



PLYMOUTH CAST NEWSLETTER

2018/19

No.4: March 2019

“Our mission is to be a community of outstanding schools in which our pupils flourish in safe, happy and stimulating environments and leave us with the knowledge and skills, personal qualities and aspirations, to make the world a better place, inspired by the Gospel.”

CEO Updates

Clusters

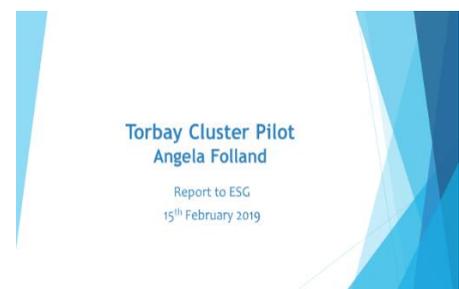
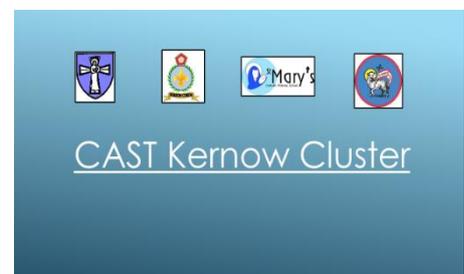
As I mentioned in the last newsletter, three pilot clusters are up and running and the co-ordinators – Rob Meech, Demelza Bolton and Angela Folland made presentations to the Trust’s ESG on Friday 15 February. It was clear from the presentations and their enthusiastic reception from the ESG that good things are already happening and there is real excitement about the potential of this collaborative working.

Before the half-term, I sent out the final clusters paper approved by the Board on 25 January. Following the feedback from the consultation, a number of issues remain unresolved and I would welcome any thoughts from heads and local governing boards in a further ‘mini consultation’ before the senior team brings a further proposal to the ESG on 12 April and then to the Board on 26 April.

I’d be grateful for any thoughts and recommendations on three issues:

- Any proposals for the membership of your local cluster?
- Any recommendation for the scope of the role of Cluster Leader from September 2020?
- Should any allowance attached to the cluster go to the Cluster Co-ordinator (from Sept 2019 – August 2020) or be allocated to the cluster as a budget?

Can you please return any feedback on these three points directly to me by email by **Friday 29 March** at the latest.



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Heads and RE Leaders Conference – 20-21 March

Please also remember to book your place on the **Headteachers and RE Leaders conference** at the Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay, on Wed 20 and Thu 21 March. The final programme is attached and I'm delighted that we're being joined by **Sr Judith Russi**, who will be introducing us to pupil chaplaincy; **Roz Stockley**, who has already introduced some of our schools to meditation for children, will be speaking on that topic and colleagues from **CAFOD in Westminster** who will be showing us how to make *Laudato Si* more of a part of the life of our schools. Fr John Deeny will also be with us to introduce the plans for Caritas Plymouth, which should work very well with our pupil chaplaincy initiative. We'll also be hearing from **Sarah Barreto**, who will be speaking on some of her priorities for RE and Catholic life. The 24-hour rate is confirmed at £120, thanks to Sarah's contacts with the hotel, so please make sure you book your place via the CAST website calendar. My expectation is that all of our heads and RE leaders are in attendance for this important event.



Day Conference for Teachers New to Plymouth CAST – Wed 3 April

We can now confirm that the venue for our day conference on 3 April for those teachers who are new to Plymouth CAST is **St. Joseph's Parish Hall in Newton Abbott**. The day is essentially an introduction to Catholic education and to the Diocese. This is not a conference for our NQTs who have their own programme. I will lead a session on the mission of the Catholic school and I'll be joined by Emma Wilson, who will lead a session on collective worship in schools. After lunch Sarah Barreto will lead a session on RE reaching and assessment, which will be of most relevance to our new primary teachers, so secondary teachers need only attend up until lunch time. Booking is now open on the calendar.

