

AUTUMN 2026



St Francis of Assisi
CATHOLIC ACADEMY TRUST

Messenger

Documenting the life and learning at the St Francis Trust



St Mary's Catholic School Head Pupil Team. Discover more about our Sixth Form at the Sixth Form Open Evening on 11 November 2026.

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Mr Celano
Chief Executive Officer

Celebrating Franciscan Values

2026 is a very important year for our schools and the Trust. This year marks the 800th anniversary of the death of St Francis of Assisi. Pope Leo XIV has invited everyone to reflect on and rediscover a way of life that is simple, open to peace, fellowship and a respect for all in society who are vulnerable, as well as fostering a deep care of creation. I hope that throughout the St Francis of Assisi Anniversary events in our schools and the wider opportunities through assemblies we are all able to reflect on these Franciscan values:

Community – are we doing all we can to build up our communities (be that home, school or elsewhere)?

Compassion – are we working for the good of all in society, ensuring nobody is left behind, everyone flourishes, including the vulnerable and needy and those for whom equity is far from a reality?

Care for Creation – do we care for all of creation – from the little things to the bigger priorities of sustainability including looking after the planet and doing all we can to preserve and protect our world?

Peacemakers – do we act with humility, forgiveness and tolerance. A recent Gospel reminded us of the call to forgive our brother 'seventy-seven times seven' – is a tolerant approach visible in the way we live our lives?

In this term's newsletter, I'm delighted to see that these values come through in every article, for example, on page 7, as we read of rewarding our pupils who are leading through Franciscan values, or in the celebration of our Trust community as we review the significant benefits our school pupils, staff and communities receive as a result of belonging to our Trust (page 3). Please do take a moment to scan the QR code to read more about the Benefits of Belonging.

Thank you for taking an interest in the work of our Trust and schools. I hope that your reading this newsletter will be a blessing and encouragement to you.



The Difference
of Belonging



Trust Marks 5th Anniversary with Celebration of Collaboration and Shared Mission



St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust held a Headteacher Celebration Event, bringing together school leaders, Executive and Central Team colleagues, Governors and guests for a day of reflection, collaboration and thanksgiving.

The event provided an opportunity for school leaders to reflect on the Trust's achievements and impact, while highlighting its mission, vision and purpose.

In his welcome message, Trust CEO Andrew Celano welcomed guests including Peter Sweeney, Westminster Diocesan Director of Education, Andrew Johnson, Jesuit Delegate for Education, as well as Headteachers and Governors from Enfield schools preparing to join the Trust.

Marking the Trust's fifth anniversary, Mr Celano reflected on the importance of Catholic education and quoted Pope Leo XIV: "*Education does not measure*

its value only on the axis of efficiency: it measures it according to dignity, justice, the capacity to serve the common good."

Throughout the day, Headteachers and Central Team colleagues shared examples of successful practice, discussed common challenges and explored practical solutions together in a collaborative and supportive environment. Delegates also heard keynote presentations on the Trust's SEND Strategy, including its impact and next steps, as well as Trust support for pupil admissions remedies.

In his address, Peter Sweeney encouraged schools to continue

working together through strong partnerships to strengthen Catholic education. He also reflected on the important role of educators in supporting young people through life's challenges. He also thanked members across the Trust for their dedication and commitment and congratulated schools and leaders on their achievements and positive impact on pupils and communities.

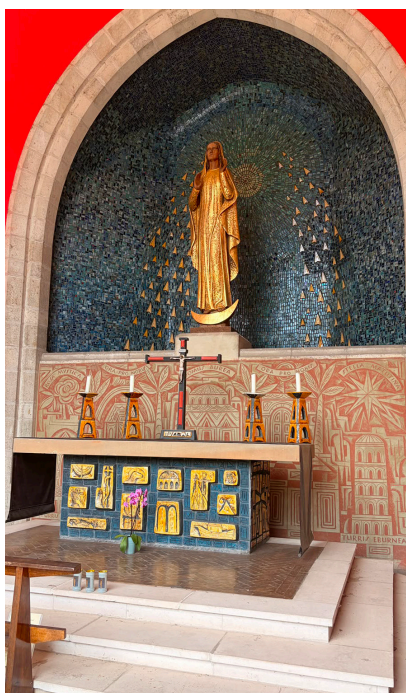
The event concluded with a closing prayer led by Fr Peter Harris, Chair of the Trust, who thanked colleagues across the Trust for their dedication and commitment to Catholic education.

