



A Celebration of Catholic Life in the Saint Thomas Catholic Academies Trust

2024-2025

Hope does not disappoint

Romans 5:5



Welcome to our newsletter featuring some of the wonderful events that have taken place in the Catholic Schools within our Trust over the course of the last academic year.

Writing about this Jubilee Year where we are called to be 'Pilgrims of Hope', Pope Francis said,

'We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.'

Within these pages you will find numerous ways in which our schools have brought hope to others. We are so proud of our pupils and staff and the innovative ways they have found to embrace the jubilee themes and reach out beyond their own communities, witnessing to the hope we share.

As we celebrate Education Sunday, please continue to pray for our Catholic schools and in particular for the children and young people we serve.

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Cardinal Newman Catholic School

Luton



Year 8 students at Cardinal Newman took part in a day retreat as part of our celebrations of the Year of Jubilee in June. Becoming 'Pilgrims of Hope' was our theme, and the whole day was an exploration of the way in which we can bring hope to others.

The students had already been enthusiastically putting their faith into action throughout the year. The whole school sponsored walk saw £1583 raised for CAFOD, one of a number of charities chosen by students to benefit from their efforts.

Year 8 had worked closely with members of the Youth SVP group to organise the annual Advent Foodbank collection. Over 75 boxes and bags of food were collected – a vital contribution to the SVP Foodbank which is based at Our Lady Help of Christians, Castle Street.

For the retreat day, students were divided into 10 groups across their year group and participated in a carousel of workshops on offer, from art to drama, Emmaus walks on the field to the inspiration of the saints. We were delighted to welcome guest speakers from Youth SVP and CAFOD who shared how the students' commitment to serving others was bringing hope to those who most need it, both in Luton and around the world.



Holy Family Catholic Primary School

Langley



This year the Catholic Church invites us all to celebrate the Jubilee Year of Hope, a special time of joy, reflection and renewal in our faith. At Holy Family Catholic School, we have embraced this call with open hearts - and feet - by going on a meaningful pilgrimage together.

When planning our pilgrimage around school, we noticed that the number seven holds a special significance for us. The number seven is mentioned over 700 times in the Bible and God created the world in seven days. Seven is also evident in the seven colours of the rainbow and seven continents. During each of the seven stages in our pilgrimage, our seven year groups lapped the school grounds seven times. We also paused for seven moments of prayer and reflection on our seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

Our journey wasn't just about walking. It was a chance to think, pray, and grow closer to God and to one another. Every step reminded us that we are part of something bigger - a Church family that stretches across the world and throughout time. Along the way, we carried prayers in our hearts: for peace, for those who are suffering, for our families and for hope in the future.

Pope Francis has called this Jubilee year a time for healing and rebuilding. After the challenges of recent years, we are reminded that hope is alive and active. Hope is in our friendships, in the laughter of our classrooms, in helping someone in need, and in knowing that God never leaves us alone.

Through our pilgrimage and all the special Jubilee celebrations, we have been learning what it truly means to be people of hope, not just waiting for good things to happen - but bringing goodness, love and light wherever we go. We will pledge to keep walking in hope, not just this year, but always.



Our Lady's Catholic Primary School

Chesham Bois



This Jubilee Year's theme 'Pilgrims of Hope' has sparked new energy in our school life, providing us with a desire to reach out to our local community in a variety of ways. One of these is our popular high tea experience for the SVP members and their clients organised by the team of Mini Vinnies from Year 5. These events occur every term and are carefully planned with specific tasks allocated to the ushers, the waiters, the entertainers, the communication team etc.

Colourful fabric tablecloths and fine bone china crockery contribute to the sophisticated look of our school hall, setting the scene for a memorable afternoon with live music and entertainment encompassing magic tricks, comedy acts, poems and solo performances. One of our most distinguished guests, Mrs Sheila Haines, aged 91, once commented, 'I always look forward to the afternoon teas at OLS where I reconnect with old friends and make new ones too. I love being around these wonderful children (in fact I used to be a teacher myself). With their exuberance and natural warmth, they are the perfect witness of God's love and a sign of hope for all of us.' The newly planted 'Garden of Hope' in our school grounds is a further reminder of all this!

