



SCES is established to promote and support Catholic education throughout Scotland.

November 2026

Inside this issue:

Welcome to Catholic Education Week Barbara Coupar	1
The Curriculum Improvement Cycle for RERC	2
New: The Pope Leo XIV Hope Award	3
To Know, Love and Serve God: At the heart of Catholic Education Dr. Natalie Finnigan	4&5
Forming Young People who Know, Love and Serve God Sarah Gallacher	6
Spiritus 2027: An International Formation Experience comes to Scotland	7& 8
Knowing, Loving and Serving God through Catholic Teacher Formation Fr Charles Coyle	9
Called to Teach, Formed for Mission	10 - 12

Catholic Education Week 2026

To Know God

Love God &

Serve God



Dear Clergy, Parents, Parishioners, Headteachers, Staff and Pupils across Scotland, As Director of the Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES), it gives me great joy to write to you as we celebrate Catholic Education Week from 16th to 30th November—a sacred fortnight anchored between the Feast of St Margaret, patroness of Scotland, and the Feast of St Andrew, our national patron.

Our theme this year is "Know God, Love God, Serve God." In every lesson taught, every act of kindness shown, and every community prayer shared, our Catholic schools put this theme into action as they mirror the lives and works of Jesus and our patron saints. Our young people witness this theme daily as they grow in faith, academic excellence, and loving service to others.

At SCES, we are privileged to promote and advocate for Catholic education at every level. Over the past year, we have actively represented your interests in Scottish Government consultations and the ongoing Curriculum Improvement Cycle, ensuring that the distinct mission and religious character of Catholic schools are recognised and protected. We continue to support vital diocesan initiatives and inspire our young people through the Pope Benedict XVI Caritas Award and the Pope Francis Faith award. This Catholic Education Week, we are particularly proud to launch the new Pope Leo XIV Hope Award, encouraging our youth to become beacons of hope in an ever-changing world.

None of this vital work can be achieved without the essential partnership of parents and carers. SCES is dedicated to giving a clear, strong voice to Catholic families within Scottish education. Likewise, our schools work hand in hand with our parishes. We rely deeply on the prayers and support of our parish communities, without which our mission could not flourish.

In this Catholic Education Week Newsletter, we will explore some of our ongoing work, resources, and pupil achievements. I invite you to read this and share it with colleagues, family members and friends.

As we celebrate Catholic Education Week, may we be renewed in our shared mission to help every young person grow in knowledge of God, deepen their love of Him and put their faith into action through service to others. Thank you for all that you do to make the vision of Catholic education a living reality in our schools and communities.

May St Margaret and St Andrew pray for our school communities, our parishes, and our families.

With warm regards and assurances of my prayers,

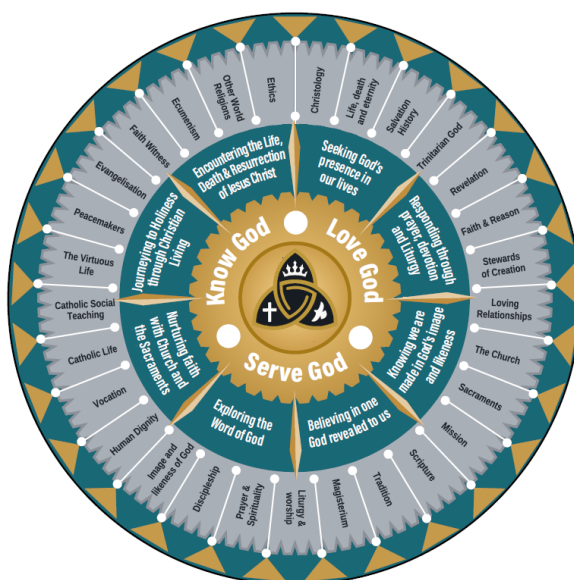


Barbara Coupar

Director, Scottish Catholic Education Service



The Curriculum Improvement Cycle for RERC



To Know God, Love God and Serve God: Shaping the Future of RERC in Scottish Catholic Schools

This Catholic Education Week, we celebrate the distinctive vision at the heart of Religious Education in Roman Catholic schools: to help children and young people know God, love God and serve God. These Big Ideas express the purpose of Religious Education in Catholic schools (RERC) and provide a guiding vision for our ongoing work to review and strengthen the curriculum for the future.

In partnership with Education Scotland, we are working through the Curriculum Improvement Cycle to review RERC, ensuring that the curriculum continues to offer children and young people rich, meaningful and coherent learning experiences rooted in the Catholic faith and responsive to the world in which they live.

This is an important opportunity to reflect on what we want learners to know, understand and be able to do as they progress through their learning. It is also an opportunity to ensure that the distinctive contribution of RERC to the formation of the whole person remains clear: nurturing faith, deepening understanding, supporting spiritual growth and inspiring a life of love and service.

A collaborative approach to curriculum improvement

The review is being shaped through a collaborative process that brings together a range of perspectives and expertise. We have established a Core Group, Collaboration Group and Critical Friends Group, alongside Steering and Focus Groups, to support and inform the work at different stages.