Trust Pupils Celebrate Their Sacraments Together

Over 180 pupils from across the nine schools within the Trust came together during the summer term for a joyful and reverent Sacramental Gathering at St Joseph's and the English Martyrs Church in Bishop's Stortford. The event celebrated the children who had recently received the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

The Mass was celebrated by Fr Peter, and provided a meaningful occasion of faith, unity and thanksgiving, marking an important milestone in the spiritual journeys of many young people across the Trust.

The gathering reflected the strong partnership between the Trust, its schools and parish communities. It was a joyful and memorable celebration that strengthened the sense of community and shared mission across the Trust family.



Trust Chaplaincy Retreat

Over 100 pupils from Chaplaincy teams across the Trust gathered at Aylesford Priory for a special Cross-Trust Retreat Day, celebrating the commitment, faith and amazing contributions they have made throughout the year.

The retreat began with team-building activities, allowing pupils to work together, take part in friendly challenges and build connections with Chaplaincy team members from other schools. Pupils then gathered at the main shrine for a welcome talk before taking part in a scavenger hunt around the beautiful grounds of Aylesford Priory.

The day concluded with a liturgy, providing pupils with a peaceful opportunity to come together in prayer and reflection. The retreat was a wonderful celebration of faith, teamwork and service, recognising the positive impact our young people have on the life of our schools.



Helping Pupils Find Their Voice: The Impact of Talk on Tuesday Across the Trust

By Nicky Blackwell, Trust Oracy & Writing Lead for EYFS & KS1

Following the Trust's commitment to the Voice 21 Oracy programme two years ago, it was important that every school could demonstrate the impact of oracy, regardless of where they were on their implementation journey.

To support this ambition, I launched the Trust-wide initiative, *Talk on Tuesday*, providing all schools with a consistent framework for embedding purposeful talk. The initiative aims to develop pupils' oracy skills, enhance learning, build confidence and ensure every child can use their voice effectively both in school and beyond.

Implementation

Talk on Tuesday has become a key driver in strengthening the Trust's commitment to high-quality oracy. Through dedicated weekly talk activities, pupils develop speaking and listening skills via structured, purposeful discussion. Teachers plan opportunities that encourage pupils to articulate ideas, justify their thinking, listen actively and respectfully, and build

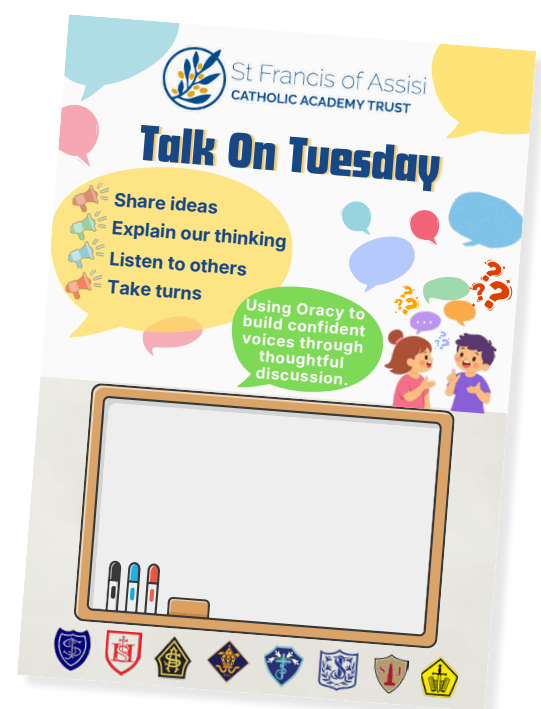
on the contributions of others. As a result, classrooms are increasingly recognising high-quality dialogue as an essential tool for learning, collaboration and deeper understanding.