CEO Visits

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, I have now visited every one of our 35 schools and our nursery. It was a great privilege to get to know our schools first hand, meet the staff and pupils and in some cases governors, see for myself the inspiring work which goes on every day. I'd now like to begin a second round of visits, but with a more distinct focus, so that my visits can add specific value to our work. In the course of each visit I'd like to monitor the impact of CAST support and services in each school. There will be no need for any particular preparation but I would like to have this discussion with Heads, senior staff and, where possible, our Governors. Above all, I'll look forward to the opportunity again to meet our children and young people. If there are any specific events or liturgies you'd like to invite me to please try and book that in plenty of time.

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Governance

Governors' Briefings

The next round of Governors' Briefings will take place in March. The training focus for this round of Governors' Briefings will be **RE and Catholic Life and a Schedule of Accountability for local governing boards**. It would be very helpful if the leads in these areas from each local Governing Board could attend.

4 March (WEST)	St. Paul's, Plymouth
5 March (CENTRAL)	St. Nicholas, Exeter
13 March (EAST)	St. Mary's, Dorchester

Sarah Barreto, our Interim RE and Catholic Life Adviser and Ann Harris, one of the Directors of CAST and our lead on SEND and Governor Training will lead the sessions. The intention is to launch consultations on a self-evaluation framework for RE and Catholic Life and a Schedule of Accountability to support local governing boards in their work. LGBs and senior teams will be invited to consider the proposals and feed back to Sarah and Ann by Monday 13 May. We would then propose to have the final documents ready for the Governors' Briefings in June.

Please note that the sessions begin at 5.30 pm and run until 7.30 pm. There is an induction session for new Governors from 4.30 pm until 5.15 pm but this has to be booked in advance. Please ensure that you register your attendance on the calendar on the website in good time before the events.

Governors' Code of Conduct: Chair's Declaration

I have received a good number of Chair's Declarations. I'd be grateful if the remaining Declarations could be sent to me as soon as possible.

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SEND and Safeguarding

SEND

Thank you to everyone for the fabulous support in delivering the beginnings of our SEND strategy. The meeting with the strategic group on the 11 January was very successful. It has also been fantastic to hear that SENCO groups within the proposed clusters have been meeting and building on our initial start.



A Trust SEND review took place on Wednesday 13 February, led by Malcolm Reeve from the Whole School SEND consortium (a group commissioned by the DfE to develop SEND reviews for schools and trusts and part of the NASEN). Malcolm was accompanied by Sarah Vardy, who leads SEND in a multi-academy trust called the Greenshaw Learning Trust. Together they provided useful challenge to the trust about how we are managing and promoting inclusion across our schools. The review was very positive about the approach we have started and how well the trust already knows its SEND cohorts. Watch this space for the final report which is expected imminently.

Safeguarding

Kim Wathen, our DSL, has been in the process of formulating a Safeguarding Development Group. The group is due to meet on the 24 April for the first time. The purpose of the group is to allow greater collaboration between the trust and schools to develop and improve the systems and processes we have for monitoring safeguarding arrangements in our schools and supporting improvement. Currently, the members of the group include:

Cathy Lowry – Headteacher at Priory Primary, Torquay
Shelley Landry – Pastoral Lead at St Mary's Primary, Bodmin
Denise Sparks – HLTA and assistant SENCO at St Nicholas Primary, Exeter
Nicky Taylor-Bashford – Headteacher at St Joseph's Primary, Exmouth
Erica Ley – Assistant Headteacher at Notre Dame, Plymouth

Just a reminder that the **SG4 and SG5 forms** are **due Friday 5th April**. A copy of the form is available on the Plymouth CAST website. Kim will send a reminder before the deadline. Can I use this opportunity to thank you for supporting us by completing these in time for the deadline.

As mentioned in my previous email, we are still finding some anomalies in the completion of the CAST single central register. When the register was shared, it included guidance on its completion. If you need to see this again, please do let Kim know and she will send it to you. Similarly, if you have any questions, please do email Kim: Kimberley.wathen@plymouthcast.org.uk

Finally, can I ask all school leaders to remind all staff that they must check the identification of any unknown visitor, even if they are expected at the school.



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A useful resource

Spot the Signs: Child Exploitation and Missing Awareness Poster Hub (Catch 22)

Catch22, a not-for-profit, social business who work with people to develop services that build resilience and aspiration. They work extensively with young people and understand the challenges they may face, particularly those who are most vulnerable. Catch22 runs alternative provisions.

