

BCCS News

CHRISTMAS EDITION • 2025

Taking a different path

Keeping children in education



School support

Empowering staff

Advent Appeal

Sharing love and happiness

Welcome



As we journey through this season of anticipation and hope, I want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible resilience of children and the power of community support. Advent is a time of waiting, of hope, and of preparing our hearts to welcome light into our lives - a sentiment that resonates deeply with our work at BCCS.

This year has been a challenging one for many children and families. The ongoing uncertainties and difficulties they face have highlighted the vital importance of kindness, understanding and mental health support. We are dedicated to ensuring that no child feels alone in their struggles; that every young person has access to the help they need, not only to cope but to flourish and build resilience for the future.

During this season of giving, I am reminded of the profound impact that small acts of kindness can have. Whether it's a listening ear, a gentle word, or simply being present, your support helps create a safe space where

children can express themselves and find hope amidst difficulties.

As we light the candles of hope and peace this Advent, I encourage all of us to carry that light into the lives of children and families in our communities. Together, we can foster an environment where every child feels valued, heard, and empowered to build a brighter future.

Thank you for your compassion, generosity, and unwavering commitment to children's mental health. Your support makes a real difference; not only during this season but throughout the entire year.

I wish you a peaceful, joyful, and hopeful Christmas season filled with love and kindness.



Bernadette Fisher
Director



BCCS Advent Appeal

Share hope and happiness this Christmas

Our Advent Appeal is so important because it helps us support families facing tough times, who are in need of both practical and emotional help. Recently, we asked our partner schools to share how our Christmas voucher scheme has made a difference:

- ▶ For many, it reduced stress and helped them enjoy a genuine Christmas celebration.
- ▶ Some families in hostels or experiencing homelessness used the vouchers to buy essentials that many of us might take for granted.
- ▶ Parents unable to work due to illness knew they could provide presents and food for their children this festive season.

All of this is made possible through the kindness and generosity of our supporters in parishes, schools, and communities across Essex, East London, and beyond.

No matter how big or small your gift, it will help us bring hope and make a real difference.

Thank you so much for your support!

Brentwood Catholic Children's Society
133 High Street,
Billericay, Essex, CM12 9AB
01277 712022
headoffice@bccs.org.uk



To donate please scan here

STRENGTHENING SCHOOL SUPPORT

Empowering staff to support children's mental health

At BCCS we pride ourselves on being experts in children and young people's mental health. We also see ourselves as allies to school staff, who are under increasing pressure to support students facing complex emotional and behavioural challenges.

School staff are often asked to understand, support, and guide children experiencing difficulties; whether it's managing disruptive behaviours, mental health concerns, home life challenges, or barriers to learning. Yet, many teachers and support staff receive limited training in these areas, despite the growing demand to support children with more complex needs.

That is why our training team is excited to introduce a new series of presentations - bite-sized, practical video sessions designed

specifically for school staff. These sessions will cover essential topics such as Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA), emotional regulation in the classroom, managing self-harming behaviours, and more. The aim is to provide accessible, time-friendly resources that empower staff to better support their students and we are currently exploring new platforms and ways to deliver them, ensuring they reach as many schools and staff members as possible.

This is a new chapter for us, showcasing our ongoing dedication to evolving and broadening the support we offer. With your continued support, we can work together to foster safer, more compassionate environments where children's mental health is at the heart of everything we do.

Team Day: Bringing the BCCS Team Together

In September, our BCCS family came together for a truly inspiring and uplifting occasion - our annual Team Day. This event was more than just a gathering; it was a celebration of our collective dedication, a platform for sharing insights, and a vital opportunity to strengthen the bonds that enable us to better serve children, young people, and their families.

Our entire team, from School Counsellors and Child and Family Counsellors to Operations, Finance, Marketing, Fundraising, and Trustees, joined forces in a day filled with meaningful conversations, collaborative activities, and shared learning.

The feedback from the day was overwhelmingly positive, with participants expressing how valuable it was to connect across departments, exchange ideas, and learn from each other's experiences.

Our Team Day is a reminder of the incredible power of unity. When we come together, pooling our skills and compassion, we amplify our impact - creating a more supportive environment for those we serve. These moments foster collaboration, inspire new ideas, and reinforce our shared commitment to making a difference.



