governors and School Leaders this very special Catholic Secondary School. Inspectors rightly commented on the the school's ambition for each and every young person, the exemplary behaviour and courteous conduct of students and the ambitious curriculum which prepares them well for the next stages of their time in education or employment. My congratulations to Mrs O'Hanlon, Mr Doyle, Mr Lee, the whole Joan of Arc team, its students and families for this fantastic achievement, which, combined with its impressive S48 (Diocesan) inspection in the previous academic year, demonstrates a real commitment to our Trust Mission for an Outstanding Catholic Education for all.'

Bernadette O'Hanlon, Headteacher:

'No-one likes the idea of being inspected and having their work scrutinised, especially when the outcomes of which are made public. The negative view that many people have of Ofsted and its high stakes, does make the anxiety of inspection even more acute. However, at the same time there is nothing more affirming than when you are able to showcase the work you are doing and the plans that you have and engage in healthy, rigorous discussions about how to do even more to ensure our children get the best possible outcomes. And so it has been with our experience of our Ofsted experience at the end of last half term. This was a two day non-graded inspection. In other words the inspection team was seeking evidence to determine whether St Joan of Arc continued to be a good school. The conversations and observations of the three inspectors reaffirmed what we knew about the strengths of our provision and the areas for further development were already noted in our own school improvement plan. The contributions made by our parents in terms of their engagement with the parent surveys was greatly appreciated. Overall the two days of inspection felt less like an inspection and more of a developmental experience. This was as much due to the compassion and genuine interest of the inspectors as it was to the preparation of the JOA staff and the engagement of our pupils, who did us all proud.'





St John Fisher Catholic Primary School

Just like London buses.... what are the chances of two inspections in the same Trust on the same two days? No sooner had we received notification of Ofsted's visit to St Joan of Arc, than a phone call came to tell us that St John Fisher Catholic Primary School would be receiving its inspection by the Catholic Schools' Inspectorate at the same time! This made St John Fisher the third of our schools to undergo the new style of S48 inspection under the new national framework by which all schools are inspected. The school was visited by two inspectors who, across two days in school, met with the Executive Headteacher Patricia O'Donnell and RE Subject Leader Sally Hines, as well as observing teaching and class prayer and meeting with the Chair of Governors Dr. Christopher Baker and Parish Priest Fr Michael O'Boy

'The respect pupils have for one another, and their good behaviour encourages Catholic life and mission to flourish, leading to a joyful community rooted in Christ.'

'Governors are highly ambitious for the school and actively involved in its accurate self-evaluation. They are strategic and determined in their pursuit of excellence.'

Stephen Wheatley, ASCAT CEO:

'It was a fantastic opportunity to have been invited to speak to the Inspection team alongside Chair of Governors Dr Chris Baker, to talk about this special Catholic School. I am delighted for Ms O'Donnell, Mrs Vontzalidis, Mrs Hines and the whole staff team, that their hard work and dedication to developing the RE curriculum and pupils' experience of prayer and liturgy as well as the authentically Catholic ethos that permeates the school. Our congratulations to all in the St John Fisher community for this fantastic achievement and recognition of all that takes place, day in and day out, in their Catholic school community, where all are loved and welcomed.'

Patricia O'Donnell, Executive Headteacher:

'We are delighted that St John Fisher School has been recognised as a welcoming school that works effectively with our families and the community and importantly for us that we are a joyful community rooted in Christ.'



ASCAT Teacher Development Day

'As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another'

Proverbs 27:17



'I feel very supported in my role by the trust. Thank you for all you are doing. It's wonderful to be part of a bigger community and today is a reminder of this.'

This was the reflection of an anonymous colleague following our Trust Development Day for teaching staff colleagues from across the Trust, who gathered together at John F Kennedy Catholic School for a day of reflection on and conversation about how, through closer partnership and collaboration, we can better support and challenge one another in our common mission to provide an Outstanding Catholic Education for all students in our schools.

