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Dear Parishioners

Education Sunday (13th September 2026) gives us an opportunity to give thanks for the remarkable gift of Catholic education and for all those who help sustain it.

Across our Diocese, thousands of children and young people are educated each day in our Catholic schools and colleges. There they are encouraged not only to achieve academically, but to grow in faith, compassion, wisdom and hope. In a world that can often feel uncertain, noisy and fragmented, our schools remain places where young people are reminded of something very precious: that they are known, loved and called by God. As the prophet Isaiah writes: “I have called you by your name, you are mine” (Isaiah 43:1).

The Catholic schools of our Diocese did not appear by accident. Many were built through the sacrifice and generosity of earlier generations who believed that handing on the faith to children was worth every effort. Some gave money they could scarcely afford. Others gave time, labour and extraordinary dedication. Today, we are the custodians of that inheritance, and we have a responsibility to hand it on with faith and courage.

In the Scriptures, again and again, God entrusts his people with the task of teaching the young. The Book of Deuteronomy tells us: “Keep these words in your heart... teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Catholic education has always been part of that great mission of handing on faith, wisdom and hope from one generation to the next.

One of the unsung strengths of Catholic education has always been the generosity of ordinary Catholics who step forward to serve as Foundation Governors and Foundation Directors. Their work is often quiet, but it is deeply important. They help ensure that our schools remain faithful to their Catholic mission and identity, while supporting headteachers, staff and pupils with wisdom, encouragement and practical oversight.

Last year, many people across the Diocese responded generously to this appeal, and I want to express my sincere gratitude for that. Yet there remains a continuing need for new Governors and Directors in a number of our schools and Trusts.

So I would like once again to invite practising Catholics aged 18 or over to consider whether this service might be something God is asking of them at this time.

You do not need to be an expert in education, finance or law. Schools need people with generosity, common sense, faith, reliability and a willingness to serve. Full training and support are provided, and the time commitment is manageable for most people.

At the heart of Catholic education is the conviction that every child is made in the image and likeness of God. Our schools are places where young people are helped to discover not only what they will do in life, but who they are called to become. They are communities where faith is lived, prayer is learned, character is formed and the Gospel is quietly made visible in daily life.

The role of Foundation Governor or Director is therefore much more than committee work or administration. It is a genuine sharing in the mission of the Church. It is one of the ways lay Catholics help shape the future of our communities, our schools and our society.

As St John Henry Newman wrote:

“God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.”

For some people, that service may include helping to guide and sustain one of our Catholic schools or colleges. Perhaps this is a moment to ask, in prayer, whether that might be true for you.

If you feel you may be able to help, or if you would simply like to find out more, please visit: schools.cliftondiocese.com/governance. You can also contact Bill McEntee, our Governance Officer, bill.mcentee@cliftondiocese.com or 0117 902 5599 / 0771 009 4976.

Please keep our schools, staff, governors, directors and pupils in your prayers, especially at the beginning of this new academic year. May the Lord bless all those who teach, serve, lead and learn in our Catholic schools, and may they continue to be places where Christ is known, loved and followed.

With my prayers and best wishes



Rt Rev Bosco MacDonald
Bishop of Clifton
September 2026