

Catholic Diocese of Arundel & Brighton Education Service

4 Southgate Drive, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 6RP

Telephone: (01293) 511130 **Fax:** (01293) 616945

website www.abeducationservice.org.uk

E-mail: schools@dabnet.org

Marie Ryan BA (Hons), MA, MCIL
Director, Education Service

5th May 2016

Dear Colleagues,

As I write, the sun is shining and there is a rumour that the weekend temperatures herald the start of Summer– it is almost barbecue weather! I am mindful however that whilst we all look forward to some relaxation at the weekend, this is an exceptionally busy and stressful time of year, with primary schools preparing for next week's SATs and secondary schools getting ready for the forthcoming GCSE and A-level exams. Thank you for everything you do for the children and young people in your care. I am acutely aware of the pressures schools are under in the unrelenting cycle of performance tables, inspection frameworks and political agendas. We must however hold on to the fact that our role is broader, deeper and infinitely more profound than that which is reflected in league tables. As Catholic schools, our mission is to educate the whole child in order to enable him/her to grow in God's image and it is 'the special function of the Catholic school to develop in the school community an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel.'¹ It is helpful for us to hold on to this as a constant in what is an ever-changing education landscape.

I am incredibly grateful to the many Headteachers and Governors who gave up time at such a busy time of year to join us at Worth Abbey last week for my Induction Mass which was led by Bishop Richard and concelebrated by clergy from across the diocese. The choirs of St Francis of Assisi, St Mary's Portslade, St Francis Caterham and St Richard's Catholic College were absolutely wonderful. They sang so beautifully and made it such a memorable occasion and their coming together in harmony was a wonderful example. Thank you for your support, your prayers and for the many cards and thoughtful words. I was, and I remain, very touched by your kindness. I have taken the liberty of reproducing below some of my words from last week about Catholic education in Arundel and Brighton:

"St Augustine said "those who sing pray twice" and it struck me as a useful analogy for Catholic education. I'm sure everyone would agree that those who teach are called to do so. Teaching is not something one can go into half-heartedly. It's a vocation. And teaching in a Catholic school is all the more so - it's twice the vocation. Because we are called not only to teach, but to do so in a Catholic setting which models and imparts the values that we hold dear. So, to my mind, as leaders in Catholic education you don't just pray, you sing.

Many of you will have heard me say how very humbled I am by what I see in our schools. I meet so many people who, often very quietly and unobtrusively, live by Gospel values which truly underpin every aspect of their life. I have witnessed many selfless acts where sacrifices have been made and risks taken in pursuit of the Common Good and in order to support and

¹ *Documents of Vatican II vol.1: Christian Education: Gravissimum Educationis pp. 732-733, § 8*
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protect others. What you do and the way you do it is a wonderful example and it challenges all of us here at the Education Service on a daily basis to do our very best to serve you.

Our mission is to work in partnership with you to serve and lead Catholic education in Arundel and Brighton and I am acutely aware that my role, and that of my colleagues at the Education Service, is both an enormous privilege and a huge responsibility. It is not something any of us at the Education Service takes lightly.

In order to continue the excellent work going on in schools across the diocese and to preserve and protect Catholic education for the next generation, we have much to do together in partnership with you. I ask for your prayers for the Education Service for the work ahead and I assure you of ours for you. And I thank you, most sincerely, for everything you do, individually and collectively, both publicly and behind the scenes.

Lastly, may I extend my grateful thanks to Bishop Richard and Trustees for their wonderful support and guidance, to the clergy for all they do, to our friends at Worth for hosting us so generously and finally to my wonderful friends and colleagues in the Education Service, not just for organising such a beautiful Mass but for being such a joy to work with.”

On the Horizon

On Wednesday 18th May we are holding our Cross-phase Headteachers’ Conference at which Professor Trevor Cooling will deliver our keynote address. Continuing our exploration of mercy in this Holy Year, Trevor will explore ‘How the virtue of mercy can be developed in subject teaching across the curriculum.’ This will be followed up with small group workshops, including a practical workshop on developing liturgies in outdoor spaces, and a practical workshop on developing simple creative writing in Modern Languages on the theme of Mercy. Please rest assured that in the MFL workshop, you really do not have to speak French aloud in front of anyone unless you wish to do so! We know schools are incredibly busy but we hope as many of you as possible will find the time to come and explore how Gospel values can underpin and infuse all aspects of both Primary and Secondary curriculums.

On Wednesday 22nd June we will welcome over 400 pupils to Arundel Cathedral to our Good Shepherd celebration, led by Bishop Richard. Our schools will make their way on pilgrimage through the grounds of Arundel Castle and to the Cathedral to walk through the Holy Door in this Jubilee Year of Mercy. This will be a wonderful opportunity to renew our faith and sense of community. Further details of both events can be found on our Diocesan website.

On Wednesday 29th June we are looking forward to Bishop Richard celebrating a Mass of Thanksgiving followed by Afternoon tea for our diocesan school communities. This will be held at Worth Abbey at 2pm on 29th June. We very much hope that both staff and governors will be able to join us to celebrate, and give thanks for, the wonderful work you do in support of Catholic education in Arundel and Brighton.

With enormous thanks, as ever, for all you do and with very best wishes for the weeks ahead,

Marie Ryan

