



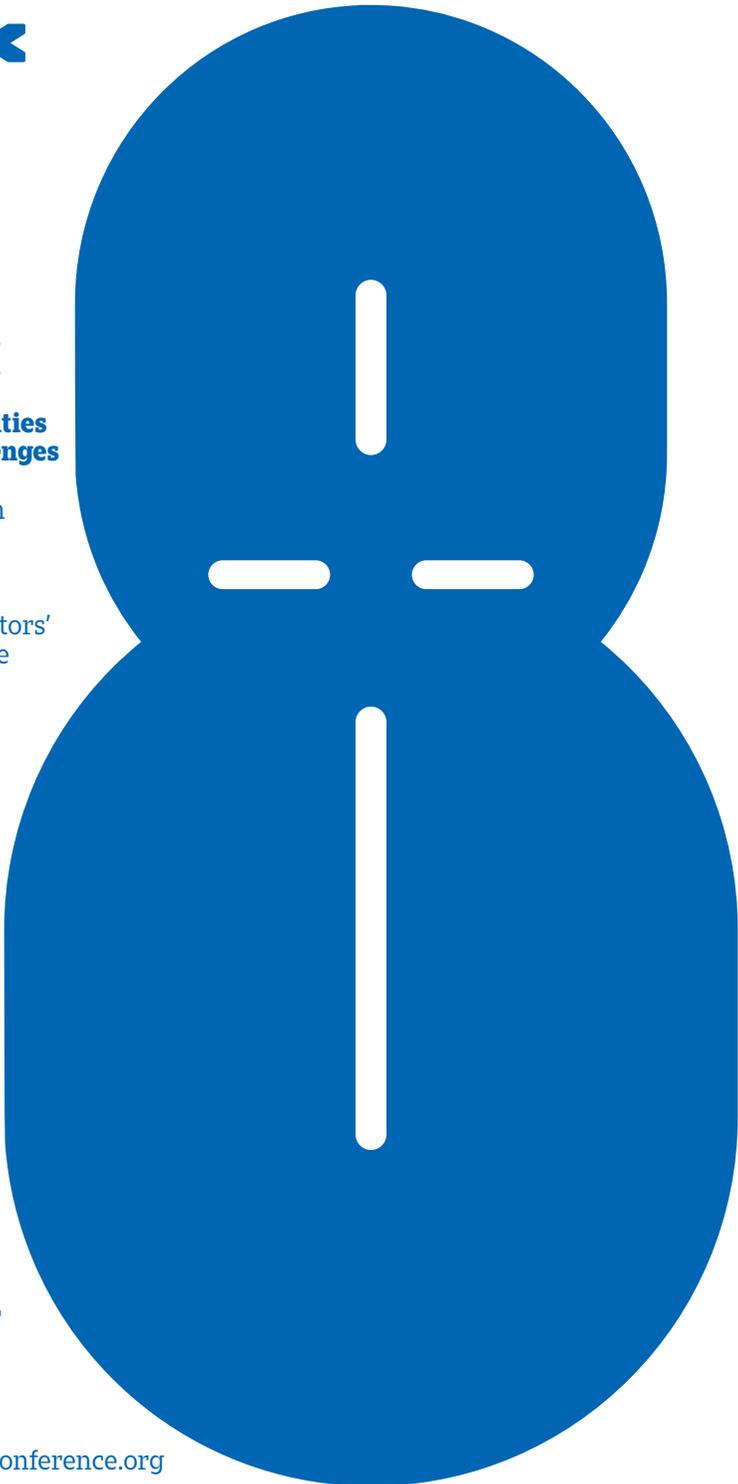
Slovakian  
Educational  
Leadership  
Conference

**Education  
and social  
justice:  
opportunities  
and challenges**

The Eighth  
Annual  
School  
Leaders'  
and Educators'  
Conference

Hotel  
Alexander  
**8—9<sup>th</sup>**  
**November**  
**2024**  
Bardejov  
Spa