Following prayer led by Callum Moore, Leader of Youth Ministry at the school, our day began with a key note speech from James Aidoo. James is the CEO of Innerscope, a leading educational coaching and mentoring organisation working with students, leaders and staff teams from across the country, inspiring and engaging teams and individuals in the pursuit of ambitious and aspirational individual and collective goals. James' talk encouraged colleagues to reflect on the power of being part of a larger team and how best to create dynamics within this to bring about collective success. This was done with a great deal of warmth and humour, leaving colleagues both motivated and inspired. Following this there were opportunities for teachers to meet and collaborate together as primary subject leads and secondary departments and also for primary and secondary colleagues to meet together to discuss opportunities to learn from one another and for cross-phase working within subject areas.

Following the opportunity to reflect on these discussions in school groups, the day concluded with Mass, celebrated by Bishop John Sherrington, marking the first occasion during which staff from across all 8 of the schools in our recently expanded Trust had had the opportunity to share in the celebration of the Mass together and to pray for one another and our common mission as Catholic schools. Our thanks to James and Bishop John for providing inspiration for us on the day, to JFK for being such warm and welcoming hosts and to our Deputy Headteacher's Forum Group who supported in the planning of the day. We look forward to meeting again for our next Trust wide development day in the 2024-25 academic year.

ASCAT Chaplaincy Retreat Day



'At the beginning of October, representative pupils from our seven Trust Primary Schools gathered together at St Saviour's Parish in Abbots Langley for our annual Chaplaincy retreat day. Each of these pupils have been selected within their own schools, to play a special and important role as pupil chaplains, to lead and support the prayer life of the school and the development of prayer and worship within their own classes.

The training day was led by Deacon Liam Lynch, School Chaplain at St Joan of Arc Catholic School and Annabel Barton, who is our new Trust Chaplaincy Apprentice, working alongside Deacon Liam to provide chaplaincy support across all of our schools. The theme of the day was 'Superheroes', and as well as creating their own rather snazzy superhero outfits, our pupil chaplains were led in sessions in which they reflected on their own mission of service back in their own schools. Pupils were also given a range of materials by Annabel and Deacon Liam, that they could use in their schools to support with the planning of pupil-led prayer in the classroom.

The retreat day ended in the Church with the celebration of Mass together. Parish Priest, Fr Richard Mway SDS spoke to the children about the special role that they had been chosen for and prayed that they would be happy and successful in their role as pupil chaplains. Following the celebration of Mass, Trust CEO, Mr. Stephen Wheatley, presented each of the pupils with a certificate of recognition of both the training and their position of pupil leadership within their schools.



Celebrating the Feast of All Saints together

Each year in November, representative pupils and staff members from across our Trust schools gather together to celebrate the feast of All Saints, which, as well as one of the major feasts in the Church calendar, is an important one for all of our schools as the patronal feast for our Trust.

This year our Mass was held at Our Lady Queen of All Creation Church in Hemel Hempstead, part of the Hemel East Parish, where Parish Priest Fr Kim Addison, the parishioners of Hemel East and the pupils of St Albert the Great Catholic Primary School invited Trust schools to join with them for their school and parish celebration of the Feast Day Mass. Thanks to the wonders of modern technology, students across the Trust, who were unable to join with us in person, were also able to participate in the Mass via a live webcast of the Mass on Hemel East's YouTube channel!

In his Sermon, Deacon Liam Lynch spoke to us about two key ways that we can try to live our lives like saints by always trying to do good for others and by letting Christ's light shine through us and on into the world. At the end of Mass, our CEO, Mr. Stephen Wheatley, spoke to all gathered about his desire that as a Trust named after this special feast, we make an extra special effort to learn more about the lives of the saints after which our schools and parishes have been named and he has asked for the help of students this year to identify the lessons and qualities of these saints in particular that we should be sharing across the Trust and putting into practice in our schools.

Following the Mass, Deacon Liam took the opportunity to work with representative pupils from across the Trust our special video edition of our weekly 'Prayer at Home' resource, to help families to mark the equally important feast of All Souls. If you have not yet had chance to share this as a family, you can find this resource by following the link below:

<http://youtu.be/PscVdwWECOM>



The state of our estate!



Our Trust's mission to provide an 'Outstanding Education for All' necessitates a focus on all areas of students' time in our schools. Part of this includes work to ensure that our children and young people are educated in schools that are attractive, well looked after and well cared for. It takes a lot of work (and money!) to ensure that this is the case, and where there are challenges to this, to be able to address these. Here are the latest updates on work taking place across the Trust to improve our school estate.

