

# The Journal

ACT 

FOR CHILDREN, FOR EDUCATORS, FOR CHRIST

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AUTUMN 2024



**THIS ISSUE: Is Education all change?**

- Curriculum review: a Christian response
- Smartphones: a large scale change needed?
- ‘Faithful Foundations’: ACT’s new mentoring course

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**What do you think of "The Journal"? Let us know.  
Have you an article you would like included? Let us see it.  
Are there any other items you would like covered? Get in touch.**

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## EO's message

**A few weeks ago, we said goodbye to our much-loved family hamster. His passing stirred up deep questions in our children they hadn't faced before: Does death hurt? Will we see loved ones again? Is death final? Though it was a sad moment, it opened the door for important conversations about eternity. In their grief over our little furry friend, their hearts were open to hear the truth of the gospel—about sin, the power of Jesus' death and resurrection, and the hope of redemption. It became a valuable learning moment for them.**

Similarly, schools present many tough situations—often much more profound than the death of a pet! Exam stress, friendship struggles, additional needs, and home issues all spill into the classroom, and while it's not appropriate to shoehorn Bible verses into these moments, we can still turn them into meaningful opportunities for learning. Just as MY children felt safe asking big questions, our students need a supportive environment where they can explore their thoughts without judgment or fear, while also learning about grace and building resilience. And reflecting on our own hardships as opportunities for growth, while trusting in a greater

plan as in Romans 8:28, can help point others to faith in Jesus as a steady anchor through life's storms. Though being a parent and a teacher come with different responsibilities and constraints, the principles remain the same: creating a space where young people feel safe to ask the big questions about life. May your efforts in cultivating the classroom environment reflect this. I pray that you use every opportunity for God's glory and for the good of your students, with the wisdom and insight to know if, how and when to speak of Jesus.

Do get in touch with us if there's anything ACT can do to support you. We also invite you to consider signing up for our "Faithful Foundations" course; you can find more details about it in this edition of The Journal. We're really excited about its launch. We pray it will equip you to integrate your Christian faith into your practice and honour God in both your classrooms and staffrooms! [↗](#)

*In Christ,*

**Lizzie Harewood**  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**Events** 

Don't forget to check out all our upcoming events here:

[community.christian-teachers.org.uk/events](https://community.christian-teachers.org.uk/events)

We would love to connect with you.

# Curriculum review- A Christian response?

**W**ith the election of a new Labour government and Bridget Philipson as Secretary of State for Education, a major review of the school curriculum has been announced, led by Professor Becky Francis. The aim is to “breathe new life into our outdated syllabus,” raising questions about what needs to change and how best to prepare students for the future.

While it's important to have a curriculum that is engaging, relevant, and equips students with key skills, concerns have emerged about potential “dumbing down” or ideological bias. Over the years, two main approaches to education have shaped curriculum reforms. The traditional approach has emphasised a structured, authoritative system focused on subject-centred learning, factual knowledge, and cultural transmission, valuing competition and measurable outcomes. In contrast, progressive approaches have prioritised egalitarianism, child-centred learning, creativity, and cooperation, focusing on skills over content, subjective assessment, and equal opportunities for all. The reality is that the UK curriculum has elements of both, and most likely will continue to, to a greater or lesser degree.

As Christians in education, we must ask: what might a Biblical perspective on any future changes

look like? Is there a ‘binary choice’ between traditional or progressive? Is ‘progressive’ really something to be fearful of? And can a truly Christian view of the curriculum be accommodated in state schools?

Although there isn't a single “correct” Christian perspective, it's valuable to reflect on two priorities as we engage Biblically and thoughtfully in this conversation.

## **1. There is no such thing as ‘curriculum neutrality’**

Let's not be naïve when we approach the curriculum. Consciously or unconsciously, it reflects beliefs, assumptions and values, which are either inclined towards God or away from Him. Schools and teachers inherently reflect a certain worldview, and students naturally absorb it. C.S.Lewis put it best when he stated that *‘There is no neutral ground in the universe: every square inch, every second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.’*

Subjects like Maths work on the assumption of immutable, ultimate truth. As Christians, we can see this as pointing to an eternal, omnipresent, and immaterial source of truth, which is itself not a neutral conclusion—though indeed a thoroughly Biblical one! In English and MFL, grammatical rules give structure and meaning to communication, but when we ask why different languages developed or why communication can break down, there's no ‘neutral’ answer.

In Literature and History, progressive theories are often accepted without question, with Queer or Feminist analysis frequently present in teaching materials. Similarly, in Geography, questions about the origins and purpose of the planet arise, and it's difficult to provide neutral answers for this, and indeed for how and why the earth's geography has been shaped.

Christian Concern's Tim Dieppe helpfully articulates that a *'neutral perspective on God's relevance to education is tantamount to an atheist perspective on the curriculum. It claims that we can make sense of the world independent of God and that God does not provide the underlying meaning behind our learning.'*

As Christians, we must be alive to this and be conscious of anti-Christian leanings that permeate our curriculum. This doesn't mean that we need to panic and 'cancel' all the offending materials or avoid inclusion of any theory. It does mean, perhaps, that our awareness of potential biases needs to be paramount, and our attempt to be transparent when teaching such frameworks should be resolute.

## **2. What is best for children is fundamental.**

As we consider any curriculum changes, we should think about how to love our neighbour and best protect students from particularly

harmful content, especially those with vulnerabilities, ensuring we don't cause any "little ones to stumble." This is especially true when it comes to RSE and Religious Education.

Christians have rightly raised concerns about extreme RSE content, which is often too explicit, ideological, and promotes permissive attitudes that can harm young people and lead them into sin. In any review, we should be asking, "Is this really the best we can offer our students?" and approach the curriculum with more caution, highlighting supportive data and evidence. Research consistently shows the positive impact of marriage and stable two-parent families on children's financial, social, and emotional well-being, and this gives Christians good reason to advocate for more focus on it in RSE.

