



VOL 13 Summer 2026

# PRESENCE

The voice of Edmund's people in the English Network



The Edmund Rice Family  
– Drawing Our New Maps of Hope.

[www.edmundriceengland.org](http://www.edmundriceengland.org)

f Edmund Rice England

Welcome to this latest edition of Presence, which once again reflects the extraordinary energy, compassion and commitment found throughout the Edmund Rice Network.

Across these pages, we see the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice being expressed in many different ways: through education, advocacy, leadership, service and community.

Our young people have continued to show that they are not simply the leaders of tomorrow, but active voices for justice today. The Geneva formation visit brought students and staff into direct contact with the work of Edmund Rice International and the United Nations, while the Student Voices for Human Rights Conference equipped young people to understand, monitor and respond to the human rights commitments made by our government.

We also celebrate those who bring the mission to life through their daily service. The Edmund Rice Awards recognise both our Year 6 pupils and the adult leaders whose compassion, commitment and quiet determination strengthen our schools and communities. Our International Women’s Day campaign similarly honoured the inspirational women whose leadership continues to nurture and advance the Edmund Rice mission across the world.

Throughout the magazine, there are many examples of communities putting faith into action:

Raising funds through sponsored walks, welcoming refugees and listening to their stories, supporting vulnerable children through Edmund Rice Camps, caring for our common home, building international relationships and finding new ways to stand alongside those who experience poverty, exclusion or injustice.

These stories remind us that the Edmund Rice charism is not something that belongs only to our history. It remains alive wherever people choose presence over indifference, compassion over judgement and action over silence.

This edition has also been prepared during a deeply difficult and personal time for me, following the recent death of my mother.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone across the Network who has reached out with messages, cards, prayers, flowers and words of comfort. Your kindness and support have meant more to me and my family than I can fully express. At a time of profound sadness, I have felt surrounded by the compassion of this community, and I am enormously grateful.

Loss reminds us of the importance of presence: of showing up, reaching out and accompanying one another through both joyful and painful times. These are values that lie at the very heart of our shared mission.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed articles, photographs and reflections to this edition, and to all those who continue to serve our communities with such generosity. I hope the stories within these pages encourage and inspire us to remain people of hope - alert to the needs of others and always ready to respond.

Ann Nichols  
Network Facilitator



With Cecilia Silva, Headteacher of Santa Margarita



Hope is Stronger than the Headlines

As another remarkable academic year draws to a close, it is impossible not to pause with gratitude.

Thank you to every member of staff, governor, trustee, volunteer, chaplain and friend who has given so generously of your gifts this year. Thank you for the early mornings and late evenings, for the conversations that no one else saw, for the encouragement offered to a child who needed someone to believe in them, for the quiet acts of kindness that will never appear in an inspection report but have changed lives forever.

It has been another extraordinary year across our Edmund Rice schools. We have celebrated outstanding inspection outcomes, witnessed remarkable examples of social justice in action, strengthened our international partnerships and, most importantly, continued to create communities where every young person knows that they are valued, loved and capable of making a difference.

Yet we cannot ignore the world beyond our school gates.

Every day we are confronted by news of war, division, poverty, environmental crises and growing uncertainty. It can sometimes feel as though darkness has the loudest voice. But as people of hope, we know that darkness has never had the final word. Edmund Rice understood this. At a time when Ireland was scarred by poverty, injustice and despair, he refused to believe that the future was determined by the circumstances of the present. Instead, he chose to respond with courage, compassion and practical action. His invitation remains as relevant today as it was over two hundred years ago: “Live Jesus in our hearts forever”.

To live Jesus in our hearts is to become people who choose hope over fear, compassion over indifference and action over despair. Pope Leo XIV has echoed this same message throughout his ministry. Recently he reminded the Church that Christ “brings light and opens a horizon of hope” and that we are called to become people who restore dignity and hope to others. He has also reminded us that faith must never become something that remains safely within church walls. Christ, he says, “walks with his people”; he is “comfort to the weak, light for families, hope for the sick and peace for those who suffer.”

That is exactly what our schools strive to be.

- Every classroom where a child discovers confidence.
- Every playground where forgiveness is chosen over conflict.
- Every foodbank collection.
- Every act of inclusion.
- Every conversation that restores someone’s dignity.
- Every young person inspired to serve others.

These are not small things. They are signs that God’s Kingdom is already breaking into our world.

Sometimes we wonder whether we are making enough difference. The answer is found not in headlines but in human lives. Every child whose future has been transformed because someone in an Edmund Rice school believed in them is evidence that hope is alive.

As we move into the summer months, may we take time to rest, to give thanks and to remember that we belong to something much bigger than ourselves. We are part of a story that began with Edmund Rice, has been carried faithfully by countless others and is now entrusted to us.

Thank you for writing another chapter of that story this year.

May you return in September refreshed, renewed and confident that, whatever challenges lie ahead, our mission remains unchanged: to walk alongside the young, to stand with those on the margins and to build communities where faith, justice and compassion flourish.

Because, as Edmund Rice showed us and Pope Leo continues to remind us, hope is never simply something we possess. Hope is something we become for other people.

Wishing you and your families peace, joy and blessings.

Roisin Maguire  
Director of the English Schools Office

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- Facebook: Edmund Rice England
- X: @edmundrice\_eng
- Instagram: @edmundriceengland
- Tiktok: @edmundrice5may

## Greetings to each of you from Rome.

We celebrate with you the generous commitment of all those people, teachers and the broader school staff members, who keep the charism of Edmund Rice alive for young people today.

The fidelity and dedication of people who have dedicated decades of their lives, maybe their whole working life, to education in the Edmund Rice tradition is a constant source of inspiration for us all.

In the Edmund Rice prayer we pray “Grant us the courage and compassion of Blessed Edmund as we seek to live lives of love and service”.

May this be our prayer always - renewing our personal dedication; reaching out to include those who are different, marginalised, forgotten; exposing young people to realities beyond the bubble in which each of us tends to live.



## A Message from Brother Dominic Sassi

As we continue our journey together, let us remember to make time to pause, to rest and to renew ourselves in God's presence.

Let us give thanks for the many blessings we receive each day—for our families, friends, colleagues and the communities we are privileged to serve.

May God refresh our minds, strengthen our bodies and renew our spirits, especially when life feels busy or demanding

May we always find the courage to continue walking in the footsteps of Blessed Edmund Rice, serving others with compassion, hope and generosity. And may each new day bring fresh opportunities to grow in faith, to care for one another and to be a sign of God's love in our schools and communities.

May God bless you and all those you love, today and always.

Photo shows Br Sassi awarding completion certificates to young volunteer leaders of our Growing Hearts program from St Edward's College.

## A New Model of Formation: Students and Staff Learning Together in Geneva

In January 2026, a pioneering new formation programme brought together students and staff from the Edmund Rice Network in England, Presentation schools in Ireland, The Oratory School, Oxford, leaders from the Frank Field Education Trust and other Edmund Rice-inspired colleagues for an immersive four-day experience in Geneva.

The programme marked the **first initiative of its kind** within the Edmund Rice family, deliberately combining the formation of young people and educators. While students participated in a Youth Ambassador programme based with the Edmund Rice International (ERI) team, staff undertook a parallel **two-day intensive course in advocacy, human rights and Catholic social action**, delivered by the ERI office in Geneva.

Although following different learning pathways during the day, both groups began and ended the programme together through shared meals, reflection and discussion. This intentional design allowed students and staff to listen to one another's experiences, deepen their understanding together and consider how they could return to their schools with a shared vision for justice and advocacy.

Rather than students returning inspired but unsupported, or staff receiving training without student engagement, the programme equipped both groups to become partners in developing advocacy within their school communities.



## Learning Together

One of the programme's greatest strengths was that it intentionally reunited both groups at key points throughout the visit. Evening reflections, shared presentations and final plenary sessions enabled students and staff to exchange ideas and begin planning how the learning could be translated into meaningful action back home.

This collaborative approach reflected a simple but powerful principle: **lasting change happens when students and educators are formed together.**

Schools returned not simply with enthusiastic students or informed staff, but with teams already thinking collectively about assemblies, curriculum development, Youth Ambassador programmes, Religious Education, sixth-form leadership and opportunities for advocacy in their own communities.

## A Shared Journey

Each morning, the students joined the Edmund Rice International team to explore the work of the United Nations, the Universal Periodic Review, global human rights and the role of young people as advocates for change. Alongside visits to the Human Rights Council, the Red Cross Museum and ERI's Geneva office, they reflected on how their own voices could contribute to building a more just world.

At the same time, teachers, chaplains and school leaders undertook an intensive professional formation programme. Through workshops led by the ERI team they examined UN human rights mechanisms, Catholic Social Teaching, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Sustainable Development Goals and practical ways of embedding advocacy throughout school life and the curriculum.



Another similar program which combines student Youth Ambassadors and staff from our own schools as well as partner schools will run this coming January.



## Growing Hearts

Back in November 2025, myself and Ann Nichols, the Network Facilitator, discussed how we could spread the magic of the Edmund Rice Camps.

Through being a coordinator of the Liverpool Edmund Rice Camp, I knew first-hand the benefits and lifelong memories that the Camps give to both the children and the Young Leaders. We set out to find a way in which we could share the gift of Camp throughout the year. Thus, we created a 5-6 week positive and fun afterschool programme, for Years 3-6, which embodies the values of Blessed Edmund Rice through songs, games, activities and reflections. This is what Growing Hearts is.

Growing Hearts is Facilitated by Ann Nichols, Co-Ordinated by myself and led by an incredible group of Young Leaders from St Edward's College, Sixth-Form. We led our first programme in Runnymede Catholic Primary School and our most recent in St Albert's Catholic Primary School.

Prior to the programme start date, we gather the Young Leaders for a day of training, activity planning, game playing and getting to know one another. We 'assign' a week to each small group where they have the opportunity to plan the session however they like which gives them the opportunity to be creative and innovative!

In Week One, we like to plant flower seeds and watch how they grow alongside the confidence and compassion inside the children and Young Leaders too. Every week has a theme that links to an Edmund Rice Value and we give the children and Young Leaders a chance to discuss what it means to them in our reflections. We run the programme on a 1:1 Young Leader to Child ratio, like we do on Camp, so that the children and Young Leaders have a 'buddy' who they can look up to and support throughout the 5-6 weeks. Teachers notice a huge positive difference within the children who join Growing Hearts!

After each session, the Young Leaders and myself have an hour of reflection time which enables the Young Leaders to speak about their experiences of the programme. Additionally, the reflection time allows us to plan materials for the next session and as the weeks go by, the Young Leaders become more enthusiastic to lead activities and games by themselves!

The final week of Growing Hearts is a chance to celebrate the incredible community we build over the duration of the programme! At Runnymede, we were so delighted and grateful to have Br Dominic Sassi come in and award the children and leaders with their Growing Hearts Certificates!

I am so incredibly grateful and proud to have contributed to the incredible programme that is Growing Hearts. The impact it has had on the children, Young Leaders and myself has been huge. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for this programme!

**Harriet Paes**, Coordinator Growing Hearts and Coordinator Edmund Rice Camp, Liverpool



## Finding Their Voice: Year 6 Students Complete the 2026 Edmund Rice Awards

The 2026 Edmund Rice Awards marked an exciting new chapter for Year 6 pupils across the Edmund Rice primary schools in England, introducing a refreshed programme that moved beyond learning about justice to experiencing it first-hand. Designed to prepare pupils for the transition to secondary school, the four-module programme invited them to reflect on justice, human rights, vocation, the global Edmund Rice family and their own ability to make a difference.

Throughout the programme, pupils encountered inspiring people whose lives brought the themes of the Awards to life. They met Christian Brothers to learn how Edmund Rice's mission continues today through education, community life and service.

A live Zoom link with an Edmund Rice school in South Africa enabled the children to discover what it means to belong to a worldwide network of schools, sharing common values despite living in very different contexts. They also listened to refugees tell their own stories of leaving home in search of safety, helping the children develop a deeper understanding of human dignity, welcome and advocacy. These encounters transformed classroom discussions into personal experiences that challenged, inspired and encouraged empathy.

The programme culminated on 18 June, when pupils from Runnymede St Edward's Catholic Primary School, St Mary's College Preparatory School and St Ambrose Preparatory School gathered at Runnymede, whose staff generously hosted this year's celebration day.

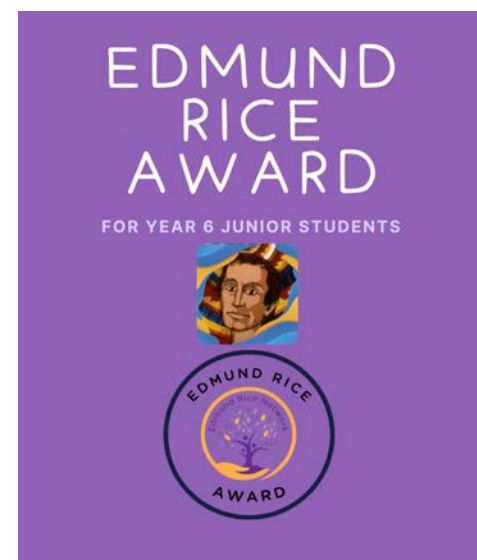
Each school proudly presented its own advocacy project, demonstrating how the children had taken what they had learned and put it into action. Their presentations reflected thoughtful research, teamwork and a genuine desire to create positive change in their local communities.

The new-look Awards place a much greater emphasis on advocacy rather than simply charity, encouraging young people to ask difficult questions, listen to the experiences of others and recognise that even small actions can contribute to a more just and compassionate world. By the end of the programme, pupils had not only gained a deeper understanding of the Edmund Rice charism but had also discovered that their own voices matter and that they, too, can become advocates for justice.

As these Year 6 pupils prepare to begin the next stage of their educational journey, they do so knowing they are part of a global Edmund Rice family, inspired to continue living out the values of presence, compassion, justice and hope in their new schools and beyond.

**See St Ambrose Prep's Awards Project – Advocating for those experiencing homelessness by scanning the code below**





## Being in An Edmund Rice School is Special because...

This year as part of our re-vamped Junior Awards program, year 6 pupils taking part in the Junior Edmund Rice Awards were invited to reflect on a simple but profound question:

**"What makes being in an Edmund Rice school so special?"**

The competition produced an inspiring collection of entries from Year 6 pupils across our Edmund Rice primary schools. Through essays, artwork, posters and creative designs, the children demonstrated a remarkable understanding of what it means to belong to an Edmund Rice community.

While each entry was unique, common themes emerged time and again. The pupils spoke about schools where everyone is welcomed, respected and valued, where nobody is left behind and where differences are celebrated. Many described their school as a family, a place where friendships are built on kindness, compassion and service rather than competition alone.

Several children recognised that an Edmund Rice education is about far more than academic success. They wrote about learning to become the person God calls them to be, following the example of Jesus and Blessed Edmund Rice through everyday acts of kindness, courage and justice. Others reflected on the importance of standing alongside those who are vulnerable, helping people in need, caring for our common home and making a positive difference in the world.

One particularly thoughtful entry described an Edmund Rice school as "being part of something bigger than yourself", while another reminded us that "even small acts of kindness can have a big impact." Another pupil beautifully captured the spirit of our network by writing that "Together we can make the world a better place."

The creativity on display was equally impressive. Alongside beautifully written essays were colourful illustrations of the Eight Essentials, striking artwork celebrating community and justice, and imaginative designs expressing the joy of belonging to the global Edmund Rice family.



Reading the entries was both inspiring and encouraging. The children did not simply recall the values they had been taught—they showed how those values are already shaping the way they think, act and care for others. Their reflections are evidence that the Edmund Rice charism is flourishing in our youngest schools and that the seeds planted by Blessed Edmund over 200 years ago continue to bear fruit today.

Congratulations to all of this year's competition winners and to every pupil who entered. Your words remind us that the future of Edmund Rice education is not only hopeful—it is already taking shape in the hearts of our young people.