Together, these groups provide opportunities to examine the existing curriculum, explore the ideas that underpin it, consider progression in learning and reflect on how best to articulate the knowledge, skills and understanding that children and young people develop through RERC. Working in partnership with Education Scotland enables us to draw on shared professional expertise and contribute to the wider national conversation about curriculum improvement.

At the heart of this process is a commitment to preserving the distinctive identity and purpose of Catholic education while ensuring that the curriculum is clear, coherent and meaningful for learners at every stage. The work is not simply about revisiting what is taught; it is about clarifying why it matters and how learning in RERC contributes to the lives, faith and formation of our young people.

Looking ahead

As the Curriculum Improvement Cycle continues, the contribution of those involved in the review will be vital in shaping a curriculum that is grounded in the richness of the Catholic tradition, supports progression in learning and speaks meaningfully to the experiences and questions of children and young people today.

This Catholic Education Week, we invite colleagues to reflect on how the call to know God, love God and serve God is lived out in our schools, classrooms and communities. In doing so, we recognise that RERC is not only about learning about the Catholic faith, but also about opening up opportunities for children and young people to encounter its meaning, reflect on its truth and consider how it can shape their lives.

The articles that follow explore these three Big Ideas in greater depth, considering their significance for Catholic education and the ways in which they can inform our shared mission.

Through this collaborative work, we look forward to continuing to strengthen RERC for the next generation — helping young people grow in knowledge, deepen in love and put their faith into action.

The full draft technical framework for all curricular areas will be released early autumn 2026.

The graphic on the top left demonstrates the interconnected nature of the Big Ides, the strands and the concepts for the new technical framework for RERC.

Introducing the Pope Leo XIV Hope Award



THE POPE LEO XIV Hope Award

● DRAWING NEW MAPS OF HOPE ●

We are delighted to announce the launch of the New Hope Award, with 30 schools from dioceses across Scotland signed up to pilot the award with their S1 pupils. This exciting new initiative will support young people to grow in faith, discern their vocation and become witnesses of hope in their schools, parishes and wider communities.

Rooted in the lives and example of the saints, the Hope Award is inspired by Pope Leo XIV's call to Draw New Maps of Hope and guided by the Global Compact on Education. It will take young people on an active journey from knowledge, to prayer, to lived action, helping them discover how faith can shape their response to the needs and challenges of the world today.

The award will bridge the gap between the Faith Award and the Caritas Award, offering a pathway for pupils from S1 to S4. Each year will have its own focus: S1 – Pilgrims of Hope; S2 – Voices of Hope; S3 – Servants of Hope; and S4 – Ambassadors of Hope. Together, these stages will encourage pupils to move from discovering hope, to sharing it, putting it into action and inspiring others.

A distinctive feature of the Hope Award is its connection to the whole life of the Catholic school. The Catholic identity of the school will be linked to learning across every curricular area and to wider initiatives, including learning for sustainability, Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), the Global Compact on Education and the discernment of personal vocation. Departments and aspects of the Catholic life of the school will be associated with a patron saint, whose life, example and charisms will help bring learning to life and reveal how faith can inspire every aspect of human endeavour.



Through encountering traditional, Scottish and contemporary global saints, pupils will discover inspiring examples of people who responded courageously and creatively to the needs of their time. They will explore Catholic virtues, the fruits of the Holy Spirit and Catholic Social Teaching, discovering how these can be lived out in everyday relationships and choices. Varied opportunities for personal and communal prayer will provide opportunities to deepen their relationship with God, while age-

appropriate service projects will help them respond to real needs — from poverty and ecological justice to digital integrity and welcoming the stranger.

At the heart of the award is the belief that every young person has unique gifts and talents, and a vocation to use them in service of others and the common good. By learning to listen for God's call, pupils will be encouraged to see themselves not simply as recipients of hope, but as people who can help bring hope to others.

The New Hope Award is an invitation to make faith visible through prayer, discernment and practical action in the home, school and parish. As our young people learn from the saints and from one another, they will be equipped to become what Pope Leo XIV describes as "choreographers of hope" — helping to shape a more compassionate, just and hopeful world.

We look forward to working with our 30 pilot schools as they begin this journey and help bring the vision of the New Hope Award to life across Scotland.

The Hope Award will be launched this Catholic Education Week: 16th—30th November 2026.

To Know, Love and Serve God: At the Heart of Catholic Education



Dr Natalie Finnigan

Secondary RE Adviser - Diocese of Motherwell

What makes a Catholic school Catholic? This is a question that sounds straightforward enough, but one which deserves, and requires, much more than a straightforward answer. In response we might point towards Religious Education, the prayer or liturgical life of the school, or even the values that shape school life. All of these are important, but none alone quite captures the fundamental purpose of Catholic education. Drawing on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, Pope St John Paul II described preparing young people for life in this world, and for the Kingdom of God as “two facets of a single objective” (John Paul II, 1992, §4). This objective, he explained, was to form and accompany young people in coming “to know, love and follow Christ.” (*ibid*). His words do more than provide a useful starting point from which to reflect on the theme of Catholic Education Week; they offer an invitation to recognise and celebrate the many ways in which this mission is alive and dynamic in our schools, but also an opportunity to consider how we might give fuller expression to the fundamental purpose for which Catholic education exists.