We should also advocate for better Religious Education. A lack of good RE leads to religious illiteracy, which deprives children of the essential knowledge about Christianity needed to understand British culture and history, and, crucially, limits their opportunity to explore what the Bible says for themselves.

Our concern shouldn't be limited to RSE and RE; however, the Christian perspective should extend across the entire curriculum! As key issues are being reviewed, we should prayerfully advocate for knowledge and truth

*...continued on next page*

that edify pupils, help them discern truth from error, and equip them with skills for modern life. The order and design in Science, Technology, and Mathematics, humanity's search for meaning and expression in Literature, creativity in Music and Art, and the lessons of humanity's endeavours, failures and search for order in History all reflect God's truth and purpose. These are beautiful and natural opportunities for Christians in Education to affirm Biblical truth in the curriculum- and it is good that children know this!


There are other Biblical considerations of great merit, such as loving our neighbour (colleagues) by being mindful of curriculum content overload and showing particular care for vulnerable students, including those with special educational needs or emotional difficulties.

It is surely a Biblical mandate to ensure the curriculum isn't just preparing children to be tomorrow's workforce. Children, made in the image of God and imbued with inherent dignity, are not mere cogs in an economic machine. Education's goal should go beyond producing contributors to the economy; learning has value in and of itself and canons of knowledge and skills should benefit all children, regardless of their future path.

Perhaps a more 'Christian' approach should be not asking 'what can the curriculum achieve WITH

our students' but 'what can the curriculum achieve FOR our students'. And unless there is radical cultural and legislative change, there won't be the chance of placing all learning in its proper context, with ultimate and objective truth as its 'achievement' goal. It is likely that curriculum will continue to promote 'value relativism'. But let's not despair; perhaps this is the very reason that we are placed in our positions in school.

Let us remember that we are *relational* communicators of the curriculum. Our godly and prayerful attitudes toward each subject, the purpose of learning, and the value of every child can deeply influence our students. Above all, let's pray that the Lord's will be done, trusting that 'The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.' (Psalm 19:1).

*Stakeholders can give their perspective on curriculum through the government's call for evidence. ACT will be planning how to best articulate what it sees as key areas of relevance to our members' interests, but we would also encourage members to respond individually. You can communicate your views via the [consult.education website](https://www.consult.education.gov.uk). *




# 'Faithful Foundations' We invite YOU to be involved in ACT's new mentoring program

**B**eing a Christian teacher is different to the world's way of being a teacher—or at least it should be. We all know that don't we? But defining what 'different' looks like in practice can be challenging. It's more than just navigating unbiblical ideologies or taking opportunities to talk about Christianity. What would it look like for Christian teachers to integrate their faith into all aspects of their teaching practice? How can faith become an integral part of how we teach? Is it possible to embed biblically informed principles and pedagogy into our work in a way that remains professional and doesn't manipulate lessons?

Maybe you've thought about these questions. Would it help to have someone who listens, encourages, and walks alongside you as you explore them? Or perhaps you have the experience to share with a fellow Christian educator—someone newer to the profession. You don't need all the answers, but if you're faithful, available, and willing to learn, you could make a great mentor.

At our church, we often refer to this as 'one anothering'—intentional fellowship and biblical encouragement in pairs or groups. Whether it's through organised settings like home groups or more informal chats with a Christian friend, these relationships work best when approached as a shared responsibility—an opportunity to grow together in faith.

ACT's mentoring scheme, Faithful Foundations, is designed to connect and support Christian education professionals as they explore topics such as the purpose of our work in schools, the role of the pupil, classroom dynamics, and school culture. We aim to connect mentors and mentees, either one to one or in a small group, based on their priorities and goals, fostering relationships that offer mutual encouragement and growth, based on Biblical teaching. It doesn't require a huge time commitment, but having someone to listen, share, and pray with can make a big difference. We hope to run a taster session on Monday 2nd December.

If you're interested in becoming a mentor or mentee, or just want to learn more, please contact us at [hello@christian-teachers.org.uk](mailto:hello@christian-teachers.org.uk). 



The banner features a dark blue background with a geometric pattern of blue and white cubes on the left. The text 'Faithful Foundations' is in a large, light blue font, with 'Mentoring Course' below it in a smaller, white font. To the right is a white square icon with a blue arrow pointing up and right. Below this is a photograph of a young man with short brown hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt, smiling and looking down at a laptop. To the right of the photo is a green box with white text. At the bottom of the banner is a dark blue box with white text.

**Faithful Foundations**  
Mentoring Course

Join us for the launch of 'Faithful Foundations', our **NEW** small group mentoring course. Try the taster session before you commit to the whole course.

Taster Session Monday 2nd December  
Book here:  
[community.christian-teachers.org.uk/events](http://community.christian-teachers.org.uk/events)

# Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics: An exciting resource for RE teachers

**O**CCA (The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics) was established in 2004 to raise up the next generation of evangelist-apologists. By 2021, around 350 emerging evangelists from around the world had studied on the OCCA one-year programme. The course equips them to share and defend the gospel, addressing both intellectual objections and heartfelt concerns about the Christian faith.

## Who we are

The OCCA team consists of academics, theologians, and professionals who speak in various settings about life's big questions—faith, meaning, and purpose. They engage with diverse audiences, from community cafés to universities, local schools to workplaces. As well as being a subject leader in Religious Education, ACT's Cristo Rodriguez is also a speaker and tutor at OCCA with responsibility for schools work.

## What we do

We at OCCA believe heartfelt questions deserve thoughtful answers. We discuss issues of life, philosophy, meaning, and faith with both grace and intellectual rigour. Our team of committed Christian speakers and administrators journey together to pursue Jesus, joyfully sharing that pursuit with all those around us.



