

Weekly Communication: 8th January 2026



www.carlislediocese.org.uk/education

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Reflection: Welcome back and Happy New Year!

I am very conscious that it's been a difficult start of term for some for various reasons. Conversations about or with boilers, police, unions, LADO, complaints, grievance and politicians have taken up a significant amount of my time this week. And I know if I'm having a tough week, yours is worse. Don't forget that we're always here to help if you are struggling with anything at all. Never suffer in silence. We can't promise to be as wise as The Wise Men, but we'll always do our best!



Those of you who know me well know that I don't "do" poetry. It just isn't my thing. But **even I** was moved by this poem when I heard it in church on Sunday. I really valued the rawness and brutality. So often the nativity story is so saccharin it bears no resemblance to reality. Plus, this is definitely the best use of the word "satisfactory" I can ever remember reading! Happy Epiphany.

The Journey of the Magi, T.S Elliott

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The was deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires gong out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty, and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
 Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
 And three trees on the low sky,
 And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
 Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
 And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
 And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
 Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
 And I would do it again, but set down
 This set down
 This: were we lead all that way for
 Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I have seen birth and death,
 But had thought they were different; this Birth was
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
 We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
 With an alien people clutching their gods.
 I should be glad of another death.

"And having been warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, the magi left for their own country by another way."

Matthew 2:12

NEW THIS WEEK!

Termly Heads and Clergy Breakfast

Come and join us for breakfast, mutual support and encouragement from others in your role in our diocese.

Wednesday 4th February
8am-10am

at Beaconside CE Primary School, Penrith

The title of this session will be: **Wonder - a stepping stone to faith led by Peter Barfoot**

Book [here](#) - £15 per person

Contact for more information:

ruth.houston@carlislediocese.org.uk
maggie.cole@carlislediocese.org.uk
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DEIB Calendar



I know it is part way through the school year, but it is a new year! So, I thought you might find a reminder about the attached Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging calendar useful.

[Our DEIB Calendar | Belonging Effect](#)

Happy New Year
Ruth

Are you an RE teacher with questions about Judaism?

A chance to ask anything you like...

Open to primary and secondary teachers who teach Judaism

Why don't all...

What's the difference between...

I don't understand which...



Tues 20th Jan 2026, 3.45-4.45pm

Any question answered



by Anna Silver,
Education Officer

Monthly informal drop in session

(for monthly dates and zoom links email
anna.silver@bod.org.uk)

For Zoom link see attached text

New Grove Book

Attached to this email
you will find a PDF copy
of this Grove books.

grove education

SEND Matters

A Vision of Inclusion for Pupils
with Additional Needs



eD65

Des Ricketts-Chu

Islam CPD Courses for Primary Schools

Happy New Year! We are pleased to share our Islam course calendar for Primary RE Teachers & Headteachers. All sessions are delivered live online as twilight sessions by Imran Kotwal from the Muslim Learner Services, with a video recording and training materials available to all delegates. [**Book a place here**](#)

TUES 20 JAN: 5 PILLARS OF ISLAM (BELIEF, PRAYER, CHARITY, FASTING AND PILGRIMAGE) + STORIES

WED 11 FEB: RAMADAN & EID-UL-FITR

THU 26 MAR: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MUSLIM IN BRITAIN TODAY + ISLAMOPHOBIA

MON 27 APR: LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD + STORIES

TUES 19 MAY: WHAT DO MUSLIMS BELIEVE? (ALLAH, ANGELS, PROPHETS, HOLY BOOKS, LIFE AFTER DEATH, DESTINY)

WED 17 JUNE: DIVERSITY WITHIN ISLAM (SUNNI & SHI'A)

BOOK YOUR PLACE NOW



6 weeks until Ramadan

We expect Muslims in the UK to begin observing the holy month of Ramadan on 18 or 19 February 2026. To help schools prepare and understand the importance of Ramadan and the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr, [Muslim Learner Services](#) will once again support primary schools through school visits (both in-person and virtual options).