Central to the mission of Catholic education is our understanding of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. While this is something with which we are all familiar, it is worth considering how deeply this understanding informs the everyday life of our schools. This has implications for how we regard the young people entrusted to our care and, perhaps more importantly, how they come to understand their own worth. We rightly place considerable emphasis on academic achievement and preparing young people for life beyond school, but Catholic education has always been rooted in the profound understanding of what it means to educate the human person.

Catholic education begins from the conviction that every young person possesses an inherent dignity that precedes achievement or attainment. The formation of the whole person must therefore involve more than simply recognising this dignity; it requires us to help young people discover who God has created them to be and the unique contribution they are called to make in the world.

Perhaps one of the clearest expressions of this understanding is found in the relationships that lie at the heart of school life. In my doctoral research into Catholic teacher identity in Scotland, I was struck by the extent to which teachers understood their Catholic identity through their relationships with the young people in their care. For many, their sense of vocation was expressed not simply through the explicitly religious dimensions of school life, but through their everyday encounters with pupils. There is something significant in this: the Catholic character of a school is expressed not only through its prayer and liturgical life, but also in the manner in which young people are treated and the extent to which they experience the dignity and love that our faith teaches us belongs to every person.

Of course, care for young people and commitment to their development are not exclusive to Catholic education. For the Catholic teacher, however, this commitment is understood within the context of faith and vocation. Being a Catholic teacher is not simply a matter of fulfilling a professional responsibility but is closely connected to an understanding of one's own identity and calling.

This is significant when we consider the Church's understanding of the teacher as a witness to faith. Such witness does not demand perfection, nor is it confined to explicitly religious encounters. Rather, it invites a degree of authenticity in which what we profess finds expression in how we live. It is perhaps in this consistency between faith and daily practice that the distinctive character of Catholic education becomes most recognisable.

The significance of this witness extends beyond the immediate relationships within our schools. If Catholic education is concerned with helping young people discover who God has created them to be, then it must also encourage them to consider how their lives might be lived in the service of others. Across our schools, there is

much to celebrate in the willingness of young people to respond to the needs of others, often with a generosity that challenges and inspires those around them. Yet service, understood in its fullest Christian sense, is not simply about what we do for others. It emerges from an understanding of our shared humanity and a recognition that love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbour. In this way, service becomes not an additional dimension of Catholic education, but a natural expression of its purpose.

The responsibility for sustaining this mission cannot, however, rest solely with individual teachers. If we recognise the importance of accompanying young people in coming to know, love and serve God, we must also recognise that those entrusted with their formation are themselves on that same journey. This calls for opportunities which allow Catholic educators to engage more deeply with Scripture and the teachings of the Church, to explore questions about their own faith, and to reflect with colleagues on the challenges they encounter in living out their vocation. Such opportunities are not simply an extension of professional learning, but an acknowledgement that the faith of the teacher matters profoundly to the life of a Catholic school. The willingness of so many Catholic educators to deepen their understanding of their faith is itself a source of encouragement and hope, particularly when considering the demands already placed upon their time. This commitment deserves to be matched by opportunities for formation that are not simply made available, but are genuinely accessible and supported.



Spotlight on Catholic Deputes' Scotland Conference 2026

Established in 2020 by diocesan RE offices and SCES, Catholic Deputes Scotland provides Catholic leadership formation for deputy headteachers in primary and secondary schools. The network supports deputies in their professional and spiritual development as Catholic leaders. At its heart, is the opportunity to encounter Christ and reflect on the role of the Catholic Deputy in the light of faith.

This year, over 60 deputies from across Scotland gathered in Glasgow for the annual conference. A particular highlight was the opportunity to reflect prayerfully on Salvador Dalí's *Christ of St John of the Cross*, before viewing the painting in situ. This powerful experience invited deputies to reflect on Christ's central place in their vocation as Catholic school leaders and the shared mission of supporting Scotland's Catholic schools.

The theme of Catholic Education Week invites us to consider something fundamental about the purpose of our schools. To know, love and serve God is not an additional aspiration alongside the educational ambitions we hold for our young people, but something which gives those ambitions their fullest meaning. This is not to diminish the importance of academic achievement or the many opportunities which education opens up for young people. Rather, it is to recognise that our understanding of what constitutes a flourishing human life must extend beyond these things. There will inevitably be challenges in giving expression to this understanding amidst the considerable demands of contemporary school life, but there is also much to encourage us in the commitment of Catholic educators and in the ways young people respond to the opportunities offered to them. Perhaps Catholic Education Week is an occasion not only to celebrate what our schools do, but to reflect more deeply upon why they exist. In doing so, we return to the conviction at the heart of Catholic education: that every young person is called to a life whose meaning and purpose are ultimately found in God.