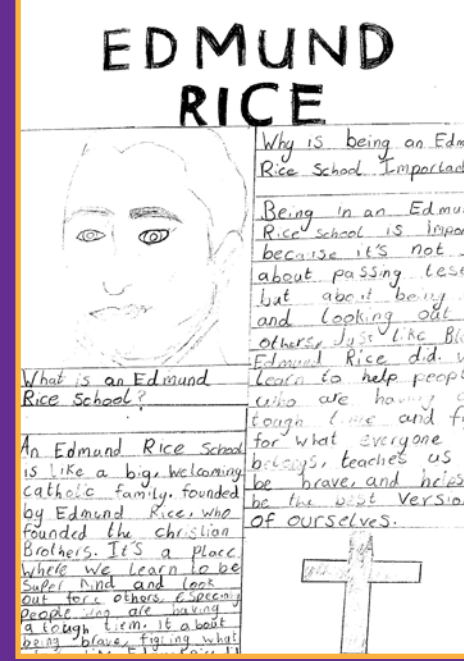
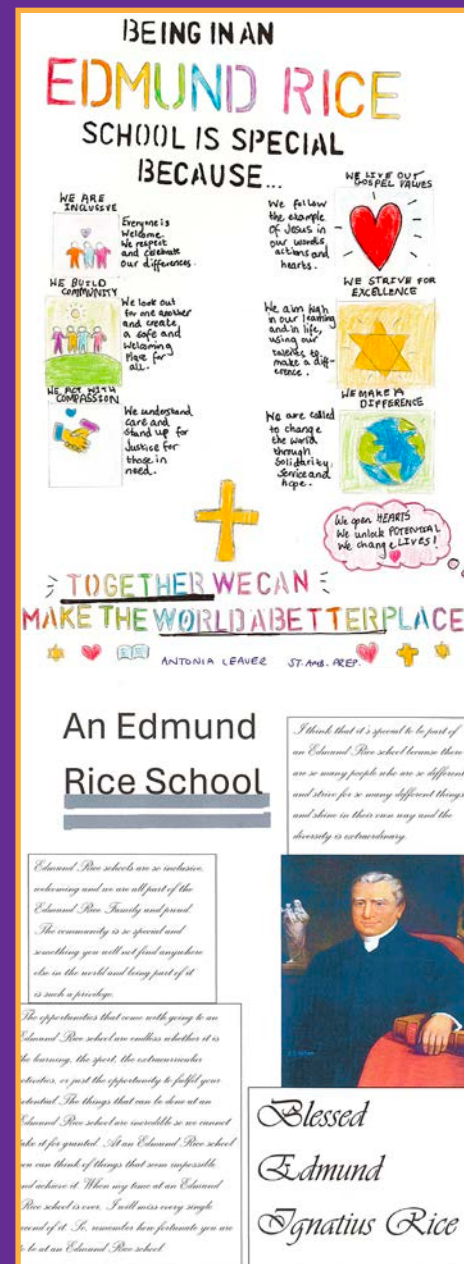
### Winners:

**Teddy**, St Ambrose Prep and **Sonia** from St Mary's Prep

### Runners up:

**Reuben, Lily, Lavinia-Ann, Elias** – St Mary's Prep  
**Manus, Caroline, Antonia, Anson** – St Ambrose Prep.

Read the full entry from the winners opposite:



## Being an Edmund Rice Pupil by Teddy Robinson

Being a pupil in an Edmund Rice school is special because it is about much more than lessons and exams. It is about becoming the person God wants us to be.

Inspired by the life of Blessed Edmund Rice, these schools enable young people to grow in faith, compassion, courage, and service to others. Blessed Edmund Rice was an Irish Catholic businessman and teacher who lived from 1762 to 1844.

He is remembered for dedicating his life to helping poor and vulnerable children who often faced hardship and unfair treatment, to receive an education. Edmund Rice believed that education could change lives. He opened schools where poor boys could learn, feel safe and discover their own value. Edmund Rice believed that every child should know they were loved and valued by God and that they were capable of achieving great success.

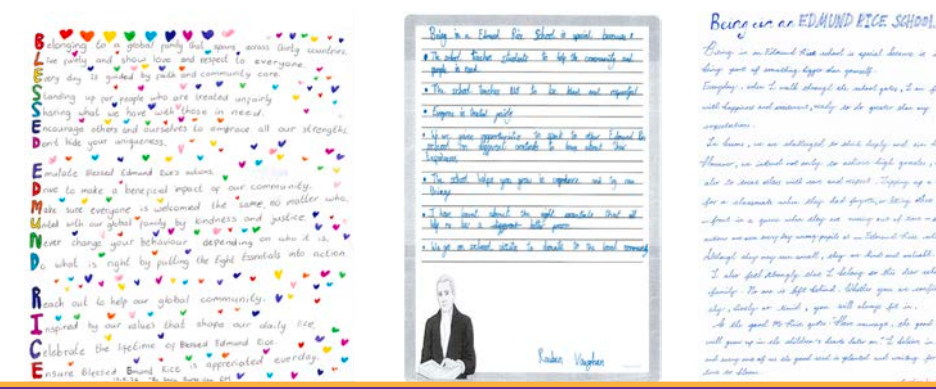
In an Edmund Rice school, every person is valued and respected. Pupils are encouraged to look after one another, especially those who may feel lonely, worried, or left out. Each school is a community where everyone belongs and where being a kind and understanding person matters just as much as achieving good exam results.

Edmund Rice believed that education could change lives. He wanted young people to have hope, dignity, and opportunities for the future. Still now, his schools continue to encourage pupils to work hard, use their gifts wisely, and make a positive difference in the world.

An Edmund Rice school also challenges pupils to think about justice and fairness. Students learn to stand up for what is right, help those in need, have respect for everybody and become people who bring peace and hope to others. Through prayer, compassion, charity work, leadership, and everyday actions, pupils learn that even small acts of kindness can have a big impact. Through the Edmund Rice award system, in my school, quiet acts of kindness and helpfulness can be recognised. People who don't shout about what they do are then rewarded with respect and friendship. I believe that this encourages pupils to treat each other with compassion, helping to create a strong supportive community.

Being part of an Edmund Rice school means knowing that you are never alone. It is a place where faith, friendship, learning, and service are all equally important. They help young people grow not only in knowledge but also in heart and spirit. Experiencing the ethos of an Edmund Rice School gave me the courage to stand up against an incident of bullying and to challenge an atmosphere of nastiness against someone who was being made sad.

I will always be grateful that I have had the opportunity to attend an Edmund Rice school since I was three years old. The values and principles I have experienced will be my strength for the rest of my life.





## Sixth Form Student Leadership Conference



### Hope Begins with Us: Sixth Form Students Gather for Edmund Rice Leadership Conference

Student leaders from Edmund Rice schools across the network gathered in Wirral for the 2026 Sixth Form Student Leadership Conference, an inspiring and reflective day centred on the theme *Hope Begins With Us*.

The conference encouraged young people to explore leadership through the lens of faith, justice, service, and courage while strengthening connections across the Edmund Rice school community.

The conference program included reflection, leadership activities, moral debate, school presentations, guest speakers, and opportunities for students to engage with the wider global Edmund Rice mission.

The day began with a powerful opening address from Brother David Ryan Silva CFC of the Congregational Leadership Team in Rome. Speaking to the gathered students, Br David challenged them to recognise that authentic leadership begins with openness of heart, compassion, and a willingness to respond to injustice.

Drawing on the life and example of Blessed Edmund Rice, Br David reflected on the importance of 'opening one's heart' to those experiencing poverty, exclusion, and injustice. He reminded students that Edmund's mission itself was 'an act of radical hope against all odds' and encouraged the young leaders present to become people who stop, listen, and respond when others 'pass by'.



Br David's address deeply connected with the conference theme as he encouraged students not to seek perfection, but instead to lead authentically through compassion and service. He challenged them to use their own experiences and struggles as opportunities to understand and support others more fully.

Throughout the day, students engaged enthusiastically in a range of interactive leadership activities. Icebreakers and group discussions helped students build relationships and exchange ideas with peers from other Edmund Rice schools. A particularly engaging session involved students debating moral and social justice questions such as whether silence is a form of complicity, whether systems change is more important than changing hearts, and the role schools should play in addressing justice issues.

Students also explored the qualities of effective leadership through collaborative activities in which they identified leaders they admired and discussed the qualities that define courageous and servant leadership. The emphasis throughout the conference was that leadership is rooted not in status or popularity, but in service, integrity, empathy, and action.

An important aspect of the conference was the opportunity for schools to share examples of servant leadership initiatives taking place within their own communities.

These presentations allowed students to celebrate projects already making a difference while also gathering ideas and inspiration to bring back to their own schools.

The conference also highlighted the international dimension of the Edmund Rice Network. Students viewed leadership videos created by young people from

Edmund Rice schools around the world and reflected on what it means to belong to a global community committed to justice, solidarity, and hope. Students were encouraged to consider how local leadership can contribute to global change.

The afternoon featured inspiring contributions from guest speakers Chloe Marks, National Coordinator for Edmund Rice Camps Ireland, and Brother Ger O'Connell CFC, whose life in mission and work with refugees, asylum seekers, and young people facing disadvantage offered students powerful examples of leadership in action. Their stories reinforced the conference message that leadership grounded in compassion and service can transform lives and communities.

Students also explored opportunities for greater involvement within the wider Edmund Rice movement, including Edmund Rice Camps, global classroom partnerships, social justice initiatives, internships, immersion experiences, and environmental projects such as the 'Carbon Rangers' eco-newsletter.

Throughout the conference, the atmosphere was one of openness, encouragement, and hope. Students were challenged to think deeply about how they can shape school culture positively, amplify the voices of those who may feel invisible, and become leaders who place dignity and inclusion at the centre of their actions.

The conference concluded with reflection, commissioning, and action planning, inviting students to consider not only what they had learned, but how they would put those lessons into practice in their schools and communities.

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As students departed, the message of the day remained clear: hope is not passive. It begins when people choose courage, compassion, and service.

Guided by the example of Blessed Edmund Rice and inspired by the words of Brother David Ryan Silva, the Sixth Form Student Leadership Conference reminded all present that young people are not simply the leaders of tomorrow, but leaders capable of bringing hope and transformation today.



I am honoured to be given this opportunity to welcome each of you to the School’s

What a lovely theme to base this conference on - “Hope begins with us.”

I’d like to start with a few lines that perfectly encapsulate the Charism of Blessed Edmund for us.

Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.  
As sons and daughters of Edmund, we ask ourselves—how did hope begin with Edmund? And I will use three lines from the Edmund Rice prayer to help us draw inspiration for our lives.  
O God, we thank you for the life of Blessed Edmund Rice, he opened his heart to Christ present in those oppressed by poverty and injustice. May we follow his example of faith and generosity. Grant us the courage and compassion of Blessed Edmundas we seek to live lives of love and service.

1. He opened his heart

The opposite of this would be to close one’s heart. And that is what everyone around Edmund did. They looked out of their windows, they saw, and as we are told in the parable of the Good Samaritan, they passed by.

Edmund stopped. He opened his heart. What does opening one’s heart look like? It’s choosing to listen, no matter how disturbing and unsettling. It’s allowing the pain and suffering of others to disturb you. It’s recognising the dignity of every person as God-given, at the core of the person, not something people give each other. In opening his heart, Edmund offered hope. Leadership is easy when you keep your heart guarded.

As Leaders, what are you willing to let disturb you this year? Would you be seen as a Leader who passed by, or one that stopped and chose to be disturbed?

2. To Christ present in those oppressed by poverty and injustice.

We are told in Scripture that God’s heart has a special place for those who are oppressed, for those made poor and those suffering injustice. As Edmund opened his heart, those oppressed by poverty and injustice found a home within it. Edmund started his schools during a time of immense structural oppression (the Penal Laws in Ireland), meaning his entire mission was an act of radical hope against all odds. I was inspired when I logged on last week to the ERI Global Student Ambassadors Zoom. Youth Leadership works! To think that our schools are not just local schools, but parts of a Global Movement for Justice filled me with such pride.

And yet, global movements need local eyes. As Leaders, who are the ‘invisible’ groups in our own schools or local communities waiting for you to amplify their voices or represent them?

3. As we seek to live lives of love and service.

St. Mother Teresa once said that true love is “giving until it hurts.”

Pope Francis took it a step further, reminding us that “in giving ourselves, we grow.”

We see this explicitly in Edmund’s life. When his wife died, he was plunged into a space of intense pain and hopelessness. His service was born out of profound personal tragedy.

Edmund didn’t wait until his life was perfect to serve others. he used his brokenness to heal a broken world. None of our lives are perfect! We probably do not have everything figured out either. Our imperfections, our mistakes, and our own struggles don’t disqualify us from being great leaders. They allow us to look at someone else who is struggling and say, ‘I see you, because I’ve been there too.’” So, as a school leader, are you going to waste this year trying to look perfect, ‘the perfect Instagram story/ reel’, or are you going to use your real, messy, authentic self to actually serve?

May you not fear your own imperfections, but through them, may you be blessed with Edmund’s fierce spirit of love and service.

When everyone tells you to keep walking, may you have the courage and compassion like Edmund to stop. May the poor, the oppressed, and the ‘invisible’ find a permanent home in your hearts.

Keep opening your hearts, Leaders - because it is in that brave space that you will bring hope to our world.

Br David Silva



We were so lucky to have Br Francis Hall with us at Edmund Rice House to celebrate Edmund Rice Feast Day this May 5th.

It was his first in person visit to Edmund Rice House and he was very impressed by our new Edmund Rice office base.

Students from Runnymede St Edward’s and St Edward’s College came to join Francis and he told them about his work in Zambia with the Western Cluster, where the Brother’s development project focuses on livelihoods, maternal and child health as well as water, sanitation and improved farming techniques.

You can read more about their work on the Edmund Rice Development website.

Brother Francis tells us he could not have planned a better way to have spent the feast day!



To mark International Women's Day, the Edmund Rice England Team launched an international online campaign celebrating the inspirational women who lead, nurture and strengthen the Edmund Rice mission across the world.

The campaign recognised the countless women whose leadership, compassion and commitment continue to inspire their communities and bring the Edmund Rice charism to life each day.



**8th March**



**Sharon Van Vuren**  
Head of College  
CBC St John's College  
Cape Town

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

"Women have always been part of the Blessed Edmund Rice story, not as supporting actors, but as guiding and transformative figures. From Edmund's mother Mary to the inspiration of the Blessed Virgin, Nano Nagle and St Teresa of Ávila, their presence shaped the spirit of a mission that continues today. Their place on Edmund's icon reminds us that this journey was never walked alone.

As women in the Edmund Rice network today, we inherit that legacy and its responsibility: to create space for dignity, justice and hope, and to open the path for others to walk it too. Through Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders and the global network of Edmund Rice schools, women are not leading from the sidelines, we are helping lead from the front."



**8th March**



**Serena Cubbin**  
Headteacher  
England

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

"I seek to lead St. Anselm's College in creating a culture where dignity, justice, and hope are lived each day. Underpinned by our distinct ethos and mission, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me", my aim is to develop young minds who will become the next generation of leaders, formed by the values of the Edmund Rice 8 Essentials. In today's world, shaping courageous, compassionate, and faith-filled leaders is not just important, it is essential, it is the Anselmian way."



**8th March**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Women across the Edmund Rice global community lead with courage, compassion and vision. Through their dedication to justice, education and the dignity of every person, they inspire others and help build a more hopeful and inclusive world.



**8th March**



**Clare Evans**  
Assistant Head Teacher  
England

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

"As a woman in the Edmund Rice network, my leadership is centred on nurturing the moral and spiritual formation of our students, helping them recognise their God-given dignity and their responsibility to act with compassion and justice. By creating a school culture where every young person feels seen, valued, and inspired by Gospel values, my aim is to develop students who are not only hopeful about their future but also committed to bringing dignity, justice, and hope to the communities they will one day lead."



**8th March**



**Sarita Naicker**  
Head Prefect  
CBC St John's College  
Cape Town

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

"As a female leader in South Africa and part of the Edmund Rice network, I understand that leadership is not about titles, it's about responsibility. In a country where inequality is still very real, leadership means using your voice to create space for others. I try to create dignity by making sure people feel heard and respected. Justice, for me, is about action. It's not enough to speak about fairness, we have to work towards it. I create hope by leading with consistency and integrity.

In today's world, where division, inequality and uncertainty affect so many communities, creating spaces of dignity, justice and hope is essential. As women within the Edmund Rice community, we are called to lead with compassion, courage and a commitment to uplift others, because the kind of leadership we model today shapes the future we build tomorrow."



**8th March**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Women across the Edmund Rice global community lead with courage, compassion and vision. Through their dedication to justice, education and the dignity of every person, they inspire others and help build a more hopeful and inclusive world.



**8th March**



**Grace David**  
Advocacy and  
Social Justice  
Lead, India

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

"As a woman leader, I am deeply conscious of the wisdom and experience each member of my team brings to the table. Because I value trust and respect, I intentionally create space for dialogue and encourage creative initiative. This is essential, as hierarchical and closed models of leadership often stifle innovation and growth. Leaders in the Edmund Rice tradition, in particular, are called to embody and model Presence and Respect in all that they do to foster hope."



**8th March**



**Paola Avalos Carrascal**  
Regional Coordinator  
Defensoría Edmundo Rice  
Peru

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

"As a woman in the Edmund Rice network, I exercise leadership based on service, consistency, and commitment to human dignity. I contribute by creating safe spaces where justice, equity, and participation are promoted, especially for children and adolescents.