Sacred Heart Primary School

Luton



During this year, the children have explored the different ways in which people worldwide face challenges from war, poverty, climate change, and social inequalities.

EYFS focussed on the creation story, and the hope that we experience in the natural environment of new life and the beauty of the world we live in.

In Year 2, we started off by listening to the story of Noah's Ark. We then explored the effects of climate change on animals, plants and habitats. We also examined the impact of storms, droughts and floods on vulnerable communities worldwide. As part of our discussions, we shared ideas on how we could support those affected by flooding and how we can protect the earth that God has made. This reflection inspired the children to compose a prayer of hope for communities impacted by these natural disasters.

Year 4 embarked on a heartfelt art project titled 'Hope to Know God', which helped them to reflect on how to deepen their connection with God. The children were encouraged to express their individual hopes, prayers and wishes for a stronger relationship, using poems, prayers and messages that reflect their spiritual aspirations. The theme of yellow flowers surrounding a cross symbolises hope, joy and enlightenment.

Year 6 explored themes of identity, history and freedom. We each wrote a footprint, explaining who we are and the paths we hope to follow in life. Alongside this, we designed chains to represent the harsh realities of slavery, acknowledging the struggles of the past and the importance of remembering history. Through these activities, we deepened our understanding of resilience, equality and the fight for justice, reminding ourselves of the power of education and reflection in shaping a better future.



St Anthony's Catholic Primary School

Slough



At St. Anthony's we have been very busy! We have been sharing our hope with others as part of our jubilee pledge and we have been creating doors of hope to share our hopes and ambitions for the future. We have been thinking about the type of world we want to live in and how we can effect change. Our Jubilee Pledge is to start a food bank at school for our local community and also to donate to Ukraine. As a community, we are sharing what we have with others. We believe that being Pilgrims of Hope is about action.

We have also had many wonderful celebrations this year. We celebrated when we had a special Mass for our new Chaplain, Mary Quinn. We had a huge celebration on our school feast day as it is also our school birthday this year – our school is 85 years old! We are planning a renovation project for our prayer garden as a legacy for future children in our school. We had a big picnic and Mass outside with all our parents, parish and children. We are very proud of our parish links and plan to have more celebrations together over the next year. Our parish is also celebrating a Jubilee year and we have also had a wonderful Jubilee celebration with Bishop David this summer, where our children served and performed. We are looking forward to another exciting year ahead!



St Edward's Catholic Junior School

Aylesbury



During the month of May, our chaplaincy display, classroom activities and liturgies reflected the fact that May is dedicated to Mary. During this month, we invite children to attend Rosary prayer sessions at lunch time in our Oratory. This year the sessions have been led by volunteers from the Legion of Mary from our local church community.

After explaining why we say the Rosary and getting the children to make a bouquet for Our Lady, the ladies from the Legion of Mary led the children through the process of saying the Rosary. They went on to emphasise the fact that children could complete as much or as little of this prayer journey as they wished.

Involving children in this form of meditative prayer allows children to ask Mary to intercede on their behalf. Meditative prayer provides children with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, increases spiritual growth, encourages a more hopeful outlook and ultimately helps to create a deeper connection with God.

Children at St Edwards were very keen to attend our weekly Rosary prayer meetings and found them to be very rewarding; Ocean in Year 4 told me that she enjoys understanding more about Jesus' sacrifice. These sessions are also part of the wider set of prayers and liturgies at our school which not only encourages the growth of all in our community but also helps to promote and maintain our hope-filled Catholic ethos at our school.

St Ethelbert's Catholic Primary School

Slough



This year at St. Ethelbert's we have been celebrating the Jubilee Year as Pilgrims of Hope. Our Faith Ambassadors have been very excited to help our Catholic Life Team to celebrate the jubilee with the school. We are recording our jubilee journey on a map in our front entrance for all to see. We launched our jubilee year with a special Celebration of the Word and the Faith Ambassadors helped their classes to create a canvas of hope for their classroom door. The idea is that God is behind every door, offering hope to us all.