John Paul II (1992) *'Address to the Bishops of Great Britain on their Ad Limina Visit'*, 26 March.

Available at: https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1992/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19920326_gran-bretagna-ad-limina.html (Accessed: 8 October 2026).



"Attending the annual Catholic Deputes Scotland Conference is definitely a highlight of my professional learning calendar, and an event I always look forward to. It offers a fantastic opportunity to network with like-minded colleagues across both primary and secondary sectors to share ideas and reflect together. Each year, the carefully planned programme is enriched by truly inspirational speakers who challenge and uplift us. The programme perfectly blends prayer, practical learning and fellowship. Taking this necessary time out of a busy school schedule is invaluable. I always leave feeling refocused, inspired and energised to return to my school with a renewed sense of purpose. I would highly recommend attending to any deputy colleague to support them in their role and vocation."

Donna Matthewman, Sinclair Academy, Broxburn.

Forming Young People Who Know God, Love God and Serve God

**Sarah Gallacher**

National Adviser - RERC Education Scotland

Many of us will remember hearing the phrase "Know God, Love God, Serve God" as children. It is one of those expressions of faith that stays with us long after we leave school. Although only six words, it captures the heart of Catholic education and the mission entrusted to all who work with children and young people.

Today, young people are growing up in a very different world from the one many of us experienced. They have access to more information than any previous generation, yet are often searching for meaning, purpose and belonging. Constantly connected, many still describe feeling isolated or overwhelmed. Amid the noise and distraction of modern life, they are asking the same timeless questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Am I loved? Does my life have value?

As Catholic educators, we are privileged to accompany young people as they search for answers. This is why the theme "Know God, Love God, Serve God" remains so relevant.

The journey begins with knowing God. This is about more than learning facts about religion: to know God is to encounter Him. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus meets people where they are. Before He teaches, He listens; before He sends people out, He invites them into relationship. The same is true in our schools. Young people come to know God through prayer, Scripture, the Sacraments and Religious Education, and through the witness of adults around them. They encounter Christ in acts of kindness, forgiveness, compassion and service, and in schools and faith communities where they are respected, valued and loved.

When young people recognise God's presence in their lives, they begin to understand that they are known and loved by God. This naturally leads to the second part of the journey: loving God.

Love of God is not simply an emotion; it is a response to encounter. As young people appreciate God's love for

them, they are invited into a relationship that can deepen over time, giving meaning and direction to their lives. This is at the heart of Catholic education today. It is not enough to teach about God; we must create opportunities to encounter Him.

This conviction is reflected in the ongoing renewal of Religious Education in Catholic schools across Scotland. As we revise our curriculum, our focus remains firmly on Jesus Christ and the mission of Catholic education. Religious Education occupies a unique place within the life of the school. It is academically rigorous, but it is also an invitation to explore the deepest questions of life, meaning and purpose.

In a society where many young people search for truth, belonging and hope, Religious Education has an important evangelising role. We must create spaces where they can encounter the richness of the Catholic tradition, engage in dialogue about their faith and reflect on God's invitation in their lives.

Our hope is that Religious Education forms young people who have religious knowledge, are spiritually aware and are committed to making a positive difference in the world. This leads naturally to the final part of the journey: serving God.

One of the things that inspires me most about young people is their desire to change the world for the better. This is evident from P1 to S6. They care deeply about justice, compassion, inclusion and care for others. Catholic education helps them see that these values are not separate from faith but flow directly from it. When we know and love God, we are called to serve Him by serving others. Through acts of charity, care for creation, standing up for the vulnerable or everyday kindness, young people discover that faith is something to be lived.

This is the evangelising mission of Catholic education today: not to compete with the many voices seeking young people's attention, but to help them hear the voice of Christ; not simply to provide information, but to form them as children of God. We must prepare young people for the future while helping them discover that Christ is with them throughout life's journey. When we help them know God, they discover they are loved. When they know they are loved, they learn to love in return. And when they learn to love, they can hear the call to serve.

That remains the enduring mission of Catholic education: to form young people who know God, love God and serve God, and who, through their lives, help others to do the same.

Spiritus 2027: An International Formation Experience Comes to Scotland



Since its formation in 2019, SCES has been delighted to work in partnership with the Australian Catholic University (ACU) through the Spiritus programme.



What began as an international formation experience has grown into a valued partnership, providing opportunities each year for groups of Catholic school leaders and teachers from Scotland to participate in Spiritus programmes in Edinburgh, London and Rome.

Spiritus brings together Catholic educational and Church leaders, teachers and others involved in the mission of Catholic education from across the world for prayer, formation, reflection and fellowship. At the recent Spiritus programme in Rome, Bishop Frank joined our Scottish cohort as more than 60 Catholic educators from over 20 countries gathered for a long weekend of shared learning, prayer and community.