St John's Catholic Primary School

Nationally, the 2023-24 academic year began with a huge amount of press focus on the issue of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in British schools. This form of light weight, 'bubbly' concrete is now considered to be a risk in schools due to its liability to deteriorate over time and the fact that in most cases, it is reaching or well beyond its safe lifespan within school buildings. St John's in Rickmansworth was one of the first schools in the country to be identified with this problem when in February 2022, as a result of a survey, commissioned by the Trust into the condition of its school estate, RAAC was discovered at the school. Since this time, the Trust has been working hard with school leaders, Governors, the Diocese of Westminster and the DfE to plan for the complete rebuild of the school, on the existing school site, as part of the DfE's School Rebuilding Programme. Just before the summer holiday, there was a public consultation at which we were able to share with staff, parents, pupils and local residents the proposed designs for the new school building and the school site. This term has marked another significant milestone with the submission of the planning application for the rebuilding of the school to Three Rivers' District Council. Tilbury Douglas, the contractor tasked with the DfE to deliver

Chris Briggs, Chair of Governors

'The Governors, Trust, Diocese and DfE have been working together to ensure the new school building does not only offer modern facilities but also creates a vibrant and inspiring atmosphere for our students to thrive academically, socially, and spiritually.'

'I would like to extend my thanks to Ms. O'Donnell and Miss. Hassell for their tireless efforts in making the current arrangements work. Their dedication and hard work have been instrumental in ensuring that our school continues to operate smoothly despite the challenges we have faced. We are fortunate to have such committed staff members who consistently go above and beyond for our pupils.'





**ST. JOAN OF ARC
Catholic School**

St Joan of Arc Catholic School

Over the Autumn/ Winter Term, it has been fantastic to see work on the long awaited new science block and school hall at St Joan of Arc continuing apace. As you can see from the images below the building is really starting to take shape, with the school now eagerly planning to be able to move into the building in Spring 2024.

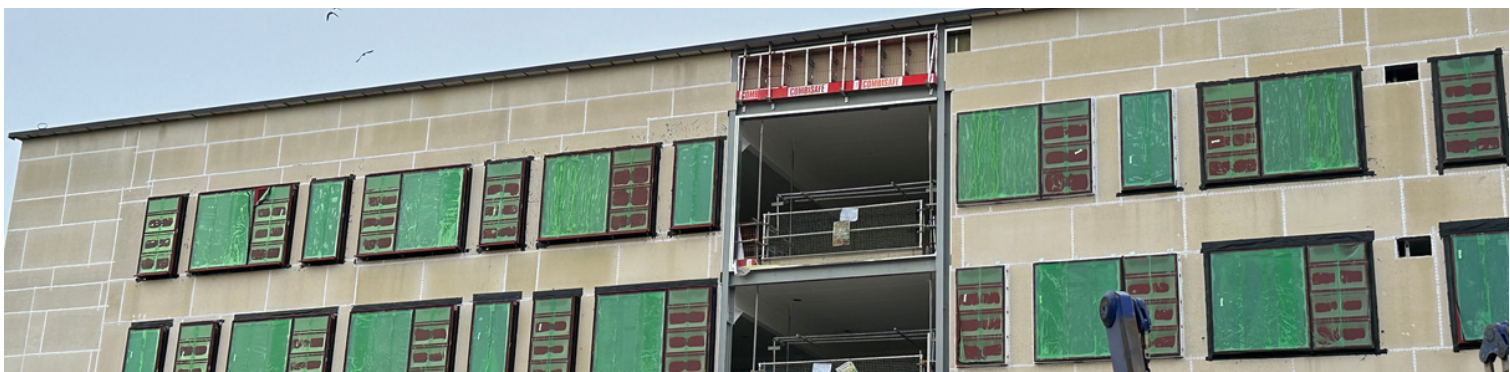
Following a number of delays to the project, outside the of the school and the Trust’s control, it is pleasing to now be within touching distance of pupils and staff working in the building before the end of this current academic year. The building is now sufficiently far enough along that a number of staff, governors and members of the Trust have been able to tour the new facilities and see them developing over time. Particularly fitting has been the fact that part of the Kier Leadership team that have been on site managing the project is an ex- St Joan of Arc student, who is very pleased to be playing his part in ‘giving back’ to his former school !