Our jubilee year events have also included a very successful CAFOD Big Lent Walk with our parents and governors, and a beautiful Stations of the Cross pilgrimage around the school with artwork made by each class for the stations. We were privileged that our neighbouring Sikh school, Khalsa, joined us for this pilgrimage, and St. Joseph's High School joined us for their Feast Day. Our Prayer Club has focussed on the jubilee year as well as the theme of hope. Our Jubilee Pledge is to help an orphanage in India called Udayan. This year we are raising money for new bedding and mosquito nets for the children living there. We can't wait for more jubilee events after the summer!



St Joseph's Catholic High School

Slough



On Thursday 1st May, all of the St Joseph's community came together to celebrate our feast day, St Joseph the Worker. Fr Kevin O'Driscoll came into school to celebrate a whole school Mass before we all went onto the school field for a photo where we spelt out St Joseph's.

We then went out into the community to serve and help others to live out our School Mission Statement of 'Unlocking Belief in All' and demonstrate our school virtues of being: learned and wise, loving and compassionate, truthful and eloquent, intentional and prophetic, attentive and discerning, faith-filled and hopeful, curious and active, grateful and generous.

St Joseph's students went to St Anthony's primary school, St Bernard's' prep, St Ethelbert's primary, Holy Family primary, Iqra primary, Our Lady Of Peace primary, the Riverside Day nursery in Windsor, a Faith Walk to Eton and Windsor, Oxford House care home and Wexham Park Hospital.

All of our students were outstanding - they engaged with all the activities they had to deliver with ease.

St Joseph's Catholic Infant School

Aylesbury



At St Joseph's Infants we held a special Art week to learn about and celebrate our school community and the diversity within it.

The children looked at our similarities and differences and there was lots of discussion about what each of us looked like and the different skin tones we each had. We listened to talks and looked at how we celebrate each other's cultures and traditions. There was a lot of working together to learn about each other especially using the mirrors and magnifying glasses. Exploring fabrics and dress from our different cultures and nationalities was really fun and we used them as a stimulus for our artwork. This work built on earlier work we had been doing on 'Fairtrade' where the school learnt about fair and unfair trade from the past and the present. We learnt that some people work in very unfair conditions and that others can help in different ways to make things fair.

The children collected packaging from home that had the Fairtrade mark and lots encouraged their parents to make this choice when they were out shopping! We were then delighted to receive the 'Fair Aware' Award which we displayed in our Art Gallery.

The highlight was using Fairtrade flour, butter, sugar and bananas for a fair trade bake-off. Mrs Taylor, Mrs Green and Mr McLaughlin were asked to judge the baking and score each cake in front of a very excited school. It was a close finish but the Preschool banana cake won by a point. All of these activities have fed into our Catholic Social Teaching in many ways as well as linking into British Values.



St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Chalfont



As part of our Jubilee Year celebrations, St Joseph's School has embarked on a creative and spiritual journey centred around the theme of hope. Each class took time to reflect on scripture and inspirational quotes before expressing their thoughts and prayers through canvas artworks. The results are vibrant, moving pieces that now line our school corridors, offering a daily visual reminder of the faith and optimism that define this special year.

A key highlight of our celebration is the construction of our Holy Door, a powerful symbol of pilgrimage and renewal. Designed to reflect the patron saints of each class, the Holy Door invites students and staff alike to step into a deeper understanding of their faith and the call to live with hope and purpose.

We are also proud to have entered our artwork into a local exhibition titled 'Destination Hope', where our pupils' creativity was shared with the wider community. These projects are more than displays — they are expressions of belief, unity and joy, helping us all keep the spirit of the Jubilee alive every day.

St Louis Catholic Primary School

Aylesbury



As part of our Jubilee year celebrations at St Louis School, the children have been spreading signs of hope within our school and the wider community. A group of pupils have formed a 'Mini Vinnies' group, inspired by the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society. This group has shown wonderful compassion and leadership, choosing to raise money to support those in need.

Their first fundraising idea was to sell blank triangles of bunting for 10p each. Children across the school were invited to purchase and decorate these triangles with colourful designs and hopeful messages. It was a simple but powerful way for everyone to get involved, and the response was fantastic.