The Catch22 website has a number of useful resources, including:

Posters: <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/news/spot-the-signs-cse-awareness-poster-hub>

Reports, including the impact of gangs on

schools: <https://www.catch-22.org.uk/publications/page/3/>



Matthew Barnes, Deputy Director of Education and Standards

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Education and Standards

Headteachers' Briefings

Thank you for your feedback and suggestions about how we can improve and adapt the headteachers' briefings. Your suggestions are listed below:

West area: hold one meeting each term, to include time for clusters to get together

Central and East areas: keep the two meetings, in a similar format, possibly including cluster meeting time at both.

West area: information sharing through podcasts and webinars

Central and East areas: not keen on podcasts or webinars

Headteachers to suggest points for discussion at the heads' forum, and set up in such a way that it encourages open discussion

The PowerPoint and associated documents have been circulated separately to this newsletter so that you can locate them easily.



Primary Data Scorecards

The primary scorecard for this term will be circulated by Wednesday 6th March. Please note that the submission date for this term is **Monday 18th March**.

Some of you have raised the fact that by bringing forward this date, we are at risk of compromising the integrity of the data. Please do the best you can to ensure the data you submit is accurate and closely reflects what the end of year position will be.

From next year we will plan data drops to align with relevant directors' meetings. Also, assuming we have an automatic data system in place, the process will be more stream-lined and less labour-intensive. Thank you for your support.

Headteacher Vacancies

We are currently in the process of appointing headteachers at Cathedral St Mary's Plymouth, St Mary's Falmouth, Sacred Heart Paignton and St Boniface College Plymouth. Shortlisting has taken place for Cathedral St Mary's and St Boniface College. However, we are re-advertising for St Mary's Falmouth and Sacred Heart.

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Forthcoming Training and Events

7 March	Metacognition - St Rita's, Honiton
14 & 15 March	Aspiring Headteachers - Buckfast Abbey
20 & 21 March	Headteachers, Chaplains and RE Leaders' conference , Torquay
26 March	New Headteachers - St Nicholas, Exeter
27 March	Headteachers of 'good' schools - St Nicholas, Exeter
3 April	Teachers New to Plymouth CAST – St. Joseph's Parish Hall, Newton Abbot

Louise Adams, Director of Education and Standards

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Finance and Resources update

Financial Notice to Improve

The Trust is still awaiting confirmation from Lord Agnew about the position on the FNtl. The ESFA have confirmed that we have met all of the conditions, but we all recognise that like a large number of Trusts we remain financially challenged as funding levels per pupil remain stable, but costs continue to rise. We hope to receive feedback at our meeting on 1st March.



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Budgets and Planning

As discussed at the Head Teacher Briefings the school business planning templates will be issued to schools by mid-March to start the 2019/20 – 2023 budget process. This planning process will be supported by the School Hub Business Managers who are now in place except in a small number of schools. I will be liaising with HCSS to update the budget tool with the key performance indicators for the future years. I will confirm to you when this has been completed so that you do not waste time updating information in the current year system.

The new planning template will also include a school focused commentary, capital needs and a risk register at school level. The deadline for the first draft budget is **10th May 2019**.

The little extras funding has been received and advise to the school business managers. Please confirm through the business manager what your intentions are as we need to ensure that this funding is separately identified. Please can you provide this information **before** the spending is committed as we need to consider this in terms of the funding restrictions and your predicted year end position? Please can this be received by **Friday 15th March 2019** at the latest?

The Trust are required to send a mid-year financial position to the ESFA in May, so we will need to review the expected year end position for all of the schools. The return date to ESFA is 18th May, so we will be looking at your accounts as at the month end April 2019, so business managers will need to work with Head Teachers during early April to ensure that we have the most accurate information.

The Top slice

The Board have agreed that the recharge and top slice will be amalgamated into one top slice as the recharging mechanisms are too complex. I am working with Senior Executive Leadership colleagues to review the top slice and what the Trust should be providing and the cost of this. The initial meeting to discuss this is 5th March 2019, and the indicative level of top slice per school will be available by **mid-April**. In terms of the charging mechanism please can you confirm your preference for a per pupil charge or a % of General Annual Grant (GAG) by **25th March**.