Early Impact

Early evidence demonstrates improvements in pupil engagement, confidence and the quality of classroom discussion. Teachers report that pupils are participating more readily, using subject-specific vocabulary with greater precision and demonstrating increasingly sophisticated reasoning. Pupils are also becoming more confident in expressing their ideas, respectfully challenging viewpoints and engaging in purposeful dialogue.

Long-Term Impact

As *Talk on Tuesday* becomes securely embedded across the Trust, it will continue to strengthen oracy, enrich language development and improve writing through enhanced vocabulary and reasoning. By placing purposeful talk at the heart of teaching and learning, the initiative is developing confident, articulate and reflective learners who are equipped with the communication skills, critical thinking and resilience needed to succeed in education, contribute positively to their communities and thrive in their future lives.

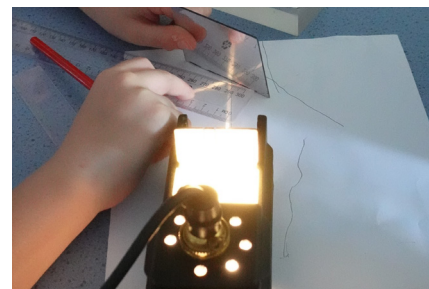


Trust Year 5 Pupils Enjoy an Interactive Science Experience

More than 150 Year 5 pupils from primary schools across the Trust took part in a Science Enrichment Day at St Mary's Catholic School during the Summer term.

For many pupils, it was their first time visiting a science laboratory. Through interactive, hands-on activities, they learnt how to use microscopes to examine tiny details and explored how light travels, reflects and refracts.

The day provided an exciting opportunity for pupils to experience science beyond their usual classroom environment, inspiring curiosity and enthusiasm through practical learning.



Trust Speak Out Challenge Inspires Confident Young Speakers

Pupils from across the Trust demonstrated confidence, creativity and outstanding communication skills as they took part in the Trust's Speak Out Challenge during the Summer term.

Bringing together pupils from Year 4 to Year 9, the event celebrated the art of public speaking while encouraging participants to express their ideas on a range of thought-provoking topics. Each year group explored a different theme, including leadership, kindness, change, success and making the world a better place.

The challenge provided pupils with the opportunity to develop their speaking and presentation skills, think critically and

confidently share their own perspectives with an audience. Throughout the event, participants impressed judges and supporters with their enthusiasm, originality and thoughtful reflections.

The Trust congratulates all the pupils who took part for their

inspiring contributions and thanks the staff and judges who supported and organised the event, helping to make the Speak Out Challenge another successful occasion.





Franciscan Values Award

The Trust's Franciscan Values Award recognises pupils across all year groups who embody the virtues of St Francis: community, creation, compassion, and peace-making. Through their words, actions, kindness, and leadership, these pupils demonstrate our Franciscan values in their daily lives.

The list of this year's award recipients from each school is as follows:




Charlie
Sacred Heart




Matilda
St Augustine's




Aliyah
St Cross




Amelia
St Joseph's (Bishop's Stortford)




Poppy
St Joseph's (Hertford)




Maia
St Joseph's (Waltham Cross)




Midhun
St Paul's




Dorothy
St Thomas of Canterbury




Chidiogo
St Mary's

A Fond Farewell to Joanne Walsh

After six years of dedicated leadership, Joanne Walsh has retired from her role as Executive Headteacher of St Cross Catholic Primary School and St Augustine's Catholic Primary School.

Joanne joined St Cross as Headteacher in September 2020, guiding the school through the challenges of the pandemic and three national lockdowns. During her leadership, both schools celebrated significant achievements, including successful Ofsted inspections and outstanding outcomes in their Catholic Schools Inspections.

Reflecting on her time with the schools, Joanne said: *"It is the ordinary days that I will miss the most – the smiles, conversations and simple moments that make school life so rewarding."*



Joanne described serving both school communities as *"one of the greatest privileges of my career"*.

The Trust extends its sincere thanks to Joanne for her dedicated service and leadership and wishes her every happiness in her retirement.

New Interim Leadership at St Augustine's and St Cross



Following Mrs Walsh's retirement, the Trust is pleased to welcome two experienced school leaders who have taken on leadership roles at St Augustine's and St Cross this September.