The decorated bunting has been carefully joined together and used to adorn our school field for our St Louis Day picnic, where we celebrated 80 years of St Louis School. This project has not only encouraged creativity and a sense of community but is also helping to raise valuable funds for the St Vincent de Paul Society.

We also held an art competition to celebrate St Louis, our 80th birthday, and the Jubilee Year. Parents visited the gallery for a small fee, with all proceeds going to the St Vincent de Paul Society. The artwork amazed everyone — it was truly impressive.



St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School

Luton

Each term here at St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School we host 'Tasty Treats' – an event that brings generations together. This cherished tradition invites grandparents to join their grandchildren for an afternoon of tea, cake and community spirit.

Held in the school hall, our event offers a wonderful opportunity for families to spend quality time together in a warm and welcoming setting. Tables are decorated with care and a delectable afternoon tea is served. Grandparents and grandchildren sit side by side, sharing stories, laughter and delicious slices of cake, all while enjoying a relaxing cup of tea.

Adding to the special atmosphere, the school choir performs a selection of songs prepared especially for the occasion. Their joyful voices and heartfelt performances bring smiles to every face.



'Tasty Treats' is more than just tea and cake – it's a celebration of family bonds, school spirit and the simple joys of being together. It's a highlight of the school calendar – our children love to have one-on-one time with their grandparent and it's a tradition that will continue for many more years to come.

St Martin de Porres Catholic Primary School

Luton

At St Martin's, our newly formed 'Mini Vinnies' group has embraced the mission of bringing hope to others in a practical and heartfelt way. Inspired by the values of compassion and service, the group decided their first project would focus on supporting the spiritual life of our school community.

They identified the Prayer Room and Prayer Garden as special spaces that could be transformed into places of peace and reflection—offering comfort and hope to anyone in need of a quiet moment with God. Determined to make a difference, the Mini Vinnies have generously given their lunchtimes and after-school hours to begin revamping these areas, ensuring they are welcoming, calm and purposeful.

The students hope that through their efforts, others will feel supported, uplifted and connected, especially during challenging times. They are also working on ways to make the Prayer Room more accessible throughout the day, giving staff and students a quiet space to reflect and find hope in their faith.



To support this mission, the Mini Vinnies are planning a fundraising movie night, with all proceeds going towards enhancing these sacred spaces. Their commitment is a beautiful example of young people bringing hope through action.



St Mary's & St Vincent's Catholic Primary Schools

Caddington & Houghton Regis

In this Jubilee Year, St Mary's and St Vincent's Catholic Primary Schools have united in faith and action to bring hope to their communities. Rooted in Gospel values and inspired by the call to live out mercy and compassion, we have jointly launched our Year of Hope, encouraging pupils to be instruments of God's love in practical ways.

Throughout the school year, students have taken part in community activities, including visits to local care homes, where they sang hymns, shared handmade cards and offered companionship to the elderly. Families and staff came together to collect food for local charities. Pupils also participated in fundraising for international aid efforts, helping them understand that hope extends beyond our borders.

Liturgical worship has been an integral part of our journey, enabling both children and staff to reflect on God's word and consider how we can be the stewards he calls us to be. Peter Haddon from CAFOD delivered workshops that reinforced the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, deepening the children's understanding of why this Jubilee Year is important and why they are called to share hope with others.



By our actions, our words, the decisions we make each day, our patient efforts to sow seeds of beauty and kindness wherever we find ourselves, we want to sing of hope... and reawaken in every heart the joy and the courage to embrace life to the full.

Pope Francis



St Michael's Catholic School

High Wycombe



Primary

A huge round of applause goes out to our incredible St Michael's Catholic School Primary students for their outstanding fundraising efforts during the Lent term! Every single year group embraced the challenge with enthusiasm, putting together a fantastic array of events, all in support of CAFOD's World Gifts for Schools.

We saw such creativity and dedication in their activities. From cozy movie afternoons that brought everyone together, to exciting 'break the rules' days that added a playful twist to the school day, there was something fun for everyone to enjoy. Our students also organised hugely popular cake sales, filling the air with delicious aromas, and successful second-hand book and toy sales, giving pre-loved items new homes. The energy and commitment from all involved was truly inspiring!

