

Programme and Abstracts for 2025

Friday 21st November

From 10-00	Arrival and registration.
13-00	Lunch
14-00-14-10	Opening remarks – Martin Smilnak and Professor Simon Uttley, Executive Co-Chairs.
14-10 – 14-50	Shingi Hopkins and Sue Matthews: Embracing Uncertainty
14-55 – 15-40	<u>The ‘Andrew Lockington’ Lecture:</u> Maria Budzynska - Curriculum 2035: Reimagining Key Stage 3 to empower socially disadvantaged learners for a Human-AI Future
15-40 – 16-00	Refreshments & networking
16-00 – 16-45	Professor Jacek Brant: Teaching with values; leading with values.
16-50 – 17-30	Martin Gazda: The role of religious education in a culturally pluralistic world
19 – 15	Drinks reception followed by dinner and networking

Saturday 22nd November

9-00 – 9-50	Dr Dominik Kielb: Education as a space for dialogue between individual autonomy and group solidarity: reflections on individualism and collectivism in contemporary education.
9-50 – 10-45	Brian Grady: Teaching for the Best Start in Life’
10-45 -11-10	Refreshments
11-10 – 11-50	Professor David Oswell: Cultivating Future Creative Talent in a World of Uncertainty
11-55 – 12-45	Professor Pawel Makosa: Religious education as personal and social support in our uncertain world.
12-45	Concluding remarks

Abstracts

Maria Budzynska

Curriculum 2035: Reimagining Key Stage 3 to empower socially disadvantaged learners for a Human-AI Future

In the face of exponential technological advancement and intensifying social inequality, schools are uniquely placed to prepare young people not just for a job market shaped by artificial intelligence, but for lives of ethical agency, emotional intelligence and social responsibility. This paper explores a strategic curriculum redesign at Key Stage 3 (11-14 years old) in a Salesian secondary school in inner London, where over 70% of students face socio-economic disadvantage. Anchored in the Salesian principle that young people must be “loved and know they are loved,” the proposed Curriculum 2035 framework places human dignity, character formation and future-readiness at the heart of schooling.

Drawing on secondary research, leadership theory, and Catholic social teaching, the project outlines a values-led, interdisciplinary curriculum architecture. It weaves together digital fluency, ethical literacy, powerful knowledge, and Salesian virtues to empower students for the complexities of a human-AI world. Particular attention is given to the cultivation of essential human skills such as collaboration, critical thinking, and resilience, alongside emerging AI competencies. Leadership approaches such as servant and distributed leadership are examined as enablers of sustainable and inclusive reform.

This practice-focused case contributes to wider conversations about how schools can form the whole person while preparing students for rapid technological and societal change. It makes the case that a future-facing curriculum must not only respond to external demands but also draw from internal values and community identity. The session will also provide practical ideas for educators about how to use AI in the mainstream classroom to support learning and holistic development.

Shingi Hopkins and Sue Matthews
'Embracing Uncertainty'

Whilst, for some, change is exciting, motivating and provokes curiosity, for others it creates anxiety and fear of what the future will bring and how to respond. How best can we prepare our children for the challenge of the constantly changing environment in which we live? Join Sue and Shingi in this exploration into key strategies that we, as educators, can effectively employ to level the playing field such that most (if not all) have the best chance to achieve and succeed.

David Oswell
'Cultivating Future Creative Talent in a World of Uncertainty'

As educators we work with peoples' subjectivities. Cultivating talent means addressing the integrity of the person. But as educational leaders we have to consider creative talent in terms of longer term societal needs. To educate, not simply for the creative capabilities needed now, but for creative capabilities for the future we have to consider the long term. We have to think strategically. We have to broaden our horizons. We can't control the future but we can think, in terms of the information we have of where we are now and consider a range of probabilities of future risk and opportunity.

This talk considers these strategic horizons in terms of the current crisis of legitimacy of the global rules-based order and in the context of two longer term projections from two 'big tech' leaders, Peter Thiel and Alex Karp.