[www.sel-conference.org](http://www.sel-conference.org)



## Programme

### Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2024

12.45—13.45	<b>Lunch</b>
13.45—14.05	<b>Opening Remarks</b> <b>Martin Smilnak and Simon Uttley,</b> Executive Co-Chairs and founders.
14.05—14.40	<b>Marcin Hryniewicz</b> Social Justice and the classroom.
14.50—15.20	<b>Sue Matthews</b> Equality versus Equity.
15.25—15.40	<b>Refreshments</b>
15.45—16.20	<b>Maria Budzynska</b> Navigating the Liminal Shift in Sixth Form Pedagogy and Provision: A Strategic Approach to Enhancing Post-16 Academic Outcomes.
16.25—17.00	<b>Natasha Coccia</b> Leighton Park – Social Justice and Quaker Education.
17.05—17.40	<b>Olena Grushchak</b> Enhancing Fluency Through Interactive Speaking Activities.
19.15	<b>Drinks reception followed by dinner</b>

## **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

09.00—09.45

### **Jacek Brant**

Teacher as a researcher, teacher as a curriculum maker.

09.50—10.35

### **Brian Grady**

Responses to tackling injustice in and through education: an English civic response.

10.35—10.50

### **Refreshments**

10.50—11.20

### **Judy Hutchinson**

moderated by Simon Uttley

Title: The Power of 'Why?': Instilling Social Justice in the Hearts and Minds of Students.

11.20—12.05

### **David Oswell**

Justice and (Higher) Educational Leadership.

## Our Sponsors



### **Derek Allen**

**Executive Chairman & Founder,  
Securus Software Ltd**

In 2002 Derek co-founded Securus Software which has become a leading software brand in eSafety within the Education sector. Derek has extensive experience and skills in building effective teams of people, as well as building successful relationships and platforms with both UK and overseas companies at senior management level.

Derek is a Governor of St John Bosco College, a Salesian Catholic school, in London.



### **Andrew Lockington**

With over 25 years' experience advising main board directors of FTSE 100 and 250 businesses, as well as other business leaders, accountants and lawyers, Andrew saw a gap in the financing market in 2015 and, with two prominent business friends, they established Avalanche Capital in 2015 as a first-tier asset backed money lender to residential property developers. Andrew was the Co-founder of Novia Financial Holdings Plc in 2007, a Financial services technology company providing technology services to the financial services industry, a business now Chaired by the former CEO and Chairman of IBM (UK), Sir Anthony Cleaver.

Andrew also co-founded the over 50 internet portal "over50s.com" in 2007.

Andrew is a member of the Chartered Institute of Financial Planners and is a leading Catholic businessman in the Midlands region of England.

## Our Speakers



### **Olena Grushchak**

is a dedicated educator with over twenty years of experience in education. Mrs. Grushchak graduated from Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University with a diploma of a specialist in teaching English and French languages, as well as foreign literature. This comprehensive educational background has equipped her with the skills and knowledge necessary to excel in the field of language education and literature.

After graduating from the university, she worked in Poland for two years, where she taught English at a school, honing her teaching skills and gaining valuable international experience.

Subsequently, Olena served as a Lecturer at Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University, where she taught a variety of subjects, including English, Latin, Introduction to Linguistics, and the History of Literature. Her diverse teaching portfolio highlights her versatile knowledge and commitment to fostering a comprehensive understanding of languages and literature among her students.

## Education and social justice: opportunities and challenges

Currently, Mrs. Grushchak is a lecturer at the Center for Modern Foreign Languages at the Ukrainian Catholic University, where she teaches English and conducts courses in Polish language. Additionally, she serves as the Administrative Director of the English Summer School, further demonstrating her leadership and dedication to language education.

### **Abstract**

#### **Enhancing Fluency Through Interactive Speaking Activities**

This workshop aims to equip teachers of English as a Second or other language (ESL educators) with practical and engaging techniques to improve their students' speaking fluency. Participants will explore a range of interactive speaking activities designed to foster spontaneous and confident language use. These activities are vital in the ESL classroom, offering students opportunities to practice and enhance their speaking skills in a dynamic and supportive environment.

