



Bishop Stephen Wright

Bishop of Hexham & Newcastle

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2 March 2026

Dear Headteachers and School Leaders,

As part of our diocesan journey of discernment, we are inviting parishes, partnerships and deaneries to listen to the Holy Spirit and to one another, asking: Where is God calling us to grow, to change, and to become more missionary?

Our Diocesan Catholic schools are central to this moment of discernment. Your schools hold insights and relationships that are essential for helping the Diocese understand how faith is being lived and received among children, young people, and families. Specifically:

- You have daily contact with children, young people and families.
- You see clearly what helps people belong, and what makes connection harder.
- Your staff include people of great skill, faith and experience—many of whom already serve as catechists, volunteers and leaders in parish life.
- You already have strong ways of listening through student councils, student voice, parent voice and staff forums.

Across the Diocese, parishes are being asked to use a Mission Discernment Toolkit (included with this letter) to reflect prayerfully and honestly upon:

- How they worship, teach, serve and build community.
- How their people, buildings and finances serve the mission.
- What needs to be strengthened, adapted or let go for the sake of future generations.

How schools can help

As part of one diocesan family, we are inviting schools to work with the local clergy and laity to support this discernment. Some suggested approaches include:

Facilitating conversations

- Bringing parish representatives together with parents, staff or young people.
- Sharing what helps your school families feel welcome and connected.
- Exploring how parish and school spaces might serve mission together.

Shining a light on mission

- Showcasing strong school-parish partnerships.
- Sharing examples of good practice in liturgy, service, youth leadership and formation.

Gathering and sharing insights

- Listening to what helps families connect with parish life.
- Naming barriers to belonging to the parish.
- Sharing these reflections with your local parish or parish council so they can be included in parish discernment.

All reflections gathered should be shared with your local parish so that they can be included in the parish's discernment submission, which must be sent to the Diocese by **23 April 2026**. In order to do this, please can you share your thoughts on the above to your parishes by **20 March 2026**.



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The life, faith and care you offer every day to our children and families is greatly appreciated. Please be assured that your voice matters deeply in this moment of discernment, and we are grateful for your partnership in the mission of the Church.

Thank you for your support.

With every blessing

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen".

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