

The Newman Catholic Trust

Christmas Newsletter 2023

Issue: 2 15/12/2023



Welcome to our Christmas newsletter!

As we come to the end of this calendar year, it is important to look back, take stock and see how much we have achieved together in 2023. There has been a lot to celebrate across our schools. Hopefully, this newsletter provides a snapshot!

A Message from the Newman MAT Chair

To our children, parents and carers, school staff and governors,

As I prepare to celebrate the birth of baby Jesus, I am grateful that I was able to join recent events in our primary schools. Our children have helpfully reminded me through their plays and singing, about the simple Christmas message of Peace, Hope, Joy and Love. Thank you to everyone at home and in school who has coached and guided them in their preparations for these celebrations.

I am also very grateful to the governors in our schools and our MAT Directors, who volunteer their time and energy to support our schools and MAT Vision **“To be a leading provider of outstanding, sustainable Catholic education”**. Without them there wouldn't be a MAT, so please join me in praying that God sustains them in their efforts.

One of our MAT values is **caring**, and I have truly experienced this, in the many heartfelt messages and gifts of appreciation I have received, as I step down from the MAT Board of Directors, at the end of December.

It has been a privilege and huge responsibility establishing and chairing the MAT over the past few years and now that our schools and children are starting to reap the benefits, I can say it has been worthwhile. I am handing on leadership to Chris Izuka (our Vice-Chair), who is highly capable and committed and I look forward to hearing how our schools continue to go from strength to strength delivering better outcomes and spiritual growth for our pupils.

Wishing you all a happy, restful and blessed Christmas

Anne Rolls
Chair of the Board





CEO Update: Dr Danny Doyle



Dear Trust Family,

As the festive lights twinkle and the air is filled with the melodies of carols, I am filled with gratitude. St. Thérèse of Lisieux once said, "Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love." These words resonate with the essence of Christmas — a season of love, kindness, and giving.

Throughout this year, our Trust family has been a shining example of living out these words. Witnessing the commitment of our schools to charity work, active community involvement, and beautiful collaborative efforts has been truly heartwarming.

We've flourished so far this term, setting the stage for a successful year ahead. A personal highlight for me was our first Trust-wide INSET with Sister Judith Russi. It filled me with pride to see school leaders, teachers, governors, and Directors all gathered at St Nicholas, collaborating on curriculum and vocation. Sister Judith certainly left us "fired up and ready to go" for the rest of the year!

Collectively, we've had a strong year, culminating in an impeccable audit report that highlights the progress we've made as a Trust and the strength of our systems. Our audited accounts reveal that we are in a robust position to continue supporting our schools, keeping the focus on our children, the classroom, and the curriculum. I want to express my deepest gratitude to our Trust Central Team, school leaders, governors, and admin teams for their tireless work, putting us in this strong position and giving us a solid footing for a positive future.



This is also a moment to celebrate the dedicated individuals in our Trust who have gone above and beyond - embodying the true meaning of community (and Christmas!). From the teachers igniting the sparks of knowledge and leaders guiding with compassion to our pupils who inspire every day — each one plays a vital role in creating our thriving community. There have been some truly remarkable acts of service and support for our schools this term, and I am very grateful to each one of you!

As we approach Christmas, let us not only revel in the accomplishments of the year but also embrace the true meaning of the season. May our hearts be filled with the joy of giving, the warmth of love, and the spirit of togetherness. Together, let us continue to make a positive impact, nurturing a community where every individual is cherished.

Wishing each member of our Trust family a Christmas filled with love, peace, and the joy that comes from knowing we are making a difference together.

With heartfelt regards,

Dr. Daniel Doyle



"Charity is certainly greater than any rule. Moreover, all rules must lead to charity." - Saint Vincent de Paul

This autumn, our Trust's commitment to compassion and community has blossomed into a profound journey. At the core of this transformative experience is the heartbeat of charity and the principles of Catholic Social Teaching that guide us.

Our array of charity work began with our Trust Chaplaincy Teams meeting in-person and virtually to discuss the importance of charity and share ideas on charitable initiatives for the year. These young leaders, fuelled by empathy and a desire to make a tangible impact on the world around them, decided on who they wanted to help and what action they were going to take! These dedicated teams, with hearts full of compassion, took up the mantle of responsibility, collectively deciding on charities that align with our values... and boy did they get to work!



From this shared commitment, a cascade of kindness has unfurled across our four schools. Collections for the homeless, the establishment of food banks within our own walls, participation in the Shoe Box appeal and rallying support for the Diocesan charity - the Emmaus Project – all woven into a beautiful tapestry of acts of kindness that extend far beyond our classrooms.

Our children have shown solidarity with those in need – assembling care packages for refugee families in our city and providing Christmas gifts to children in need this winter! These small bundles of hope carry within them the collective compassion of our Trust. They are not just packages; they are expressions of love and solidarity, reinforcing the values we hold dear. We are proud of our children for working within society and for social justice!

At the heart of our schools' work lies the profound understanding that charity is not just an activity; it is a commitment to creating a better society. Our Chaplaincy Teams and our school communities underscore that our children are not just beneficiaries of charity but architects of positive change.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of this term, let our hearts be stirred by the power of charity. Together, as a Trust family, we continue to be beacons of compassion, illuminating the path toward a brighter and more caring society.