As Mary-Ann, one of our Trustees, beautifully put it:



The expertise and kindness in the room was so evident. It was a very special day. So wonderful to bring everyone together to connect and to share expertise.





How therapy can provide a path away from exclusion

Background

Alfie (pseudonym), a 13-year-old boy in Year 8, was referred to the school pastoral team after a series of escalating behavioural incidents. His teachers reported persistent classroom disruption, defiance toward authority, and multiple instances of fighting with peers. Despite numerous sanctions, including several suspensions and over one hundred detentions, there was little improvement. The headteacher eventually informed Alfie's parents that expulsion was being considered.

Alfie lived with his long-term foster parents. He was intelligent, sporty, and popular with his peers, despite struggling with

concentration and emotional regulation. The difficulty he experienced in the classroom, combined with his desire to fit in with friends, was beginning to lead to risk-taking behaviour both at school and at home.

After a particularly serious altercation at school, Alfie's foster parents, hoping to avoid expulsion, referred him to our Children and Family Counselling Services (CFCS). Alfie was initially reluctant. He didn't want to talk about his feelings with somebody unfamiliar and believed he hadn't done anything wrong. He agreed to attend only to "get people off my back."

An initial assessment identified underlying issues related to anger, anxiety, and feelings of abandonment,

linked to his experience in foster care.

Therapeutic Intervention

Alfie was offered weekly creative therapy at CFCS, for as long as he needed and was willing to attend. The focus was on providing him with a reflective space of his own, somewhere he could tell his story and feel heard by someone impartial from both home and school dynamics.

Due to Alfie's emotional dysregulation, it was important to build a trusting relationship in which he could experience co-regulation before learning to self-regulate. Therefore, the work remained non-directive and child-led throughout.

We also collaborated with the school to ensure a



CASE STUDY

Alfie, aged 13

designated member of staff met with Alfie weekly. This adult provided consistent encouragement, monitored his progress, and helped him set realistic academic and behavioural goals. They were available when Alfie needed time out of lessons. Alfie was issued a time-out card, and all of his teachers were informed of its purpose.

Alfie's foster parents were included in review sessions, where progress was discussed and insights into his behaviours were shared. They received support in learning de-escalation strategies and coping techniques to use at home.

Progress

In the first month, Alfie remained resistant to therapy, often giving short answers and questioning its purpose. However, by incorporating

his interests in sport and friendships, the therapist used metaphors around teamwork, rules, and managing frustration. This approach helped Alfie feel understood and more engaged.

Gradually, Alfie began reporting fewer incidents of aggression and described situations where he had calmed himself or walked away. He started to pause before reacting and could recognise early signs of emotional overwhelm. Teachers noticed gradual improvements: fewer classroom disruptions and greater participation in class discussions.

His foster parents commented that he seemed "more willing to talk instead of just slamming doors."

Alfie had no further suspensions. Although he still received some sanctions

for minor issues, these were less frequent, significantly reducing the pressure on his parents and alleviating stress at home. His grades improved slightly across most subjects, not just those he was naturally interested in. He also began thinking about his GCSE options.

Conclusion

Alfie's case highlights how early access to therapy, when combined with school and family support, can successfully divert a young person from the path to exclusion. Therapy helped Alfie build emotional awareness, self-regulation skills, and healthier coping mechanisms. Most importantly, it restored his sense of hope and belonging, both protective factors against further behavioural difficulties.

Suspensions and Permanent Exclusions in England: Key Figures 2023/24

The Department for Education (DfE) collects and publishes data on school exclusions in England and its latest data for 2023/24 reveals concerning trends in schools across England, highlighting increases in both suspensions and permanent exclusions.

Key points:

- ▶ Exclusions increased, reversing pre-pandemic decline.
- ▶ Boys, disadvantaged pupils, and children with SEN face higher rates.
- ▶ Exclusions rose in all school types; secondary schools have the most.
- ▶ 10,900 permanent exclusions (13 per 10,000 students).
- ▶ Suspensions hit 954,952, the highest since 2006 - a 21% rise from 2022/23.
- ▶ Special schools have the highest exclusion rates.



Ingatestone Hall Tea and Tour an unforgettable experience!