I believe in leadership that accompanies, listens, and transforms. In a world marked by inequality and indifference, generating hope through the defense of rights and the building of more humane communities is not only necessary but urgent."



**8th March**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Women across the Edmund Rice global community lead with courage, compassion and vision. Through their dedication to justice, education and the dignity of every person, they inspire others and help build a more hopeful and inclusive world.



**8th March**



**Aindrita Acharya,**  
St Joseph's College,  
Kolkata,  
India

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

"As a woman in the Edmund Rice Network, I believe my leadership is rooted in the relationships I build and the safe spaces I create — spaces where we listen without judgment, feel without prejudice, and lead with conviction. In my classroom and community, I ensure that no learner is reduced to marks, background, language, or circumstance, because justice becomes real only when fairness is practised daily in discipline, assessment, and opportunity. In a world marked by competition, intolerance, and bias, I see it as my responsibility to lead with authenticity and courage, transforming education into a powerful instrument of dignity, justice, and hope — within and beyond the school walls."



Student Voices for Human Rights  
Conference:  
Following the UK's UN Human Rights Commitments

Student Voices for Human Rights: Young Advocates Launch a New National Initiative

More than sixty students and staff from seven schools gathered at the Liverpool Archdiocesan Conference Centre in May for the inaugural **Student Voices for Human Rights Conference**, a new initiative from the Edmund Rice Network in England in partnership with Edmund Rice International (ERI). Bringing together young people from Edmund Rice schools alongside colleagues from Loreto Grammar School, Birches Head Academy and Ellesmere Port Church of England College, the conference launched an exciting new programme that places student voice at the heart of human rights advocacy.

Building on the learning from the recent Geneva formation programme, the conference introduced students to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process and explored how the UK's human rights commitments can be monitored and brought to life through local action. Interactive workshops, debates and role-play challenged participants to move beyond simply learning about injustice to becoming advocates for change within their own schools and communities.

A highlight of the day was the launch of the new **Student Social Justice Volunteers Programme**, developed in partnership with Edmund Rice International. Every participating school received a comprehensive toolkit enabling students to investigate the UK's commitments on issues including children's rights, education, mental health, equality, migration and poverty, before taking informed action through research, campaigning, assemblies and dialogue with decision-makers.

Throughout the conference, students considered a simple but challenging question: **"Are the UK's human rights promises becoming reality?"** Using a new traffic-light monitoring framework, they explored how evidence from government reports, charities, local communities and their own lived experiences can be used to hold governments accountable for the commitments they have made.



The conference concluded with each school developing its own action plan for the year ahead. Student Social Justice Volunteer groups will now focus on a priority human rights issue, report annually to Edmund Rice International, and contribute evidence and student perspectives that can help inform future advocacy at both national and international level.

The launch marks an important new chapter in Edmund Rice education. By connecting young people's experiences with the work of the United Nations through Edmund Rice International, the programme empowers students not only to learn about human rights but to become informed, compassionate and courageous advocates for dignity, equality and justice—living out Edmund Rice's vision in today's world.

**One student's reaction from Loreto Grammar School, Altrincham:**

"The conference helped me realise how important young people's voices are in creating change. Learning about the UN's Universal Periodic Review was fascinating, especially discovering how countries are held accountable for protecting human rights. It also challenged me to think about advocacy differently. I learnt that real change often starts small – by recognising the injustice around us and taking action within our own communities. If we want to build a better world, we have to be willing to start making that difference ourselves."

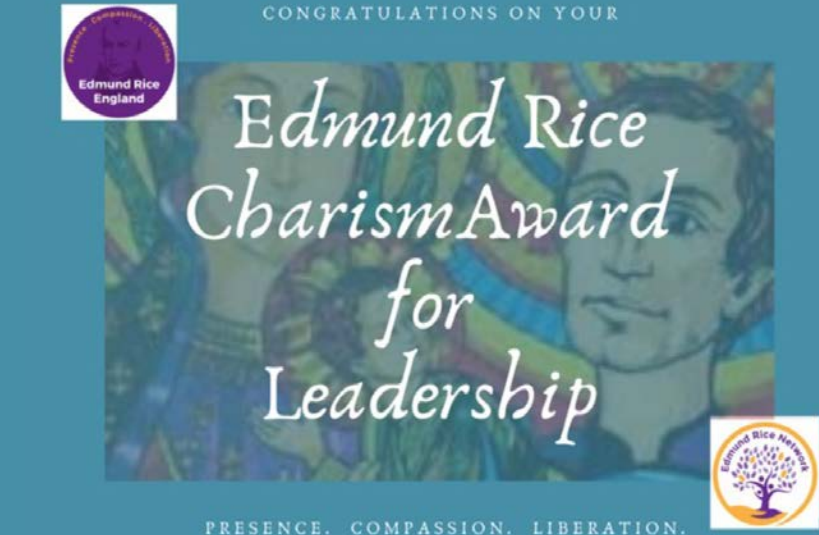
Edmund's People:  
Celebrating Leadership  
and Service

The Edmund Rice Charism Awards for Leadership once again provided an opportunity to recognise some of the remarkable adults who bring the Edmund Rice mission to life throughout our English Network.

There were 17 recipients this year.

The annual awards honour staff, governors, volunteers and adults involved in wider Edmund Rice ministries whose leadership is rooted in service, compassion and justice. Those nominated are not necessarily people in the most senior or visible positions. Many lead quietly through their kindness, reliability, encouragement of others and willingness to respond whenever help is needed.

The citations received in 2026 revealed an inspiring breadth of service across the Network. Recipients included teachers, chaplaincy and support staff, school leaders, governors, administrators and volunteers. Their contributions ranged from nurturing prayer and liturgy, strengthening Religious Education and supporting school governance, to mentoring young people, serving vulnerable communities, volunteering with Edmund Rice Camps and creating opportunities for pupils to engage in leadership, social justice and the wider global Network.



Each recipient received a personal letter from the Edmund Rice Schools Office containing the citation written by their nominator. They also received a special congratulatory card and an Edmund Rice pin badge as a lasting symbol of their place within our Network. A further letter from Brother David Gibson, European Province Leader of the Christian Brothers, acknowledged their generous contribution and thanked them for offering leadership and service in the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice.

Reading the citations is a powerful reminder that the charism continues through people. It can be seen in those who welcome, organise, teach, listen, advocate, pray, encourage and quietly go far beyond what is expected of them. Their leadership helps ensure that the values of presence, compassion and liberation are not simply spoken about but experienced each day within our schools and communities.

We offer our warmest congratulations and sincere thanks to all of the 2026 recipients. Through their witness and example, they show us what it means to be truly Edmund's People.

- Norman Smith
- Angela Mills
- Matthew Arthur
- Sharron Hamnett
- Heidi Keegan
- Marie Claire Cooke
- Georgina Ostick
- Julie Thomas
- Joe Richardson
- James Maroney
- Jane Roberts
- Louise Snape
- Jo Lawrie
- Beverley Barnett
- Paula Keever
- Katie Woolliscroft
- Harriet Paes

## Woolton Community, Liverpool

**Brothers Michael Halligan and Dominic Sassi form community in Woolton.**

We are both retired but try to keep involved in what is going on in the world in various ways. We are both trustees of the Christian Brothers Trust, as well as other trusts.

Michael serves in the St Vincent's kitchen in Toxteth, and Dominic assists an elderly person in Woolton Community Life. Michael attended the renewal course in Mt St Anne in Killenard.

We have welcomed numerous visitors recently, including: Brothers Francis Hall, Tino D'Abreu, and Ben Boonen. Also, Kate Peaston and Patricia Minogue from Runnymede school, and Joe Cainen and Aaron Kiely, former brothers.

**All are welcome here.**



## St Timothy's Community

- Parish Priest Fr John Southworth is retiring in August. He is here in St Paul's & Timothy's Parish for past seven years. He left a great legacy of music in the parish. We are very grateful for his time with us. He will be replaced by Canon Mark Madden.

- Br Francis Hall spent some time with us in April/May. He was on vacation from his mission in Mongu, Zambia. One of his ministries is a project supporting farmers in the Region to make a living and to live more sustainably. He was also raising funds to buy two motor bikes in their support.

- Visitors recently included Kate and Patricia from Runnymede who joined us for an evening meal and good conversation.

- Zoom Reflections: Philip Pinto, our former Congregation Leader gave an excellent input in May on the topic 'Loving Wastefully'. He will be offering another inspiring talk on June 27th. All are welcome. Contact through the Edmund Rice Office.

- This week of writing our communication is June 15th – 22nd when we mark Refugee Week. There are many events taking place, one of which is the annual Asylum Link trip to Thurston in Wirral on Tuesday. This is always a fun day where staff and students mix freely, with walks through the wood and along the beach, with football, sport and lots to eat and drink being organised.

- The annual African Oye Festival is in Sefton Park on June 21st/22nd, a real celebration of diverse cultures & our asylum Link choir are performing this year on both days.

## A Door Just Opened on a Street

A door just opened on a street –  
I, lost was passing by –  
An instant's width of warmth disclosed  
And wealth and company

The door as sudden shut, and I,  
I, lost, was passing by, -  
Lost doubly, but by contrast most,  
Enlightening misery

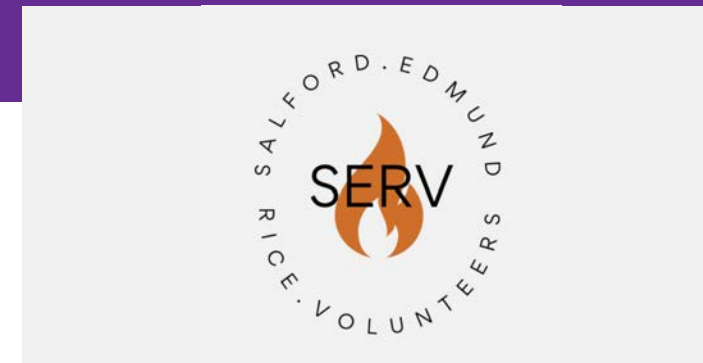


## If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking

A door just opened on a street –  
I, lost was passing by –  
An instant's width of warmth disclosed  
And wealth and company

The door as sudden shut, and I,  
I, lost, was passing by, -  
Lost doubly, but by contrast most,  
Enlightening misery

**Emily Dickinson**



## SERV: A Ministry of Presence, Compassion and Liberation

**In a time when the public conversation around asylum and migration can too often become harsh, political and impersonal, the work of SERV in Salford offers a quieter but deeply powerful witness: welcome, dignity and practical solidarity.**

SERV was established in March 2017, after the Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice volunteers, who had previously worked alongside the Spiritan Fathers through the charity Revive, discerned that the time was right to develop a distinct Edmund Rice response. With the generous support of Bishop John Arnold and the Diocese of Salford, accommodation was provided at St Sebastian's Presbytery, and a new community began to take shape.

Today, the SERV community consists of Brothers Ger O'Connell, George Gordon, Jim Catterson and Tony Twomey, supported by a committed team of volunteers inspired by the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice. Together, they serve people seeking asylum and refugees, offering practical help, companionship and a place of belonging.

Their work feels especially urgent in 2026. In the year to March 2026, there were around 76,700 asylum applications in the UK, relating to about 93,500 people. Behind each figure is a human story of fear, courage, loss and hope. Refugee Week 2026 took the theme "Courage", recognising the resilience of those forced to flee and rebuild their lives.

At SERV, that courage is encountered every day. Many who come to the centre have fled persecution, war, violence and life-threatening situations in countries including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Afghanistan and Sudan. Each person's story is unique, but many share a remarkable determination to build a safer future and to contribute positively to their new communities.

The SERV team helps with whatever is needed: asylum claims, communication with the Home Office, benefits, housing, school access, GP registration and English classes twice a week. Just as importantly, they listen. They create a space where people are welcomed, valued and known by name.

The centre is also made available for faith celebrations, bereavement services and community gatherings. In this way, SERV is not simply a service provider; it is an extended family. The volunteers themselves reflect the richness of the Edmund Rice network: a retired GP, a university lecturer and her daughter, a retired headteacher of a Christian Brothers' school, a retired teacher, and former refugees who once received support from SERV and now offer it to others.

For the Brothers and volunteers, the words Presence, Compassion and Liberation are not abstract ideals. They are lived daily through accompaniment, advocacy and friendship.

As the Catholic Church continues to remind us, people seeking sanctuary must never be reduced to statistics or headlines. They are our brothers and sisters. SERV stands as a powerful sign of that Gospel truth.

The SERV community is deeply grateful to the Edmund Rice Network in England, especially Roisin Maguire and Ann Nichols, for their support, encouragement and belief in this ministry of welcome.



Brother Ger spoke about his life and ministry at our Sixth form Conference this year



## Asylum Link Merseyside News

At last the good weather is with us, with all it brings: sunshine, turning the heating off, opening up the windows to let the summer breeze flow through the building. And yet I find myself hoping the rain and cold return. You might reasonably ask why?

It stems from a conversation two years ago, when some Police Officers visited us to discuss target hardening our building, following the rioting at the Pier Head and County Road. We all agreed that we could do with some help from Police Constable 'Rain' – people hardly ever riot in bad weather.

The recent disturbance and destruction that took place in Southampton and Belfast carry echoes of 2024 and show what happens when mobs take matters into their own hands. People were targeted, not because of anything they had done, but simply because they looked and sounded different or came from another country.

Shops and houses destroyed, people terrified, lives and livelihoods ruined. Whatever argument people wanted to have about immigration was drowned out by bigotry and racism.

That feels pretty depressing, even for me! But it's only part of the story.

Our Action Asylum project has just had its funding confirmed for a further three years, working with Wildlife Trusts and others on Climate Action projects.



Last year the project worked alongside the Friends of Princes Park in Liverpool, clearing, planting, tidying, together making the park a better place to visit and enjoy. Out of the blue, we received an email from a local resident.



"I am not sure if you are the right person to contact but I just wanted to say thanks to your members for the hours of work they have put into Princes Park this spring. I have a dog so I am in the park three times a day on walks and I have seen the difference the work has made.

The sidings/gutters on the entrance are clean, the steps by the lake are clear and tidy and the hedges are tidy. There is one particular volunteer we see most days who makes our day as they are so committed to improving our neighbourhood. I know a lot of the effort and contributions of people seeking asylum goes unseen but I just wanted to say thank you it's very much appreciated."

Asylum Seekers, Refugees and local people working together to improve their community! I would venture that is a lot more patriotic than tying cheap flags to lampposts? There was an article on it in the Echo <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/i-felt-lost-alone-now-33979637> In a brief chat with one of the TB Nurses who visit to offer checks and advice, she said that coming to the centre made it so much easier to speak to people. "The people using the centre trust you, and because you invited us in, they also trust us" Back in November we had a great session at the Runnymede St Edward's Primary, with the Choir on good form and everyone joining in. Sharing our music and our stories is such an easy way to develop understanding about unfamiliar people and places. These are just a few examples of how Asylum Link builds bridges and brings people together, working with our community partners like the Edmund Rice Network, to make the places where we live and work better for everyone. Thank you once again for the help given over the years.



## Building Bridges for Justice: Strengthening ERI's Partnership with Edmund Rice England

At Edmund Rice International (ERI), we believe that advocacy is most effective when it is rooted in relationships.

While our work at the United Nations seeks to influence global policy and promote human rights, its greatest strength comes from the thousands of students, educators and schools across the Edmund Rice network who bring these values to life in their own communities.

Over the years, our partnership with Edmund Rice England (ER England) has become a powerful example of how local action and global advocacy can work hand in hand. Together, we have created opportunities for students and educators to deepen their understanding of human rights, develop as advocates and connect with the wider Edmund Rice family. The result has been a growing movement of young people who recognise that their voices matter and that they can contribute to creating a more just world.

### Bringing Human Rights to Life

Working alongside colleagues in ER England, we have been privileged to support a series of human rights and advocacy conferences for schools across England. These gatherings introduce students to the work of ERI at the United Nations while helping them understand how international human rights relate directly to issues within their own communities.

A recent Justice and Advocacy Conference, held in May 2026, brought together students from schools across the North of England to explore the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the United Nations process that reviews every country's human rights record. Students examined the UK's commitments, discussed progress and challenges, and considered how young people can influence positive change within their own communities.



## Our Headteachers Reflect on their experience at Congress this year...

As I come to the end of my second year as Headteacher of St Edward's College, attending the EREBB Congress was both a privilege and a deeply humbling experience. The Congress, held across Argentina in April 2025, brought together Edmund Rice schools and leaders from across the world to reflect on faith, service and presence within our communities. For me personally, it provided an opportunity to reflect not only on our mission as an Edmund Rice school but also on the kind of community we continue striving to build at St Edward's.