"Education is the art of helping young people to completeness; for the Christian, this means education is helping a young person to be more like Christ, the model of all Christians." - Saint John Bosco



This term, our Trust schools were honoured to welcome Sister Judith Russi, a beacon of wisdom in the realm of religious education to our schools to lead our first Trust-wide INSET day. Her visit marked a pivotal moment in our collective journey, inspiring and guiding us on the path of shaping not just a curriculum but a transformative experience rooted in our mission and vocation.



Sister Judith's session unfolded as a vibrant tapestry of insights, weaving together the threads of our shared values and the introduction of the new RE curriculum across the Diocese. Organised by the Trust, this session was a testament to our commitment to actively shapes the identity of this curriculum and its implementation in a way that suits our unique group of institutions.



Sister Judith highlighted the importance of integrating faith into education and reminded us of the profound impact our work can have on shaping young minds and hearts. She challenged us to embrace our mission and vocation, urging us to envision a curriculum that transcends subject matter, becoming a profound journey of spiritual and academic growth.

Sister Judith's visit has become a cornerstone in our quest to shape the implementation of the new RE curriculum. Her guidance serves as a guiding light, challenging us to think creatively and deeply about our purpose as educators within the Diocese.

Feedback from the day:

"I now feel part of a bigger lake, rather than just a small pond."

"The inset really affirmed my own beliefs around education. I also felt reassured that the Trust is heading in a direction that is aligned with my own ambitions and values."

"It was inspiring listening to Sister Judith about the importance and reason for Catholic Education. I felt that she inspired all staff, regardless of their faith, to improve education for all children who walk through our doors."

"I have really enjoyed and benefitted from visiting other schools and building relationships with members of the other schools from the trust. I am beginning to feel that I have so much that I could achieve in these schools."

"I feel fully supported by the Trust. It has enabled me to work across 2 schools which I feel is an amazing opportunity. I feel lucky that we have been able to share our good practice with the other schools in the Trust."

"I thought the MAT being together was lovely. And Sister J was just utterly inspirational."



INVESTING IN EARLY YEARS AN ABUNDANCE OF TOGETHERNESS

With significant Early Years legal updates, a flurry of guidance and a relentless drive for ambitious excellence in the EYFS, 'togetherness' is key. And that is exactly what has been happening at The Newman Catholic Trust - the word Trust could, indeed, be replaced by the word 'family'. Link this with a mindset of abundance, and transformation really can and does happen!

This term as part of their aspirational partnership with HEYD and an ambitious Early Years' investment, the Trust has seen:

- Headteacher's Briefings - covering Early Years updates in the context of individual schools. (Did you know the updated EYFS Statutory Framework is ripe for implementation on 4th January?)
- Personalised Early Years visits to every Trust school, in line with a strategic Trust action plan.
- Comprehensive visit reports with a rigorous focus on the four Early Years Trust actions, including links to FREE CPD (Have you listened to our Early Years Connect podcast?)
- Coaching for EYFS Leads, ensuring autonomous and aspirational leadership within a clear Trust Early Years vision.

At HEYD, we are dedicated to enhancing, developing and elevating early years settings, knowing that investment in these crucial years makes a long-lasting difference to the progress and future lives of our children. The Newman Catholic Trust knows that 'gaps by the end of the Reception year, on average, double by the end of Primary' so they are investing in Early Years right now - why wouldn't they?

www.euhu.co.uk/heyd



End of year reflection



Christmas is joy, religious joy, an inner joy of light and peace."

- Pope Francis

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we gather at the end of this calendar year – fully immersed in the spirit of Christmas, Pope Francis's profound words remind us of the sacred responsibility each member of our Trust family carries. The unique and irreplaceable nature of every individual within our community is a divine testament to the extraordinary journey we share.

In this season of love and reflection, our hearts are filled with gratitude for the hands that have tirelessly worked to shape the minds and souls of our young learners. These hands, bearing the weight of the future, have become vessels of love, compassion, and inspiration. They have kindled the flame of knowledge and illuminated the path of countless hearts.

As we bid farewell to the passing year, let us linger in the warmth of shared moments, lessons learned, and bonds forged. Our teachers, leaders, pupils, and families have not merely participated in a journey; they have been architects of hope, builders of dreams, and guardians of the true meaning of Christmas.

The true gift lies not only in academic achievements but in the love and kindness that permeate our schools. The essence of Christmas is alive in the selfless dedication, the moments of understanding, and the unwavering commitment of our Trust family. These are the gifts that transcend time and echo the eternal message of love and goodwill.

As we enter the season of Christ's birth, let us carry this spirit forward. May the love and care that define our community be a beacon of light in the lives of our students and their families. May the true meaning of Christmas, a celebration of love, grace, and redemption, permeate every corner of our hearts and homes.

In this season of miracles, we seek your guidance and strength, dear Father. Renew our spirits, deepen our bonds, and grant us the wisdom to continue nurturing the seeds of hope and knowledge planted in our care.

May this Christmas prayer and reflection resonate with the profound truth that each member of our Trust family is a cherished and unique gift. Wishing you all a Christmas filled with the warmth of love, the joy of togetherness, and the transformative power of the true Christmas spirit.

Amen!



"My life is not my own, but a part of the larger tapestry of humanity, woven with threads of love, compassion, and shared experiences... Connections are the essence of our shared humanity and the foundation upon which we build a better world."

- Saint John Henry Newman