- **Ramadan assemblies (R / KS1/ks2)**
- **Ramadan pupil workshops (Yr R to 6)**
- **Ramadan Training for Primary staff**

Enquire about a school visit: assembly, workshop or staff training for the spring or summer term
[HERE](#)

<https://zfrmz.com/ajbKiqynJIHAK9stSRYO>

Book a place on the live Ramadan training webinar for staff

Wed 11 Feb 4 pm or request a recording [HERE](#)

<https://zfrmz.com/K1zYcXSY90hGWcQU7bXr>

Have you planned, led or attended a prayer or reflection space?



Prayer Spaces would like to know how many people in Carlisle Diocese who are interacting with Prayer spaces. If you have planned, led or attended a prayer or reflection space please could you email Laura with brief details ie age, theme, where, who led/supported.

Laura.watson@carlislediocese.org.uk



National Association of Teachers
of Religious Education

Hello, teachers, pupils and parents!

Get creative through this cross-curricular competition!

Join hundreds of schools worldwide participating in the 2026 Spirited Arts competition!

We welcome entries in (almost!) any art form your pupils can think of, including:

- Art (painting, drawing, sketching, etc)
- Poetry
- Photography
- Dance
- Music
- Drama
- Sculpture

It's a fantastic way to engage teachers and students while boosting the profile of RE in your school. Some schools integrate the competition into RE lessons with a 'Spirited Arts' unit or a RE/arts week.

This competition not only enables your pupils to articulate their thoughts and opinions about religion and worldviews through the arts, they will also get recognised for taking part in a national competition. Winning/highly commended artwork will be displayed on our online Spirited Arts Gallery.

There will be 40 prizes up for grabs plus certificates for all schools entering to give to their pupils.

[**Check out the new themes**](#)

[**For inspiration check out last year's winners**](#)

Training Schedule

We have a variety of training sessions running each month. Most of the sessions are online and are cost-free if you are part of the partnership agreement.

Want to attend a session but can't? Get in touch and we can arrange for it to be recorded for you.



You can find a copy of the training schedule [**here**](#). Booking is quick and easy just click the link and follow the on screen steps.

Any queries then please email Anna – anna.lea@carlislediocese.org.uk

Governor Zone



Education Office Team

As always, if you have any questions about any of the information contained in this week's communication, need any help or support or want to arrange a visit, don't hesitate to get in touch



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School Advisers

All DBE Officers and School Advisers hold Enhanced DBS Certificates



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Let's Build Empathy

Sanctuary Foundation is proud to present an exciting new art and poetry competition that invites 7-19 year olds to reflect on what life is like for the 43.3 million children around the world who are displaced. Schools, families or community groups should digitally submit their top 3 pieces in each category.

Students can create either a piece of artwork or a piece of poetry illustrating their empathy with or experience of being separated from the place they call home. These creations will be judged by a fantastic panel of celebrities, refugees, and journalists with the top 30 entries going on display in The British Library during National Refugee Week (Monday 15 – Sunday 21 June 2026). They will also be featured in a special national online assembly, in the press and elsewhere. The prize ceremony will be at the British Library on Monday 15 June 2026.

[Enter the competition here](#)

The competition is open from Wednesday 12 November 2025.

Any student aged 7-19 can enter a single submission.

Closing date is: *Wednesday 15 April 2026 (11.59pm)*

Judging will take place following the closing date.

Artwork should be produced on A4-sized paper, in landscape format, as two-dimensional submissions, in any appropriate media.

Poetry should be no longer than 14 lines.

Schools, families or community groups should submit a .jpg image of the artwork or a .pdf file of the poem with the student's name, year group and school/guardian/parent contact details via a

link on the Sanctuary Foundation website. (see below). Each submission should not be larger than 4MB.

For reference, here's a quick summary of the relevant Key Stages in the UK education system:

Key Stage 2: 7–11 years old

Key Stage 3: 12–14 years old

Key Stage 4: 15–16 years old

Key Stage 5: 17–19 years old

Schools families or community groups should retain physical copies of artwork and poetry submitted for potential display.

Schools, families or community groups will be notified of shortlisted finalists by the middle of May 2026.

More information can be found [here](#)



Racial justice spotlight

Starting in January 2026, we will be including in our Weekly Comms a monthly feature to support and develop the racial justice work within the diocese. We aim to share resources; to offer stimulus ideas, activities and reflections and to shine a light on work being undertaken by schools and partnerships across Cumbria.