Finance Staffing

The Plymouth hub now has a schools business manager in place; Helen Moram, who has taken up her role from the end of February. The general ledger clerk post has been interviewed for and will hopefully be filled on a permanent basis in the central support team.

Karen Cook, Chief Finance and Operations Officer

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To assist with answering your queries promptly, please direct your queries to the relevant teams below:

Governor/Governance to Helen Laird, helen.laird@plymouthcast.org.uk

Events to Karen Grute, karen.grute@plymouthcast.org.uk

Safeguarding/DBS to Kim Wathen, kimberley.wathen@plymouthcast.org.uk

HR policy matters to the HR team, adelle.pope@plymouthcast.org.uk & christine.forman@plymouthcast.org.uk

Finance/Invoicing to the Finance team, finance@plymouthcast.org.uk

Premises, health and safety and procurement strategy matters, Paul.stewart@plymouthcast.org.uk

Remember your school business manager may be the first point of contact for many of these issues, and they will escalate them if they need to.

General Ledger Clerk

In the previous newsletter it was mentioned that we were in the process of recruiting a General Ledger Clerk to be based in the central office. We are in the final stages of the recruitment and hope to have the post filled in the next couple of weeks.

General Information

Payslips

You may see a slight change to the payslips from April 2019. This is due to a legislation change from the HMRC which now requires any variable hours paid to display both the hours and rates used in calculating the payment.

Pre-Employment Health Checks

As you will all be aware we use Medigold Health (formally known as IMASS) to perform our pre-employment checks. To make this process more effective and cost efficient we have taken the decision to revert to a paper-based questionnaire in the first instance. The new employee would complete the pre-employment health questionnaire and the line manager would review this once completed. If the new employee answers 'Yes' to any of the three questions on the form, we would refer the employee to Medigold Health under the pre-employment referral route for more information on their suitability for the role. If the new employee answers 'No' to all of the three questions, no further action will be required. A copy of the questionnaire can be found on the Plymouth CAST Portal under Starters and Leavers in the HR section.

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Right to Work Checks

The home office now has an online right to work checking service, which gives employers access to up-to-date, real-time information about migrants' right to work, making it easier for individuals to prove their rights in the UK. For more information please follow the below link:

<https://www.gov.uk/employee-immigration-employment-status>

Teachers' Pensions (TPS)

Could Headteachers please remind members of their teaching staff that, if they have a teachers' pension, they are required to establish a log-in on the Teachers' Pension website

<https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/forms/registration.aspx> Registrations are monitored by TPS and the Trust receives monthly reminders to ensure compliance.

Adelle Pope and Christine Forman, HR Team

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Premises Matters

The Premises Compliance Checklist

The Premises Compliance Checklist first mentioned at the Heads' Briefings has been completed and will be released to each school on Monday 4 March. This document is meant to be a starting point to help provide schools with an overview of premises compliance and servicing, from in-house testing to the Service Level Agreements (SLA) provided by TDA.



This document will require tailoring to your individual school needs. For example, if you do not have a lift or a kiln then simply delete those lines. If you have any suggestions on how the document can be improved, then please let me know.

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity

The Emergency Plan and Business Continuity document template has been developed for each school to complete, and will be released this week. As discussed at the Heads' Briefings, this is a working document which we would like each school to have completed by September of this year.

Each school will have different requirements and situations unique to them, and there will be no "one size fits all" answer in developing your school plan.

If you require guidance, please let me know.

Training

I have had requests for Fire Warden training from several schools across the Trust. If this is something that you would like your school to take part in, then please send me an email expressing your interest. I will then look into organising some training days across the Trust.

Tf Cloud

The new ticketing system Tf Cloud will be rolled out this month. Your Schools' Business Manager will provide instruction on using the web-based ticketing system for reporting, monitoring and managing all your school premises and maintenance issues. Please remember that you will be required to fund from your School Maintenance budget those works that fall under the £500 threshold that are not already a SLA provision.

As always, if you require any further information or support on any of these premises matters, then please get in touch.