We are delighted that Spiritus 2027 will come to Scotland, hosted by SCES at the beautiful University of St Andrews. This international formation programme will offer Catholic educators and Church leaders an opportunity to

deepen their understanding of the mission of the Church in the Catholic school, build an international learning community and explore how faith can be lived and shared in our schools.

In particular, we warmly encourage school chaplains and chaplaincy teams to consider joining us for this important opportunity to reflect on how our schools can become centres of the New Evangelisation, supporting young people and the wider school community to encounter Christ.

Calling all School Chaplains!

How can our schools become centres of the New Evangelisation?

Spiritus 2027 provides a unique opportunity for chaplains and chaplaincy teams to step back, pray, learn and reflect together on this important question. Join an international community of Catholic educators in St Andrews and explore how we can place encounter with Christ at the heart of our schools.

Scan the QR Code to book today!



Spiritus Scotland 2026

International Formation Program *Leading Evangelisation in Catholic Education*

From: Sun 20 June (11:00) to Tue 22 June (14:00), 2027

Inviting: Catholic Educational and Church Leaders, teachers and chaplains from Scotland, Ireland, England & Wales, Europe and Australia

Location: St Andrew's University Campus, St Andrews, Scotland
Hosted by: The Scottish Catholic Education Service

Program Overview

An International Formation Program that equips participants in the mission of the Church in the Catholic School will be offered in 2027 in Scotland. The Spiritus Program began in 2019 in the UK as an international formation experience. It went online in 2021 with leaders from England, Scotland, and Ireland. In 2022, it returned in person at Worth Abbey and Edinburgh. The 2023 edition was held at Worth School, with leaders from Australia, the UK, and Ireland, while the Australian cohort continued in Rome and Assisi. In 2024, the Program was based in Rome, and in 2025, Spiritus UK was hosted in England.

Each year has deepened the Spiritus legacy, enriching leaders through shared wisdom, culture, and faith.

The Spiritus Program is designed to draw together an international learning community. An Australian cohort of leaders will attend the Program and continue with further study at the ACU Rome Campus.

The International Program is designed for Catholic school leaders and teachers, including Religious Education teachers. It is also intended for Church leaders, youth ministers, family parish educators or others who work in Church organisations with Catholic schools.

OFFERINGS

The International Formation Program is offered as a Professional Learning Program with a Certificate of Catholic Formation given at the conclusion.

2027 Extension Stream Spiritus Part 3 Ongoing Formation and Mission Implementation

For past Spiritus participants, an extension stream will be offered focusing on further formation and equipping participants with strategies for leading staff and student formation.



Key Features

- A Formation School with opportunities for Eucharist, Reconciliation and Worship.
- A focus on formation of the head, the heart and the hand.
- Experienced and contemporary lecturers.
- Porta Fidei retreat experience.
- Exploration of contemporary models of evangelisation in schools and Church ministries including Catholic Schools Youth Ministry International.
- Practical application including school and evangelisation plans.
- An international faith learning community and opportunity for ongoing networks.
- Contemporary professional development with various pathways.
- Access to the Spiritus Leaders Network (SLN)

SPIRITUS PROGRAM

Spiritus Core

Part 1 - Faith Formation and the New Evangelisation

Part 2 - Creating Centres of Evangelisation: Schools, Parishes and Church Ministries

Spiritus Part 3 (Extension Stream)

Ongoing Formation and Mission Implementation

For those who have completed the Spiritus Core components, there will be a Spiritus Part 3 offering. This will consist of further formation in evangelisation and in-depth strategies focused on staff and student formation.



SPIRITUS ROME 2024



Spiritus Program Scotland

Spiritus Program Worth Abbey

Spiritus in Action



New Sacred Space at St Mary's Primary developed by our Pope Francis Faith Award children

Following my participation in Spiritus in September 2025, St Mary's renewed its commitment to placing our Catholic faith at the heart of all that we do and every decision we make.

A significant development has been the creation of our new Sacred Space, providing a special place within our school for prayer, reflection and encounter with God, helping to nurture the spiritual lives of our children and staff.

We have also reclaimed our historic school motto, *Sine Me Nihil* ("Without Me, you can do nothing"), and linked this to our renewed school values: Growing Closer to God through Kindness, Honesty and Perseverance.

In addition, we have been working collaboratively with SCES, the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, and our local parish to develop a new P1–P7 learning topic which will deepen our children's understanding of their Catholic identity and their place within the global Catholic family.

Stephen McPeak, Headteacher of St Mary's Primary School, Bo'ness



St Bernadette' Primary School, Falkirk—A Centre of Evangelisation

Inspired by its engagement with Spiritus and Australian Catholic University, St Bernadette's has placed evangelisation at the heart of school life, creating intentional opportunities for every child to encounter Christ, grow in faith and develop as a faith leader.