## Vision

OCCA's vision is to engage the world and equip the church with the good news of Jesus Christ. This involves itinerant speaking, running conferences and study programmes, creating online content, and connecting with local churches across the nation. We love to travel! We can be found in universities and cafés, in schools and in the business world, in youth ministry and at Christian festivals. Where there is a need, we want to serve. We love to engage with those who are passionate and knowledgeable in their field, aiming for the very best of Christian thinking.

We desire to ‘always be ready with an answer...for the hope (we) have’ in Jesus ‘with gentleness and respect’. Our heart is for the world to receive the love of Christ, seeing that he is the answer to our most profound questions. We recognise the fundamental integration of the heart and the mind in human life and seek to engage both seamlessly.

### Schools

The OCCA team is available to speak in schools and work with schools to organise Critical Thinking Conferences, Dialogues and Workshops bringing schools

together for high quality presentations from different worldviews as well as supporting RE and Christian Unions in schools.

OCCA has many existing resources on their website which may be helpful for teachers and students looking to answer the big questions of life. The team is also working on a series of videos on ‘Jesus the Master Teacher’ as well as resources to help the teaching of RE in all school contexts.

OCCA The Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics ([theocca.org](http://theocca.org))



# The Fire of Faith

## Faithful Foundations & Friendships in Christ-centred Education

Book Now for CST's 2025 Conference

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> - Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2025

*'The Fire of Faith: Faithful Foundations & Friendships in Christ-centred Education'*

Sponsored by TeachBeyond & Supported by ACSI



*We are delighted that one of our key speakers at the 2025 CST conference will be Sheridan Voysey. Three Days' Residential Conference for Envisioning, Equipping and Encouragement at the beautiful Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick*

### Keynote Speakers:



**Sheridan Voysey** is an author, speaker and broadcaster with a keen interest on what makes life deeply worthwhile. He is the author of eight books, including *Reflect with Sheridan*. Sheridan is a presenter of *Pause for Thought* on BBC Radio 2's *Zoe Ball Breakfast Show* (heard by 9 million people daily), and has conducted over 2000 radio interviews in his 25-year broadcast career. He has been featured on BBC Breakfast, BBC News, Day of Discovery, 100 Huntley Street, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5 Live, the ABC, CBC's Tapestry, and in publications like *The Times*, *The Sunday Telegraph* and *Christianity Today*.

**Mark Roques** is Director of Reality Bites part of the Thinking Faith Network based in Leeds in the UK. He is an author, philosopher and storyteller. He has debated with atheists on Premier Christian Radio and appeared on Channel 4, BBC World Service and the Australian ABC network. Mark taught philosophy and Religious Education for many years and has recently authored the course *Slave Chronicles* and *Dangerous Beliefs: Discipling Others through Creative Storytelling*. He is passionate about imaginative and engaging discipleship.



**Christian Schools' Trust**  
Promoting Christian Education Nationwide

Email: [office@christianschoolstrust.co.uk](mailto:office@christianschoolstrust.co.uk)  
[www.christianschoolstrust.co.uk](http://www.christianschoolstrust.co.uk)

# Prayer Diary **'Pull Out'** 2024/25

**Oct 20 – Nov 2**

## **WORKING YEARS AND RETIREMENT**

*'Now also, when I am old and greyheaded O God, forsake me not until I have shown Thy strength unto this generation and Thy power to everyone that is to come' - Psalm 71:18*

- Thank God for every Christian who works in education, seeking to witness for Him in their places of learning
- Thank God for those Christians working behind the scenes, away from face-to-face teaching, as they witness to colleagues
- Thank You, Lord, for those Christian Headteachers across the UK who seek to live out their faith in the way that they lead others, and who seek to witness for You in their key leadership position; please raise up more!
- Thank God for those who are now retired from such careers; we pray that their influence may continue on others within their families, Churches and communities
- Lord, please give strength and wisdom to those working in environments within education which are hostile to You and to Your Gospel
- Lord, please preserve the freedom for Christians to speak of You and not to be compelled to act in affirmation of lifestyles and philosophies which oppose Your Word
- Lord, please preserve and use those Christians now retired from education, that their wisdom, experience and encouragement might not be lost to those who follow in their footsteps

**Nov 3 – Nov 16**

## **LIVING ON THE OUTSIDE: CHILDREN IN CARE**

*'Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; Free them from the hand of the wicked' - Psalm 82:3-4*

- Thank God for His perfect example of what fatherhood is, as protector, inspirer, provider, tender carer and constant and loving guide. May He deliver us all from the spectre of failed father figures in our own lives who obscure the beauty of what truly 'Heavenly Fatherhood' is

- Thank God for Christian widows, widowers and single parents who bring up their children single-handedly, in the fear of the Lord. May He strengthen, comfort and enable them in this key but often lonely role
- Thank God for those such as Gladys Aylward, Thomas Barnardo, George Müller and Edward Rudolf, whose Christian hearts motivated them to present 'God-like parenthood' through the setting up of orphanages to care for the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of children who have lost their parents or have been abandoned by them
- We pray that, in their vulnerability, these children would be protected from the evil that often targets them, whispering that they are unwanted, uncared for and 'a burden' on all around them. We pray that they would somehow meet Christians who will share God's unique, unconditional and open embrace for all who come to Him
- We pray for Christian teachers, Christians serving in the care of orphans and the abandoned, Christians who adopt and foster, and Christian churches which such children attend, that they might know God's daily inspiration and might be able to point these young people to the place He has in His family for all who believe on His name
- We pray for the preservation of the family unit as described in the Bible, at a time when society seeks to replace God's model of lifelong commitment, fidelity and mother-father teamwork with alternatives which give no regard to His Word or Will
- We pray that men would not abandon their children, leaving the mothers to raise their children alone, and that they would recognise both the duty and the joy of being fully-present fathers and husbands