Professor Jacek Brant
'Teaching with values, leading with values'

What is the purpose of education? There isn't one purpose of education, but many. In various parts of the world and over the centuries, schooling has been subject to different demands and expectations. One is to meet the needs of the economy so that school leavers can join the workforce as employees, managers and entrepreneurs. Schools are also expected to prepare students to pass high stake assessments such as the maturita skúška.

Schools are also expected to help children learn through enquiry and to learn how to learn. Education is complex, and the demands of schooling compete

against each other. What perhaps is missing from educational discourses is the importance of values in teaching, and in leading learning. My talk will explore the idea of teacher-leadership, exploring leadership within and beyond the classroom. It is my argument that teaching and leadership are inseparable.

Brian Grady

'Teaching for the Best Start in Life'

This session will consider the international evidence and research on how children can have the best start in life. We will explore how the British Government education system is seeking to apply this research to support schools and educators.

We will explore how educators can apply approaches within their education setting with their pupils, to help pupils in their readiness for learning. The session will invite participants to "think child think family then think community" both in and outside of the classroom to help children be happy, safe and thriving learners.

Paweł Mąkosa,

Religious Education as Personal and Social Support in our Uncertain World.

The presentation examines the potential of religious education to build the adaptive capacity of young people facing contemporary challenges. Adaptive capacity is defined as the ability to cope effectively with stress and uncertainty by maintaining well-being amid chronic difficulties, extending beyond traditional resilience. Contemporary youth confront many challenges, e.g. social isolation, academic achievement pressure, threats of war and geopolitical uncertainty, climate anxiety, socio-economic inequalities, mental health crisis, ect. that require new forms of personal and social support. Christian-oriented religious education offers various means of developing adaptive capacity, including transcendent sources of meaning and effective coping strategies to address the mental health crisis. Its effectiveness depends on pedagogical strategies grounded in experiential learning, dialogical teaching of complex ethical scenarios, and spiritual mentoring. Reflective and inclusive religious education thus serves as a vital source of personal and social support in an uncertain world, integrating spiritual, moral, social, and emotional development into a coherent whole.

Dominik Kiełb,

Construction of religious identity in the educational process. Between individualism and community.

In the observed situation of cultural change, with increasing individualism, secularisation and the influence of digital media, religious education faces a fundamental challenge: how to shape a young person's Christian identity so that it is both deeply personal and firmly rooted in the community? The article reflects on the process of building religious identity during adolescence, paying attention to the individual and community dimensions and to the structural causes of deficits in religious knowledge as well as cognitive and practical competences among young people. Particular attention was paid to the impact of frequent changes in the education system, language transformation, the phenomenon of religious illiteracy and the shift in emphasis in religious education and pastoral practice from doctrinal teaching to experiential evangelism. In response, a model of integral religious education has been proposed, combining systematic doctrinal teaching with dialogical methods, the enhancement of community experiences and the development of media competence of teachers and pastoral workers. The solutions indicated include, above all, the wider use of the media in education, the cooperation of the basic educational environment, i.e. family, school and parish, the implementation of relatively permanent educational programmes and the competent preparation of those who teach religious education. The article furthermore postulates the need for in-depth empirical research to assess the long-term fruits of effective models of religious education.

Marcin Gazda,

The Role of Religious Education in a Culturally Plural World: Balancing Identity and Openness

Modern schools are increasingly becoming spaces where different cultures, religions, and worldviews meet. In this context, religious education faces the challenge of how to form students' mature religious identity while also fostering empathy, dialogue, and openness towards others. The aim of this presentation is to show that these two dimensions—identity and openness—are not contradictory but complementary and can together form the foundation of contemporary religious formation. The theoretical part introduces the inclusive-dialogical model of religious education, which combines fidelity to the Christian tradition with the development of intercultural competence. This approach

assumes that catechesis and religious instruction should not be limited to doctrinal transmission but should become spaces of encounter, witness, and cooperation within a pluralistic social environment. The practical part presents examples of pedagogical strategies that teachers can effectively apply in their classrooms, such as project-based learning, reflective questioning, biographical approaches, and activities enhancing intercultural understanding. The presentation argues that religious education can successfully integrate spiritual formation with education for openness, helping students become people of faith, dialogue, and social responsibility. In this way, religious education not only supports personal growth but also contributes to building a culture of encounter and peace in a diverse world.