Working with Catholic Schools Youth Ministry International, the school has developed peer-to-peer ministry, with pupil peer ministers acting as prayer buddies and leading prayer clubs. Faith formation extends across the school, with retreat experiences for all pupils. A highlight is the Priest, Prophet and King retreat for Primary 7 pupils, delivered in partnership with the parish

to deepen their understanding of their baptismal calling ahead of Confirmation. The school has also strengthened transition faith formation through sessions led by S6 Caritas candidates from St Mungo's High School for Primary 7 pupils.

St Bernadette's journey has inspired others across Scotland and Europe. It was shared at the Catholic Schools Festival in Glasgow in June 2025 and at the St Andrew's and Edinburgh Archdiocese Headteachers' Conference in May 2026, helping colleagues explore Spiritus, evangelisation and youth ministry pathways. This is a powerful example of how a shared vision can transform faith formation and help schools become genuine centres of the New Evangelisation.

Knowing, Loving and Serving God through Catholic Teacher Formation



Fr Charles Coyle

Coordinator of Spiritual & Pastoral Formation -
St Andrew's Foundation

Future Catholic teachers in Scotland are trained and formed by the St Andrews Foundation for Catholic Teacher Education at Glasgow University. Throughout their four-year undergraduate degree, students take a weekly lecture called Catholic Teacher Formation, designed to develop their faith and give them confidence to live that faith by having a deeper understanding of their relationship with God.

The course is based upon the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The first year is based on prayer, the second, on the sacraments and celebration of life in the church, the third, on the moral teachings of the Church, and the fourth on the profession of faith. Those of you who know the catechism well will notice that the order in which it is taught to the students is out of order and this is deliberate.

In order to build a relationship with the Lord, to know him, we must always begin with prayer. The students therefore spend the first few weeks of their degree considering and exploring prayer using the Catechism and Dr. Brant Pitre's *Walking the Path of Prayer with Jesus*. Two key scriptural passages guide this journey: the Road to Emmaus and the Woman at the Well.

Introduced in the first week, students listen to the Emmaus narrative (Luke 24:13–35) with their eyes closed, sharing their initial impressions. We then discuss Sacred Scripture and the relationship between humanity and God, and we then consider Christian life itself as a Road to Emmaus, a pilgrimage journey on which we are accompanied by Christ. The students are then invited to think of the Catholic Teacher Formation course as a particular Road to Emmaus. They are encouraged not only study the things they learn in their lectures, both in Catholic Teacher Formation and the Theology course they take in year one and two, but also to pray through the material to ask Jesus to help them understand what

they are learning, as he explained it to the disciples on the Road to Emmaus that day.

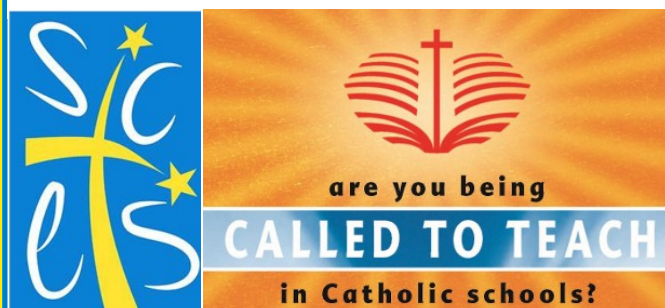
The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4:1–42) gets to the heart of what it means to know, love, and serve God. After listening to the passage, students explore its historical context: specifically the relationship of the Samaritans and the Jews at the time of Jesus. The students are told why the Jews and the Samaritans have a difficult relationship, the roots of which are in the destruction of Northern Palestine by Assyria in the 8th century BC, when the population were taken into exile, an account of which is given in the second book of the Kings 17:6, 24–41. In short, the Samaritans remained at home and in the eyes of the Jews defiled themselves by assimilating the practices of the invaders and intermarrying with them leading to the breach in their relationship. In this particular Gospel passage, we are told that Jesus is on his way to Galilee. The shortest way from Judea to Galilee is through Samaria and ordinarily Jews would have skirted Samaria and taken the long way around to avoid it, but Jesus travelled straight through Samaria, emphasizing, once again, that God's ways are not our ways.

Resting at the well at midday—the sixth hour—Jesus encounters a woman seeking water during the hottest part of the day. We can surmise therefore that the woman is trying to avoid her neighbours, or that she may be someone who is shunned. In any case, she has a lot on her mind. Jesus, then asks her for a drink, and through their conversation, her life is changed forever; her burdens and past are exposed, forgiven, and unburdened by the realisation of God's love. She then returns to town, and we are told she tells them about her encounter with the Lord. "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me all that I ever did.'" (John 4:39).

In this encounter, Jesus demonstrates how we can know, love, and serve God: First, through prayer, we can come to know and be honest with ourselves and with God. Once established, we come to love God in a deeper, more consoling way, without being hampered by guilt. We then serve God by following the example of the woman at the well, sharing how our relationship with God transforms our lives, through our words and deeds.

Studying the encounter of Jesus with the Woman at the Well is a great way for our students to begin their preparation for becoming Catholic teacher. With this passage and with the weeks of studying prayer, our students are given the opportunity, just like the Samaritan Woman, to know then love and then serve God.