**Nov 17 – Nov 30**

## **LIVING ON THE OUTSIDE: THE POOR**

*'He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor' - Psalm 72:4:*

- Thank God for His eternal heart of justice and His championing of those who are marginalised through lack of resource

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- Thank God for His promise to save the poor from lives which are defined simply in terms of their wealth, and His judgement upon those who seek to exploit them
- Thank God for the tireless work of Christians and Christian charities who focus their energies and service on caring for the material needs of the poor, in order to show them Christ's more important offer to meet their spiritual needs
- We pray that the hearts of oppressors would be changed, and that the authorities would arrest the work of those who refuse to change
- We pray that governments would use their powers to resolutely pursue the relief and removal of poverty whilst also frustrating those who would exploit such endeavours for wrongful personal gain
- We pray for children arriving at school who are hungry, poorly-clothed and vulnerable to the taunts of others; may their families find increasing support from those who can help, and may they give their children a quality of love, care and security which transcends their material circumstances
- We pray that good quality education will enable children from needy backgrounds to find work and careers to lift themselves and their families out of an ongoing cycle of poverty, and that Christian educators can show these young people how the Gospel can open up God's eternal riches for them to enjoy forever
- We pray for an ever-growing appreciation across society that all children are deserving of equal care, love and nurture, and that never-ending energies should be invested into helping every child to find a way of learning and thriving
- We pray that ideologies around diversity, able-bodiedness, disability and individual specialness will find their way back to the baseline Truth that we are all uniquely created and precious as spiritual beings who are capable of knowing and being reconciled to our Creator
- We pray for the protection of those whose neurodiversity is being exposed to the continuing promotion of 'gender doubt' across society and within schools, and who are being encouraged to see medication, surgery and social transitioning as solutions to their quest for identity rather than dangers to be avoided
- We pray that the ongoing crisis in government funding for the identification and support for SEND students will lead to a re-focus on what is tried and tested, what is wholesome and true, and what is capable of bringing purpose, hope and worth to all

## **Dec 1 – Dec 14**

### **LIVING ON THE OUTSIDE: SEND**

***'God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty'***  
- 1 Corinthians 1:27

- Thank God for teaching us what true strength is, as opposed to what the world considers 'mighty', and what is truly powerful about the things which the world considers 'weak'
- Thank God that He values every single human being, irrespective of our abilities, and that He views us in terms of our response to Him rather than the extent to which we fit into man-made norms and expectations
- Thank God for all those Christians who work with children who find it a challenge to adapt to the mainstream provision made in schools and special schools
- Thank God for His omnipotence and for His eternal promise to those who love Him and face persecution because of their allegiance to Him
- Thank God for the evidence we find in Scripture and in history that God knows we are battling against spiritual forces pitched against us. Thank Him also that we know He is both ever-present alongside us as we battle, and is the strength we need to overcome those forces
- We pray for those children who are teased, ridiculed and bullied because they are not afraid to say they are Christians
- We pray for teachers, lecturers and other staff who feel threatened by employers to silence their witness on pain of being disciplined or dismissed
- We pray for all those engaged in the current reviews of legislation, schools' guidance and wider directives on freedoms of speech and faith, that they would not act to restrict

## **Dec 15 – Dec 28**

### **LIVING ON THE OUTSIDE: CHRISTIANS**

***'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'*** - Matthew 5:10

Christian prayer for others, the ability to witness publicly to our belief in salvation through Christ alone, or the right to live and act according to Biblical teaching

- We pray for those who are currently in prison in other parts of the world, or who are suffering reputational, financial, relational or psychological damage as a result of persecution, prosecution, dismissal or demotion because of their faith in Christ; may their reward be the peace and comfort of God in their hearts
- Thank God that He is greater than he that is in the world, and His rewards are infinitely more precious than whatever harm the enemy may seek to hail down upon God's children

### **Dec 29 – Jan 11 2025**

#### **LIVING ON THE OUTSIDE: NEW ARRIVERS**

***'You are not to exploit a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether one of your brothers or a foreigner living in your land'***

**- Deuteronomy 24:14**

- Thank God that He loves the whole world and not just the British!
- Thank Him for the influx of Christians into the UK from other countries over the past 20-30 years in particular, especially Bible-believing African Christians whose fire for Christ is vibrant and does nothing but enrich the presentation of the Gospel across our nation
- Thanks be to God the Son for allowing Himself to be exiled in Egypt as a child, showing the importance of being safe from danger in a foreign land
- Challenge our hearts, O Lord, with regards to those foreigners seeking a home in the UK, for there will be many fleeing in fear as well as those who may have different motives
- Bless the children of these new arrivals, we pray, as they reach our schools - confused, detached and disorientated no doubt. May we open our hearts and may we receive Your wisdom as to how to support these innocents
- We pray that those Christians among new arrivals will find a welcoming home within our churches
- And may those who flee from countries where they have never heard the Gospel, be delighted to hear and receive that Good News in the schools which they attend in this foreign land of ours

### **Jan 12 – Jan 25**

#### **RUNNING THE RACE**

***'Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us'*** - Hebrews 12:1

- Thank God for a new year, when minds turn towards new hope, new resolves and new beginnings
- Thank God for the new opportunities that Christian staff in schools, Colleges and Universities will have to engage their students with the Person of Jesus Christ this year
- Thank God for the resilient and faithful witness of long-serving Christian teachers and lecturers who have maintained this witness over long periods of time and who are ready to 'go again' as another New Year begins
- At such a time as this, Lord, we pray for a new hunger for truth and a desire among young people to find real answers to their deepest questions and concerns by investigating Jesus
- In response to young people's searching, we pray that the witness of Christian teachers will continue to be clear, consistent and continuous, and that they would be able to see and take opportunities to remind students of their faith in Christ and what He has to offer them
- Lord, we pray that You would restore our strength for the year ahead, helping us to keep going if it is tough being a witness for You in our place of work
- We pray for those staff and students trying to start Christian Unions, that they would be content with small beginnings and would persevere in prayerful service, regardless of the numbers expressing interest