Paul Stewart, Premises and Procurement Manager

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Diocesan News

Caritas Plymouth – Launch on Saturday 18 May

Caritas is the umbrella organisation in the Church which co-ordinates charitable activity to support and enable the most vulnerable in our society to flourish, inspired by the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching. Saturday 18 May sees the launch of Caritas Plymouth at St. Nicholas School in Exeter. Bishop Mark will welcome delegates at 11.00 am and lead the celebration of Mass later in the day. Canon John Deeny, the Vicar General, will explain the strategic plan and the next steps in the diocese. Angela Folland will provide a view from our schools.



I appreciate that this event is on a Saturday and your weekends are precious, but if you were able to come it would be much appreciated. I will be there along with Angela to represent CAST.

Zoe Oldman, Caritas Development Officer for Caritas Plymouth, has asked us if we could take part in the diocesan **'mapping exercise'** to provide a picture of all the charitable activity which takes place around the diocese. You will find a very simple form attached with the newsletter, with the schools section beginning on page 5. Please take a moment to briefly describe the charitable work you do and return it directly to Zoe at Zoe.Oldman@prcdtr.org.uk by **Friday 15 March**.

Gather 2019

The Gather conference at the Livermead in Torquay on 18-20 January was an inspirational event, with a range of excellent speakers and rich and reflective liturgies. Bishop Mark was with us on the Saturday and shared some very powerful reflections from the Youth Synod in Rome which took place last year. A number of our heads were involved in the planning or came along for some of the event. I strongly recommend you look out for this event next year and come along, even for a day. The dates are **31 Jan-2 Feb 2020**.



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Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Over half-term, I joined the Plymouth Diocese pilgrimage to the Holy Land. It was an inspiring journey which took us from the tranquillity of the shores of the Sea of Galilee to the Via Dolorosa amidst the hectic bustle of Jerusalem.

Bishop Mark led us in the celebration of daily Mass at some memorable locations. For me, the most special was our Mass on the shores of the lake where Jesus did so much of his teaching and where he appeared to his disciples after the resurrection.

We also visited the School of Joy, a school in Bethlehem for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties. It was a very inspiring place, run by hugely committed and loving teachers. The school exists solely by donations, much of it coming from the **Friends of the Holy Land**. If you were able to do some fundraising for this very worthwhile charity, which is supported by the Catholic and Anglican bishops in England, it would be much appreciated. More details can be found at <https://www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk/>.

The whole experience made me think about the opportunities we could provide for our heads to go on retreat as part of their formation as faith leaders. In the article below, Kelly Dunne and Angela Folland reflect on their experience on the National School of Formation. We would like to encourage some more colleagues to come forward who might be interested in this opportunity. In the meantime, we need to think about how we can support all our heads in their faith formation. Any ideas would be very welcome.



Raymond Friel

Plymouth CAST

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Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth) – an exciting year ahead!

The Board of the Catholic Children's Society (Plymouth), which has 10 volunteer trustees from across the diocese, is pleased to welcome two new members of staff to our small team based at St Boniface House in Ashburton.



Vicki Dunstone is our new Fundraiser and Communications Officer replacing Claire Warren, who for the last 8 years did a wonderful job raising funds and increasing the charity's profile across the diocese. Having worked in a local CAST school for the last 6 years and with a wealth of marketing and fundraising experience, Vicki is looking forward to continuing the great work undertaken by her predecessor, and to finding innovative and fun ways to link with our schools in the diocese to help raise much needed funds for the charity. We also welcome Lydia Keogh, our new administrator who is responsible for our grant funding scheme assisting children and their families at a time of great financial need. Last year, CCSP raised £50,000 and was able to provide over £33,000 in grant funding and we hope to be able to support even more families over the next couple of years.

Vicki and Lydia will be working alongside Caroline Hambly, who will be a familiar face to some of our local CAST schools as she has been providing our Patchwork Parenting programme throughout the diocese for the last 5 years, supporting over 60 families in 2018. Together with our Vice Chair, Andrea Rodgers, Caroline also attended the annual CAST Heads Conference in Exeter last September.