Our new College Mission Statement — “Let all that you do be done with love” (1 Corinthians 16:14) — became very real throughout the Congress. Again and again, I witnessed that love is not simply a feeling but action: shown through service, compassion, generosity and hope.

One of the most powerful parts of the immersion experience in Argentina was visiting two vastly different schools. One, Cardinal Newman College, was among the most affluent schools imaginable with exceptional facilities and resources. The other was situated in the shantytowns where families and children live with very little and face daily hardship. What struck me most was not the contrast in wealth but the extraordinary joy, warmth and hope shown by the young people who had the least materially.

Despite difficult circumstances, the children radiated love and optimism. Their sense of community, resilience and faith was inspirational. It reminded me that we often search for meaning in possessions or success, yet the Congress showed me clearly that we find Christ most powerfully in one another: in kindness, in dignity, in service and in the way we choose to live each day.

Another particularly moving experience came from hearing about the pre-Congress immersion in Peru, where a group of headteachers and colleagues helped a mother and her children who were living together in a single-room home. Over two days, they built two additional rooms for the family. This was far more than a construction project; it was love in action.



The Gospel story of the Road to Emmaus resonated strongly throughout the Congress. Just as the disciples recognised Jesus in the breaking of bread, we recognised Him in the people we encountered: the families we served, the children in the schools, the Edmund Rice communities we visited and even in one another. These experiences brought the Gospel to life in a very real and tangible way.

Our pilgrimage to Our Lady of Luján and following the footsteps of Pope Francis through Buenos Aires also reinforced the idea that faith is a journey lived through community, humility and action. Pilgrimage reminds us that we walk together, supporting one another and recognising Christ in everyday encounters.

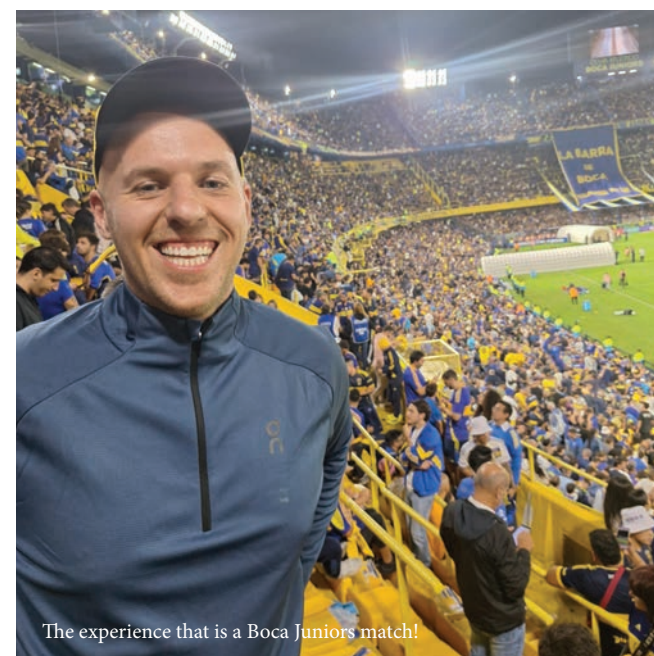
What struck me most throughout the Congress was the selflessness of others and their unwavering commitment to service. That spirit of service is something I will bring back with me to St Edward's College. Over the past two years, we have worked hard to transform many aspects of school life, including creating a new College prayer and renewing our mission and identity as an Edmund Rice school. Central to this has been our commitment to ensuring that we act as stewards of God's creation - caring for the Earth and for those most in need.

The Congress reaffirmed the importance of the Edmund Rice charism and particularly the preferential option for the poor, one of the Eight Essentials of an Edmund Rice education. Blessed Edmund Rice understood that education must always be rooted in justice, compassion and dignity for all. That message feels more important than ever today.

As a College community, we speak often about the Five Keys of being an Edwardian. The Congress reminded me that these values must always lead to action. Our pupils, staff, parents and wider community are called to look for Jesus in the people around them and to live out love through small but meaningful actions each day - helping others, showing kindness, standing up for what is right and supporting those in need.

The experience in Argentina has strengthened my belief that our mission at St Edward's is not simply about academic success but about forming young people who live with compassion, faith, courage and service at the centre of their lives.

Lee Fabia



The experience that is a Boca Juniors match!

During the Easter holidays I had the opportunity of accompanying other members of the global Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders network to the congress hosted by Cardinal Newman College, Buenos Aires.

The congress was split in to two parts; pre-congress immersion and then the congress itself. I was joined by Kate Peaston from Runnymede and Lee Fabia from St Edward's for the pre-congress immersion with Roisin Maguire and Ann Nichols from the Schools Office joining us for the congress having opted for the pre-congress immersion option in Uruguay.

Having arrived the day before the official schedule got underway, we got ourselves acquainted with some of the city's sites, including the Cathedral where Pope Francis (or Bishop Jorge Mario Bergoglio) resided. Given that the theme of the congress was Walking in the Spirit of Francis, it was an appropriate way to start the trip.

The official schedule started with a walking tour of Buenos Aires on day 2, we settled into the pre-congress immersion in San Isidro, a northern suburb of Buenos Aires, not too far away from host school, Cardinal Newman College.

The 'brief' for the countries hosting pre-immersion is to offer experiences that are a combination of cultural, spiritual and that also demonstrate outreach to those on the margins.

The 3 days on the immersion were undoubtedly the highlight of the visit, providing numerous opportunities for prayer and reflection including a pilgrimage to Lujan and, a traditional Argentinian asado (one of many!) and a visit to Club Newman to watch the first XV rugby game. However, the outreach programmes we visited were incredibly moving and inspirational.

We visited a community where the parish priest, an old boy of the school, is essentially regarded as a saint. Fr Jaime met us in the morning at the kindergarten where many of the school's older students volunteer and then celebrated Mass with his community at the Ricardo Rojas addiction centre for men.

The stories from those men were powerful and the visit to the centre was the first time the famous line, “Take up your mat and go”, from the story of the paralysed man in the Gospels was alluded to. That line stayed with me throughout the trip and became an unintended theme, not just because of the desire for healing, but there was an element of the passage being interpreted as one where it was down to the individuals to take responsibility, demonstrate resilience and not make excuses.

I did check to see whether there had been anything written on the story of the paralysed man from that angle but couldn't find anything - there might be more to come from me on that.



The visit to Ricardo Rojas was a particularly important moment as the Principal of an all-boys' school. Quite a few of us were from all boys' contexts and so I took the opportunity to ask the men what message they would give to us as leaders of boys' schools to prevent our students succumbing to addiction, or at least reduce the chances of doing so. The answer wasn't anything radical at all. In fact, it was very simple - love. Their testimonies hit hard and it was a quiet bus that returned to the hotel later that day. Further information about the projects supported by Cardinal Newman College can be found here:

<https://cardenal-newman.edu/en/projects/>

The visit to the sewing workshop in Santa Clara was also fascinating and as ever, the hospitality we received was exceptional.

The second half of the congress was based in the centre of Buenos Aires. There were a number of interesting speakers on overlapping themes but the most engaging was unsurprisingly the testimony of one of the survivors of the Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571, carrying a rugby team of Stella Maris' Old Boys, which crashed in the Andes in October 1972. Pedro Algorta spoke about the role faith played in the months they were stranded and freezing in the mountains. The recent film Society of the Snow, which is approved by the survivors, is very much worth watching.

Regrettably I had to return a few days' early due to an NPQ assessment window clashing but I certainly gained a lot from the days I was there.

I am thankful to our hosts from Cardinal Newman College who were incredibly attentive throughout the trip. Nothing was too much for them at any point and I look forward to returning at some point in the future.

Dermot Rainey



## Argentina: A Journey That Changed My Heart

**There are moments in life that quietly transform the way you see the world. My recent journey to Argentina was one of those moments—a truly life-changing experience that reminded me why the work we do in education is such a privilege.**

I travelled alongside leaders from Edmund Rice schools across the globe, each bringing different experiences, cultures and challenges. Although our schools are separated by thousands of miles, one thing united us all: a shared belief that every child deserves to be known, valued and given every opportunity to flourish.

It was a powerful reminder that whilst our contexts may differ, our purpose remains the same.

One of the most unforgettable moments of my visit was meeting Bruno, a little boy who attends a kindergarten supporting some of the most disadvantaged children in the local community. Bruno's smile, warmth and curiosity captured my heart instantly. Despite having so little compared to many of our own children, his joy was infectious and his resilience inspirational.

He reminded me that happiness is not measured by what we have, but by the love, kindness and hope that surrounds us.

Meeting Bruno strengthened my determination to ensure that our Edmund Rice family extends far beyond the walls of our own school. I am therefore incredibly proud that we have begun a partnership with his kindergarten. Our first collaborative project will see our children donate nearly new books to the school. Even more importantly, each book will contain a handwritten message inside the front cover—a personal note of friendship, encouragement and hope from one child to another. It is a simple gesture, but one that reflects the Edmund Rice values of Presence, Compassion and Justice, reminding children across the world that they are cared for and never forgotten.

Throughout the visit, I was continually inspired by the conversations I shared with fellow school leaders. We spoke honestly about the challenges facing education in our own countries, yet every discussion was rooted in optimism, faith and a determination to improve the lives of children. Those conversations quickly became friendships, and I know many of the connections we made will last a lifetime.

There is something incredibly special about meeting people who share the same vocation and understand both the immense responsibility and the profound joy that comes with leading schools.

Not every memory was quite so inspirational! Argentina also introduced me to its wildlife rather more personally than I had anticipated, leaving me with three rather painful spider bites that my colleagues found highly amusing.

Thankfully, they became part of the adventure and another story to laugh about together.

As I reflected on the journey home, I realised that Argentina had reinforced everything the Edmund Rice 8 Essentials represent. It challenged me to be more present, to listen more deeply, to act with compassion and justice, to build authentic community and to remain hopeful about the difference education can make.

Blessed Edmund Rice believed that education has the power to transform lives. Having witnessed that mission lived so powerfully across the world, I returned home more convinced than ever that, together, we can continue to sow seeds of hope for future generations. Sometimes the greatest journeys are not measured by the miles we travel, but by the lives that touch our hearts forever.

Kate Peaston





And from Director of Global Engagement for EREBB and brains behind the Congress! **Brian Garrone**

## A Global Family on Mission:

EREBB Congress 2026 Inspires Hope, Encounter and Action  
“Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter.” — Pope Francis

There are conferences that inform. There are gatherings that inspire. And then there are experiences that transform.

For almost 200 leaders from 18 countries, the 2026 Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders (EREBB) Congress in Buenos Aires was one of those transformative experiences. Over six days, delegates from Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America and Australia came together not simply to discuss education, but to encounter one another as members of one global Catholic family committed to the vision of Blessed Edmund Rice. Guided by the Congress theme, Pedagogy of Encounter – Walking in the Spirit of Francis through Edmund Rice Education Today, participants explored how relationships, faith and collaboration can renew both schools and those who lead them.

Hosted by Colegio Cardenal Newman in Buenos Aires, the Congress intentionally broke away from the traditional conference model. Instead of keynote speakers alone, delegates journeyed together through prayer, cultural experiences, school visits, pilgrimages, workshops, dialogue and encounters with communities living on the margins. The result was an experience that many described as deeply spiritual, profoundly practical and personally life-changing.

### More than a Congress

The gathering built upon an EREBB Congress journey that began in Kolkata, India, in 2017, continued through the online Congress during the pandemic and reconnected in Ireland in 2023. Buenos Aires represented another important milestone in EREBB's mission to strengthen global relationships and reaffirm education as a catalyst for justice, hope and peace.

Before arriving in Buenos Aires, many delegates participated in immersion experiences in Argentina, Uruguay and Peru, living alongside local Edmund Rice communities and experiencing schools, ministries and outreach programmes first-hand. These encounters reminded participants that genuine leadership begins not with speaking, but with listening; not with programs, but with relationships. Encounter Changes People

Throughout the Congress, one theme emerged repeatedly in delegate reflections: **encounter changes people.** One delegate described the week as:

“A profound, very challenging, and enriching experience. Preparing for the Congress was a gift. The way we worked together—so simply, professionally, lovingly and closely—showed me how the network hopes relationships will be built. I am grateful for this gift of continuing to share a dream together: a more humane and more just world.”

### Another participant reflected:

“It was a Mount Tabor experience. I arrived wearing old clothes and was able to exchange them for new ones filled with hope, energy and purpose.” Many delegates spoke of discovering a renewed confidence in the global Edmund Rice charism. “The EREBB Congress helped to widen my vision about the potential of the charism of Edmund Rice to bring about change in the world.”

### Voices from Around the World

One of the greatest strengths of the Congress was hearing perspectives from every corner of the Edmund Rice world. Our English leaders captured this reality in their reflections: “It has connected us across the globe. We are a global family.” “It provides the ‘why’ for me and gives me purpose.” “It’s not a divisive religion. It’s an inclusive religion.” From Argentina, where delegates were welcomed into schools and communities, participants expressed gratitude for being able to share their reality with the world. “As a member of the host country, I am very grateful to everyone who came to Argentina to meet us, to strengthen the network, and to share our reality. It was incredibly moving.”

### Another delegate highlighted the practical implications of global solidarity:

“I was inspired by the gifts that others brought to the Congress in their sharing of ideas and challenges. It made me realise how important it is that those schools that have more financial resources be willing to help support those who are less fortunate.”

### And on the impact of international relationships:

“I am more and more convinced of the vital importance of our global relationships as Catholics, Edmund Rice family and as educators. Understanding and being in communion with fellow followers of Blessed Edmund’s response to the Gospel can only make one a better leader.”

**These voices, coming from different cultures and continents, all pointed towards the same reality:** the Congress strengthened not only professional practice but also faith, hope and belonging.

### The Gift of Argentine Hospitality

Throughout the week, delegates repeatedly praised the extraordinary welcome offered by Colegio Cardenal Newman and the wider Argentinian community.

### One delegate wrote:

“The people I met, the energy put into the experience by the organisers, and the phenomenal hospitality by the Argentinian people highlighted the generosity of spirit of the Cardinal Newman team.” “The Congress theme... was not only spoken about—it was lived among you.”



Video: <https://www.erea.edu.au/our-programs/erebbcongress>



## The Journey Continues

The Congress was never intended to be a once-off event. Delegates have already begun reconnecting online through the EREBB Congress Reconnection gatherings, sharing practical initiatives, celebrating new partnerships and exploring ways to strengthen collaboration between students, educators and schools across the world.

These ongoing conversations reflect one of the defining insights of the Congress: global solidarity is not built during one week in Argentina but through relationships that continue long after delegates return home.



## One Global Family

Over 200 years ago, Blessed Edmund Rice responded to the needs of young people in Waterford by creating schools that would transform lives through faith, compassion and justice. Today, that vision continues through a network of more than 280 schools educating almost 200,000 young people across more than 20 countries.

The 2026 EREBB Congress reminded delegates that they belong to something much larger than their individual schools or nations. They are part of a worldwide movement of educators committed to forming young people who will build a more just, peaceful and hope-filled world.

As delegates departed Buenos Aires, they carried home more than photographs and memories. They returned with renewed purpose, lasting friendships, and a shared conviction that authentic encounter has the power to transform people, schools and communities.

In the words of one delegate, the Congress was simply: “A phenomenal experience filled with opportunities to engage with many quality people, faith, the Edmund Rice charism and why we do what we do each day.”

**The journey of encounter continues.**

# A life in mission

## Brothers' stories

### Br Parag D'Costa cfc

I was born in 1977 in the northern suburbs of Mumbai to loving, middle-class Catholic parents who worked tirelessly to provide my younger brother and me with a good education, a stable home and strong values. I always felt loved, protected and supported, and I witnessed first-hand the sacrifices my parents made to give us every opportunity.

For the first eight years of my life, I grew up in a joint family household surrounded by cousins, uncles, aunts and my grandmother's tenants, many of whom came from different parts of India and practised different faiths, predominantly Hinduism. This rich cultural environment exposed me to a diversity of languages, traditions, food and religious celebrations. Sharing festivals, games and everyday life with people from different backgrounds nurtured in me an appreciation of diversity and planted the seeds of acceptance, openness and respect that continue to shape my outlook today.

My years at St. Augustine's School further contributed to my personal development. Beyond academic learning, the Brothers, teachers and fellow students helped me grow through sport, drama, leadership and community life. Receiving a strong English-medium education and belonging to a vibrant school community provided a solid foundation for both my personal and professional future.

At the age of 20, I made the life-changing decision to join the Christian Brothers. Entering religious life opened an entirely new chapter, one that deepened my relationship with God and challenged me to grow in prayer, self-awareness and service. The years of postulancy, novitiate, first mission and scholasticate shaped me profoundly and laid the foundation for more than three decades of ministry.