### **Jan 26 – Feb 8**

#### **FIGHTING THE FIGHT**

***'Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.'*** - 1 Timothy 6:12

- Thank God for those who speak out in public places for the retention of Christian Assemblies in schools
- Thank God for those lawyers and others who defend teachers who are being unjustly 'shut down' from speaking and acting in ways consistent with their faith in the workplace

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- Thank God for those working hard to ensure that the accurate teaching of the Christian faith remains a key plank in the RE Curriculum, and that RE remains as a compulsory subject for all children up to the age of 18
- Thank God for those forerunners who established the Christian faith at the heart of our nation, our monarchy, our legislature and our education system; may we strive to preserve this position in the face of opposition from secular interests seeking to remove Him from our public life
- Lord, please continue to raise up prayerful people who will pray for our schools, Colleges and universities
- Lord, please strengthen those students and staff who feel intimidated by others who seek to silence their witness
- Lord, please may our efforts to be Your ambassadors be characterised by grace, love and gentleness, and be emboldened with courage, faith and the knowledge of Your present help at all times

### **Feb 9 – Feb 22**

#### **LIGHTING THE LIGHT**

***'You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.'* - Matthew 5:14-15**

- Thank God for the unquenchable light of Christ which has saved and sustained generations of His disciples across the centuries since His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension
- Thank God that He chooses to reflect this light through us, to reach those amongst whom we live, work and study
- Thank God for the space which He has created inside each young person whom we teach, which only He can fill; the unlit candle within us all which only He can light
- Inspire us, O Lord, to introduce children to this Light of the World, and not to keep Him hidden from them
- Strengthen us, O God, when we see darkness closing in on our young people in the forms of doubt, temptation, addiction, godless behaviour, dabblings with the occult and dehumanising lust, to speak of the liberating, uplifting and revolutionary light of a Saviour, Lord and King

- Our Father, frustrate those who seek to block children from seeing Christ, who try to put distracting alternative religions and worldviews in their way, and who strive to quench the witness of Christian teachers
- Mighty God, please continuously raise up brave new generations of young people who want to speak to their fellow students of their faith in Christ, and new battalions of Christian teachers who will set their faith on a lampstand in their schools, for all to see

### **Feb 23 – Mar 8**

#### **WALKING THE WALK**

***'He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?'* - Micah 6:8**

- Thank God for the example of Christ, whose life was the perfect reflection of everything He said
- Thank God for His Holy Spirit who encourages us, inspires us, equips us and strengthens us to walk as Christ did
- Thank God for the example of the great men and women from the past who walked humbly before God and sought to follow Him with integrity. It is this crowd of witnesses who continue to inspire us to live our lives with the same honour, diligence and obedience
- We pray that those who witness our lives in schools might see something of Christ in how we speak and act, that they would know of our dedication to the Lord and that they would recognise a clear 'connect' between what we say and what they see
- We pray for Christian Headteachers, that they might be characterised and recognised for their humility rather than for any sense of power-hunger
- We pray that Christian teachers will be known by their students for the consistency between their claims of faith and the way in which they teach, administer discipline and provide pastoral support
- We pray that young Christians might be able to see the dangers and temptations which the world places in their way to trip them up, and that they might thrive as Christ's disciples in the eyes of their friends and classmates



# Smartphone Culture and Stunted Growth: one perspective

***The debate over banning smartphones in schools is growing, with Christians voicing opinions on both sides of the discussion. In this article, Jason Fletcher explores key points of the argument for a ban, but we'd love to hear your perspective. Share your thoughts and join the conversation!***

## **Why was it needed?**

Many years ago we found a book by Nicholas Carr helpful – *The Shallows: How the internet is changing the way we think, read and remember* (2010). 'What the Net seems to be doing,' he wrote 'is chipping away at my capacity for concentration and contemplation.' (p.6) Now, the internet is instantly accessible 24/7 on our smartphones and, as Johann Hari explains in his book *Stolen Focus: Why You Can't Pay Attention* (2022), the most powerful companies the world has ever seen are aggressively seeking to colonise our interior life. And how successful they have been! Average screen time statistics are staggering. The power of these tech companies, says Hari, dwarfs that of the individual will; something is happening to us.

And the cost is mounting. In his recent book *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (2024), Jonathan Haidt shows that the rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicide among pre-teens and teenagers have increased sharply across the developed world

over the past decade, and he argues that the best explanation for this is the rise of social media and the market saturation of the smartphone since about 2012.

## **Why it matters**

For us, the book by Nicholas Carr resonated because we had already been steeped in the thinking of a remarkably insightful British Christian educationalist called Charlotte Mason (1842-1923), whose work was and remains the inspiration behind Heritage School.