Thanks to the truly wonderful generosity of our entire school community – our fantastic pupils, supportive parents and dedicated staff – we're absolutely thrilled to announce that the Primary Phase collectively raised a grand total of £1,700!



This incredible sum is going to make a profound difference. These funds will be used to directly help other schools in need around the world by providing vital resources through CAFOD's World Gifts. This could mean anything from supplying essential livestock like chickens or cows to help families become self-sufficient, to funding improved sanitation facilities like toilets, and even supporting the provision of teachers to ensure children receive the education they deserve. It's a testament to the power of our community working together to make a real global impact.

We are so proud of our Primary students for their hard work and compassion, and immensely grateful to everyone who contributed to this outstanding achievement. Well done everyone!

Secondary

During this Jubilee Year, our school has sought meaningful ways to bring light and encouragement to our community. A powerful expression of this was our whole-school journey through the Stations of the Cross in the final three weeks before the Easter break.

The weather was kind to us allowing us each day to gather as a whole school on the playground. Each day we focused on one of the stations, culminating in a 15th station – the Resurrection – a symbol of hope that reminded us of the joy that follows suffering. What made this truly special was that each station was led by a student, with every year group represented. These daily reflections allowed our students to prayerfully accompany Jesus on his path to the cross, fostering a deep sense of compassion and connection.

This collective act of prayer has been a springboard for increased student leadership in prayer across the school. Many students have since gone on to lead prayers in our daily morning line-ups, bringing a calm and reflective tone to the start of our school day.



For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the 'door' of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as 'our hope.'

Pope Francis

St Michael's Catholic School

Aylesbury



Our school joyfully launched the Jubilee Year, joining the global celebration in this special time of reflection and renewal. It has been a powerful opportunity for students to learn that pilgrimage is more than a journey to a holy place; it is a spiritual path, where we walk with faith and hold fast to hope in every season of life.

As part of the launch, students explored how hope sustains us on our life's pilgrimage and keeps us anchored in God's promises. The sense of excitement and meaning was brought to life through a Jubilee Logo Competition, where students designed and labelled their own creative versions of this year's Jubilee logo. Many chose symbols such as open doors, footsteps and doves to reflect themes of welcome, movement and peace.

The creativity and reflection shown by the students was a beautiful reminder that they are beacons of hope in our school and beyond. Through their compassion, resilience and willingness to grow in faith, they are helping to shape a community that reflects the light of Christ, a community journeying together with hope at its heart.



St Peter's Catholic Primary School

Marlow



This year at St Peter's, we are continuing to celebrate the faith life of our school while embodying the spirit of Catholic Social Teaching by reaching out to our community with kindness, compassion and joy!

We have had weekly visits to Sir Aubrey Ward House, a wonderful care home for the elderly and those living with dementia. Our activities range from lively Zumba sessions to nurturing the garden, creating a vibrant connection with the residents. We were also invited to sing at the annual Marlow Regatta - It was wonderful to see our happy children sing to several hundred people!

We held a delightful tea party to express our gratitude to all our helpers, with our Mission Team serving refreshments and our youngest children making special cards. It was a lovely opportunity to connect and celebrate our community spirit.

Our Year 6 pupils have been incredibly active, taking part in the Fiver Challenge, where they raised over £150 for a local charity, along with planning a special treat for themselves. Their enthusiasm for helping others is truly inspiring!

Following a successful CSI and OFSTED inspection this academic year, our pupils enjoyed a fantastic whole-school outing to the Cotswold Wildlife Park in their mixed-age Buddy Groups. It was a day of learning and fun!

In collaboration with our Catholic Family of Schools, our SENCO and two Teaching Assistants visited St Ethelbert's and St Anthony's to share best practices, reinforcing our commitment to inclusive education. Along with an entire day of activities to celebrate St Peter on our Feast Day including a treasure hunt it is fair to say it has been a real celebration of our faith!



Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it. May the way we live our lives say to them in so many words: 'Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart and hope in the Lord!' (Psalm 27:14)

Pope Francis