One unexpected turning point came when I was invited into Formation. Originally expecting to study education and become a teacher, I instead found myself studying theology in preparation for accompanying young men discerning religious life. Although theology was not my natural passion - I found spirituality and psychology more engaging - the experience broadened my understanding and equipped me for almost ten years of ministry in Formation. Walking alongside young Brothers became a period of immense personal growth, requiring me to confront my own strengths, limitations and assumptions while learning what it truly meant to be a Brother.



After a decade in Formation, I sensed the need for renewal and new challenges. A sabbatical provided time for reflection and restoration before I took on the role of community leader and school counsellor in Mt. Abu, Rajasthan. These experiences further expanded my understanding of leadership, accompaniment and service.

Today I serve on the Congregation Leadership Team in Rome, a role that has brought fresh challenges and opportunities. Looking back, I see this as the second stage of my life. The experiences of the first half have given me greater perspective, patience and resilience. Situations that once seemed overwhelming can now be approached with greater calmness, acceptance and trust.

I see this stage of life as one of generativity - using the wisdom gained through experience to accompany others, mentor younger Brothers and help discern the future direction of the Congregation and the wider Edmund Rice network. My role now is less about doing and more about enabling others, listening deeply and holding a vision that serves both the present and the future.

Although the expression of my ministry has changed many times - from formation to education, counselling, leadership and governance - the heart of my mission has remained constant.

The call I responded to as a young man to deepen my relationship with God and dedicate my life to the service of others continues to guide me. My hope is to keep responding to that call with integrity, generosity and openness, wherever God continues to lead me.



## A Reflection on My Five Years as Global Ambassador for EREBB

**It has been a true privilege to serve as Global Ambassador for Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders (EREBB) for the past five years, and I am pleased to share some reflections on this journey.**

EREBB is a vibrant global educational family, connecting approximately 280 schools across 24 countries and nurturing the minds and spirits of more than 220,000 young people. Throughout my term, it has been an immense privilege to visit many of these diverse school communities: to listen to their stories, meet their dedicated leaders and educators, and, most importantly, encounter the young people whose lives give purpose to everything we do. Each visit has been a powerful reminder that, despite our very different contexts, a recognisable Edmund Rice spirit is alive in our schools. It is evident in the welcome extended to strangers, the concern shown for those on the margins, the courage to confront injustice, and the daily commitment of educators who believe that education can transform lives and help build a more compassionate world.

**“It is better that we speak with a common heart than with a common tongue.”** For me, these words from the poet Rumi capture the dream we hold for our multicultural, multilingual and multi-faith global family. We do not need to be identical in order to belong deeply to one another. Indeed, our diversity is not an obstacle to our shared mission; it is one of its greatest gifts.

**The question that has consistently guided us is this:** Can we participate together in God’s mission across borders, enriched by our diverse cultures and united by shared beliefs about education—beliefs shaped by our commitment to Gospel priorities, the vision of Edmund Rice and the legacy of the Christian Brothers?

Since EREBB’s inception eight years ago, the Christian Brothers have offered their unwavering support, inviting us to write new chapters and find fresh language for this shared vision. This has been a generous and courageous invitation.

It recognises that the Edmund Rice tradition is not simply something to be preserved from the past, but a living gift that must continue to grow, adapt and find meaningful expression in the realities of the present.

In embracing that invitation, we are called not to guard a museum, but to plant and tend a garden. We are challenged to nurture and further develop the precious gift entrusted to us: the vision and priorities of Edmund Rice.

**Yet before any garden can flourish, the ground must be cleared of weeds, stones and thorns. In the same way, we must prepare the ground in which this vision is to grow:**

- the weeds of discouragement and hopelessness;
- the thorns of fear that prevent us from speaking our truth; and
- the stones that limit our imagination, passion and courage.

This task is particularly important as we seek to offer spiritual formation to young people at a time when many cultures are asking new and challenging questions of established religion.

In some places, religious language no longer carries the same meaning it once did. In others, faith remains deeply woven into the fabric of community life. Yet across all contexts, young people continue to ask the enduring human questions:

- Who am I?
- What is my life for?
- How can I live with meaning?
- How can I contribute to a better world?

These questions invite us to offer formation that is not merely instructional, but deeply human, spiritual and transformative. We must help young people to recognise their inherent dignity, awaken their capacity for compassion, and discover that a life of service to others is not a burden but a pathway to meaning, joy and fulfilment.

We are called to bring life to belief, and belief to life. We bring life to belief by recovering and offering what is eternal, relevant and life-giving in our religious traditions: those elements that can speak meaningfully to the formation of young people today. We bring belief to life through our faith in young people and in their capacity to give birth to a hope-filled future—for themselves, for their communities and for the world.

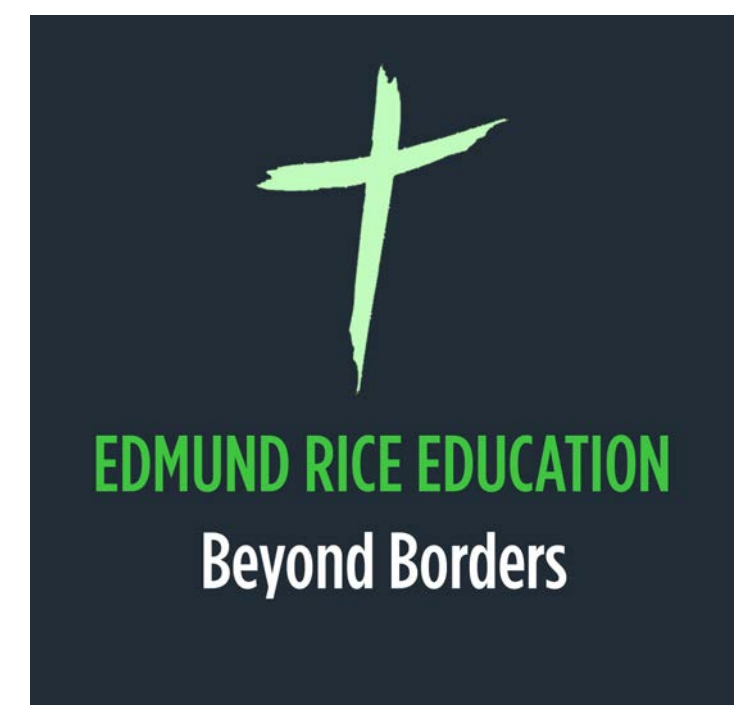
The good news of EREBB is that we do not undertake this work alone. We tend this garden together. We are strengthened by the wisdom of our many cultures, by the generosity and courage of our educators, by the support of the Christian Brothers, and by the energy, idealism and hope of the young people entrusted to our care.

As I conclude my term as Global Ambassador, I do so with deep gratitude. I am grateful for the friendship and hospitality I have received across the network; for the stories of courage, creativity and commitment that I have encountered; and for the privilege of sharing in a movement that is larger than any one school, country or individual.

My hope is that EREBB will continue to grow as a community of shared purpose: a global family that speaks with a common heart across borders, languages, cultures and faith traditions. May the garden we are planting together become a place where young people discover hope, purpose, compassion and the courage to help build a more just, peaceful and sustainable world. With deep gratitude and appreciation.

**Wayne Tinsey**

[www.ourcommonheart.com.au](http://www.ourcommonheart.com.au)



# Head Space

**Sara Heron**  
Headteacher  
St Ambrose Preparatory School

**When I reflect on what inspired me to become a headteacher, I realise that it came from seeing education from different perspectives and understanding just how transformative a school community can be in a child's life.**

As a deputy head in a state secondary school, I worked closely with young people facing a wide range of challenges.

I saw that the quality of leadership shapes much more than academic outcomes; it influences confidence, wellbeing and the opportunities that children believe are open to them. Those experiences made me want to have a greater influence on the culture and direction of a school, creating an environment where staff feel supported and where children genuinely enjoy learning. Moving into headship at St Ambrose Preparatory School has given me the privilege of helping to shape children's lives from an earlier age. In the Edmund Rice tradition, education is about much more than preparing pupils for examinations. It is about nurturing the whole person and helping every child to recognise their own God-given dignity and potential.

What continues to inspire me is knowing that a nurturing and ambitious school can transform lives and create a community where both pupils and staff flourish.

My Christian faith is at the heart of the values that guide my leadership. Integrity, compassion, service and a belief in the inherent worth of every child shape the decisions I make each day. I believe schools should be places where children are known, valued and encouraged to flourish academically, socially and spiritually.

The Edmund Rice charism speaks of a liberating education that stands with those who need support and gives every young person the opportunity to grow into the person they are called to be. That vision resonates deeply with me. I see leadership as an act of service rather than authority. My responsibility is to support and enable others—pupils, staff and families—to grow in confidence, character and purpose.

I try to lead with fairness, humility, honesty and stewardship, ensuring that decisions reflect what is right and just for the whole community, especially for those who may need additional encouragement or advocacy. Above all, I want our school culture to reflect values such as respect, kindness, courage, forgiveness and hope, helping children become not only successful learners but compassionate young people who understand their responsibility to others.

If I had to identify one essential quality that every child should develop, it would be resilience. Academic knowledge is important, but children will inevitably experience disappointment, challenge and change throughout their lives. Resilience gives them the confidence to persevere, learn from mistakes and continue striving to improve.

In a Catholic school inspired by the values of Edmund Rice, resilience is strengthened through hope, encouragement and a sense of belonging. I believe schools have an important role in helping children understand that setbacks do not define them and that growth often comes through challenge. When children know that they are valued and supported, they are more willing to take risks, to show courage and to discover their own strengths.



The most rewarding part of my role is seeing children grow in confidence, character and independence. There is something incredibly special about watching a child discover their gifts, overcome difficulties and begin to believe in themselves. I also feel privileged to help shape a school culture where children feel safe, valued and inspired to flourish.

The environment we create can have a lasting impact on a child's life, and that is both a privilege and a responsibility. I particularly value the relationships we build with pupils, staff and families because education is at its most powerful when it is rooted in trust, kindness and a shared sense of purpose.

Looking back, I am most proud of the work we have done to strengthen both the religious life of the school and its academic culture. We wanted our Christian values to become more than words displayed on a wall; we wanted them to shape relationships, behaviour and everyday decisions.

We have developed opportunities for prayer, worship and reflection, while encouraging pupils to become leaders who understand the importance of compassion, service, respect and responsibility towards others. At the same time, we have worked to create a culture of high expectations, supported by strong pastoral care, ensuring that every child is both challenged and nurtured. What gives me the greatest satisfaction is that these changes have been built collectively. They are not the achievement of one person but the result of building trust, empowering staff and creating a shared mission.

For me, this is at the heart of Edmund Rice education. We are called to create communities where every child is cherished, where faith is lived through action, and where education becomes a pathway to hope, justice and service. If our young people leave St Ambrose with a strong sense of their own worth, a compassionate heart and a desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others, then we will have been faithful to that mission.

# Deputy HeadSpace

**Becky Jones**, Deputy Head, St Edward's College, Liverpool

It's been really valuable to reflect on my first year in post now that I've had time to settle into my role as Deputy Head at St Edward's College and to gain a deeper understanding of the Edmund Rice charism and culture that sit at the heart of the school community.

Starting in September was both an exciting and significant step in my career. From the very beginning, I was made to feel incredibly welcome by staff, students, and the wider College community.

Over the past few months, I have gained a much deeper appreciation for the values that define an Edmund Rice education; community, compassion, inclusion, justice, and a commitment to supporting every young person to flourish both academically and personally.

One particularly important experience for me this year was attending the autumn term induction day, 'A Call to Participation', in September. Bringing together almost 30 new members of staff from across the Edmund Rice network, the day provided a real insight into the shared mission and identity of our schools. It was inspiring to spend time reflecting on Edmund Rice's story and to see the enthusiasm of colleagues who were so eager to embrace the values and traditions of their new schools.

What stood out most was the strong sense of belonging and shared purpose amongst everyone present.

There was a genuine energy in the room as staff discussed what it means to be part of an Edmund Rice community and how we can continue to place young people, especially those most in need, at the centre of all we do. Hearing from Brother Ger in the afternoon was also a real privilege. Listening to a 'real' Christian Brother speak so authentically about the mission and legacy of Edmund Rice helped bring the charism to life in a very personal and meaningful way.

Since then, I have continued to see those same values lived out every day at St Edward's College. There is a clear dedication from staff not only to academic excellence, but also to nurturing students as individuals; encouraging confidence, integrity, compassion, and service to others. That balance between ambition and care is what makes the College such a special place to work and learn. **"Trust the good seed. It will grow in good time."**

As I continue to grow into the role, I feel incredibly proud to be part of a community rooted in faith, relationships, and opportunity for all. I look forward to continuing to work alongside colleagues, students, and families to build upon the many strengths of the College in the years ahead.

The values of Edmund Rice continue to shape the life of St Edward's College each day through compassion, service, and a genuine commitment to others.

As reflected in the words from Corinthians, **"Let all that you do be done in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14)**, this spirit remains central to our mission as educators and as a community.

## National Teaching Awards Recognise the Heart of Edmund Rice Education at St Ambrose College

There was great cause for celebration at St Ambrose College this summer as two members of staff received national recognition in the prestigious Pearson National Teaching Awards, announced as part of National Thank a Teacher Day.

Head of Drama Mrs Layla Taylor was named a Bronze Award winner in the Secondary Teacher of the Year category, while Miss Shelley McCrory, Head of Religious Education, received a Silver Award, progressing to the national finals where Gold Award winners will be announced later this year.

The Pearson National Teaching Awards celebrate outstanding educators across the United Kingdom whose commitment transforms the lives of young people.

Both teachers were nominated by their colleagues in recognition of the exceptional contribution they make to the life of St Ambrose College and the wider school community.

The awards were announced during a special gathering of students and staff, with BBC Breakfast presenter Sally Nugent joining the celebrations and reading the nominations aloud.

It was a fitting opportunity to recognise not only the achievements of Layla and Shelley, but also the dedication of every member of staff who contributes to the flourishing of young people each day.

For Mrs Taylor, the nomination highlighted how Drama becomes far more than a curriculum subject. Through creativity, performance and storytelling, she enables students to discover confidence, develop empathy and find the courage to use their own voices. Her original productions, Real People and To Be Seen, encourage honest conversations around mental health, vulnerability and belonging, reflecting the Gospel values at the heart of Edmund Rice education.

Her colleagues also recognised her leadership in developing teaching and learning across the school, championing research-informed practice and promoting professional growth amongst staff. As her nomination concluded, "She does not see Drama as an add-on. She sees it as a vehicle for voice, belonging and growth."





Miss McCrory's Silver Award recognised excellence both within and beyond the classroom. While her students consistently achieve exceptional examination results, her leadership ensures that Religious Education is experienced as a subject that shapes hearts as well as minds. Through prayer, liturgy, retreats and chaplaincy, she helps nurture a community where faith is lived, celebrated and put into action.

Her commitment extends well beyond St Ambrose College. She has played a significant role in strengthening links with the College's partner school, St Ambrose Academy in Sierra Leone, supporting young people across continents and deepening students' understanding of global solidarity. Her influence on Catholic education has also been felt through her support for colleagues and schools beyond her own community.

Reflecting on the awards, Principal Mr Rainey noted that both teachers embody everything the College seeks to achieve through its mission. While working in very different disciplines, both place the dignity of every young person at the centre of their vocation. Through advocacy, inclusion, creativity and faith, they encourage students to become compassionate young men who are prepared to stand alongside those on the margins and work for a more just world.

**Their recognition is a celebration not only of outstanding teaching, but of the distinctive spirit of an Edmund Rice school, where academic excellence is inseparable from compassion, justice and service.**

**Layla Taylor and Shelley McCrory exemplify the educators who inspire young people to become "good young men" who use their gifts in the service of others, living out the enduring charism of Blessed Edmund Rice in today's world.**

See this celebration  
video of our Edmund Rice  
England schools



## "The unique charism of Blessed Edmund Rice is woven into every aspect of daily life." Catholic Schools Inspectorate – St Anselm's College

There are moments when independent voices help us to see ourselves more clearly. During the 2025–26 academic year, four schools within the Edmund Rice Network welcomed inspectors: **St Ambrose College** was inspected by Ofsted, while **St Anselm's College, St Ambrose Preparatory School and St Joseph's College** welcomed the Catholic Schools Inspectorate. Each inspection was conducted independently and through a different framework, yet together they tell one remarkable story. Again and again, inspectors recognised not simply outstanding schools, but schools whose excellence is inseparable from their mission.

At the heart of every report lies the same compelling message: the vision of Blessed Edmund Rice is alive and flourishing. At St Anselm's College, inspectors concluded that **"the unique charism of Blessed Edmund Rice is woven into every aspect of daily life."** It is difficult to imagine a more powerful affirmation of an Edmund Rice school. At St Ambrose Preparatory School, inspectors echoed this finding, recognising that **"the spirit of Edmund Rice is clearly visible throughout the school and the advocacy work is a real strength,"** while observing that "the charism of Edmund Rice permeates all aspects of the school's life and work," profoundly influencing pupils' moral and spiritual development.