## Our Speakers



### **Sue Matthews**

is Assistant Headteacher, with responsibility for Teaching and Learning and Safeguarding at Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School. She teaches both Business Studies and French with previous Head of Department responsibility in both subjects. She holds a BA Honours in French Studies, a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) a Management Diploma and the National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH). She came into teaching following a successful career in sales and marketing in the French Chemicals and Polymers Industry both in France and the United Kingdom. Sue is married to Jan and is mum to Céline, also a Business Studies and French teacher and Liam a qualified Occupational Therapist.

Education and social justice:  
opportunities and challenges

### **Abstract** **Equality versus Equity**

Today where, quite rightly, justice is or should be an expectation everywhere — a way of life — let's consider the following: 'If we treat people equally, are we always treating them fairly?' Having considered this question, I now invite you to apply this to our educational settings: 'Are we going to put everyone (staff and students alike) in the best position to be happy, confident and succeed if we don't take differences into account?' Join me on this voyage of discovery to consider how best to support each and every member of staff and student to flourish.

## Our Speakers



### **Judy Hutchinson**

SELC Honorary Secretary

is the Senior Associate Director for Study Abroad with Notre Dame Global, University of Notre Dame, USA. With over 28 years of experience in formational education in the Catholic university sector, she has been a pivotal member of the university's international division since 2007. During her tenure in London, she established and led the role of Director of Student Affairs at Notre Dame's largest global location, where she provided pastoral care for 200 undergraduate and 50 graduate law students each semester. In this role, she also spearheaded the development of numerous experiential learning initiatives, including a robust internship and immersion program. Judy is currently pursuing her doctorate in education at St. Mary's University in London and serves as the honorary secretary of this conference.

Education and social justice:  
opportunities and challenges

### **Abstract**

#### **The Power of 'Why?': Instilling Social Justice in the Hearts and Minds of Students**

"Why should we care about justice?" This is a question that our students—and indeed, all of us, inevitably ask. In answering this question, we are not only addressing an intellectual curiosity but also guiding young minds toward a deeper understanding of their role in society. Drawing on the universal principles and wisdom of Catholic social teaching, particularly the concepts of Integral Human Development and Integral Humanism, as articulated by Jacques Maritain, we find that justice is not just a religious ideal but a universal human concern. These principles remind us that true education must nurture the whole person, socially, morally and spiritually, so that students can grow into individuals who contribute to a just and compassionate world. As educators, it is our responsibility to instill these values in the hearts and minds of our students, helping them understand the profound impact that justice, or the lack thereof, has on the fabric of our society.

## Our Speakers



### **Maria Budzynska**

has worked in Catholic secondary education in Inner London schools for over 10 years including in her current role as a senior leader [Deputy Headteacher]. With a background in 11–18 English teaching, she has come to specialise in inclusion, special needs support and whole school pastoral management. A lead practitioner and an authoritative voice in the area of improving standards, Maria offers fresh thinking around whole-school assessment systems.

### **Abstract**

#### **The Power of 'Why?': Instilling Social Justice in the Hearts and Minds of Students**

This presentation explores the unique challenges of sixth form education, particularly within the context of an inner-city school serving a diverse and disadvantaged student population. With nearly 50% of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and more than 12% having complex needs, the school faces the complex task of improving post-16 academic outcomes despite significant parts of the cohort arriving with below-average prior attainment. The transitional nature of post-16 education requires a nuanced approach that bridges the gap between the struc-

