

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton Education Service

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Dear Colleagues,

It is incredible that December is already upon us! It seems no time whatsoever since we were all starting the new academic year and the days were long and sunny. Now we are looking forward to the peace and joy of Christmas and it will not be long before we put 2018 on all our correspondence!

Much has happened over the past four months and this is a good opportunity to reflect on some of the highs and lows, before looking forward to Christmas and a new term:

The Highs....

This has been a very successful term for all schools inspected under Sec 48, Sec 5 and Sec 8 frameworks. My thanks and appreciation go to all teaching and non-teaching staff across the diocese for the amazing job you do, in what can be very challenging circumstances. Your commitment and dedication are second to none. All published reports this term have been highly positive and are testament to the impressive range of strengths already in place, as well as indicating constructive next steps where appropriate. At the time of writing we are awaiting publication of the DfE Key Stage 2 performance tables for 2017, but we anticipate that a number of Catholic primary schools in Arundel and Brighton will be high in the tables for progress and/or performance. On this note, may I extend congratulations to the many primary schools which received letters of commendation from their local authority on performance and/or progress scores in Summer 2017 Key Stage 2 Tests. Progress is an especially important benchmark, shifting the focus of league tables from attainment to progress of students and it is very encouraging to see how many schools and academies across the diocese are 'adding value' in a very marked way. This is a key part of our mission as Catholic schools and I never cease to be impressed by the difference schools in Arundel and Brighton can make to a child's life.

Like their primary colleagues, Catholic secondary schools and academies in Arundel and Brighton achieved impressive results for progress in Summer 2017 GCSEs. The GCSE Progress 8 measure, which came in last year, compares the progress of a school's students with the progress of students nationally with the same prior attainment data from primary school. Cardinal Newman topped the Brighton and Hove tables for overall progress; St Richard's was the second highest for progress in East Sussex; SJB, St Andrew's and St Peter's were first, second and fourth respectively in Surrey; and St Philip Howard was the fourth highest school in West Sussex. Particular congratulations to SJB, which not only topped the table in Surrey but is also the highest performing Catholic school in the country for overall performance at KS4 in 2017. On the subject of SJB, this term also saw Ani Magill (CEO of Xavier Catholic Educational Trust and Executive Headteacher, SJB) receive her CBE from the Queen in recognition of her services to education. This is wonderful recognition of the outstanding contribution Ani has made both within and beyond Catholic education, and hugely deserved. Ani dedicated her award "to all the amazing Students, Staff,

Governors and Parents I've had the privilege of working with over the last 37 years in education". We are all very proud of her!

For the second term running, we have had no unfilled vacancies for Headships! Despite the prevailing notion that 'there are no Catholic leaders out there', we are able to confirm that this is absolutely not the case in Arundel and Brighton! The DES is developing career pathways, from undergraduate and postgraduate students on placement through to Executive Headteachers and will be sharing more with you about this early in 2018. In the meantime, may I thank you for your continued support of, and encouragement for, future Catholic leaders in your schools.

The Lows....

Whilst we all hope schools are places where children and young people feel secure and happy, they are microcosms of human life and, as such, it is inevitable that schools can also undergo significant loss through illness or bereavement. This term has been no exception. Please keep in your thoughts and prayers all members of our school communities who are suffering and/or grieving due to illness or bereavement. We are truly blessed to have faith in the resurrection.

As you will be aware, there is considerable concern that the Education Secretary Justine Greening is considering reneging on the Government's promise to lift the 50% cap on faith admissions for new religious schools. The policy of imposing a 50% cap on admissions has effectively banned new Catholic schools as our Bishops ruled that opening a Catholic school that turned away Catholics for being Catholic contravened Canon Law. The Catholic community needs to make its collective voice heard and tell Justine Greening this discrimination is absolutely unacceptable. Please may I urge you to encourage your entire school community to support this. I know this is an exceptionally busy time of year but simply by clicking on the link provided, you can contact Ms Greening and your MP expressing concern that this manifesto pledge could be broken. The process takes less than a minute in total. Please visit <http://catholicnews.org.uk/education-cap> insert your details and click 'send'. We hope that through a concerted effort on the part of all members of the Catholic community, we can effect real, and much needed, influence.

Looking forward to 2018....

By now, you will be aware of the intention to expand Bosco and Xavier Catholic Education Trusts and the rationale behind this decision. We will be holding meetings for Surrey Headteachers on 10th January, and for Sussex Headteachers on 11th January in a number of venues. Further details to follow shortly, but in the meantime please hold the respective date!

As in previous years, an independent panel will be working with Mark Brunet and I to assess all LCVAP bids in early January, in order to present recommendations to the Diocesan Finance Committee for their consideration later that month. We will keep you updated of the outcome as soon as we are able. In the meantime, thank you for your patience.

But before then.....

Thank you to the many schools which have invited us to Advent Services and Nativity plays! We are sorry we cannot attend more than a handful between us but we appreciate the invitations nonetheless!

Lastly and importantly, on behalf of all members of the Education Service may I wish you and your families a very happy, peaceful and restful Christmas. We look forward to seeing you in 2018!

Marie Ryan