Called to Teach, Formed for Mission



“Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of humanity’s excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings”

(The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium)

Called to Teach in a Catholic School?

Are you, or is someone you know, considering a vocation as a Catholic teacher? The SCES website has a number of resources including our *Called to Teach Handbook* to guide, support and accompany you as you consider this important vocation.

Access our Called to Teach here: [page https://sces.org.uk/becoming-a-teacher/](https://sces.org.uk/becoming-a-teacher/)

Resources include:

- Called to Teach Handbook
- Vocational video resources
- Guidance on pathways to Catholic teaching
- Reading & reflection materials for aspiring teachers

“I appeal to Pastors, consecrated men and women, laypeople, those responsible for institutions, teachers and students: be servants of the world of education, choreographers of hope, tireless seekers of wisdom, credible creators of expressions of beauty. [...] Then our constellation will not only shine, but it will also guide us: towards the truth that sets us free (cf. Jn 8:32), towards the fraternity that consolidates justice (cf. Mt 23:8), towards the hope that does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5).”

Pope Leo XIV, Drawing New Maps of Hope §11.3

Supporting Formation Across Scotland:

SCES CLPL 2026–27

The Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES) offers a varied programme of Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) opportunities throughout the academic year, supporting the ongoing formation of Catholic teachers and strengthening the mission of our schools.

The 2026–27 calendar includes leadership pathways and residential retreats, professional learning for Religious Education teachers and coordinators, support for the Pope Francis Faith and Caritas Awards, and opportunities to deepen understanding of Catholic school identity, spirituality and evangelisation.

From online sessions and collaborative networks to national conferences and international formation experiences, the programme brings colleagues together to share practice, renew their vocation and grow in confidence as Catholic educators.

Explore the [SCES CLPL calendar](#) to discover opportunities for professional learning, spiritual formation and collaboration throughout the year.

Scottish Catholic Education Service CLPL Calendar 2026 - 2027				
Title of Course	Course Description	Date/Time/ Venue/Cost	Completion (or the Journey) Status	Booking Link
August 2026				
Welcome Message and Catholic Schools Resources for Inservice programme: CLICK HERE				
September 2026				
Seminar of Clergy 1st September to 8th October				
Theme: Living Waters				
Church Representatives on Local Authority Education Committee Meeting 1	Network meeting of Catholic Church Representatives on Local Authority Education Committees. These values and in person meetings offer an opportunity for Church Reps to share practice, update on current work and identify priorities.	11/09/2026 Sundays 2-22/1/2027 Conference 20/ April 2027 venue TRIC 9:30 - 11:00 Online TRAMS Free	Participation in the Journey	Church Representatives registration for meeting
Head Teacher Good Shepherd Pathway Online Leadership Programme	This leadership programme is centred on the Good Shepherd Journal for Head Teachers and is designed to support the ongoing formation of Catholic leaders. Following the academic and liturgical year, participants will join their online, small group peer learning sessions to explore Catholic leadership through academic texts, professional dialogue, Church teaching, and personal reflection. Participants will receive a copy of the Good Shepherd Journal in advance of the programme. Prior to each session, they will be directed towards selected reading and discussion materials to support their preparation and participation.	02/10/2026 10/10/2026 11/10/2026 10:00 - 17:00 Online TRAMS £60	Vocation of the Teacher Spiritual Development Vocation of the Teacher Catholic School Leadership	Good Shepherd online Head Teachers network
October 2026				
November 2026				
December 2026				
January 2027				
February 2027				
March 2027				
April 2027				
May 2027				
June 2027				
July 2027				
August 2027				

Called to Teach, Formed for Mission



Forming Catholic Leaders for Catholic Schools

Residential Leadership Summer School | Salamanca, Spain

This summer, school leaders from across Scotland are invited to take part in a transformative six-day residential Leadership Summer School in Salamanca. Open to leaders at all levels, the programme offers a unique opportunity to explore Catholic school leadership not simply as a professional role, but as a spiritual vocation rooted in the Gospel and the mission of the Church.

Through theological input, prayer, reflection and pilgrimage, participants will explore the foundations of Catholic leadership, reflect on the gifts God has entrusted to them and consider how these gifts can be put at the service of their school communities. Inspired by Scripture, the lives of the saints and models of Christian servant leadership, the programme will encourage leaders to grow in confidence, deepen their understanding of their vocation and help nurture vibrant communities of faith and learning.

Alongside this personal and spiritual formation, the summer school will provide valuable opportunities to connect with Catholic leaders from across Scotland, share experiences and build supportive professional relationships that continue beyond the programme.

Join us in Salamanca for an opportunity to pause, reflect and renew your sense of purpose as a Catholic school leader.

Contact mail@sces.uk.com for further details.

Forming Catholic Leaders for Catholic Schools
Residential Leadership Summer School | Salamanca, Spain

Thursday 1st - Wednesday 7th July

An opportunity for Catholic school leaders at all levels to deepen their understanding of the distinctive mission and vocation of leadership within a Catholic school.