## Education and social justice: opportunities and challenges

tured, child-cantered environment of earlier schooling and the increased independence expected of students as they move toward adulthood. This presentation will examine strategies for navigating this liminal phase. Additionally, the session will highlight the influence of curriculum choices in 11-15 education on post-16 success, drawing on research that links strong prior performance in academic subjects leads to improved outcomes at A-Level and beyond. Confidence-building initiatives like the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) will also be discussed, along with their proven impact on student aspirations and academic results. For teachers, the transition to post-16 teaching requires a shift in pedagogical practice. This presentation will address the need for targeted professional development to build confidence in staff who are more accustomed to teaching younger students. By embracing a hybrid approach that combines both pedagogical and andragogical methods, schools can better support both students and staff through this critical stage of education. The presentation will offer a strategic framework for improving post-16 academic outcomes, ensuring that both students and educators are equipped to navigate the complexities of this pivotal phase in their educational journey.

## Our Speakers



### **David Oswell**

is a sociologist and a deputy vice-chancellor at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He has a responsibility for research, innovation and knowledge exchange, as well as leading on various cross-university and sector-wide projects.

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### **Abstract**

#### **Justice and (Higher) Educational Leadership**

I start by considering, very broadly, what we might mean by justice and education, separately and combined. In the context of the question of 'justice', I then focus on two core issues facing senior educational leaders today: how do we support our students? And what kind of institution should we be? I consider key recent debates in the UK, Europe and the USA.

## Our Speakers



### **Jacek Brant**

is Full Professor at the world-renowned University College, London's, Institute of Education Faculty of Education and Society. Jacek worked in manufacturing industry for two years before becoming a school-teacher of economics and business for 11 years and he is now in his 26th year at the IOE. He has run pre-service and continuing professional development programmes for teachers; master's programmes and modules, he supervises research students and is involved in various international projects. Jacek writes on educational issues concerning curriculum and pedagogy. His latest article is available in an open access journal: Brant, J (2022). The curriculum question and school economics: three educational scenarios for the future. *Journal of Social Science Education* 21(2). <https://doi.org/10.11576/jsse-4858> of education: Critique and Possibilities in the *Journal of Critical Realism*.

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### **Abstract**

#### **Teacher as a researcher, teacher as a curriculum maker**

In his seminal book *An Introduction to curriculum research and development*, Lawrence Stenhouse (1975) posed the rhetorical question: is knowledge like a ladder that you climb rung by rung and which can be assessed at each stage and when you are ready you can climb to the next rung or is it like exploring a country? Of course, knowledge is both; there is an element that is pre-defined, known and accepted, but knowledge is also fluid, layered and subject to interpretation and may be contested. This presentation will explore the vital role that teachers have to play in curriculum making and their right to play a part in the criticism and construction of professional knowledge.

## Our Speakers



### **Marcin Hryniewicz**

is an historian and Head of the History department

at Blessed Hugh Faringdon school. Marcin, originally from Poland, has been in Reading for the last 15 years during which time he has taught history across all secondary ages, worked with children requiring special educational needs and also supported teacher training by mentoring individuals in the process of becoming qualified teachers.

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### **Abstract**

#### **Social Justice and the classroom**

Roosevelt's idea of social justice at the time of the Great Depression focused on dealing with poverty, but he later expanded this to include areas such as civil rights and job security.

Today, social justice relates to much more than this, touching every aspect of society. But what is it exactly and how it could be applied to our educational settings, especially within the History department?

Having considered this question, I now invite you to apply this to our classroom environment: 'Are we going to give everyone better opportunities if we take social justice into account?'

Join me on this voyage of discovery to consider how to support each and every student to flourish.

## Our Speakers



### **Brian Grady**

has over 20 years of civic, public service experience, holding Local Government senior leadership positions in England with responsibility for improving educational outcomes across the English education system. Brian has experience in a variety of contexts of Local Government in England, working in London, densely populated urban settings and more rural districts, delivering early years, primary and secondary provision and overseeing programmes to improve attainment for disadvantaged groups.

### **Abstract**

**Responses to tackling injustice in and through education: an English civic response.**

This session will consider the role of both the state and civic society in championing education as the solution to inequalities in society, and how different levels of government in England have tried to deliver improved education to reduce inequality in society. The session will ask questions about the role of the state in supporting educators; how the state can support educators to succeed; and how the state gets education wrong.