At the centre of her educational vision is the conviction that, like the body, a child's mind needs food to grow; and, she says, the food of the mind is knowledge. These days, we are unwittingly influenced by a secular, one-dimensional view of knowledge – as mere information that helps us

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The image shows a podcast cover for ACT (Association of Christian Teachers) S3 E2. It features a microphone icon, the text 'S3 E2 ACT Association of Christian Teachers', and a quote: 'Smartphones at school: a Christian response'. Below the quote is a graphic of colorful cubes and a photo of Sam Brown, a woman with long brown hair, smiling. At the bottom, it says 'Featuring David Smith and Sam Brown of Fulham Boys School'.

perform a function. Because she was a Christian, Charlotte Mason saw knowledge as something far richer, as something intrinsically valuable. To know is to connect with or encounter; it is to establish what she would call a 'relation'. The idea is that as we give of ourselves to get in touch with reality – with God, with others, with the best of human culture past and present, and with nature – we get something in return. We become, as Charlotte Mason would say, larger people. *We grow.*

Here's the problem. Knowledge demands attentive engagement. Education cannot be done to you; it must be done by you. She illustrates the problem of inattention and lack of will power with respect to a young child: 'Watch him at his investigations,' she says, 'He flits from thing to thing with less purpose than a butterfly amongst the flowers, staying at nothing long enough to get the good out of it.' (Home Education, p.142)

The problem is that the internet, social media, video streaming and gaming, and particularly their incessant intrusion through smartphones, is destroying our capacity for the attentive engagement that leads to knowledge that leads to growth. As such, smartphone culture is taking an axe to the root of the tree of human flourishing; it is undermining the common good.

Those of us who are 'people of the book', who believe that the ability to read and listen deeply is at the heart of the spiritual life, have a reason to be particularly concerned. Following Charlotte Mason's lead, we have worked to create an alternative learning culture: one that is free from the distractions of smartphones and ed-tech, and one that prioritises books and nature and real world activities and relationships. We are wholeheartedly behind Smartphone Free Childhood, and would urge you too to join the movement and help reclaim childhood.

*Want to dive deeper into this topic? Check out ACT's latest podcast with David Smith and Sam Brown from Fulham Boys' School, where they discuss their recent decision to ban smartphones with Lizzie, reflecting on some key Biblical principles. [📌](#)*

**Jason Fletcher**  
**HEADMASTER AND CO-FOUNDER,**  
**HERITAGE SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE**



*David Smith, Headteacher at Fulham Boys School*

# The Annual Conference for Christian Leaders 2024

*...challenged all present to allow the King of Glory to come into their schools!*

**A**n annual conference for Christians in school leadership was held on 20th / 21st September 2024. It was hosted by Broadway Academy in Birmingham. The conference was organised by a group of Christians involved in a wide range of educational leadership contexts.

There was an opportunity to observe good practice at Broadway Academy\* (a tour of the school on Friday afternoon) to meet with staff, students and governors who all spoke intelligently and passionately about their faith. There was time for encouragement, challenge and mutual support. The conference was a valuable source of professional development, inspiration, fellowship and spiritual refreshment for all those who are involved in school leadership.

We were all challenged to let the Lord Jesus to come into our schools and His name be 'lifted high'. Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Psalm 24.9.

We are now planning the next conference (2025) that will welcome colleagues from both the maintained and independent sectors. We will work closely with other Christian

charities to complement and strengthen their work. We believe the Holy Spirit is moving among our young people.

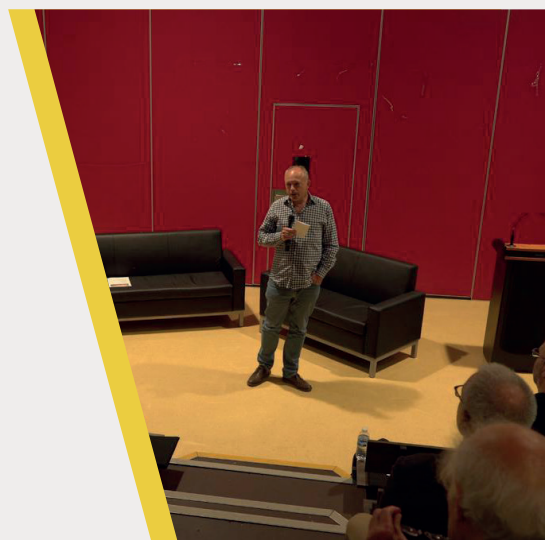
The master of the banquet, in Luke 14, vv.15-24, told his servants to go out to the highways and byways to tell all his people to come in as there are plenty of seats at the banqueting table. The Master is inviting us to join in what He is doing. We look forward to working with you as co-workers in the Gospel. [📧](#)

Ron Skelton

HEADMASTER, BROADWAY ACADEMY

***If you are interested in learning more about ACT's Leadership Network, or details of 2025's conference, do get in touch [executiveofficer@christian-teachers.org.uk](mailto:executiveofficer@christian-teachers.org.uk)***

*\*Broadway Academy is a state-school in Birmingham with a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse intake. It does not have a faith designation but is well-known as a place where matters of faith are taken seriously.*





# Member Profile: Diyana - based in Edinburgh

## 1. Tell us a little about your background

*I was 19 and in my second year at the Technical University of Varna, Bulgaria when communism collapsed. Bulgaria was a socialist country building a communist utopia where the Marxist ideas of a classless society were applied - no private property and equality expressed in the “dictatorship of the proletariat”. Little did we know that the pigs had moved into the farmer’s house and started walking on two legs.*

*Another feature of Marxism is its anti-Christ nature, so until 19 years of age, I had not seen or possessed a Bible. The church existed underground and when I became a Christian, I joined a church coming out of persecution.*

*Becoming a Christian was a seismic event for me and my family. I threw myself into establishing a Baptist youthwork network and linking this work with the other evangelicals in Bulgaria. Studying the Bible and teaching others to do so was part of this work. In 2001 I came to the UK and studied Applied Theology at Moorlands College, Dorset.*

## 2. What is your involvement in Education?

*While in college, I met my husband, and we married and started a family. Now my attention has turned to bringing up the two little ones in a Christian way into British society. After 10 years of being a stay-at-home mum, we decided for me to retrain as a secondary Maths teacher. I wanted to know what my children would be taught at school.*