These are not simply descriptions of school ethos. They are independent confirmations that the distinctive mission entrusted to our schools continues to shape the lives of children and young people in meaningful and transformative ways.

One of the most striking themes running through this year's inspections is the

commitment to forming young people who become advocates for justice and service. At St Ambrose Preparatory School, inspectors found that pupils **"have a keen sense of social justice and know that they have a responsibility to be advocates for change."** During the recent Catholic Schools Inspection at St Joseph's College, although the written report will not be published until after this edition of Presence, inspectors described the school's particular Edmund Rice charism as **"a real gift to the Church."** They praised pupils' outstanding commitment to supporting those who are less privileged locally, nationally and internationally and recognised their deep respect for people of other faiths. Throughout their verbal feedback they repeatedly returned to words such as **"remarkable"** and **"inspirational"** to describe what they had experienced.

Compassion, inclusion and respect are equally powerful threads woven through every inspection. At St Ambrose College, Ofsted recognised **"the palpable school culture of compassion for those that are marginalised"**, observing that it empowers pupils to reach out to more deprived communities both locally and internationally.

Inspectors also found **"a culture of respect where different views are heard and all opinions are valued,"** while concluding that the school's ethos develops pupils' character so deeply that it **"compels them to go out of their way to understand difference and show empathy to others."** The verbal feedback at St Joseph's College reflected the same culture, highlighting "an outstanding culture of welcome, inclusion and respect" and describing the school's commitment to inclusion as profound.

Alongside this unmistakable commitment to mission sits educational excellence of the highest order.

At St Ambrose College, Ofsted found that **"pupils make incredible progress and the quality of work that pupils produce demonstrates profoundly the extremely**

**high achievement in the school."**

Inspectors concluded that leaders have achieved this **"exceptionality through the values, ethos and the high expectations that they have established in the school."** Perhaps the most powerful sentence in the report is simply that **"the experience for pupils is transformational."** It goes on to describe leaders who are **"passionate about creating courageous and empathetic young men,"** while recognising pupils' behaviour as **"impeccable."**

Taken individually, these are exceptional inspection outcomes. Read together, however, they tell a much bigger story. Different inspectors, different schools and different inspection frameworks all arrived at remarkably similar conclusions. They found schools where faith is lived authentically, where compassion shapes action, where advocacy for those on the margins is part of everyday life and where the dignity of every person is honoured. They found communities where academic excellence is inseparable from spiritual formation and where young people are inspired not simply to succeed, but to make a difference.

Nearly 250 years after Blessed Edmund Rice first began his work in Waterford, these inspections remind us that his vision remains as relevant and as transformative as ever. They affirm that our schools continue to form young people who are courageous in faith, generous in service and committed to building a more just and compassionate world.

**That is why our schools are not only recognised for excellence—they are truly distinguished by mission.**

Ofsted

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS  
INSPECTORATE



In the heart of La Cruz de Carrasco, on the outskirts of Montevideo, Uruguay, the Santa Margarita Educational Centre has been transforming lives through education, community and hope for more than 25 years.

Inspired by the charism of Edmund Rice and as part of the international Edmund Rice network, Santa Margarita began when Brother Juan Casey arrived in the neighbourhood and chose to live alongside a community experiencing deep social inequality.

What started as a small community presence has grown into a comprehensive educational and social initiative, dedicated to supporting children and young people growing up in situations of significant vulnerability. In 2021, Santa Margarita School was established as an innovative bilingual school. Since then, it has expanded year by year and now provides education for more than 200 children. Alongside the school, the Madres de la Cruz Youth Centre works daily with around 60 young people, providing a safe environment for learning, personal development and belonging.

Many of our students face the daily challenges of poverty, inadequate housing, violence and limited access to quality education. In response, Santa Margarita is committed to an approach to education that goes far beyond academic learning. We believe every child and young person deserves to discover their dignity, develop their talents and dream of a brighter future.

At Santa Margarita, we strive to accompany every child, every young person and every family in the reality of their own lives.

We want everyone who comes through our doors to find a place that is safe, joyful and welcoming—a place where they feel cared for, listened to and valued. For many of our students, the school and youth centre also provide a daily refuge: a space where they can play, learn, share a meal and express themselves freely, often offering opportunities they do not experience elsewhere.

Guided by the Edmund Rice values of faith, compassion and social justice, we believe education is one of the most powerful tools for transforming lives and communities. At Santa Margarita, we know that changing one life can help transform an entire community, and that hope grows strongest when it is nurtured together.

**More than an educational institution, Santa Margarita is a community united by the dream of a more just world and committed to making that vision a reality every day.**

**To learn more about Santa Margarita**

Visit <https://santamargarita.edu.uy/> or contact the team at [info@santamargarita.edu.uy](mailto:info@santamargarita.edu.uy).



**Santa  
Margarita**



# Alumni Where are they now?

**Camille Ralphs**, Past pupil of St Joseph's College, Stoke-on-Trent, 2003–2010

Camille Ralphs is a poet and critic, and an editor at the Times Literary Supplement. Her first collection of poems, *After You Were, I Am*, was published by Faber in the UK (2024) and McSweeney's in the US (2025).

She was shortlisted for the Arts Foundation Futures Award in Literature in 2026. Her poems, essays, reviews and translations have appeared in magazines including :

- The New York Review of Books • Poetry • The Telegraph
- The Poetry Review • The Los Angeles Review of Books
- Poetry London.

"The child is father to the man", and I was always liberated from detention in the science wing before my friends, because the task detainees were expected to perform was memorizing poems. Why this was believed to be a punishment I just can't say. (Though I knew even then that those, all taken from *Please Mrs Butler*, 1983, were wretched little verses.) In retrospect, I think it was a sign St Joseph's College was not quite a normal school.

I might have known: I was recruited after being headhunted at church about an hour's drive away, by the then headmistress Roisin Maguire, who I like to think prized my transferable skills – such as knocking the altar bells over just as the priest started talking, or spilling the red-hot thurible on the (refurbished 2002) chancel carpet.

In my non-detention learning hours, certain other teachers helped me to explore and share my own creative work. Between 2008 and 2010, I wrote or co-wrote many far worse poems at the sixth-form Writers' Club set up by Mrs Rule.

I've since gone on to be a poet published by Faber and Faber in the UK and McSweeney's in the US. The telescope at Jodrell Bank could not have seen that coming.

It's harder at first to judge the influence of staff like Mr Shorthouse, the somehow Dickensian history teacher, whistling through his moustache as he gracefully offended everyone, encouraging my friends and me to "help out" at Year 7 history days by teaching the children a Tudor dance or playing "When I'm Cleaning Windows" for them on the ukulele. But those, in retrospect, were the beginnings of an interest in education.

I ended up returning to St Joseph's as the school librarian – if never quite replacing Mrs Wilcox and her cardboard Chaucer cut-out – in 2014. I delivered talks for English classes, helped arrange the poetry recital, co-administered a winning Public Speaking Club and temporarily restored the Writers' Club. (I took Mrs Wilcox's famous catchphrase with me everywhere. "This is a library, not a mothers' meet", she'd say; or "not a colosseum"; or, once and memorably, "not a brothel". I tried to develop the form: "This is a library, not a workhouse/a Shakira concert/A Midsummer Night's Dream".) This led on to a small librarianship at the University of Oxford, where I now teach Creative Writing part-time, and to further library and teaching work at schools in Enfield. (There are few schools like St Joseph's, as I've noted. Nonetheless, I was surprised to get one email saying only that "The child who lit the aerosol has been dealt with".)

I also followed my enthusiasms into academia. I read theology at Cambridge for a year at postgrad level and went back in 2025 as the Whichcote Society's Poet-in-Residence, giving a workshop, a reading and a public lecture on theology and poetry. Today, as well as being Poetry Editor at the Times Literary Supplement, I also oversee religion and a few more worldly areas.

In the unsteady literary sphere, one's experience and curiosity can never be too varied, and the attitude of "be[ing] true to devotions we've learned", "cling[ing] to our standards" and being "strong in adversity, humble in fame", as our school song had it, can't be overvalued. There's a gift in being taught to live, as well as think. "Fideliter et Fortiter" or "faithful and strong", the motto of St Joseph's, is at least as much an artist's motto, or a theologian's, as a student's.

I'm always on the move between Hastings and London, Oxford, Cambridge and elsewhere. But I'm still close to the friends I made in Trent Vale when I was eleven, and I'm seeing them again tomorrow, on the Saturday of Easter weekend. Whether in a library or a lecture hall or at a Saturday reunion, I still keep the lessons of those early classrooms with me.

**Watch Camille reading one of her poems here:**



## A Life of Service: Celebrating the Retirement of Norman Smith

**After 36 years of dedicated service, Norman Smith retires this summer from his role as a Maths teacher at St Aidan's Catholic Academy, a vocation marked not only by excellence in the classroom, but by a profound commitment to the charism of Blessed Edmund Rice.**

Norman's journey in education has been one of steadfast dedication, quiet leadership, and unwavering belief in the potential of every young person entrusted to his care.

Generations of students have walked into his classroom perhaps uncertain or lacking confidence in Maths, only to leave inspired by his clarity, patience, and enduring encouragement. For Norman, teaching has never been just about numbers; it has always been about forming young men of integrity, resilience, and compassion.

### Excellence in Mathematics Education

Over more than three decades, Norman has made a lasting contribution to the teaching of Maths. Known for his structured approach, clear explanations, and high expectations, he has supported countless students in achieving success, often beyond what they themselves thought possible.

From changes in curriculum to developments in assessment and pedagogy, Norman has remained engaged, reflective, and focused on what would best serve his students. Importantly, he has reminded generations of young men that perseverance and effort matter – that mistakes are part of learning and that confidence is built through resilience. These are lessons that extend far beyond Maths.

### A Legacy of Community and Care

Norman's impact reaches far beyond the classroom. He has been an integral part of the school community, contributing to its ethos and supporting its mission over many years. His presence has been one of calm assurance, a constant in a changing educational landscape. Students remember him not only for his teaching, but for the way he made them feel respected and capable. Colleagues value his wisdom, his consistency, and his quiet sense of humour. Parents have trusted him to guide and support their sons during formative years. In living out the Edmund Rice tradition, Norman has helped to create an environment where young people are encouraged to grow into men of faith and action, men who are mindful of their responsibilities to others and the world around them.

### Looking Ahead

As Norman steps into retirement, he leaves behind a remarkable legacy. His 36 years of service stand as a testament to the power of vocation in education, when teaching is not simply a job, but a calling rooted in faith and service.

While he will be greatly missed by staff, students, and the wider school community, his influence will continue through the lives he has shaped and the values he has modelled. His career reflects what it means to live authentically the mission of Edmund Rice: to educate through presence, compassion, and commitment to justice.

We thank Norman for his years of service, his dedication to young people, and his faithful witness to the Edmund Rice charism. We wish him health, joy, and fulfilment in the next chapter of his life, richly deserved after a lifetime of giving so much to others.



## Building for the Future

As part of St Aidan's exciting new school building project, the community is helping to create a welcoming new library for future generations of pupils. Donations of books continue to pour in, with generous support from parents, alumni, staff and friends of the school already helping to fill the shelves



### St Ambrose College marked National Diversity Week – and Refugee Week – by holding our annual Advocacy and Inclusivity Week from 22nd – 26th June.

We think it's vitally important as a Catholic community to celebrate diversity as we seek to live out the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and the Essential Elements of an Edmund Rice Education. Our theme for the week, **"All One in Christ"**, draws prayerfully from St Paul's Letter to the Galatians and inspires the choice we make to recognise diversity and vulnerability in our community.

Much of the week is student led, with our Edmund Rice International Justice Group delivering workshops on Human Rights and Advocacy, our Anti-Bullying Ambassadors leading discussions on how to make our school a safe and loving environment, and students from the 6th Form speaking about their identity and ethnicity.

Gene McBride, a Y12 student who spoke to all Year Groups about how he experienced bullying and was able to work through it said, **"learning about inclusivity is pivotal because it ensures that everyone feels valued, respected, and accepted regardless of their background, culture, or abilities. It's important that we encourage people to learn from different perspectives, allowing students to feel safe and supported."**

We also welcomed Asylum Link Merseyside's Refugee Choir into school as we explored the truth behind people seeking asylum. Their interactive workshop had all the students dancing in the Lecture Theatre! David Ajayi from Y12 said, **"we want to be part of a society where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and empowered to be themselves."** Finally, Sara Saigol from Altrincham and Hale Mosque spoke to us about the importance of interfaith dialogue.

The theme of **"All One in Christ"** reminds us that we are all created in the image and likeness of God. It is our responsibility as Catholics to lead on this premise in an increasingly fractured world, and we want our students to be outspoken upstanders for Gospel values.

Harrison Beckett, one of our Human Rights presenters from Y10, says, **"Inclusivity Week helps to shape our understanding of other cultures and to embrace our differences in tradition, race, religion and all other aspects that gives each and every one of us the face of Christ."**

The week concluded with a look ahead to compassionate action, as staff led students in making Gospel-focused pledges based on their experiences of the week. We firmly believe these young people will go on to further our concern for the Common Good.



### Living the Edmund Rice Charism Through Service, Advocacy and Community

**This term, students across St. Anselm's College have continued to demonstrate an outstanding commitment to service, compassion and social justice through a wide range of initiatives inspired by the Edmund Rice Charism and the Eight Essentials.**

The College's Saint Vincent de Paul (SVP) Society has expanded its outreach work significantly during the spring and summer terms. The Junior SVP Society has partnered with the UK charity Omega, whose mission is to support those experiencing loneliness and isolation. Students have created special occasion cards for individuals who may otherwise receive little or no correspondence, bringing moments of connection and encouragement to those most in need.

Closer to home, the Society has established letter-writing links with local nursing homes and is developing a new correspondence project with the Sisters of the Carmelite Monastery in Birkenhead.

The Senior SVP Society has further strengthened its commitment to serving the local community through its Faith in Action programme.

Students have been visiting local care homes on a weekly basis, spending time with residents through conversation, games and companionship.

In addition, a new partnership with a local homeless shelter has enabled students to donate food prepared during practical cookery lessons, supporting the shelter's evening soup kitchen and providing practical assistance to those facing hardship.

Alongside this work, the Edmund Rice Society, open to Year 11 and Sixth Form students, has been leading a number of educational and advocacy initiatives.

One notable project has been the planning and delivery of a Model United Nations conference for Key Stage 3 students, providing younger pupils with the opportunity to engage with global issues, develop leadership skills and deepen their understanding of the work of the United Nations. The initiative also strengthens the College's links with Edmund Rice International, the global advocacy organisation representing Edmund Rice schools and communities.

Building on this success, plans are underway to establish a Sixth Form debating society focused on contemporary human rights issues and global citizenship. The Society has also launched a student-led awareness campaign encouraging support for migrant workers' rights.



Through discussion, education and petitioning, students have engaged thoughtfully with issues of dignity, justice and human rights, reflecting the College's commitment to developing informed and compassionate young people who seek to make a positive difference in the world.

As part of our ongoing commitment to embedding the Eight Essentials more deeply into College life, we have also reimagined our approach to charitable giving. Each year group has been assigned an Essential and invited to identify and support charities that reflect its values and mission.

This approach has helped students make stronger connections between their charitable actions and the Gospel-centred values that underpin an Edmund Rice education.

These developments have been further reinforced through the introduction of our new Edmund Rice Charism Awards, which recognise students who exemplify one or more of the Eight Essentials through their actions, leadership and service to others.

This work builds upon recent staff development initiatives, during which departments mapped their curricula against the Eight Essentials to identify how Edmund Rice values are promoted across all subject areas. Staff also contributed to the review and refinement of the College Mission Statement, ensuring that it continues to reflect the distinctive Catholic ethos, values and charism that make St. Anselm's College such a special community.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate our continued commitment to educating the whole person and developing young men who strive for excellence, serve others with compassion and live out their faith through action.

## A Lasting Legacy: Our New Chapel Mural Celebrates the Heart of St Edward's College

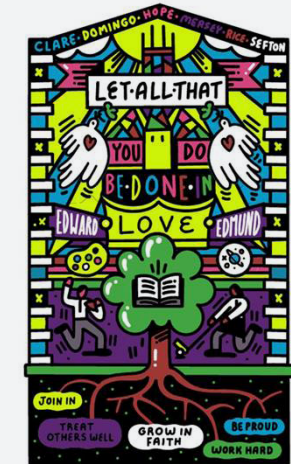
Visitors arriving at St Edward's College are now greeted by a spectacular new landmark that captures the very heart of our school.