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The role of the English government in education has changed substantially over the last thirty years. This session will explore, from the perspective of a regional Director of Education in the English education system. It will consider what has worked well and what has worked not so well in translating national government ambitions for improving educational outcomes and reducing educational inequalities, over the past three decades. The session will explore these perspective through three case studies: the regional development of early years education through children's centres; London-wide work reducing primary and secondary educational attainment gaps for low-performing vulnerable groups; and the reorganisation of schools in a district to include more children with Special Educational Needs. Through these case studies; we will consider what the state and civic society could do more to support educators to provide more equal opportunity and improved outcomes.

## Our Speakers



### **Natasha Coccia**

is Senior Assistant Head at Leighton Park School, ISA Senior School of the Year 2023. She has worked in education for over twenty years in state and independent schools. A graduate of Trinity College Dublin, and scholar from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama she holds BA Hons, MA, as well as teaching and senior leadership qualifications. She has worked in inner London state schools for 12 years, driving whole school improvement in academic enrichment, co-curricular, pastoral and partnership programmes in Hackney, one of the most deprived boroughs in the capital. Natasha is co-founder of the Berkshire Women's Leadership Network, is a school governor and sits on the Reading Educational Partnerships Board. She has won national awards for her partnership work and lives with her two sons as well as Woody the Cockerpoo

### **Abstract**

#### **Leighton Park – Social Justice and Quaker Education.**

This paper investigates the role of social justice in Quaker education, using Leighton Park School in Reading as a case study. Rooted in the school's Quaker testimonies—simplicity, truth, respect, integrity, peace, equality, and sustainability

Education and social justice: opportunities and challenges

(STRIPES)—and the broader Christian values of compassion and justice, Leighton Park School integrates these principles into every aspect of its educational experience. Central to this is the school's unique Creativity, Action, and Service (CAS) curriculum, which provides students with hands-on opportunities to serve others, engage creatively, and take action on social and environmental issues.

Through the CAS curriculum which focuses on partnership working, students at Leighton Park are exposed to a wide range of service projects, community initiatives, and leadership opportunities that encourage them to reflect on ethical leadership and social responsibility. By participating in activities that promote empathy, collaboration, and problem-solving, students are nurtured as changemakers who understand the importance of advocating for equity and justice. The school's approach not only fosters academic growth but also develops students as ethical leaders with a strong commitment to creating positive social impact. This case study highlights the effectiveness of integrating Quaker and Christian values with an experiential learning curriculum to shape socially responsible leaders of tomorrow.

## Our Speakers



### **Simon Uttley**

is, together with Martin Smilnak, the co-Founder and co-Chair of SELC. He is full Professor and Course Leader for Catholic Education and the Common Good at the University of Notre Dame [U.S.A], London Global Gateway. In addition, Professor Uttley is Visiting Professor in Catholic Education, Institute of Education, St Mary's University, London. His current research includes deepening the relationship between the Higher Education sector and the school (Koinonia), and exploring the importance of meaning and moral purpose in educational curricula. Professor Uttley also holds the position of Visiting Lecturer in Catholic education at Dominican University, Chicago, as well as Visiting Lecturer at UCL Institute of Education, London. In the daytime, Professor Uttley is the Headteacher of Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic High School in Reading, 65km from London. Simon is a licensed Catholic Schools' Inspector for the schools of the Dioceses of England and Wales. He is also Co-Chair of the Reading Education Partnership, working alongside one of another of this year's speakers. Brian Grady.