Stephen Wheatley, CEO:

‘It was a real pleasure recently to be able to tour work on the the new science block at St Joan of Arc. Although not yet complete, walking around the construction site with Mrs O’Hanlon was a fantastic opportunity to see first-hand what a wonderful facility students and staff can look forward to. With large, spacious, modern science labs and a fantastic new school hall, complete with bleacher style seating and badminton courts, all with views out over the wider St Joan of Arc estate and surroundings, it will be the envy of many local secondary schools I am sure! As a Trust we completely understand and appreciate the difficulties that the delays to this project have caused for the entire St Joan of Arc community and therefore are very excited that we are able to be having conversations about moving students, staff and science teaching into its brand new home, for many years to come!’

Bernadette O’Hanlon, Headteacher:

‘As we approach the end of the Autumn term, conversations with Kier and the DFE are now focussing on the last leg of the building project which will provide the students and staff at St Joan of Arc with a brand-new Hall and Science Labs fit and equipped for the 21st Century. Talk of curtains and the colour of the bleacher seats are giving a sense of a project coming to an end. We expect to have all of our students experiencing Science lessons in the new labs before the end of this academic year.’



Governance

It has been an incredibly busy term for our schools and, as a Trust, we are fortunate to have a complement of skilled Governors who are committed to supporting our Headteachers and their teams. I am very proud to have the privilege of working and collaborating with groups of highly skilled and dedicated Governors, across our Trust, who have an important role in shaping the future of ASCAT.

Opinions on what good governance looks like have been evolving for a number of years and the growth of Multi Academy Trusts has changed the landscape of Governance. In response to this a new Academy Trust Governance Code has been published, in partnership with Catholic Education Service; The Chartered Governance Institute UK & Ireland; The Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership; Confederation of School Trusts (CST); National Governance Association; and Stone King LLP. The Code sets out the principles, desired outcomes, and recommended practice for effective governance.

Ultimately, anyone involved in the Governance will understand that the true test of effectiveness is the ongoing improvement in pupil outcomes and the development of positive working cultures and engagement in schools. This is why it is critical to have the right people around the table and this is what has contributed to the success to our Trust. To ensure the ongoing sustainability of our Governing Boards we have launched two new webpages which provide more information on the roles of Foundation Governors and Foundation Directors, where you can also register an interest.

At ASCAT we understand the need to ensure our Governors are supported and have the relevant skills and expertise to fulfill such an important role. In recognition of this there are a number of opportunities for Governors to attend quality training and to network with other Governors across the Trust.



Governance provides an excellent opportunity to not only become more involved in the local community but also for professional development. Whilst Foundation Governors are required to be practicing Catholics there are other roles in which members of our community, who cannot fulfil this requirement, can still support our Boards and these are shown in the diagram of our Constitution above. Whether you are a member of staff in our Trust or an Education professional in another organisation; a former pupil; a parent in one of our schools; a member of the parish community; or a member of the wider community, you are welcome to contact us to understand more about the roles we currently have available.

Lastly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Governors and staff for their commitment to our school communities and for the continued drive for school improvement and outstanding Catholic education.

Christina Reffold
Director of Governance & Compliance
 governance@ascat.co.uk



We are delighted to announce the recent appointed of Peter Taylor to our Trust Board. Peter is the current serving Mayor of Watford; a former teacher and has previously worked with the Catholic Education Service.

Peter is an exciting addition to our Trust Board bringing a wealth of experience whilst sharing our vision and ambitions for ASCAT.



Connect with us

At ASCAT we are keen to engage with stakeholders across our Trust on multiple platforms to share our news and build the Trust network. Follow us on LinkedIn to stay informed of opportunities and our latest updates.

Prayer at home

Since September 2021, a team of leaders, teachers and governors from across our Trust schools, have been involved in a project to provide a weekly prayer resources for our primary pupil and their families. As the Trust has grown, so has the team of willing volunteers who give of their time once or twice a term to produce these fantastic prayers resources. The project has been led and co-ordinated for the past two years by Aisling Willis, Deputy Headteacher at Holy Rood Catholic Primary School and we are grateful for all of the energy and enthusiasm that she has put into making our Prayer at Home resources a real success. This year Aisling has handed over responsibility for this to Marian Lally, Assistant Headteacher at St Thomas More Catholic Primary school, who has continued to lead the project with the same passion and enthusiasm for supporting families across the Trust to make time for regular prayer within the home.



