Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter. We have reached an important milestone on our journey, our first full term as a Trust. We have much to look back on with great pride. Our Feast day celebration held on the 30 November stands out as one of those special moments. We asked all of our 25 schools within the Trust to close and make this a joint INSET day. We then asked all staff; teachers, TA’s, catering, technicians, cleaners and everyone else who would normally work on that Friday to come together, in order to celebrate and to share being part of the St Ralph Sherwin community. Our guest speakers were superb and the day was finished by us all celebrating Mass led by Bishop Patrick.

Catholic schools are very special places at Christmas as we prepare to celebrate the arrival of baby Jesus. One of my favourite roles as a CEO is being able to visit a number of schools and enjoy their nativity plays, carol concerts and other school productions. In fact, as a Trust we wanted to ensure that someone from the Executive team and Trust Board attended at least one event at each of our 25 schools and I believe we managed to achieve this. Early in the Lent term I shall visit a school and present to them the St Ralph Sherwin Wheel. This wheel will then travel around our Trust visiting each school and reminding them of the St Ralph Sherwin story and what binds us together as a Trust. For those of you who did not attend our Feast day, the wheel symbolises the Trust bringing together all the talents from all the schools within the Trust. The wheel may mean different things to different people, but to me the outer rim are the parishes and the communities we serve, the spokes of the wheel and the individual schools and the hub, the centre is the Trust – serving all the schools – without the trust we have 25 separate spokes, 25 separate schools - this analogy works for me.

As we have explored the theme of 'Encounter' during this advent term, we now move onto ‘Discipleship’ during Lent. So in all our school communities this theme will become more of a living reality as each of us hear and respond to Christ’s invitation to be his Disciples. In order to assist with this theme the Diocese has arranged for David Wells to lead a day of reflection for each Catholic Multi-Academy Trust community during the Lent term. Our day will be on Wednesday 6 February at the Diocesan centre in Mackworth. During the day Headteachers, subject leads of RE, lay chaplains and representative of Governing bodies will be invited to attend. In the evenings the invitation will be extended to parishioners.

As we start this new Lent term in our schools and communities can I thank you for your continued support and wish you all a very happy and holy New Year. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to my new PA, Jackie Bell.

Sean McClafferty

WALKING BUS AWARD
Congratulations to Holy Rosary Catholic Voluntary Academy, in Burton, for winning a prestigious award for its walking buses for pupils and parents. The school scooped the Modeshift STARS Staffordshire Primary School of the Year Award for its commitment to sustainable travel. Modeshift STARS is a national awards scheme and Holy Rosary has already achieved Bronze and Silver.
If every day was Christmas...

As a child my favourite Christmas song was Wizzard’s I wish it could be Christmas every day. I couldn’t honestly tell you if Wizzard wrote any other songs! However I was a huge fan of this song as I loved the idea of every day being Christmas, the excitement of the morning, the playing with presents, big tasty dinner and then family time in the evening. For primary school me there was no better day than Christmas, I remember actually talking about this to my mum who said, ‘If every day was Christmas, when would we prepare? It would feel ordinary and there would be no time to do what we need to do every day, what God wants us to do’. I can’t portray here how lovingly she said this, it occurred to me that I needed to show that I could still do what God wanted me to do and live Christmas every day, it has taken me about 20 years but think I have cracked it!

One thing is for certain at Christmas, we need the manger, the stable and the quiet family time; however Jesus didn’t stay in the manger and neither should we. My desire to live Christmas every day we have to be like the wise men. I can’t imagine what joy the wise men would have felt as they finally got to the manger. They had been travelling for years, when you follow a star you can only travel at night and when it is a clear sky. Not only that they had been waiting for the star all their lives, maybe for generations and generations. When they got to what they think would be their destination – Jerusalem, they must have been totally heartbroken to find no newborn king. When they finally find the stable in Bethlehem what joy they must have felt their whole life had been leading to this. They must have wanted to stay there with the baby Jesus forever but they couldn’t, they had to return home.

“You can live Christmas every day!”

Christmas tells us that God wanted to live an ordinary human life in an extraordinary way, he spent 10 times the amount of time living an ordinary quiet life than he did as the wandering preacher and miracle worker. He filled his home and work with the fullness of love and service. We can do the same, here are my suggestions for new year’s resolutions to live Christmas every day:

• First be humble – think every day who can I build up rather than who annoys or angers you.
• Second – make a place for Christ in your home and your heart. There was no room for him in the Inn, yet we have cribs and nativity scenes in our homes. Take time in your day for Jesus, every day.
• Third – do better each day, keep heading on a different route, leave the day behind where you have made mistakes. Say sorry and aim to do better tomorrow.
• Finally – give presence. My mum was right, you can’t give presents every day but you can give your presence, put down your phone and be Christ to your family, friends, your colleagues, those in need, and even those you don’t like.
• I write this as someone who really needs to live Christmas every day, and I know I have a long way to go but I know I can do it through and with Jesus, who loves me (and you) so so much.
• I write this before Christmas so it feels strange to say this but I know you will read this after Christmas. I hope you have had a happy, peacefully, holy, restful and joyful Christmas. But more importantly that you continue doing so!

Joe Hopkins
Trust Lead Lay Chaplain.

We would love to share your good news across our trust so please submit items and photos to pr@srsclmat.co.uk. We will try to use as many as we can. Thankyou.