If you have a project to share or a question to ask, or would like to be involved in any way, please contact one of the team. Our contact details can be found at the end of this week's bulletin

Nativity, Beyond the Tea Towel

If you're a parent or carer in charge of making a costume, or you're hearing your little angels practicing their Christmas songs on loop, we don't need to tell you that it's the season of the nativity play!



Appropriate Costumes

The old classic tea towel and rope round the head seems to have remained a staple on stage for shepherds and the three kings. But instead of going with this because it's what's always been done, there is a great opportunity here to explore historical dress and religious clothing in a deeper way with the children, honouring traditions from different regions and religions.

Using a beautiful fabric (a rummage in a charity shop can reveal loads of options) teachers can run a lesson making the headdresses together. This takes pressure off parents to source and create costumes, and avoids what can feel like a disrespectful way to depict people from Bethlehem, which is now in Palestine. If you're not sure how using a tea towel could be disrespectful, ask yourself: when else, other than during a Nativity, is it ever socially acceptable to depict people from this area of the world with tea towels as head coverings? If an adult did this, wouldn't it feel a bit racist? [A bit problematic?](#) By brushing this to one side 'because it's a Nativity' we are sending confusing messages to children.

Making the head coverings is a great opportunity to take some time and care to explore place, dress, and religion with the children. We can be more respectful and give the children more context about what the nativity story is about.

To read the whole blog [click here](#)

Creative for Climate Justice

Each year we invite your pupils to reflect on the issue of climate justice and to express their responses through art. These pieces of art can then be shared with members of your local community to highlight the views of children and young people and to provide opportunities for developing courageous advocacy.



This year our focus is on supporting and resourcing pupils to meaningfully share their learning, ideas and engage with the wider community.

To find out more you can register for one of our overview webinars (even if you can't attend, register anyway and we will be in touch!).

To register please contact: [Josh Glear](#), Children and Young People's Project Officer.

The Warm Welcome Campaign

The Warm Welcome Campaign has a searchable map to help people find a warm welcome space near them. The campaign is supporting more than 5,000 organisations that have opened their doors to anyone struggling to heat their home.



key dates in the RE calendar

For schools looking to book an Islam assembly, pupil workshops, parents' Islam awareness sessions and or staff training. We offer both in-person and live virtual visits.

National Inter-Faith Week: 9-16 November 2025

World Religions Day: 19 Jan 2026

Ramadan: 19th February-19 March*

Eid-ul-Fitr: 20th March*

Hajj / Pilgrimage to Mecca: 25-29 May*



Eid-ul-Adha: 27th May*

*Subject to the sighting of the new crescent moon.

[Enquire about a visit](#)

<https://zfrmz.com/ajbKiqynJIHAK9stSRYO>

[Read our testimonials](#)

<https://muslimlearnerservices.org/testimonials/>

Explore our selection of assemblies, workshops, and training sessions.

<https://muslimlearnerservices.org/primary-school-visits/>

Learning Hub Applications 2026



Growing Faith Foundation

Church of England

Does your school, church, trust or Diocese have an idea which enables young people at the heart of what church and school do together? Find out more about this creative opportunity and apply.

We are delighted to be launching a third application process for our Growing Faith Learning Hubs. The Growing Faith Foundation is seeking to resource a further 14 Learning Hubs across the country starting in January 2026. They will act as strong developmental communities of practice from which schools and church leaders (both regionally and nationally) can learn.

The Learning Hubs will become centres of innovation, where schools/churches are resourced to further embed creative practices that build the strategic partnership between school, church and home. Hubs are creative spaces, with an emphasis on imaginative approaches that champion the voices of children and young people and embed inclusion and hospitality. as we seek to put children, young people and families at the heart of all the mission and ministry of the Church by changing the culture of the Church of England.



In 2026 The Learning Hubs will be funded in two different models:

- an annual grant of £10,000 each year for two years. There will be 10 location places available
- a smaller grant of up to £2500 for 3 months to 1 year projects, where local partnerships want to undertake a smaller piece of work as part of their wider Growing Faith shaped development. There will be 4 location places available in 2026 and 4 in 2027.

Please do consider whether your church/school partnership, whether based in a Diocese, a deanery, a school trust, an individual church or school or other iteration might become a suitable Hub. Read more about the application process in our [guidance document](#).