Pictured left to right: Caroline, Vicki and Lydia

The team are hoping to build stronger links with our CAST schools - ***watch this space for information on how your children can enter a competition in the autumn to showcase their amazing creative skills just in time for Christmas!***

Why not join in the Great Big Diocesan Quiz? Do you or your colleagues enjoy taking part in quiz nights? We would love you to consider a fundraising event in your school to help CCSP raise funds? A Great Big Diocesan Quiz is being held on Friday, 17 May 2019 and CCSP warmly extend the invite to all schools to compete against the parishes for ultimate Diocesan Championship status. All materials will be provided by CCSP – you just need to find a venue and some teams to compete in each school. Please consider CCSP as your school's charity or encourage your classes to support us in your class fundraising activities? If you have an idea to help CCSP raise funds, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Vicki Dunstone by phoning 07388 185374 or by emailing vicki.dunstone@prcdtr.org.uk. Vicki works Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays but you can always leave a message at any time and she will contact you as soon as she can.

For more information on our grant funding, please visit our website www.ccsplymouth.org.uk or contact Lydia Keogh on 01364 645420 or by email ccs@prcdtr.org.uk If you are interested in running a Patchwork Parenting course in your school, please contact Caroline Hambly on 01364 645420 or email caroline.hambly@prcdtr.org.uk On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we look forward to hearing from you.

Shelagh Fearnley, Chair of the Board of Trustees

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RAINBOWS BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GREAT BRITAIN

Rainbows is a well-respected national charity having a proven, positive impact on the lives of children, young people and adults grieving a significant and often devastating loss in their lives.

The work of Rainbows is tried, tested, researched, monitored and evaluated. We know the impact of our work is long-lasting and has a tangible impact on people's lives.

High quality training for all members of staff and further training for facilitators and co-ordinators to suit the specific needs of your school are delivered at your site.

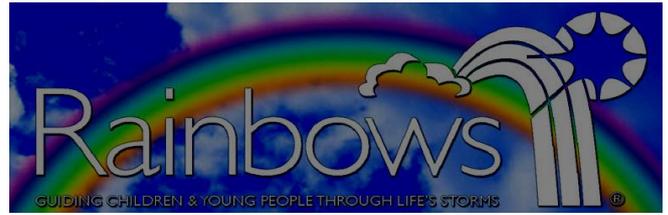
Further information: www.rainbowsgb.org.uk

Rainbows Bereavement Support GB programmes:

- ❖ Sunbeams: Foundation Stages and Key Stage One
- ❖ Rainbows: Key Stage Two
- ❖ Spectrum: Key Stage Three, Four and Five
- ❖ Sunrise: Children with Special Needs
- ❖ Silver Linings: Community Crisis response for schools when an unexpected death occurs.

Andrea Rodgers, National Co-Director, South

Email: andrea1.rainbowsgb@btconnect.com Contact number: 07568198079



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ARTICLES

The National School of Formation: a journey in mission

Kelly Dunne and Angela Folland

Kelly

There isn't a great deal that can tempt me out of school. My first year at St Joseph's, Newton Abbot, was a baptism in crisis management. I felt that I had to be there to fight the fires every day. But, whilst I have always embraced learning, the truth is that I have always found being away from school difficult. Consumed by the daily and the strategic joys and demands of the job, opportunities to devote funds and time to my own development were always something on a list that I would get to when I had the time. Of course, that time rarely came.

I never imagined that, when I did commit to significant professional development, it would be about faith leadership. Not that I think I am excellent faith leader, but rather, I mistakenly felt that I had far greater professional priorities than faith formation, failing to realise that, ultimately, deepening my understanding of the Catholic mission in education and nurturing my own spiritual development was the key to becoming a more effective leader overall.

After roughly eleven years of headship in Catholic schools, I was only now aware that such a resource existed. Yet, is there any greater priority as a school leader? Isn't transformation what we strive for, in many different ways, each and every day?