Towering above the gable end of the chapel, our stunning new mural is far more than a work of art. It is a powerful celebration of our Catholic identity, our Edmund Rice charism and the values that shape every aspect of College life.

Made possible through the generous support of FOSEC (Friends of St Edward's College), the mural represents a lasting legacy for our community and a visible reminder of our mission: **"Let all that you do be done in love."**

What makes the project especially meaningful is that it was designed through genuine collaboration with our pupils and staff. Their ideas, reflections and aspirations formed the foundation of the artwork before being brought vividly to life by renowned local artist Neil Keating.

**The finished mural tells the story of who we are.**



**STEDWARDS MURAL DESIGN (B)**  
(EXTERIOR CHAPEL WALL)

DESIGNS BY NEIL KEATING, 2026  
ASSISTED BY THE STUDENTS OF STEDWARDS COLLEGE

At its centre are Jesus Christ and Blessed Edmund Rice, whose vision continues to inspire our College today. Together they symbolise our commitment to living out the Gospel through compassion, justice, service and respect for the dignity of every person. Their presence reminds us that education is about much more than academic success; it is about developing young people of character who are called to make a positive difference in the world. Alongside them stands St Edward, the College's patron saint, representing wisdom, integrity and faithful leadership. Together, these figures beautifully express the unique charism of St Edward's College, where Catholic faith and the educational vision of Edmund Rice work hand in hand to nurture the whole person.

Running throughout the mural are the values that define life at St Edward's: faith, love, service, excellence, inclusion, respect and ambition. It celebrates the rich diversity of our school community and the many talents, achievements and aspirations of our pupils, while reflecting our shared commitment to ensuring that every young person is known, valued and encouraged to flourish.

Positioned on one of the most prominent buildings on our campus, the mural provides an inspiring welcome to pupils, parents, staff and visitors alike. It serves as a daily reminder of the principles that unite us and the responsibility we all share to live out our mission through our words and actions.

This remarkable artwork is more than a visual enhancement to our beautiful campus—it is a permanent expression of our identity. It celebrates our past, reflects our present and inspires our future, ensuring that the values of St Edward's College will continue to be seen, shared and lived by generations of pupils to come.

## How do we help our students to look out of the window with compassion?

St Edward's has developed a strong link over the years with the Missionary of Charity Sisters who provide support for the homeless in Liverpool City Centre.

In keeping with the keen social awareness of Edmund Rice Sixth form students and staff have regularly helped at a Sunday Soup Kitchen over many years but for the last few years the school has also developed a service retreat experience, combining a reflective morning at the university chaplaincy followed by practical service.

Each year we taken inspiration from a line of scripture and have invited students, guided by a university student leader, to reflect on several questions related to their experience:

- **What has been your happiest moment?**
- **What has been your greatest challenge?**
- **Does faith play a role in your life?**

Pupils have often shared with great maturity but have equally been very honest in saying when they do not want to share. Students have come from a wide range of backgrounds, and I have always been impressed with their openness in expressing their faith as well as doubts in a honest and non-judgemental context.

The presence of the university students guiding these activities has been very valuable. As Pope Francis often noted the young are often the best evangelisers of the young.



The day has also involved moments of shared lectio Divina, an opportunity for confession, testimonies from university students and short talks by young African seminarians training with the missionaries of Africa in the city of centre.

In the afternoon Session the students have been given a range of practical tasks to complete, ranging from peeling potatoes to giving the dining hall a deep clean.



For most students this is the highlight of the day!high achievement in the school."

This year also included a short talk by Sister Bethany who had lived with Mother Teresa and shared her experience of the challenges and joys of working with the very poorest and most marginalised in Society.

The students clearly found her talk a very moving witness and we were lucky to experience this as Sr Bethany was soon after transferred to the London Community. The ended with a joyful sung Blessing by Fr Moses who joined us from St Vincent's Parish.

Overall, this small but regular annual event has become a great way of helping students to bond with each other, become more aware of their own journey of faith and open their eyes to the needs of others while doing something small to help.



## Building the City of God: St Edward's College Begins a New Journey in Peru

**This summer marks a significant milestone for Edmund Rice education in England as St Edward's College, Liverpool becomes the first Edmund Rice school in the country to participate in the renowned Christian Brothers North America Immersion Programme in Lima, Peru.**

Representing the College are Roisin McMenamin, Ciara McCloskey and Damian Murphy, who joined fellow Edmund Rice educators from Canada, Hawaii, Illinois, Texas and New York for a week of faith, service, reflection and solidarity.

The programme, established by Brother Steve Casey CFC, was created to offer members of the Edmund Rice family an authentic encounter with communities experiencing poverty while inviting participants to grow through presence, relationship and shared humanity. For more than two decades, the immersion has enabled staff and students from Edmund Rice schools across North America to work alongside local communities, build earthquake-resistant homes, visit the Edmund Rice school Fe y Alegría 26, and deepen their understanding of justice through prayer, reflection and service.

The group's first days in Lima began with an orientation exploring the true meaning of immersion and what it means to say "yes" to the experience. From there, the pilgrims journeyed into communities across the city, spending time in Las Flores, Centro Cívico, Canto Grande and Jicamarca, where they listened to stories of resilience, poverty, faith and hope. Rather than simply visiting these communities, they were invited to become pilgrims—walking alongside local people, building relationships and learning from their lived experiences.

A defining moment of the week came with the completion of a new earthquake-resistant home for Armando, Maria and their family in Jicamarca. After laying the final cement floor, the group gathered with the family to bless their new home, praying that Blessed Edmund Rice would rise with them each day. It was a powerful reminder that the programme is not simply about building houses, but about building dignity, friendship and hope.

The pilgrimage now continues beyond Lima as the group travels to Cusco, Ollantaytambo and Machu Picchu, taking time to encounter Peru's rich cultural and spiritual heritage before returning home. This visit has a purpose far beyond the week itself. The three St Edward's staff members are undertaking this reconnaissance immersion with the intention of launching a student immersion programme at the College during the new academic year. Supported by the Edmund Rice Schools Office, they will begin preparing senior students to participate in future immersions, giving young people from England the opportunity to experience the same transformative programme that has inspired generations of students across the North American Edmund Rice network.

Immersion is about far more than travelling overseas. It is an invitation to encounter Christ in others, to recognise the dignity of every person, and to return home with a renewed commitment to justice, compassion and the Gospel values at the heart of the Edmund Rice charism.

As Roisin, Ciara and Damian continue this pioneering journey, we keep them in our prayers. Their experience marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for St Edward's College and for the Edmund Rice network in England, opening the door for future generations of students to live out Edmund Rice's vision by walking alongside those on the margins, learning through encounter, and becoming leaders of hope in our world.



## Serving with Compassion: St Joseph's Pilgrimage to Lourdes

During the May half-term, nine students and four members of staff from St Joseph's College travelled on pilgrimage to Lourdes with the Archdiocese of Birmingham, accompanying and caring for more than 30 assisted pilgrims.

Despite soaring temperatures, the students embraced every opportunity to serve, discovering that the pilgrimage was about far more than practical support. Through assisting pilgrims, taking part in liturgies and processions, and sharing in prayer and reflection, they encountered a profound sense of faith, community and service.

Many students described the experience as life-changing. They spoke of the joy of building friendships with assisted pilgrims, witnessing remarkable resilience and gratitude, and discovering a deeper appreciation of the importance of compassion and selfless service. The Torchlight Procession was a particular highlight, with many reflecting on the moving experience of joining thousands of pilgrims from around the world in prayer.

One of the most encouraging aspects of this year's pilgrimage was the impact it had on students of all faith backgrounds. Several non-Catholic students admitted they had initially been unsure about taking part but returned inspired by the warmth, welcome and spirit of Lourdes.

They described growing in confidence, developing lasting friendships and gaining a deeper understanding of faith through serving others.

Pilgrimage leader Sam Chater reflected on how heartening it was to hear students describe Lourdes as a place that had changed their outlook on life, strengthened their faith and inspired them to return. Their experiences are a powerful reminder that pilgrimage is not simply about visiting a holy place, but about encountering Christ in those we serve.

St Joseph's extends its sincere thanks to the staff team—Michelle McKenna, Sarah Cumbo and Simon Goodall—for giving their time so generously and accompanying the students on this unforgettable journey of faith, service and hope.

## Building Faith and Community at St Joseph's College, Stoke-on-Trent

By Chloe Hopkinson, Lay Chaplain

Since beginning as Lay Chaplain at St Joseph's College in September, I've been focused on building an active, visible chaplaincy rooted in faith, service, and creativity.

After completing my teacher training through the St Joseph's SCITT and discovering my vocation in pastoral ministry, I was eager to create opportunities for students and staff to live out our Edmund Rice values in everyday school life. I feel privileged to serve the same community in a new way.

In just one term, chaplaincy has grown into a vibrant part of our community. Staff and students have attended parish and diocesan Masses across the Archdiocese of Birmingham with Bishop Timothy.

We have also strengthened our Edmund Rice connections through attending ER Camp review days in Dublin and Liverpool, which have inspired new ideas for our community here in Stoke. I was also invited to attend the Edmund Rice England Schools Conference, where I spoke about the importance of schools and Edmund Rice Camps working together to share the spirit of service and inclusion.

Two groups of our sixth formers have recently returned from life-changing immersion experiences in both Sierra Leone and Delhi, India. They have experienced beautiful, vibrant cultures and met inspirational people, making memories that they will cherish forever.

Our ERI ambassadors have actively pushed for social justice awareness in our local community, becoming involved in our upcoming Advent appeals.

Our student chaplaincy team now leads whole-school prayer resources, fundraising, and faith displays. We have restored our lovely prayer garden space, supporting care for creation projects in all of the green spaces around our school.

Each break and lunchtime, the chapel is alive with activity—from arts and crafts clubs making rosary bracelets in October and remembrance rocks in November, to a flourishing gardening club that has created a new prayer garden on site. I

n November, we have launched a staff chaplaincy initiative for the month of Holy Souls, pairing colleagues in prayer and creating heart-shaped paper chains of remembrance, displayed as a focal point of our shared faith and community.

Though this term has also brought sadness with the passing of our much-loved priest chaplain, Fr Simon Hall, our community has drawn strength and unity through prayer and remembrance.

It has been both humbling and a privilege to witness how faith continues to bring light, creativity, and comfort to our school family.



## A Lifetime of Service: Celebrating Julie Thomas

This summer, the St Mary's College community gathered to celebrate the retirement of one of its most dedicated and much-loved educators, Mrs Julie Thomas, following an extraordinary 36 years of service to the College.

A special Retirement Mass brought together current and former staff, past and present pupils, family and friends to give thanks for Julie's remarkable contribution to the life of the school. It was an evening filled with laughter, gratitude and heartfelt emotion, reflecting the profound impact she has had on generations of young people and colleagues alike.

Julie's connection with St Mary's began long before she joined the staff. Growing up in Walton, Liverpool, she attended the College as a sixth form student through an Edmund Rice means-tested scholarship—an opportunity that would shape the course of her life. Inspired by the Christian Brothers' vision of education and encouraged through pilgrimages and the rich extracurricular life of the school, she returned after graduating with a First-Class degree in Mathematics from the University of Liverpool to begin what would become a lifelong vocation in Edmund Rice education.



## Walking in the Footsteps of Edmund Rice

Each summer, two of our Edmund Rice schools in England step out as communities in a tradition that is about far more than miles walked. The annual Edmund Rice Walks at St Mary's College, Crosby, and St Anselm's College, Birkenhead, bring whole school communities together in a living expression of the values of Blessed Edmund Rice – faith in action, service to others and solidarity with those most in need.

### St Mary's College – A Journey of Community and Compassion

Despite soaring summer temperatures, pupils, teachers and support staff from St Mary's College once again embraced the challenge of their annual Edmund Rice Sponsored Walk. Setting out on a remarkable 12-mile “desert trek” along the stunning Sefton Coastal Path, walkers travelled to Formby and back before finishing on the school's Games Field in Crosby.

The walk was a wonderful celebration of community spirit, determination and generosity. Along every mile there was encouragement, laughter and a shared sense of purpose as participants walked not simply for themselves, but for others. The event raises vital funds for charities close to the heart of the St Mary's community, including Edmund Rice Camps, Claire House Children's Hospice, Jospice, Nugent Care and CAFOD. Through the generosity of families, friends and supporters, hundreds of pounds have already been raised to support those who need it most.

For many students, the walk is one of the highlights of the school year,

### One Network, One Mission

Although each walk has its own unique history and purpose, together they embody the shared mission of Edmund Rice Education.

They remind us that education extends far beyond the classroom and that our schools are communities where faith is lived through action.

Whether walking the Sefton coastline in Crosby or the beautiful coastal paths of the Wirral, every step taken, every conversation shared and every pound raised reflects the enduring vision of Blessed Edmund Rice: to build communities of justice, compassion and hope where young people are inspired to make a difference in the lives of others.

**In walking together, our school communities continue to follow in Edmund's footsteps— one step at a time.**



### St Anselm's College – Honouring the Legacy of Brother Kerrigan

Across the River Mersey, students and staff at St Anselm's College continue another treasured Edmund Rice tradition through the annual Brother Kerrigan Walk.

Named in honour of former Headteacher Brother Kerrigan, who later gave his life while serving on mission in Sierra Leone during the country's civil war, the walk stands as a lasting tribute to a man whose commitment to education, faith and the poor continues to inspire generations of young people.

Blessed this year with glorious sunshine, refreshing summer breezes and the stunning Wirral coastline, the school community once again came together for this special annual event. Families, students and staff embraced the opportunity to walk side by side, celebrating community while remembering Brother Kerrigan's remarkable legacy of service.

The generosity shown through this year's fundraising has been outstanding. Donations from students, families and supporters will help provide much-needed support for the mental health and wellbeing of young men in the local community, ensuring that the compassion which inspired Brother Kerrigan continues to make a real difference today.

The Brother Kerrigan Walk reminds students that the Edmund Rice story is not simply part of history; it is a story they are invited to continue through their own lives of service, courage and compassion.



## Justice Society Supports Families in Need

Pupils at St Ambrose Preparatory School have once again shown what it means to put faith into action through their work with the Justice Society, leading a whole-school appeal in support of the Little Green Sock Project, a Trafford-based charity that provides essential items to babies, children and parents facing hardship.

As part of the initiative, the children learned about the Catholic Social Teaching principle of the Preferential Option for the Poor, reflecting on our shared responsibility to stand alongside those who are most vulnerable in society. They explored how Blessed Edmund Rice dedicated his life to serving children living in poverty and discussed practical ways they could continue his mission within their own local community.

Inspired by these discussions, members of the Justice Society designed colourful posters and displayed them throughout the school, encouraging pupils and families to donate everyday essentials for the appeal. The response from the school community was overwhelming, with generous donations of toiletries, clothing, baby essentials and other much-needed items.

The project offered pupils a valuable opportunity to discover that justice begins with small acts of compassion. Through their leadership and commitment, they helped make a tangible difference to local families while demonstrating the Edmund Rice values of solidarity, service and hope.

The school extends its sincere thanks to all the families who supported the appeal so generously. Their kindness is a powerful reminder that, when a community comes together, even the simplest gifts can bring dignity and hope to those who need it most.



## Prep 3 Brings the Easter Story to Life

The pupils of Prep 3 at St Ambrose Preparatory School helped the school community enter more deeply into the Easter season through a beautifully presented Easter Reflection, shared with fellow pupils, staff and parents.

With confidence, reverence and enthusiasm, the children retold the story of Christ's Passion, Death and Resurrection, inviting everyone present to reflect on the central message of the Christian faith: that through sacrifice comes hope, and through the Resurrection comes the promise of new life.

Through thoughtful readings, drama, music and prayer, the pupils conveyed the enduring relevance of the Easter story, reminding the school community that Christ's love continues to inspire lives of compassion, forgiveness and service. Their reflections encouraged everyone to consider how the hope of Easter can be lived out in everyday actions through kindness, generosity and care for others.

The presentation also reflected the values that lie at the heart of an Edmund Rice education. Just as Blessed Edmund Rice recognised the transforming power of faith in action, the children demonstrated that the Gospel message is not only something to be heard but something to be lived.

The school community is immensely proud of the commitment, teamwork and maturity shown by every member of Prep 3. Their heartfelt presentation provided a fitting conclusion to the Lenten journey and a joyful celebration of the hope that Easter brings.

St Ambrose Prep also extends its thanks to parents and families for their continued encouragement and support, which helped make the celebration such a meaningful occasion.



## Celebrating the Legacy of Blessed Edmund Rice

The community of St Ambrose Preparatory School came together in joyful celebration to mark the Feast Day of Blessed Edmund Rice, giving pupils the opportunity to reflect on the life and legacy of the founder whose vision continues to shape Edmund Rice schools across the world.

