



The White House
21 Ugate
Poringland
Norwich
NR14 7SH

Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia
The Right Reverend Peter G. Collins, KC*HS, STL
Bishop of East Anglia

Telephone: 01508 492202
Fax: 01508 495358
Email: bishop@rcdea.org.uk

PASTORAL LETTER

EDUCATION SUNDAY – 10 SEPTEMBER 2023

The reasons why the Catholic Church establishes and sustains a network of schools was highlighted most eloquently in the 2005 document entitled '**Christ at the Centre**': Our Catholic schools are critical to the mission of the Church, providing an arena where Christ is proclaimed and encountered. Parents are the primary educators of their children and the Church recognises how essential it is to support families with Catholic schools which offer excellence in all aspects of provision.

With **Christ at the Centre**, the vision for Catholic education will always prioritise the wellbeing and fulfilment of the human person. Whilst seeking the best possible outcomes in every subject, it is the spiritual formation of our children and young people in Christ that inspires and moulds our entire educative enterprise. The Catholic school draws its identity and understands its mission from the recognition that it belongs to the diocesan family and is thus empowered to be of service to parish communities and to every Christian home – which is aptly described as the domestic Church.

With **Christ at the Centre**, the Catholic school is not an isolated enclosure but a vibrant community that endeavours to provide an evangelising witness in the midst of wider society.

Gospel values and the rich tapestry of Church teaching frame and enhance every aspect of life within a Catholic school. The Diocese of East Anglia is blessed with Catholic schools that are diverse and inclusive environments where faith and reason creatively combine enabling all to explore the horizons of our knowledge and experience.

We pray for a blessing upon our current cohort of pupils and staff across the diocesan network of schools. As they embark upon a new academic year may they draw inspiration and strength from the Lord who says in today's Gospel, "Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them."

We rejoice that our senior leadership teams, our teachers and support staff are so committed to communicating our shared vision. We are fortunate in having so many people who are willing to play their part in exercising the responsibilities of governance in our Trusts and schools. I am also appreciative of the contribution of our parish clergy and other local volunteers who contribute so much to fostering coherence between church, school and home.

Some years ago, our diocese took the decision to establish two Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMATS), seeing this to be the best possible means of safeguarding and supporting the provision of Catholic education across our region. This decision envisaged that all our maintained voluntary-aided schools would join the Trust structure. Our two Trust model provides an effective framework of support and encourages the sharing of best practice.

Following their establishment in 2015, both Trusts have grown and are thriving. St. John the Baptist CMAT largely covers the northern half of the Diocese whilst Our Lady Of Walsingham CMAT covers the southern half. Seventeen of our maintained schools have already joined one or other Trust and are enjoying the benefits of

membership. While the policy of the diocese has been clear for some time, a minority of schools have not yet expressed a clear commitment to join the Trust structure. On this Education Sunday I wish to make clear my vision for Catholic education within the Diocese of East Anglia. We all desire the very best for our Children and young people. I am fully convinced that the most effective way of enabling all our schools to fulfil their mission is for them all to find their home within our structure of Diocesan Multi-Academy Trusts. Both of our Trusts have already gained critical mass to ensure resilience. It is no longer tenable for a minority of our schools to remain outside of these structures. The full potential of both Trusts and the full potential of all our schools can only be unleashed when we pool our resources in the most effective way possible. In service to the common good, I call upon all school communities that are not yet within the Trust structure to engage positively with the Diocesan Schools' Service in formulating a plan of action that will ensure future membership of our diocesan CMAT's according to a mutually agreed timetable.

My dear people, I continue to engage with my own learning curve regarding the Visitation of every part of our Diocesan Family. If I have not visited thus far, be assured that I am on my way. On this day of prayer for the flourishing of Catholic Education, I ask you to pray earnestly for the wellbeing of our school communities.

May God's blessing guide and sustain all our endeavours.

Yours In Christ,

+ PETER.

**The Right Reverend Peter G. Collins, KC*HS, STL
Bishop of East Anglia**

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Peter G. Collins" with a cross symbol to the left. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.