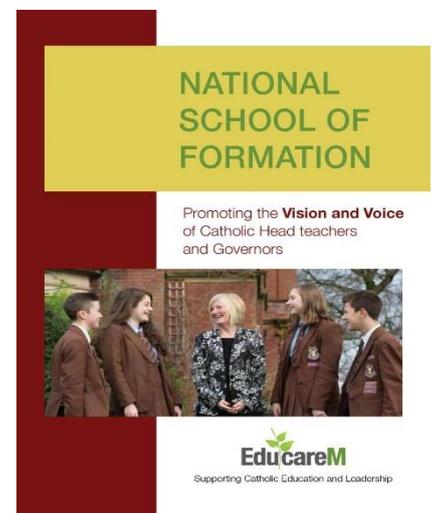
Angela

I am definitely a seeker! I have spent a long time trying to find opportunities to deepen my own sense of mission and purpose; opportunities that are both fulfilling and challenging. I have done the odd retreat, been to plenty of conferences and benefitted from a lot of coaching. However, none of those things had one vision and purpose – to help me grow as a faith leader within my school. There are times when the weight of trying to do all things and all things well, becomes so heavy that the job becomes a quagmire of survival.

We are all in our roles to transform the lives of the children in our schools. What the National School of Formation (NSF) has enabled me to discern more fully, is that my effectiveness, my vision and my passion is weakened if I leave myself at the end of the queue for enrichment. Our roles are a gift to society now, and in the future and we do not do it alone – we are Church. It has been so enriching to be with colleagues from across the country, learning from some of their successes, realising we share the same struggles. It has enabled me to get out of the South West 'box' and experience some of the inspiring, transformational work being done in the name of Jesus Christ.

Our shared experience of The National School of Formation

Sometime in the Summer Term 2017, we attended an Area Council Meeting. Sarah Barreto had invited Sr. Judith Russi to talk to the group about the National School of Formation and their wish to include other leaders from our Diocese in this initiative. Sr. Judith spoke about the work of St. Scholastica's Academy for Girls run by the Benedictine Sisters in Manila. This school has pioneered a radical curriculum and formation programme based on Catholic social teaching. The school actively promotes advocacy for the poor and those on the margins of society.



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We were both very moved by her account. Sr. Judith is an inspirational speaker and we both, with our governors approval, registered for the programme.

The NSF is part of the work of EducareM, a registered charity established in 1997, for the purpose of promoting, supporting and developing the mission of the Church in education. It is inspired by the vision to, 'Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation.' (Mark 16. v15) It is a resource for the leadership of Catholic schools in the 21st Century to support them in 'the transformation of the person for the transformation of society'. The initial programme is planned for one year but it has become clear that the year is just the beginning. The programme includes:

National Retreat

The programme starts with the national retreat, an invitation to headteachers and governors to explore and reflect upon their personal spirituality and its influence on their leadership. However, the annual retreat is open to all headteachers and governors regardless of whether they are delegates of that year's NSF cohort. It is an opportunity to nourish, strengthen and support the spiritual wellbeing of headteachers and governors.

The retreat last summer was a wonderful time of peace to reflect on what we bring to our roles, how we develop our own spiritual selves and to define more clearly our sense of vision and mission.

Immersion and Deepening Events

These events include inspirational and thought provoking speakers. There is one Immersion event and two Deepening events over the year. They aim to deepen and develop theological reflection into transformational practice. In 2018/19 the speakers have included:

Paul Vallely –The Leadership style of Pope Francis

Canon Luiz Ruscillo – Transformational Characters from Sacred Scripture

Dr John McDade – Leadership in the inter-face with those of little or no faith and those with an atheistic view point.

Fr Sean McDonagh – Environmental Sustainability and faith

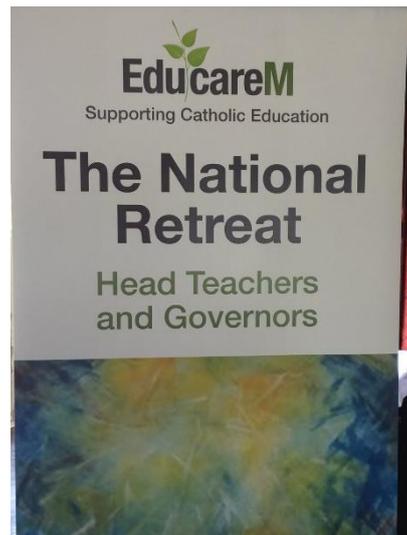
The 'events' have brought us into contact with amazing speakers who are leading voices in the church's journey. Some of the content has really challenged our thinking about how we manifest church teaching or thinking in our schools, where we do that well and where we could do it better.

