

Dear Friends and Colleagues -

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves...”

Proverbs 31:8

January can feel dark, long, and relentless. It’s exactly the kind of month where taking a moment to pause, reflect, and find some encouragement matters.

Working in education comes with plenty of highs and lows. Some days feel effortless; others feel unrelenting. But the work is never just about teaching subjects. School leaders hold a responsibility that goes so much deeper: advocating for the children and young people who rely on us, protecting the ones whose voices are quiet, and providing an environment where safety, learning, boundaries, and joy can coexist.

Schools are often the safest and most predictable places our pupils know. They’re also the places where they learn how to navigate relationships, expectations, and values that will shape them long after they leave. That matters. More than we sometimes give ourselves credit for.

There are days when you see the smiles, the small wins, the lightbulb moments — and on those days, just take them. Let them land. They’re reminders of why we do this.

And on the tougher days, when everything feels uphill, think about the young people whose names and faces stay with you. I certainly do. I can picture them even now. Not because I changed their whole life, but because I played a small part in their journey — a moment of support, a boundary held, a conversation that mattered. Those things add up.

We should never underestimate, the safe spaces we create, the experiences pupils would never have otherwise, the sense of stability we provide, the education that opens doors and the relationships that genuinely mean something to them.

There are children and young people who return after weekends or holidays genuinely excited to see you or their teachers. Not because school is perfect, but because the relationships are steady and dependable. That’s the bit they hold onto.



Proverbs 31:8 reminds us of our role as advocates — not just for the students who fit the usual definitions of “vulnerable” or “disadvantaged,” but for all pupils. We need to think beyond categories. Vulnerability doesn’t always come with a label or funding code. At different points in life, everyone — pupils, families, staff — can be vulnerable or disadvantaged in ways that aren’t immediately visible.

What you do, day in and day out, makes a difference to all who walk through the doors: not just students, but the adults who work alongside you too.

So, as you move through the term:

- Notice the moments of joy when they appear — even the small ones.
- Keep speaking up for the children who need you most, especially the ones who wouldn’t ask for it.
- Remember the impact you’ve already had on those whose faces still stay with you.

None of this is glamorous, and much of it is unseen. But it is important. And it is shaping futures in ways you may never fully know.

From Lynsey Norris, **Assistant Diocesan Director of Education**

RE Statement of Entitlement for Church Schools

The National Society for Education (NSE) has published the 2026 RE Statement of Entitlement. Please find the document here, alongside the existing statement: [Curriculum: religious education — National Society for Education](#). This document sets a minimum expectation for RE in Church of England schools. It is also used by SIAMS inspectors to support their evidence gathering in relation to inspection questions 6 and 7 (the effectiveness of the RE curriculum and the quality of RE). The 2026 RE Statement of Entitlement will not be used as the basis of addressing these inspection questions as part of a SIAMS inspection until September 2026. Our Diocesan RE Adviser will be providing further information about the 2026 RE Statement of Entitlement at upcoming headteacher, governor and RE lead briefings. If you have any questions about the document, please contact her directly at gillian.georgiou@lincoln.anglican.org.

Upcoming Courses & Events

Date	Time	Course		Book Here
20/01/2026	16:00-17:00	Collective Worship Cluster	Online	BOOK
28/01/2026	16:00-18:00	Developing the Spiritual Life of the School	Online	BOOK
29/01/2026	10:00-11:00	Headteacher Briefing	Online	BOOK
29/01/2026	17:30-19:00	Governor & Clerk to Governor Briefing	Online	BOOK
03/02/2026	13:30-15:00	RE Cluster	Online	BOOK

Withdrawal from Religious Education (RE)

In light of a recent legal ruling about RE in Northern Ireland (see [here](#) for more information and [here](#) paragraph 36 for the specific issues relevant to schools and academies in England), we are updating our guidance on withdrawal from RE.

Currently, the advice usually given (including in the 2019 NAHT / NATRE guidance) is that schools should clearly communicate information about their RE curriculum, inform parents of their right to withdraw their child either partially or wholly from RE, and communicate the process to be followed if a parent wishes to exercise that right.

The process usually involves a conversation with a relevant member of staff, sometimes the RE lead, sometimes the headteacher or another senior leader. The purpose of this conversation is to allow school leaders to hear and understand the parent's concerns and to be able to provide information about the RE curriculum that may help to assuage these concerns. In most cases, this conversation helps to reassure parents, many of whom decide that their child can remain in the RE classroom.

The approach to RE taken in Northern Ireland is very different to the approach taken in England. In state-funded schools in England, the vast majority of schools are required to deliver RE that is 'objective, critical and pluralist', including schools of religious character (Church of England and Methodist schools). However, the legal right to withdraw remains and the recent ruling, published by the UK Supreme Court, has implications for all the nations of the UK.

The significant aspect of the legal ruling for our schools is that there must be no "burden" to parents seeking to withdraw their children from RE. Paragraph 36 of the ruling states that the requirement to have a conversation with school leaders constitutes a burden.

As such, our current advice to schools is that if a parent seeks to withdraw their child from RE, the school must grant this request with no further process.

We would like every pupil to receive their entitlement to a high-quality education in religious and non-religious worldviews. As such, we would encourage schools to be proactive in sharing information about their RE curriculum, e.g. through their website, through policy documents, through parents' evenings, through displays around school, etc., such that parents are less likely to have concerns that might lead to withdrawing their children. However, schools must be aware that any process associated with withdrawing from RE that could constitute a 'burden' may now put that school at legal risk.

We are hoping that further guidance on this issue will be forthcoming, not least because if a child is withdrawn from RE, a school may still need to have a conversation with the parent about what alternative is provided for that child during the RE lesson. Until such time as this guidance is produced, we will continue to reiterate the importance of granting requests for withdrawal from RE with no further 'burdensome' processes. As soon as any such guidance is produced, we will share it with you.

If you have any questions about this, please do contact Gillian Georgiou at gillian.georgiou@lincoln.anglican.org.



Difference Programme

We are hearing some really exciting conversations about the Difference programme from those schools who have already attended training. We look forward to hearing about the impact as you start to roll out this important programme.

New dates for training in the Spring term have been released. (please see below).

For further information about the programme please use one of these links [Primary school Difference](#) [Secondary school Difference](#). Anyone wanting a longer conversation about this powerful programme should contact June to discuss. If MATs or groups of schools wish to align training please also contact June who can liaise with the National team to arrange this.

Next training sessions

[Difference training - Difference](#)