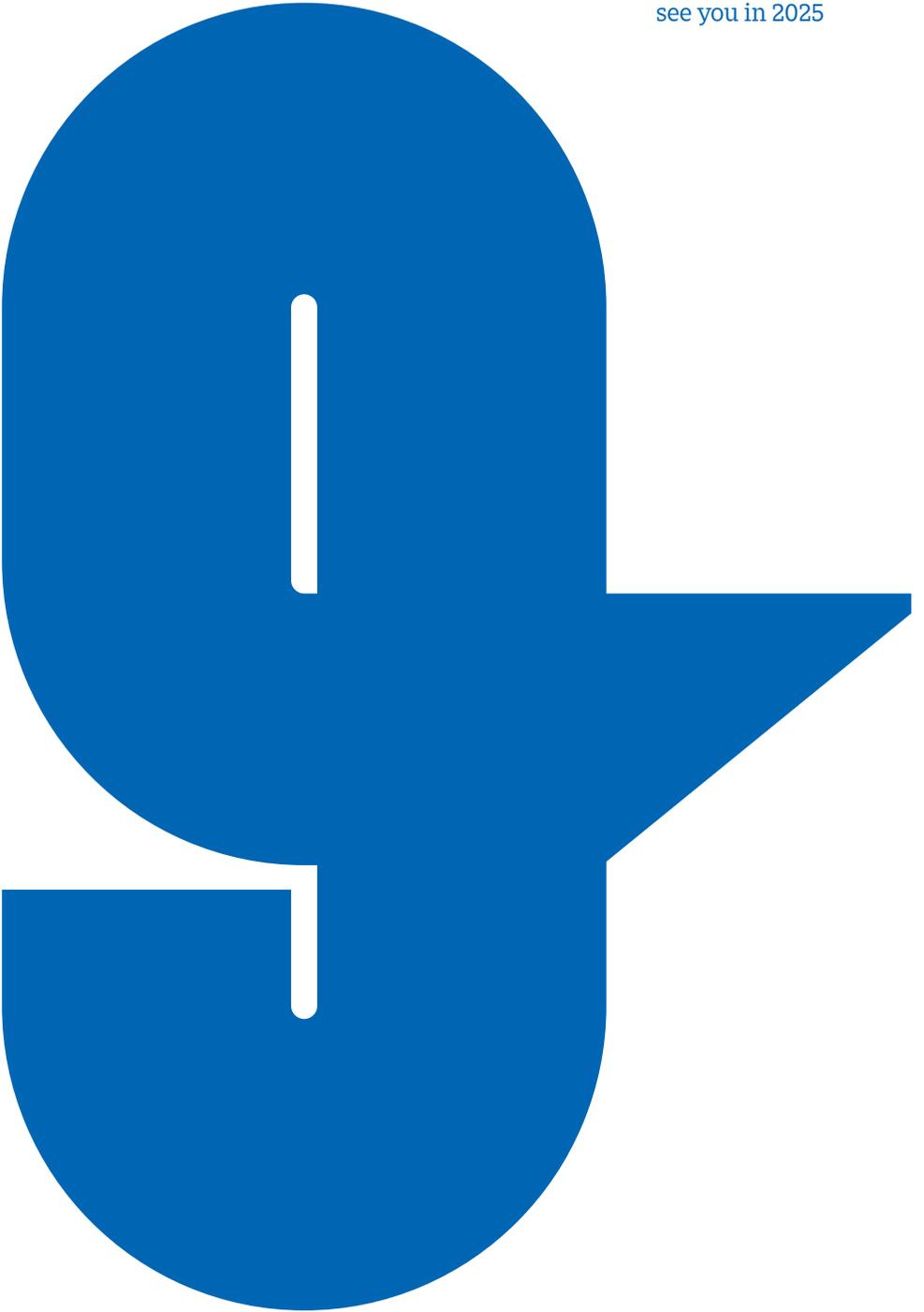
## Education and social justice: opportunities and challenges



### **Martin Šmilňák**

now a member of Slovak Parliament, is together with Simon Uttley, the co-Founder and Convener of the Bardejov Education Conference. He is also our host. As former Headmaster of Gymnázium sv. Jána Bosca, Bardejov Martin has been instrumental in building a highly successful, bilingual Catholic school.

see you in 2025





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