Transformational Projects

NSF delegates can choose to attend two of the UK projects. These opportunities to see the gospel in action in other contexts are personally and professionally challenging. We attended:

Fatima House and St Chad's Sanctuary in Birmingham

Fatima House offers temporary shelter to women forced to flee their country of origin who would otherwise be destitute: women who have faced violence and exploitation; women who have nowhere else to turn for help. We listened to their stories and to the work of the different organisations in the Catholic community, near and far, who have joined together to offer essential support to vulnerable female asylum seekers. For up to nine women at a time, many of whom have nothing but the clothes they stand up in, Fatima House will be a place of safety and recovery.



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St Chad's Sanctuary is a drop in centre in Birmingham for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. St. Chad's Sanctuary relies on donations, both financial and practical, from the local community – individuals, parishes and schools as well as the efforts of more than 100 volunteers. We were taken behind the scenes and shown how this practical example of welcome and help impacted on those who have recently arrived in our country.

Our visits were very humbling. To see the transformational work done by a small number of people, making such a difference to those in dire need, was truly inspirational. Perhaps not directly about education, it really made us think about the context of Plymouth CAST schools in the South West, and how we can support the needs that are definitely on our doorstep, even if in smaller numbers than inner city settings.

The Corrymeela Community

We went to Corrymeela, Ballycastle, thinking that we would observe how peace was being brought to the lives of those who had, in the past, suffered from the conflicts that marked the 'Troubles'. Our Corrymeela experience sums up how this programme is not about observing or replicating what others do, it is not a course that gives you all the answers in a day. It is about the transformation an individual can bring about in themselves and others.

During the visit to Belfast and Corrymeela, we felt naïve in our assumption of the pace of recovery in this part of our country. We were perhaps a little arrogant in our assumption that what we would experience in Corrymeela was about others, not ourselves. Corrymeela's agenda is an 'utter belief in the capacity of the human person to change for the better'. It was a reflection on how we are responsible for bringing peace and hope where there is conflict, it was about the need for forgiveness within the conflict in our personal and professional lives. The story of Corrymeela is the story of a Christian community trying to bring peace and hope to a fractured society, something that we suspect, whether on a large scale or on a one to one, we can all identify with.

There is a sign above the door as you leave Corrymeela that says 'Corrymeela begins when you leave'. We can definitely say that the impact of the three days is a seed that will continue to flourish and grow as we develop the vision, values and mission within our own schools.

Spiritual Guide

An optional addition, spiritual accompaniment can be arranged following the National Retreat. Spiritual accompaniment is provided in collaboration with the Jesuit Institute and is known as the Emmaus Programme.

NSF National Network

All NSF delegates become members of the NSF network and are encouraged to continue taking part in the activities of the National Network. On our cohort there are forty-five others all involved in leadership, as headteachers or governors, in Catholic schools across ten dioceses in the United Kingdom.

The programme has been designed to be manageable. There is no expectation to produce any written work or assignments; articles and monthly newsletters are brief. This is formation, it surprises, challenges and supports, but it is for the individual to identify how it shapes and informs their leadership in a Catholic school or Trust.

Often the programme has felt like an undeserved luxury and there has been more than one occasion when we have both felt compelled to cancel because of workload at the time of going - but we never have, sensing, quite rightly, that we need and deserve to go. At its very least, the programme offers an opportunity to step away from the enormity of a leadership role and reflect. A crucial element to successful leadership without doubt, but we are confident that it will do so much more than that for anyone.

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School leaders work in demanding roles during challenging times. Our role as faith leaders doesn't add another job; rather it models a relationship with God within us, through our work, and in our encounters within our school community. For us, participation in the NSF has enriched our leadership and we can't help but think how much richer, successful and strengthened Plymouth CAST would be if its leaders, at all levels, were encouraged to nourish their spiritual wellbeing through the work of EducareM.

Kelly Dunne, Headteacher St Joseph's, Newton Abbot
Angela Folland, Headteacher St Nicholas, Exeter

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