Martin Maloney



Paul O'Rourke

Martin Maloney, Headteacher of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Hertford, has taken on the additional role of Executive Headteacher at St Augustine's, while Paul O'Rourke, from St George's Catholic Primary School in Enfield, has joined St Cross as Executive Headteacher.

The Trust warmly welcomes Mr Maloney and Mr O'Rourke to their new interim roles and wishes them every success as they support the pupils, staff and parents of the school communities throughout the Autumn term.



SEND Executive Lead Update

By Emma Overett, SEND Executive Lead



Welcome back to a new academic year. I hope you and your families have had a wonderful summer break, and I look forward to another successful year working together with our schools to support our children and young

people with SEND across the Trust.

I would also like to thank all parents who contributed to our SEND parent survey at the end of last year. It was incredibly encouraging to hear about the positive impact our provision is having. As one parent shared, "The support and information provided by the staff regarding my child I cannot fault" Another commented, "I couldn't ask for a better team to help with any of my child's needs. I am always kept in the loop and up to date with his progress and targets. The staff have been on training to help with equipment he needs. I believe they go above and beyond for him and always give me support and guidance when I need it."

This year, I am delighted to introduce our new SEND Assistant, who will work alongside me to further strengthen and develop SEND provision across the Trust.

Supporting SEND Across the Trust

Ruth Rogers, Assistant to Trust SEND Lead



I am the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) at St Joseph's (Bishop's Stortford). As Assistant to the Trust SEND Lead, I work closely with the

Trust SEND Lead, SENCOs and school teams to strengthen SEND provision across the Trust. I support consistent practice, effective EHCP implementation, and inclusive classroom strategies so all children can achieve, belong and thrive.

My role includes monitoring SEND policies, reviewing provision, tracking intervention impact, and contributing to audits and improvement actions. Collaboration is central working with colleagues, leaders, and external agencies to secure positive outcomes. I also support SEND focused CPD and maintain up to date knowledge to champion inclusive education and ensure every learner has a positive lived experience.

A Fresh New Chapter for Catering and Cleaning Across the Trust

By Andrew Howard,
Chief Finance Officer

Following a comprehensive tender process, the Trust is pleased to announce new catering and cleaning suppliers across our schools from 1 September 2026.

Student voice was an important part of the process, with pupil representatives participating in catering presentations alongside Trust leaders and school staff.

Caterlink Limited is now the catering provider across the Trust. The company impressed the panel with its

commitment to nutrition, quality and innovation and has introduced new menus and serving systems, while working with schools to provide nutritious and balanced meals. In addition, Ridge Crest has been appointed as the cleaning contractor for eight Trust schools, demonstrating strong management, attention to detail and a clear understanding of school environments.

We thank everyone who contributed to the tender process, particularly our student representatives for their valuable input.

Year of St Francis Statue Tour Inspires Pupils Across the Trust



Statue for two weeks, providing time for chaplaincy teams to organise liturgies, prayer activities and opportunities for pupils and students to explore the life and values of St Francis of Assisi.

A particular highlight of the tour has been the enthusiasm and faith shown by the Trust's primary pupils. During the visits, pupils have reflected on important questions such as, *"Who does God want me to be?"* and *"How can we achieve great things with God in our lives?"* Their willingness to ask questions, share their ideas and consider how they can live out the example of St Francis has been wonderful to see.

As part of our Year of St Francis celebrations, the St Francis Statue Tour has been bringing school communities across the Trust together to rediscover the inspiring story of our patron saint and reflect on how his example continues to guide us today.

Starting in Summer Term and due to be completed in Autumn term, the Statue Tour has now visited the majority of schools across the Trust and is nearly the end of its journey. Each school welcomes the

Thomas Hutchinson, Assistant Lead of Catholic Life across the Trust, has been visiting schools as part of the tour. He said: *"Being able to share the Catholic faith with students across the Trust has been a real privilege. The most rewarding aspect has been seeing the faith of our students come alive."*

The tour has provided a wonderful way to strengthen our shared Catholic identity and connection to our patron saint.

St Francis Garden Opens at St Cross

To commemorate the 800th anniversary of St Francis of Assisi's famous *Canticle of the Creatures*, the Chaplaincy Team of St Cross, one of our Trust schools, created a special St Francis Garden.