*As a mature student I undertook placements in different councils in Scotland and after a very eventful probationer’s year, I gained full registration with the Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS). In Scotland, all teachers must be registered with GTCS to teach.*

## 3. What is teaching like for you?

*A vital point is to understand that all the institutions responsible for Scottish education are some of the most “progressive” in the West. In Scotland, there are no competing models of school types, hence, restrictive uniformity exists in the state education sector. Christian input is dwindling as the state schools use the assemblies for information sharing, promoting moral and cultural developments that are “progressive” by nature. A prayer point is more school assemblies to be Christian-focused.*

*Teaching Maths is hard but rewarding. It is rewarding when a struggling pupil finally declares they have understood a concept! I teach my pupils that Maths is a language that describes the world around us. I link this to the Creator who has made the world discoverable and full of patterns.*

## 4. How can we pray?

*In this line of thought, many Scottish Christian teachers do not understand the extent to which the “progressive” ideas have captured the curriculum. One idea is “decolonising the curriculum” advanced by the educational institutions and the unions. In the area of Mathematics, there is talk of “decolonising” the Maths curriculum! I see this “decolonising” trend as one that is ultimately anti-Christian as the Christian heritage of this nation is targeted. So, please, pray that every Christian teacher in Scotland will believe and practise that the Gospel is the only life-changing force in the life of our pupils and socially engineered means of re-writing history or redefining the meaning of words cannot do.*

## 5. What encouragements have you experienced?

*Over the years of being a Christian, I have learned that the Lord finds it “good and pleasant” when His people live in unity, psalm 133. So, I decided to put this into practice and started offering the teachers in my home church an opportunity to get together and pray. Once a month an email is sent offering the teachers a time of prayer, information on useful resources, or CPDs. We do not need to be alone in this demanding front-line job.*

# Recommended reads

In partnership with **Bethan Lycett**  
from **10** of those



*I don't know about you, but after the crazy run-up to Christmas, I really enjoy that period between Christmas and New Year when there's a bit of a lull. It's a perfect opportunity to relax and read a book, knowing school's still a week away!*

*Here are my three book recommendations as we head towards Christmas – two for your Christmas list and one to buy before.*



## The Scuttlebutt Letters: Words to a Wild Tongue

By *Natalie Brand*

What, I hear you ask, is a scuttlebutt?

Historically, scuttlebutt is naval slang for the ship's gossip. This, alongside the subtitle, may give you a hint as to what this book is about.

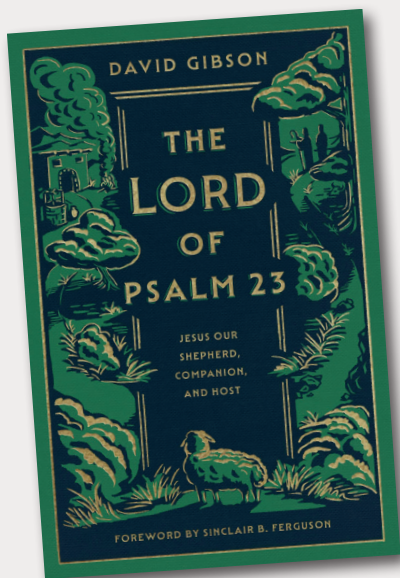
The style is very different to many other books. The book consists of letters sent from the heart to the tongue. If you've read the brilliant *Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, you'll find Natalie Brand's approach is similar here.

A range of topics are covered such as lying, insults, flattery, criticism and other sins our tongues are quick to commit. There's even a chapter on social media. The quirky letter format allows Brand to be very direct and yet in a way which doesn't come across as hyper-critical.

A short book, it only took just over an hour for me to read, and yet I was challenged in each chapter. We've all experienced the critical tongue of a colleague, and school staffrooms seem to be hotbeds for gossip and slander, but this book helps us to consider how our tongues might be affecting our colleagues in return.

30% off RRP discount  
code for readers to  
use, **ACT30WIN** valid  
until 12th December  
2024.

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## The Lord of Psalm 23: Jesus our Shepherd, Companion, and Host

*By David Gibson*

Although this book is now over a year old, you may not yet have seen or got your hands on a copy. This December is the time to change that! The Lord of Psalm 23 is a beautiful book to ask for as a gift, or to give to a Christian friend or family member. Psalm 23 may be one of, if not the, most famous psalm, yet David Gibson brings a freshness, highlighting some profound insights we may have overlooked.

The six verses of the psalm are split into three parts: the Sheep and the Shepherd, the Traveller and the Companion, the Guest and the Host. My church has recently been studying Exodus and so I was particularly struck by how Gibson brings out the Exodus undertones in the psalm. He beautifully shepherds us through the verses on our journey to see Christ more clearly. This appealing hardback, cloth-bound edition would be the ideal gift this Christmas, for yourself or to give away.

## Special Delivery

*By Colin Webster*

I've read lots of evangelistic resources. Some are somewhat vague and miss out elements of the true gospel. Some go in hard and risk losing a non-Christian at the first hurdle. Some try to crowbar the gospel into their chosen theme. Special Delivery doesn't fall into any of these categories. Webster uses the theme of delivery and gifts cleverly and, alongside a series of interesting and contemporary illustrations, gives a thorough and clear gospel explanation. It took me just 25 minutes to read through, in which time I laughed, I nodded along, and even welled up a little towards the end.

This would be perfect for giving out to your colleagues or department, alongside a Christmas cookie. Or why not pass a copy to the driver dropping off your last-minute online delivery alongside a pick-me-up bar of chocolate?



# What's news?



## ACT intervenes in Higgs

In early October, Kristie Higgs, dismissed by Farmor's School in 2019 for sharing Facebook posts criticizing LGBT+ relationship lessons, had her case heard by senior judges at the Court of Appeal. After initially winning at the Employment Appeal Tribunal, the case was sent for retrial, but her lawyers appealed this decision and successfully secured the right for her case to be heard by the Court of Appeal.