Inspired by Blessed Edmund's commitment to faith, justice and education, pupils spent the day exploring the Eight Essentials of an Edmund Rice Education—the values that guide life in every Edmund Rice school. Through a variety of creative activities, the children reflected on how these principles can be lived out in their own daily lives through compassion, service, inclusion and respect for others.

Across the school, classrooms were filled with creativity as pupils produced beautiful artwork, thoughtful prayers and inspiring poems celebrating Blessed Edmund's life and mission. Their work demonstrated not only an understanding of the Eight Essentials but also a growing appreciation of how they are called to become people of hope, justice and kindness within their families, school and wider community. The celebrations culminated in a special Feast Day Mass, where pupils, staff and families gathered to give thanks for the gift of the Edmund Rice charism. The school was delighted to welcome Ann Nichols from the Edmund Rice Schools Office England, who joined the celebrations and spent time with pupils, sharing in their enthusiasm for the values that unite the global Edmund Rice family.

The day was a fitting reminder that the story of Blessed Edmund Rice is not simply part of history but continues to inspire young people today. Through prayer, learning and action, the pupils of St Ambrose Prep are discovering that they too can make a difference in the lives of others by living the Gospel with courage, compassion and hope.

As each Feast Day passes, another generation of young people is encouraged to carry Edmund Rice's vision into the future—building communities where everyone belongs, every person is valued, and faith is expressed through service to others.



## A Fitting Farewell for Georgina Ostick

As the school community said goodbye to Georgina Ostick at the end of this academic year, there was one final reason to celebrate.

Georgina was presented with an Edmund Rice Charism Award for Leadership, recognising the outstanding contribution she has made to the life and mission of St Ambrose Preparatory School. "During her time at St Ambrose Prep, Georgina inspired pupils through her passionate leadership of Religious Education and her commitment to ensuring that every child experienced faith as something to be lived each day. Her engaging teaching, thoughtful prayer and liturgy, and unwavering care for every member of the school community reflected the values at the heart of an Edmund Rice education.

Georgina played a key role in strengthening the partnership between school, home and parish, creating opportunities for pupils, families and staff to grow together in faith. She also made a significant contribution to the school's recent Religious Education inspection, supporting colleagues with professionalism and helping to showcase the school's strong Catholic identity.

Above all, Georgina leaves a lasting legacy of compassion, service and joyful leadership. Her ability to inspire young people to live the Gospel through kindness, justice and inclusion has enriched the lives of countless pupils and colleagues.

As she embarks on an exciting new role, we congratulate Georgina on this well-deserved recognition and thank her for the dedication, enthusiasm and faith she has shared so generously with the St Ambrose Prep community. We wish her every blessing as she continues her vocation in Catholic education, confident that she will bring the same Edmund Rice spirit to all those she serves."

## Growing in Faith, Living the Edmund Rice Way

Faith is at the heart of life at St Mary's College Preparatory School, where every celebration, lesson and act of service helps children discover what it means to live the Gospel in the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice.

Looking back over the spring and early summer terms, the school community has celebrated a wonderful variety of liturgies, charitable initiatives and Edmund Rice activities, demonstrating that Catholic education is about far more than what happens in the classroom.

The year began with a beautiful Whole School Family Mass, bringing together pupils, parents, staff and parishioners in a joyful celebration of faith. Children confidently led the readings, music and prayers, creating a truly uplifting occasion that reflected the strong partnership between home, school and parish. It was a fitting reminder that St Mary's is a community built on shared faith and belonging.

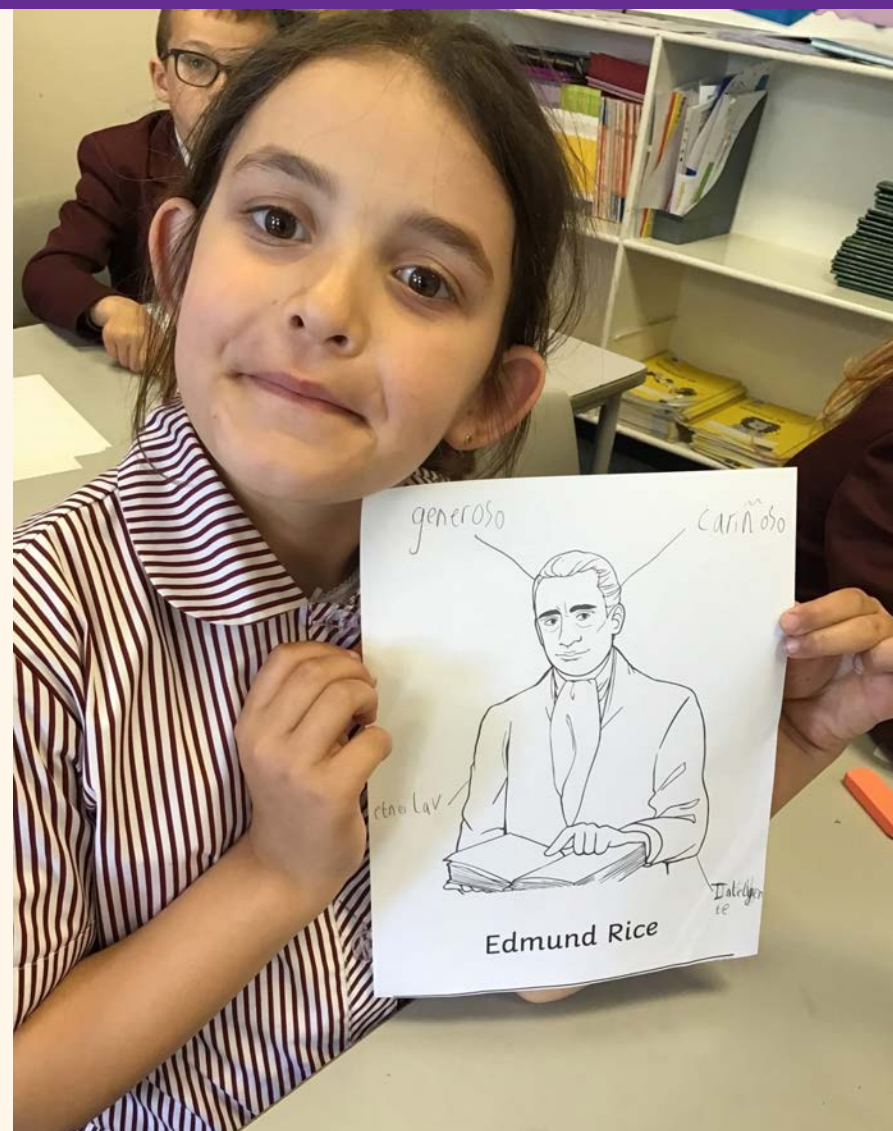
Care for God's creation has also featured prominently throughout the year. On World Wildlife Day, pupils explored the importance of biodiversity and medicinal plants through resources provided by the Edmund Rice Education Office, helping children make the connection between environmental stewardship and Catholic Social Teaching.

Learning about caring for creation encouraged pupils to see themselves as guardians of our common home, echoing Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si'*.

Lent provided countless opportunities for prayer, reflection and action. During a moving visit to St Joseph's Church, every child journeyed through the Stations of the Cross, pausing to reflect on Jesus' Passion and considering how its message of compassion, forgiveness, perseverance and kindness can shape their own lives today.

The younger pupils also brought Holy Week to life through an immersive Religious Education experience, recreating the events from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

Through drama, prayer, discussion and reflection, the children deepened their understanding of the Easter story while discovering that the Resurrection remains the heart of Christian hope.



Living out their faith through service was equally important throughout Lent. The school community embraced a wide range of fundraising initiatives, supporting CAFOD, Mission Together and Nugent Care. A lively Danceathon, energetic Big Lent Walk, and hugely successful Bring and Buy Sale saw pupils enthusiastically raising money while learning that acts of generosity can transform the lives of others. Parents, staff and children worked side by side, creating a wonderful sense of community and shared purpose. Service extended beyond fundraising. Members of the Arts and Crafts Club, together with staff and families, knitted an incredible 85 baby hats for the Neonatal Unit at Ormskirk Hospital. This thoughtful project demonstrated that even the smallest acts of kindness can bring comfort to families at difficult times.

The school's commitment to outreach continued with the launch of its support for Mary's Meals. Following an inspiring whole-school assembly, pupils began raising awareness and preparing to support the charity's mission of providing life-changing school meals for children across the world. In doing so, they gained a deeper appreciation of global solidarity and the belief that every child deserves both nourishment and an education.

Kindness also found expression closer to home. The school's Wellbeing Ambassadors visited the Early Years setting, spending time reading stories, playing with younger children and simply sharing joy. Their actions reflected perhaps the simplest but most powerful Edmund Rice value—that every person deserves to feel welcomed, valued and loved.



May brought two of the Prep School's most treasured celebrations. The annual Crowning of Our Lady, led by Fr Caddell, saw the school gather in prayer to honour Mary, with beautiful hymns, thoughtful readings and the touching moment when two of the youngest pupils crowned the statue of Our Lady. It was a celebration rich in tradition, reverence and joy.

The following day, the school celebrated the Feast of Blessed Edmund Rice. Throughout the day, pupils explored Edmund's life and reflected on how his example continues to inspire them today. They learnt about the Eight Essentials, discussed how these values shape everyday life and created imaginative artwork expressing what the Edmund Rice spirit means to them. In a wonderful cross-curricular twist, pupils even used their Spanish lessons to translate the values, demonstrating that the charism can enrich learning across the curriculum. They also explored the global Edmund Rice family, discovering that they belong to a worldwide network of schools committed to justice, compassion and liberation through education.

The school's commitment to inclusion was equally evident during Deaf Awareness Week, when Year 6 pupils confidently led a whole-school assembly promoting understanding, accessibility and British Sign Language. Their message—that everyone has the right to understand and be understood—captured the inclusive spirit that lies at the heart of an Edmund Rice education.

Finally, generosity continued with the launch of the school's Big Yellow Book Bin, inviting families to donate children's books for redistribution through the Children's Book Project. A simple idea, perhaps, but one that perfectly reflects the belief that education changes lives and that sharing resources is another way of sharing hope.

Taken together, these moments paint a picture of a school where Catholic life is vibrant, joyful and deeply rooted in action. Prayer leads naturally to service; learning inspires compassion; and every child is encouraged to recognise their ability to make a difference. As Blessed Edmund Rice himself believed, education is about transforming both hearts and lives. At St Mary's College Preparatory School, that mission is clearly flourishing, one act of faith, kindness and service at a time.



## Runnymede St Edward's Catholic Primary School: A Year of Achievement, Faith and Opportunity

At Runnymede St Edward's Catholic Primary School, we continue to celebrate another remarkable year of success, growth and community spirit. Guided by our Catholic values and a commitment to excellence, our school has gone from strength to strength, providing our children with outstanding opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.

## “Inspire, Courage and Support Through Faith”

**We are incredibly proud to remain the most oversubscribed Catholic primary school in the city, a reflection of the confidence that families place in our school and the exceptional education and pastoral care we provide. This continued demand is a testament to the dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm of our pupils and the unwavering support of our parents and governors.**

Academically, our pupils continue to excel. This year, our Key Stage 2 SATs results were once again above the national average, demonstrating the hard work, resilience and determination of our children, supported by a talented and committed staff team. We are proud that our pupils leave Runnymede St Edward's well prepared for the next stage of their educational journey.

Learning extends far beyond the classroom, and our Young Edwardians have enjoyed a wide range of unforgettable residential experiences. From the excitement of skiing in Bormio, Italy to outdoor adventure at Barnstondale and Conover Hall, our children have embraced every challenge with enthusiasm and courage. Our Year 6 pupils also experienced a memorable educational visit to the Isle of Man, where they explored the island's unique history, geography and culture while developing independence, teamwork and creating lifelong memories.

As a school community, we continue to place great importance on caring for one another and for God's creation. Over the past year we have worked hard towards achieving the CAFOD LiveSimply Award, and we look forward to welcoming our assessors next term. This journey has encouraged our pupils to think deeply about living simply, living sustainably and standing in solidarity with those in need, putting their faith into action through a variety of meaningful projects and initiatives.

Supporting the health and wellbeing of every child remains central to our mission. We were delighted to be awarded the Silver Health and Wellbeing Award, recognising our commitment to nurturing the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of our pupils. Alongside this, our children have enjoyed considerable sporting success, earning numerous sporting awards throughout the year. Whether representing the school in competitions or taking part in daily physical activity, we continue to encourage every child to be the very best they can be.

Living out the Essentials of Edmund Rice Education is something we strive to do in every aspect of school life. We were especially proud to present over 100 pupils with our bespoke Magna Carta Award during our recent Prize Giving at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King. This unique award celebrates children who independently work with their families at home to create a portfolio of evidence demonstrating how they live out the legacy of Blessed Edmund Rice in their daily lives. Through acts of kindness, service, compassion and stewardship of our world, these pupils show genuine concern for others and for God's creation, embodying the values that lie at the heart of our school community.

In June we were, once again, delighted to welcome our fellow Edmund Rice primary schools for a special celebration day to recognise their commitment to the work completed alongside Ann Nichols as part of the Edmund Rice Charism Awards. It was a truly memorable occasion, bringing together schools from across our Trust to celebrate the values and legacy of Blessed Edmund Rice. The children enjoyed a fantastic day in the sunshine, complete with ice creams, a traditional fish and chip lunch and a giant inflatable obstacle course. We were honoured to welcome Br Sassi, together with our Trust Director, Ms Maguire, who presented medals to all of the children involved.

It was a wonderful day of celebration, friendship and shared faith, and a fitting recognition of the commitment shown by every participating school.

Our special relationship with the Metropolitan Cathedral of Christ the King continues to flourish. As the Cathedral's official choir school, we are privileged to play a central role in the liturgical life of our diocesan community. Our choristers continue to inspire us with their God-given musical gifts, enhancing worship through their beautiful singing and representing our school with pride, reverence and professionalism at services and special celebrations throughout the year.

Looking ahead, there is even more to celebrate. Next year, Runnymede St Edward's will be full as a two-form entry school, marking another exciting milestone in our continued growth. We eagerly anticipate the unveiling of our newly redeveloped classrooms, which will provide modern, inspiring learning environments for our children and further enhance the outstanding provision we offer.

This year has also seen the successful launch of our new Pre-School, which has exceeded all expectations. It has been a joy to welcome our youngest learners into the Runnymede family, and they have quickly become wonderful ambassadors for our school's ethos and values. Watching them flourish, build friendships and embrace school life with such enthusiasm has been a delight for staff, parents and the wider community alike.

Above all, Runnymede St Edward's remains a school where faith, achievement and opportunity go hand in hand.

We are immensely proud of all that our pupils accomplish and grateful to our dedicated staff, supportive families, parish community and governors, whose partnership enables our school to thrive.

As we look ahead to another exciting year, we remain committed to nurturing every child's academic, spiritual and personal development, ensuring that each pupil is encouraged to fulfil their potential and live out the Gospel values in everything they do.

We thank God for His many blessings over the past year and look forward with confidence and hope to all that lies ahead for our wonderful school community.



## Runnymede Student Teacher Meets Former Prime Minister

**Pupils and staff at Runnymede St Edward's were delighted to see their student teacher, Mr McCourt, welcomed to a special meeting with the former Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, this term.**

As a member of the Northern Ireland Youth Assembly, Mr McCourt had the opportunity to represent the voices of young people from across Northern Ireland in discussions with the Prime Minister. During the visit, Sir Keir even gave a special mention to the children of Runnymede St Edward's in a video message, much to the excitement of the school community.

The visit was a proud moment for Runnymede and a wonderful example of the importance of encouraging young people to engage in leadership, public service and active citizenship. Having such a passionate and inspiring role model working alongside pupils reflects the values at the heart of Edmund Rice education, showing that every voice has the power to make a difference.



See the video of Sir Keir's message to Year 4 Runnymede pupils via the QR code



## EDMUND RICE NETWORK: EVENTS CALENDAR FOR SCHOOLS 2026/27

| What                                          | When                              |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Formation day for new staff and Governors     | 23rd September                    |
| Formation days for year 7                     | Throughout autumn term            |
| ERI Youth Ambassadors Formation Retreat       | Sunday 11th-Monday 12th October   |
| Junior advocacy conference                    | Wednesday 14th October            |
| Camp review day and dinner                    | Sunday 18th October               |
| Staff training with ERI and Youth Ambassadors | Geneva - Sunday 17th-20th January |
| Sixth Form Leadership Conference              | 19th May                          |
| Walking in the Footsteps Pilgrimage           | 19-20th June                      |
| Junior Awards Day                             | 17th June                         |

**Stay up to date with the latest network news and events on our website**  
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