Please share with anyone who may be interested and submit applications by 31st October 2025

If you have further questions or an informal chat would be of help, please contact
mandy.christopher@churchofengland.org

Laura is also very happy to chat with anyone who is interested.
Laura.watson@carlislediocese.org.uk

[Apply Now](#)

Governors



Governance Glossary

Once again, [Independent Governor Support](#) have shared their comprehensive Governance Glossary document with schools and governors. The full document is available as an attachment to this week's Weekly Comms.

Is your school a member of The Key?

The Key are holding a free webinar on **What does the new Ofsted framework mean for your board?**

27th November 4:30pm- 5:30pm



Join **Ofsted** and **GovernorHub** for a **free webinar** to learn more about the 2025 framework and how it impacts governance.

Find out more about the new inspection areas and report cards, what a 'strong standard' for leadership and governance and other strategic areas means in practice, and the new focus on the work of the trust governance professional.

You can sign up [here](#)

School admissions

Please make sure that Governors (especially in VA schools) have had chance to discuss and plan for the next round of school admissions arrangements, details of which can be found [here](#).

Determination

All admission authorities must determine their admission arrangements, including their PAN, every year, even if they have not changed from previous years and a consultation has not been required by 28 February in the determination year.



Once admission authorities have determined their admission arrangements, they must notify the appropriate bodies and must publish a copy of the determined arrangements on the school's website or their own website (in the case of a local authority) by 15 March in the determination year and continue displaying them for the whole offer year (the school year in which offers for places are made).

Admission authorities must also send a copy of their full, determined arrangements to the local authority as soon as possible before 15 March in the determination year.

Admission authorities for schools designated with a religious character must also send a copy of their arrangements to the body or person representing their religion or religious denomination.

Consultation

When changes are proposed to admission arrangements, all admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements (including any supplementary information form) that will apply for admission applications the following school year.

Where the admission arrangements have not changed from the previous year there is no requirement to consult, subject to the requirement that admission authorities must consult on their admission arrangements at least once every 7 years, even if there have been no changes during that period.

Consultation must last for a minimum of 6 weeks and must take place between 1 October and 31 January in the determination year. Admission authorities must consult with:

- a) parents of children between the ages of two and eighteen;
- b) other persons in the relevant area who in the opinion of the admission authority have an interest in the proposed admissions;
- c) all other admission authorities within the relevant area (except that primary schools need not consult secondary schools);
- d) whichever of the governing body and the local authority is not the admission authority;
- e) any adjoining neighbouring local authorities where the admission authority is the local authority; and
- f) in the case of schools designated with a religious character, the body or person representing the religion or religious denomination.

For the duration of the consultation period, the admission authority must publish a copy of their full proposed admission arrangements (including the proposed PAN) on the school's website or its own website (in the case of a local authority) together with details of where comments may be sent and the areas on which comments are not sought.

CHECKLIST

- 1.....
 - 2.....
 - 3.....
 - 4.....
 - 5.....
- 

Admission authorities must also send, upon request, a copy of the proposed admission arrangements to any of the persons or bodies listed above inviting comment. Failure to consult effectively may be grounds for subsequent complaints and appeals



GOVERNORS FOR SCHOOLS

about wellbeing, and helping drive the changes that make school environments healthier and more sustainable.

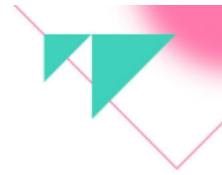
Download the full report: <https://bit.ly/43cYK30>

Teacher wellbeing

From the charity [Governors for Schools](#): "Education Support's Teacher Wellbeing Index 2025 reveals an education workforce in crisis with staff wellbeing at its lowest level since 2019.

If we want every child to thrive, we must ensure those who teach and support them are thriving too. At a time like this, governors and trustees play a pivotal role – monitoring pressures on staff, asking the right questions

New Ofsted Framework 2025



Ofsted's new approach to school inspection from November 2025

Summary of changes for governing boards

With the new Ofsted framework becoming active in the last week or so, governors may want a quick guide to the recent changes in terms of the content and operation of inspections. Helpfully, the NGA has produced a [document](#) for this.