Aisling Willis, Deputy Headteacher Holy Rood Catholic Primary School
'Following the COVID-19 pandemic, we found the need more than ever to help support our families across ASCAT in engaging with prayer, at home, as a family unit. Therefore, in 2021, a weekly 'Family prayer at Home' was created. It is planned by different staff across ASCAT. Pope Francis speaks of the importance of prayer as a family saying, "It is in the family that we first learn how to pray. There we come to know God and to see ourselves as members of God's greater family, the Church. In the family, we learn how to love, forgive, be generous and open. Through prayer, we learn to move beyond our own needs, to encounter others and share our lives with them. That is why it is so important to pray as a family!"

In order to answer this call from Pope Francis, the weekly documents offers families within our Academy Trust a fully planned, high-quality, guided prayer. It encourages them to find time each week, dedicated to being together as a household unit, and taking time out from the business of daily life to focus solely on God. 'Family prayer at Home' can take on many different forms: meditation, guided prayer, reflections, art based prayer, examines and many more. Staff involved choose a particular theme or focus for the prayer. This also enables us to share Liturgical events, global events and school specific needs with our own communities.'

Marian Lally, Assistant Headteacher St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
'Having taken over the organisation and distribution of the Prayer at Home resources this September, it has been wonderful to see the creativity and thoughtfulness from members of the ASCAT community that has helped bring to life the various themes explored and the important feasts and liturgical celebrations of the last few months. I'm particularly pleased that the list of contributors continues to expand, including from schools who have more recently joined the academy as well as from the wider Catholic community.

The resources made each week often explain how the contributor's school marks celebrations which are special to them such as the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and the Feast of St Albert the Great, help unify our understanding of other schools within our academy as well as educating us all on feasts and celebrations which may be lesser known to us. I look forward to the continuing growth and development of Prayer at Home as it goes from strength to strength, enriching the spiritual and prayer lives of our family of schools.'

Thank you to all those who have been involved in the creation of the Prayer at Home Materials over the past year: Aisling Willis, Emma Braund, Helen Wilson, Kate McKinstry, Patricia O'Donnell, Marian Lally, Deacon Liam Lynch, Karen Vontzalidis, Kathy Little, Fr Kim Addison, Jamie Molloy, Sally Hines, Danielle Hassell, Dr Chris Baker, Stephen Wheatley

Happy Birthday St Albert the Great!



The community of St Albert the Great Catholic Primary School, gathered together at the end of November to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the opening of its 'new' school building in 2013. Following the discovery of a number of 'sink holes' underneath the then school building, the Diocese of Westminster and DfE committed funding the complete rebuild of the school and ten years ago, pupils and staff walked into the brand new school building for the first time. Even though it is now ten years old, the building has been well maintained and cared for and still very much has the feel of a 'new' school building. It is a wonderfully spacious, bright and airy building with great facilities to support teaching and learning, as well as a wonderful variety of outdoor spaces. It is school site that staff, pupils and governors are rightly very proud of.

To celebrate this special occasion, Bishop Paul MacAleenan and Parish Priest of the Hemel East Parishes, Fr Kim Addison, concelebrated Mass in the school hall, attended by the whole school and a wide range of invited guests including representatives from the Trust, other schools in the St Mark's Hub and staff and governors new and old, all of whom have had some part to play in supporting the school on its journey to where it is today. In his homily, Bishop Paul spoke to the children about St Albert the Great and why he was such an apt Saint for a school to be named after. He reminded us that St Albert the Great, who treasured the pursuit of knowledge and who desired to know everything he could about the world that God has created, reminds us of the importance of our own education and in particular the important place of the Catholic school in educating the whole person. Bishop Paul reminded us that God knows all, and although we will never be able to know everything that God knows, every time that we learn something new, we become a little bit more like God. Bishop Paul also reminded everyone of God's love for us and of how important we are to God.

During the celebration of Mass, the school choir sang the hymn 'Take me Lord, use my life in the way you wish to do'. We give thanks for all those who over many years have given of their lives: their time, skills and expertise, to educating generations of St Albert the Great pupils and pray that their next ten years (and beyond) in their school home will just as happy, successful and fruitful.