HUNDREDS ATTEND INAUGURAL FEAST DAY CELEBRATIONS

More than 800 staff from 25 Catholic Voluntary Academies gathered at the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi Academy Trust’s inaugural Feast Day. Trust Lead Lay Chaplain Joe Hopkins opened the day with a liturgy welcoming everyone before Trust Chief Executive Officer Sean McClafferty addressed the audience along with Jacqueline Rodden, Foundation Director and Trust Chair, motivational speaker Lucie Meyer and Father Adrian Porter.
I am originally a Derby lad and am a proud ex-pupil of two of our trust schools St Joseph’s, Derby and St Benedict. I have a degree in Drama from the University of Birmingham and a degree in Catholic Theology from the Maryvale Institute. I now live in Nottingham with my wife, the compromises you make for love! I am a Derby County fan and as a second generation Irish man I follow the Irish Rugby and Football teams. I’m getting back into playing Gaelic Football and play for St Joseph’s in Derby.

Where are you based?

Everywhere really, I like to be in schools as much as possible but I also have an office in our Derby base, St Katherine’s House.

What is your vision for the St Ralph Sherwin CMAT and the schools within it?

My vision is based on trying to pass on what I have received, I have had many blessings in my life, the greatest being the friendship of Jesus. That every school has Lay Chaplaincy provision so that everyone can encounter person of Jesus Christ, and his life changing love for them; so that they can be transformed by the Holy Spirit into disciples of Christ and Children of God the Father who serve him and his world.

Can you tell us about your role day-to-day?

It is very varied! One day I could be in the office creating resources, another in a board meeting, or leading training for staff or pupils, meeting with Chaplains, giving advice to schools, visiting schools, organising retreats and much more!

Each week we will run a profile on a member of our trust. This edition we focus on trust Lead Lay Chaplain, Joe Hopkins.

Personal

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In the next edition we will profile Trust Chair Jacqueline Rodden.

ENTERPRISING PUPILS

Budding young entrepreneurs at St Mary’s CVA in Derby took inspiration from history to come up with exciting business ideas. The result was a spectacular Enterprise Day when pupils set up stalls to sell their creations and display their work for their families to see.

During Advent, all classes at St Thomas’ raised over £2,500 for the new Ilkeston Winter Shelter for the homeless. Classes held sales, put on games, had sponsored events as well as Years 5 and 6 ‘growing a pound’ given to them by their teachers. Some of the Year 5 and 6’s did activities such as selling reindeer food; making cakes to sell after Mass at church or school performances; upcycling rubbish into Christmas gifts and making a photo booth at a PTA coffee morning.

PARENTS INVITED FOR DINNER

St Charles Catholic Voluntary Academy in Glossop has been holding a ‘Come Dine With Me’ experience over the last five weeks on a Wednesday inviting parents to have lunch with their child. It has been a high success and over the past 5 weeks the school has fed over 100 parents. Some parents came back each week if they had other children in different year groups. The feedback was very positive and it is something the parents and children enjoy.

TASTE OF THE GREAT OUTDOORS

St Mary’s in Marple Bridge is celebrating the end of its successful first term of Forest School. Pupils from Year 5 have weekly Forest School sessions on the school grounds in a small wooded area in between the playing field and the parish church. Activities that they have taken part in so far include: whittling, den building, toasting smores on the fire and the amazingly exciting mud slide. Year 5 can’t wait for their Forest School sessions to start again in January!
Joe Hopkins writes. In October we launched a Christmas Card design competition open to all pupils in the Trust. Sean, Jacqueline and myself had to try and decide who to pick out of these amazing pieces of art. It took much deliberating and we couldn’t cut it any further than seven cards so we decided to have seven winners. It was a joy for Jacqueline, Sean and I to visit the seven schools and present the awards in an assembly to the pupils who were overjoyed. They received an art kit, a certificate, a copy of their card, a St Ralph Sherwin CMAT bookmark prayer card and a letter from Sean, Jacqueline and myself congratulating them and explaining why we chose their picture.

Congratulations to:

Maisy Moncaster, Year 1, Christ the King Alfreton.
Sarah Crompton, Year 7, St Philip Howard Glossop.
Sonny Brendan Killeavy, Year 4, St Thomas’ Ilkeston.
Gabriella Sirmane, Year 3, St Mary’s Derby.
Alice Sjomin, Year 3/4, St Alban’s Derby.
Olivia Finnan, Year 1, St Joseph’s Matlock.
Hannah Leatherland, Year 7, St John Houghton (pictured below).

And thank you to every pupil who took part!
DELVING INTO THE ARCHIVES

There has been a St Thomas' school in Ilkeston since the 1860s. This is the oldest photo we have - and we believe the date is about 1890 as one of the boys on the front row is identified as the father of a future prominent parishioner and Ilkeston Secondary Headteacher, John Lally. When St Thomas’ first opened it was an all through school – becoming a primary school in 1964 on the opening of Blessed John Houghton Secondary and moved to its current site in 1974.

This photograph, along with many others, has been found, lovingly restored and shared by current parishioners with a passion for history, the school and the parish. Their work has really helped understand the school’s rich history.

Graham Lobb
Headteacher at St Thomas’ in Ilkeston
*We would like to feature an archive photo in each newsletter, please send old photos along with a few details to pr@srscmat.co.uk

Meet the St Ralph Sherwin Catholic Multi-Academy Trust Board

Jacqueline Rodden    Peter Barnes    Melanie Barker    Fr Mark Brentnall    Izzy Winton    Vickie Stevens

The Trust Board is working closely with the Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) of our schools to develop robust and effective governance at every level of our Trust. Each term we have LGB Chairs’ Symposiums where we share progress, clarify expectations and explore ideas. In our first term, a survey of local governors highlighted a number of key areas for us to focus on in future and working groups are being convened to take these forward. These working groups consist of governors who already give their time generously to support our schools and are willing to give a little more of their time for the wider good of the CMAT. We are very thankful for their support. Jacqueline Rodden, Chair of the Trust Board.