The Association of Christian Teachers (ACT) was granted permission to act as an intervenor, alongside the Free Speech Union, Sex Matters, the Church of England Archbishops' Council, and the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The two-day hearing has concluded, but judgment has been reserved, meaning we may not receive a final decision for several months. This is a vital case of interest for Christians in Education, the outcome of which could shape the future of free speech and the freedom to express faith in the UK for years to come.

## Curriculum Review

Education Secretary Bridget Philipson has announced a major review of the school curriculum in England, led by Professor Becky Francis. Spanning Key Stages 1 to 5, the review will address challenges faced by disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs (SEND). The aim is to develop a "broad, inclusive, and innovative" national curriculum. A public call for evidence has been opened to gather input on how the curriculum can 'better prepare young people for life and work'.

## Teachers press for protection from trans ideology

More than 100 teachers, headteachers, school governors, and educational professionals have joined The Christian Institute in calling on Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson to protect children from transgender ideology in schools.

In a letter to the MP, the signatories urged for the swift introduction of draft guidance to safeguard pupils from ideologically driven teaching on gender and sex. ACT were among the signatories.

## Battle of rights over RSE in Northern Ireland

Alyson Kilpatrick, Chief Commissioner of Northern Ireland's Human Rights Commission, has criticised the parental right to withdraw children from abortion lessons, calling it an "unhelpful barrier" to sex education.

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She argued that a child's right to this education should override parental beliefs. Despite Westminster's mandate for post-primary students to learn about contraception and abortion, a Department of Education consultation revealed that 74% of parents believe their rights should take precedence.

### Scottish council admits pupil allowed to 'identify as a wolf'.

Teachers at a Scottish secondary school are reportedly supporting a boy who believes he is a wolf. The local council says the pupil has "species dysphoria" and is being helped according to the Scottish Government's GIRFEC guidelines. Previously dismissed as conspiracy theories by transgender rights activists, claims of children identifying as alternative species,

like cats, are now confirmed by two Scottish councils as cases of "species dysphoria" in schools.

### CofE Anti Bullying Guidance for Schools

The Church of England's National Society for Education has updated its anti-bullying guidance, 'Flourishing for All', for church schools, which includes advice on supporting gender-questioning pupils. After much criticism of the draft document, the acronym LGBT+ was replaced with LGB/GQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual/ Gender Questioning) to match the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 document and a paragraph pertaining to freedom of expression has been expanded. The guidance will be reviewed once the government finalises its new RHSE and gender questioning guidance. 



## Annual General Meeting Saturday 16th November

Join us for lunch and the ACT Annual General Meeting

at Hounslow West Evangelical Church, TW3 4NW

with Director Matt Coe (TeachBeyond) speaking on:

**"Creative access for missionary teachers in closed countries: lessons for Christian educators in the UK."**

#### TIMINGS:

12.30 Lunch and networking

13.15 Talk from Director Matt Coe

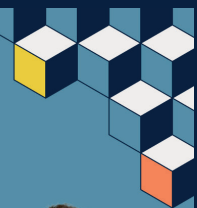
14.00 Refreshments break

14.15 AGM

15.30 Close

For more information and to book:

[community.christian-teachers.org.uk/events](https://community.christian-teachers.org.uk/events)





## A thought from the Chair

**A few years ago, I saw a cartoon on the wall of the data office in school. There were two images. The first, a parents' evening from the 1970s with the parents and the teacher shouting at the child. The second, a parents' evening from modern times, with the parents and child shouting at the teacher. Is it really that bad? What can ensure we do not find ourselves in that situation?**

The relationship between school and home is a vital one. While it is true that families are increasingly more complicated, and that schools are expected to take on increasingly more of the moral education of children, parents (or carers) are just as essential to the success of the child as ever.

In my role as pastoral deputy, I find myself regularly having challenging conversations with parents. Often, they come off the back of a serious incident in school, or a potential safeguarding issue. Regularly parents come in ready to defend their child at any cost, an emotion often driven by fear or confusion. My sinful nature wants me to judge or argue. My Christ-like nature challenges me to listen, support and understand. How can we ensure a successful meeting where parent, teacher and child come to a place of mutual understanding and resolve?

One of my favourite recruitment tasks is a difficult parent meeting. At the outset we look for candidates to show empathy with parents and take time

to understand their point of view. It is so easy in the busyness of school to lose that sense of perspective. We want to tick off the next job and miss the importance of human connection and empathy. One of the wonderful things about education is we often want the same thing - young people to develop strong character, gain good qualifications and go on to lead successful and fulfilling lives. Our viewpoint on how to get there may be different, but the goal is often the same.

In reality, the desk should be round, and relationships should be bi-directional, forged on mutual respect. In meetings I intentionally sit at right angles to parents and place the child facing us in the middle. I reinforce to children how much their parents love them and how their decisions can have a profound impact. The Bible is clear about the vital role that parents play and we must support them with this.

Over the next year, ACT will be running a series of evening events where we will discuss topics like this. Pastoral support is hard, but it is in our relationships where we can honour God the most. If you have questions or would like advice, why not reach out through our community space? We would love to hear from you. [Z](#)

**David Bedford**  
ACT CHAIR





**Association  
of Christian  
Teachers**



## **Could YOU be an ACT Director?**

**WE WELCOME INTEREST  
IF YOU ARE...**

- **involved in education**
- **committed to ACT'S vision to Connect, Resource and Influence**
- **have a passion to serve a growing community of Christian teachers for the sake of the gospel**

**For more details email  
[hello@christian-teachers.org.uk](mailto:hello@christian-teachers.org.uk)**



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