

Catholic Diocese of Arundel & Brighton Education Service

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Dear Colleagues,

I hope you and your families have all had a very happy Christmas and a well-deserved rest over the holidays. It seems incredible that 2014 is behind us and we are already into 2015!

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mary Reynolds for all she has done for Catholic education within the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton over the past twenty years. Mary has been a powerful advocate of Catholic education both within and beyond the diocese, and her achievements are simply too many to list here. I know as a Catholic community we will miss her presence, and will look forward to extending our heartfelt thanks and celebrating Mary's achievements with her later this term.

Mary is a tough act to follow, and I am very honoured to have been given the role of Director to support and serve the Catholic community of our Diocesan schools. Over the coming months I will be seeking your views regarding how best to support your school and your governing body. I very much hope you can and will be a part of this process, as your responses will help shape Diocesan support and strength. I am very grateful to those Heads and Chairs who have already shared initial thoughts and views at South Lodge in November 2014, which will be fed back to you over the course of this term.

The challenges we face in education today are both wide-reaching and ever-changing. However, I wish to reassure you that, as members of what is currently called the Schools Service, we will do everything we can to support you in your mission. You will have seen on our new website www.abeducationservice.org.uk that we are becoming the 'Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton Education Service'. This reflects the fact that some of our schools may wish to become Academies and, with this in mind, it was felt that 'Education Service' was more inclusive a term than 'Schools Service' going forward. In the interests of continuity however, the schools@dabnet.org e-mail address remains unchanged at present.

The new term promises to be a very busy one and you may be interested to know the following with regard to this first week of term:

On Monday 5th January and weekly from then on, the Education Service will have a team meeting every Monday morning from 9.30am to 11am. The phones will usually be staffed during much of this time. However, please bear with us if on the rare occasion you have to leave a phone message. Please be assured you will be contacted as soon as possible thereafter.

On Tuesday 6th January, members of the Education Service will be reviewing and prioritising the LCVAP bids recently submitted, in the hope that we will be allocated another "interim" year of funding by the Government. Prioritisation of bids will be according to the published criteria. In the

interests of transparency, Richard McKenzie (Head of Primary Steering Committee and member of the Diocesan Schools Committee) has been invited to attend, and I hope this development will go some way to allay any concerns schools may have about the process. The Education Service's recommendations will then be submitted to the Diocesan Finance Committee (DFC) for consideration later this month. The DFC is the ultimate decision-making body regarding LCVAP. Schools will be notified of the DFC's decision later this term.

On Wednesday 7th January, members of the Shadow Board will meet with Fergus Brotherton and I to finalise a short questionnaire for schools regarding Academies. As already explained in the recent Academies Newsletter, it would be greatly appreciated if you were able to complete and return your questionnaire by Friday 16th January, so that findings and trends can be shared with Trustees on Monday 19th January. In view of the short turnaround, the questionnaire is being kept deliberately short. The Shadow Board will be meeting again on the morning of Friday 16th January to consider its work on the Scheme of Delegation. At the invitation of Richard McKenzie and James Kibble, I will also attend the Heads' Meeting on Academies on the afternoon of Friday 16th January to listen to your thoughts. I hope soon to be able to notify Heads and Chairs of the date and location for our forthcoming diocesan 'Academies Assembly', to which Trustees will also be invited. The Assembly is likely to be held in late February.

On Thursday 8th January the Education Service will be on a day's spiritual retreat at Worth Abbey, led by Fr Rob Esdaile. As a result of the team's initial discussions about how we might best serve our diocesan schools, our chosen theme for our retreat day is 'Service and Servant Leadership'. Please note the Education Service Office will therefore not be staffed on that day.

On Friday 9th January I will be meeting with Dominic Herrington, Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the South-East. RSCs are responsible for making important decisions about academies and free schools in their area on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education. It is therefore important that going forward the Diocese engages in dialogue with Dominic to ensure we understand his role, and that he appreciates the distinctive nature of Catholic education within Arundel and Brighton. It goes without saying however that, since the Governing Body is the employer in Catholic schools, any decision regarding possible Academy status is one which rests with the Governing Body and the school, and not with the Diocese.

As you are aware, the Education Service is currently understaffed with two positions unfilled at present, namely a full-time Deputy Director and a part-time Buildings Officer. We are a small team and due to the volume of work and to carrying two key vacancies we are very stretched, so please bear with us. The post of Deputy Director will appear in the TES and the Catholic Teachers' Gazette on Friday 9th January. It will also appear on our Diocesan website on the same date. Interviews will be held in February, with a potential start date of April 2015. In the meantime, we are continuing to look for a part-time Buildings Officer.

On 1st February we will celebrate Education Sunday, a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone involved in the world of education. For more than 100 years there has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in England and Wales, and the CES's theme for Education Sunday 2015 is 'All Gifts and All People'. Education Sunday is an opportunity for schools and parishes to come together to celebrate and give thanks for all the students, staff, governors and parents who work so hard in and for Catholic schools, as well as encourage others to consider taking on the role of Foundation Governor. It is also a chance for us to reflect upon the contribution that Catholic education makes to our communities.

Finally, members of the Education Service have been meeting to say the Angelus together at midday since September 2014. On every occasion, our stated intention has been twofold; firstly, for all the schools in our diocese, and secondly for the Education Service, that we continue to grow together as a team in order to best serve our schools. If anybody can spare two minutes at midday, even if only occasionally, why not unite with us in prayer for the above intentions, from your office or classroom or even lunchtime/playground supervision! How wonderful it would be if the Angelus were being said *in* diocesan schools and at the Education Service, *for* diocesan schools and the Education Service!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. I intend to visit as many schools as possible between now and July and I look forward to working with you and for you.

With very best wishes for a happy and fulfilling new year and with grateful thanks for all that you do,

Marie Ryan

