



## **Introduction/Welcome from Oona Stannard to Visions for Leadership Conference**

31 March 2009

1. Good morning. On behalf of my colleagues at the Catholic Education Service for England and Wales and Reverend Dr James Hanvey, Director of the Heythrop Institute for Religion, Ethics and Public Life, I would like to welcome you to this important conference.
2. The conference is part of the ***Leaders for Catholic Education*** project., co directed by Fr James and myself. The conference is made possible by the generous support of the National College for School Leadership. As you know we have a distinguished programme of speakers and you will, therefore, not be surprised to learn that the conference was very oversubscribed and we could have doubled the numbers of delegates attending, had we but had the space.
3. A wife recently said of her husband, that she wished he would do something more likely to make a difference to the world, such as being a headteacher. That wife was Michelle Obama speaking about the now President of the United States of America!
4. I am sure that all of us here agree on the importance of headteachers and acknowledge that they can and really do make a difference to the world. That is why we are here today..... to ensure that we can continue to build on the legacy of our excellent headteachers. Headteachers' whose work is commended in the excellent outcomes achieved by Catholic schools and reported on by Ofsted and DCSF.
5. Pope John Paul II said that teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of humanities excellent and creative activities. He noted that the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirit of human beings. I am sure that you will agree that this noble calling and its positive impact is multiplied many times when thinking of the role of the headteacher of a Catholic school. (And I say this as one who still believes firmly that headteachers should firstly be experienced teachers.)

6. Nevertheless, we cannot deny that we face many challenges in securing a sufficient number of well qualified headteachers for our Catholic schools. That is why the focus of today's activities is to give time and space to think more deeply about the leaders that we need and want for our schools, and, as importantly, to consider their needs and what support we, as the Catholic community, should put in place for those aspiring to this noble vocation and those who are currently in the position of headteacher. Your contribution to these deliberations, whether as current school leader, school governor, diocesan officer or other member of the Church will be invaluable and I thank you for this.

**Oona Stannard**  
**Chief Executive & Director**

Footnote:

Quotation of John Paul II

*'Teaching has an extraordinary moral depth and is one of humanity's excellent and creative activities, for the teacher does not write on inanimate material, but on the very spirits of human beings.'*

*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*