The garden was officially opened during the Summer term, providing a peaceful and reflective space for the pupils of St Cross. Through this project, the Chaplaincy Team hopes to inspire pupils to deepen their appreciation of creation and to live out the values of St Francis in their daily lives.





NEWS FROM AROUND THE TRUST

Artistic Excellence at St Mary's

St Mary's Catholic School celebrates another outstanding year in Art, with excellent GCSE and A Level results and national recognition after student Carlos achieved full marks for their Art and Design portfolio. Continue to P12 to read more about the school's GCSE and A Level highlights.



Pupils Enjoy a Music Immersion Day

During the Summer term, Year 3 and 4 pupils from St Thomas of Canterbury were invited to St Edmund's for a Music Immersion Day. Pupils took part in a range of musical activities, explored instruments including the cello, harp and violin, and developed their singing skills. Staff praised the fantastic energy throughout the day and how enthusiastically the children engaged with the musical experiences.



Celebrate Culture

In the Summer term, pupils at St Paul's took part in the school's annual Cultural Day. As part of the celebration, pupils were invited to come to school in cultural dress and took part in different cultural activities hosted by members of the community. Coming together to celebrate different cultures is part of what makes the St Paul's community so special.



OPAL Platinum Achievement

Sacred Heart is delighted to have achieved the OPAL Platinum Award, recognising the school's commitment to providing outstanding play opportunities for every pupil. Over the past two years, the OPAL team, staff and pupils have worked together to transform playtimes and lunchtimes into vibrant, engaging and inclusive experiences. Through high-quality play, pupils are encouraged to explore, collaborate, problem-solve, build friendships and develop resilience, making a positive impact on their wellbeing, confidence and enjoyment of school.



Dressing for the Future

Pupils at St Joseph's (Waltham Cross) recently enjoyed a fantastic



Dress Up Day, showcasing their aspirations by dressing as what they hope to become in the future. As part of a special Job Takeover Day, local professionals and parents shared their experiences across a range of careers. From firefighters and solicitors to the local MP, visitors inspired pupils to ask questions, explore different career paths and dream big about their futures.



Scan the QR code to visit our school websites.

stfrancistrust.net/our-schools



Record-Breaking Results at St Mary's Catholic School

Students at St Mary's Catholic School celebrated an exceptional set of A Level and GCSE results in August, with record-breaking performances reflecting the hard work of students and staff across the school.

At A Level, St Mary's achieved some of its best-ever results. A record proportion of grades were awarded at A* and A, equalling the record benchmark set in 2018. Average point scores, the proportion of A*-B grades, the overall pass rate and early indications of value added all also reached record levels. Value added, which measures how well Sixth Form students achieve compared with students of the same ability nationally, is a particularly telling result.

The results also brought national recognition for St Mary's Art Department for the third consecutive year, after a student achieved full marks for their Art and Design portfolio, placing their work among the highest-performing nationally.

Year 13 students progressed to a range of exciting destinations, including leading universities, degree apprenticeships and employment. Students secured places at universities including UCL, York, Bristol and Warwick.

There was further cause for celebration when GCSE results were announced, with students making some of the strongest progress ever recorded at St Mary's. Progress measures how far students have advanced from their starting points compared with students of the same ability nationally. This achievement came with the largest examination cohort in the school's history, as 206 students received their results, compared with a typical recent cohort of around 186.

The school's analysis also placed GCSE attainment among the strongest in its history. Importantly, strong progress was seen across the year group, including among the most able students, those requiring additional support, boys and girls, students with special educational needs and those facing greater challenges outside school.

Headteacher Deirdre McHugh praised the students, staff and wider school community: *"I am proud of every student who collected results this summer. Our most able were stretched, those who needed more support received it, and our students have gone further than their starting points predicted."*

Andrew Celano, Chief Executive of the St Francis Trust and a former pupil and Headteacher of St Mary's, congratulated the school on its achievements.

"It is a great joy to see the young people we serve move forward not only with excellent results, but with rounded character, a firm moral compass, Gospel values and a grounding that will enable them to contribute positively to society."