Explore • The distinctive mission of Catholic school leadership • Gospel values & the theological foundations of leadership • Using your God-given gifts in service of your school community • Christian servant leadership & the example of the saints	Experience • Daily prayer, adoration & guided reflection • Pilgrimage to Avila, Twin Cathedrals, Peña de Francia & Zamora • Collaboration & connection with Catholic leaders from across Scotland • Time to reflect on your vocation & strengthen your leadership practice
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Accommodation: Royal Scots College, Salamanca

SCOTTISH CATHOLIC EDUCATION SERVICE

Magnifica Humanitas—Study Guide for Schools

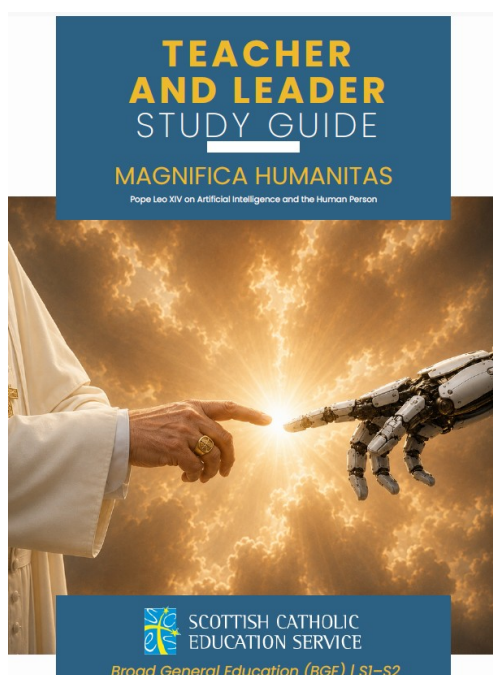
We are delighted to share with you a new Study Guide for S1–S2 students on Pope Leo XIV's *Magnifica Humanitas*.

Produced by the Office of Communication & Evangelisation in conjunction with SCES, this study guide offers an accessible way for students to explore *Magnifica Humanitas* and its teaching on artificial intelligence, human dignity and the common good.

The guide encourages prayer, reflection and discussion, helping students to consider how the document's message can be lived out within the Church and wider society.

The Study Guide for Teachers and accompanying PowerPoint Presentation can be accessed [here](#).

A summary of the encyclical, prepared by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, has also been provided as useful background information for teachers as has the video: [Unpacking Magnifica Humanitas | Pope Leo XIV, AI & the Future of Humanity](#) which may be helpful in providing further context and supporting teachers in introducing the topic to students.



Called to Teach, Formed for Mission



Good Shepherd Leadership Pathway Upcoming Events

Below you will find details of two of our upcoming Good Shepherd Leadership Pathway events. To book or for further details scan the QR code below.

2026

**Jesus the Relational Leader:
Reconnection Evening**

Thursday 26th November 4pm - 8pm

Glasgow City Centre Venue TBC

Open to all alumni of the Good Shepherd Retreat Conference. Participants will have the opportunity to reconnect with their cohort, reflect on their Good Shepherd journey, and explore opportunities for continued formation. The evening with a shared meal.

Cost: £35

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK](#)

SCOTTISH CATHOLIC EDUCATION SERVICE

Good Shepherd Reconnection Evening

26/11/2026
16:30 – 20:00

Glasgow City Centre, Venue TBC

This twilight formation opportunity is open to all alumni of the Good Shepherd Retreat Conference. Participants will have the opportunity to reconnect with their cohort, reflect on how their Good Shepherd journey has developed, and explore opportunities for continued formation, including future and international initiatives. Through prayer, reflection, and shared experience, alumni will be encouraged in their ongoing vocation to leadership before concluding the evening with a shared meal.



The Good Shepherd Leadership Pathway

2026

Into **SENIOR LEADERSHIP**

A day dedicated to those discerning if their vocation is to move from middle management to senior leadership. It is open to all PTs and Acting Depute Head Teachers.

Wednesday 2nd December 2026

09:30 – 15:30

**Westerwood Hotel,
Cumbernauld**

£85

The day will explore the personal, professional and vocational characteristics of the Catholic school leader.

The conference is one in a series of CLPL events of the "Good Shepherd Leadership Pathway" and is aimed at anyone aspiring to lead within a Catholic school.

[CLICK HERE TO BOOK](#)

SCOTTISH CATHOLIC EDUCATION SERVICE

Into Senior Leadership: Good Shepherd Pathway

02/12/2026 09:30 – 15:30
Westerwood Hotel,
Cumbernauld

A day dedicated to those discerning if their vocation is to move from middle management to senior leadership. It is open to all PTs and Acting Depute Head Teachers.

The day will explore the personal, professional and vocational characteristics of the Catholic school leader.

The conference is one in a series of CLPL events of the "Good Shepherd Leadership Pathway" and is aimed at anyone aspiring to lead within a Catholic school.