We want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Lord Petre, his son Dominic, and the dedicated staff at Ingatestone Hall for their generous support and hospitality in making our Tea & Tour event a resounding success. From the moment we arrived, it was clear that this was going to be a special day, and we were delighted to welcome so many new faces!

The enchanting setting of the Grade I listed 16th-century house provided the perfect

backdrop for an immersive journey into history. Guests enjoyed an exclusive tour of Ingatestone Hall, exploring its stunning art collection, hidden priest holes, and intriguing royal connections. Lord Petre and Dominic shared personal anecdotes and insights that brought the history of the house to life in a way that you simply cannot find in history books.

The day was topped off with tea and homemade sweet treats served in the beautiful summer parlour,

creating a warm and inviting atmosphere. The lively raffle added an extra touch of fun and excitement to the afternoon.

This event was a wonderful celebration of history, community, and shared appreciation for this remarkable heritage site. We are already looking forward to organising more events like this - so keep an eye out for upcoming announcements and secure your tickets early!





Feelgood fundraising

Billericay Lions

Thank you to the Billericay Lions for their generous £1,000 donation to help children in our local area. It is wonderful to be recognised for the work we do, and we truly appreciate the Lions Community Team taking the time to visit our Billericay office, meet with our staff, and see our specialist facilities firsthand.



To arrange a visit or community talk contact Damian – 07912 308000.

Sponsored Walks

We are incredibly grateful for the amazing support we received this year through our annual sponsored walks, which took place across the Diocese.

These walks demonstrate the power of community, with every step taken and every donation given helping to provide essential services.

London Marathon 2025 - Congratulations to our four runners for their fantastic achievement and record-breaking fundraising of over £20,000 - well done!

Up for a challenge?

Whether it is a run, bungee jump, skydive, or even a festive Santa Dash – we have got something for everyone!

Every step, jump, or climb can make a real difference, and together we can achieve incredible things.

Read more here



Annual Prize Draw Tickets

We are getting close to the final weeks to buy and submit tickets for our annual prize draw and we would ask that you return your ticket stubs to us by **Friday, 12th December**.

A big thank you to all the parishes, individuals, clubs, and groups who sold tickets throughout the year - you are making a real difference!

This year, we have three amazing cash prizes: £300, £200, and £100. Winners will be contacted promptly following the draw with the winning ticket numbers posted on our website.

Afternoon tea at Roslin Beach Hotel

Looking for a unique and memorable Christmas gift for a loved one? Why not give them a luxurious experience they'll cherish.



Treat someone special to a delightful Shrove Tuesday afternoon tea in the stunning ballroom at The Roslin Beach Hotel on Tuesday, 17th February 2026.

Tickets are £35 per person - a thoughtful gift that combines elegance, indulgence, and support for a good cause.

Scan the QR code below to find out more and purchase the perfect Christmas present today!

Scan to book now



Christmas Luncheon

Friday 5th December
The Lawn, Rochford

We are delighted to announce, following the success of our Summer Event in June, that we will be hosting a Christmas Luncheon at this much celebrated venue.

A delicious two-course luncheon will be served in the stunning orangery overlooking the beautiful, landscaped gardens. Tickets are available to purchase now at £37.50 per person.



Christmas Craft & Gift Fair

Friday 16th November
The Mill Arts & Events Centre, Rayleigh

There will be lots of stalls selling crafts and gifts so come along and pick up a few early Christmas presents and enjoy some refreshments while helping us to raise vital funds for our work.

There is free parking at the venue and admission is only £1.50 for adults and free for children under 14.



Tree of Angels

We are delighted to host our online Tree of Angels platform again this year which will allow our supporters to light up an angel on a virtual Christmas tree and post a message of remembrance during November or a Christmas greeting during Advent.

Our Tree of Angels can be used as a way of posting a prayer or dedication for a friend or family member to let them know you are thinking of them or to remember someone who has passed away.



Christmas Cards

Our selection of quality cards are now in stock and all the profits from the sale of our cards will directly help the families and children we support each year. They proudly display the BCCS logo on the back, so every card you send will raise awareness of our work.

It is never too early to buy your cards and as our designs are always very popular and supplies are limited, we would suggest you place your order early so you are guaranteed your first choice.