

## **ORTHODOX SYRIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION OF THE EAST (OSSAE)**

### **Annual Report: April 2025 to March 2026**

With gratitude and praise to the Holy Triune God, I am honoured to present the OSSAE–UK, Europe & Africa Annual Report (April 2025 – March 2026). This year marked one year since the introduction of the new Sunday School curriculum, now successfully embraced by most church units, reflecting our shared commitment to strengthening spiritual education.

Following an online General Body meeting and diocesan survey, textbooks were printed and distributed efficiently, and I sincerely thank all Zonal Coordinators for their dedicated support. In response to increasing operational costs, the registration fee was revised to £15 for units receiving printed textbooks and £10 for those without printed materials.

During 2025, the Northwest American Diocese introduced M’adrono, an AI-based platform within the Talmido framework, and online training sessions along with the first-ever zonal Teachers’ Conferences equipped teachers with innovative teaching approaches; special appreciation is extended to Rev. Fr. Dr. Jacob Mathew and Mr. Suresh Daniel for their valuable guidance.

A rolling trophy was instituted in memory of the late Mr. P. M. Raju to encourage student excellence, and an AI team, guided by Rev. Fr. Jacob Mathew and Mr. Joe Varghese with support from Mr. Suresh Daniel, was established to develop video-based resources for the Talmido platform. Significant progress was also achieved through the successful design of Grade 10 and Grade 12 certificates under the leadership of Exam Board Controller Mr. Simon Chacko and the Examination Board.

With heartfelt gratitude to Almighty God, our spiritual fathers, Metropolitans, vicars, head teachers, teachers, and all diocesan members, we continued to coordinate and strengthen Sunday School ministry throughout the year, praying that God will continue to bless our efforts as we nurture future generations in faith and service.

Diocesan Executive Committee led by

- President – H.E. Abraham Mar Stephanos;
- Director – Rev. Fr. Anoop Abraham;
- Secretary – Mr. Vinod Philip;
- Joint Secretary – Mr. Robin Thomas;
- Treasurer – Dr. Baby Cherian;
- Curriculum Coordinator – Mr. Suresh Daniel;
- Controller of Exams – Mr. Simon Chacko;
- Ireland Zonal Secretary – Mr. Febe Francis.

Zones are guided by dedicated clergy and coordinators:

- Central – Fr. Aby Philip Varghese & Mr. Geevarghese Thomas (Hemel Hempstead)
- North – Fr. Binu Thomas & Mrs. Jean Jose (Stoke-on-Trent)
- Southeast – Fr. Jins K. John & Mr. Varghese Mathai (Central London)
- Southwest – Fr. Geevarghese J. Tharakan & Mrs. Tina John (Bristol)
- Scotland & Northeast – Fr. Varghese P. A. & Mrs. Biji Varghese (Newcastle)
- Ireland – Fr. Eldhose Babu & Mr. John Mathew (Dublin)
- Central & Eastern Europe – Fr. Rohith Skariah Georgy
- Africa – Fr. Jobin Mammen Cherian.

#### The Exam Board:

Chaired by Controller of Exams – Mr. Simon Chacko;

Zonal Representatives:

Southeast: Mr. Jobin George

Southwest: Mrs. Siny Thankachan

Central: Ms. Aswathy Jacob

North: Mr. Linz Aynattu

Scotland & Northeast: Mrs. Jinsu George

Ireland: Mrs. Merin Mani

Central & Eastern Europe: Mr. Cyril Saji.

#### Safeguarding is overseen by DBS Officers:

Diocesan Lead – Mrs. Sony Linz (St. Thomas IOC, Liverpool);

Southeast – Mrs. Reshma Benoy (London), Mrs. Lisha Simon (East Kent)

Southwest – Mrs. Sophy Mathew (Oxford), Mrs. Jerly Sinu Peter (Swindon)

Central – Mrs. Omana Varghese (Cambridge), Mr. Sam Kurian (Hemel Hempstead)

North – Dr. Sumin David Joseph (Sheffield), Mrs. Rini Mathew (Stoke-on-Trent)

Scotland & Northeast – Mrs. Sheena Philip (Sunderland).

#### OVBS is led by:

Coordinator – Mrs. Merlin Robin (Cambridge);

Associate Coordinator – Mrs. Ruby Sinu (Stoke-on-Trent).

#### Talent Events and activities coordinated by:

Coordinator – Mr. Joshi Eapen (Manchester);

Associate Coordinator – Mrs. Sony Jerrin (Stoke-on-Trent).

#### Children's (Family) Conference activities led by:

Coordinator:– Mrs. Jincy James (Peterborough);

Associate Coordinator – Mrs. Viji Syra (Hemel Hempstead).

The Annual Teachers' Conference and General Body Meeting, held at St. Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, Liverpool, brought together over 110 participants from across the Diocese, focusing on equipping teachers to mentor young believers in today's digital age. Throughout the year, the Executive Committee met regularly to coordinate examinations, curriculum implementation, talent events, and diocesan programmes, ensuring steady progress across all ministries.

Annual Accounts for year 2025-2026 completed with a Closing balance of £35275.19 as of 31st March 2026, including Total Income of £43913.87 (Opening balance as of April 2025 - £44422.93) and Total Expense of £53061.61.

In 2025, Vacation Bible School continued its long-standing role as a key diocesan spiritual programme, marking the 13th year of centralized OVBS ministry under the theme "Walk in Purity" (Psalm 119:9). Around 50 parishes conducted programmes through both in-person and virtual formats, supported by well-prepared learning materials and creative student participation. A notable highlight was the first combined in-person OVBS held by parishes in Germany alongside their family conference, reflecting

growing international collaboration. OVBS remained a meaningful time of spiritual renewal, fellowship, and faith formation for children, teachers, and families across the Diocese.

Safeguarding remained a central priority throughout the year, with nearly 270 new DBS checks completed across England and Wales, bringing the total to 645 active DBS certifications within the Diocese, alongside PVG checks conducted in Scotland. Continuous safeguarding training and awareness initiatives further strengthened protection policies, ensuring that all diocesan activities provide safe and nurturing environments for children and vulnerable members of the community.

Parish and zonal talent competitions were successfully conducted across all regions, culminating in the Diocesan Talent Event hosted at St. Thomas IOC, Cambridge. The competitions encouraged creativity, confidence, and spiritual expression among students while strengthening fellowship among Sunday Schools throughout the Diocese. A memorial rolling trophy introduced in honour of the late Mr. P. M. Raju further inspired excellence and participation.

The Executive committee met virtually around 20 times in the year to discuss and prepare for Talent events, Examinations, OVBS, Text book printing etc. The Executive committee and Curriculum committee virtually met several times to discuss the feedback and assess the updated simplified version of the curriculum launched in Jan 2025 and mentor orientation programs.

Diocesan examinations for Grades 10 and 12 were conducted in December 2025, with 201 students successfully completing Grade 10 and 69 students completing Grade 12. Re-examinations held in April 2026 provided additional opportunities for students, while the structured examination system continued to strengthen academic discipline alongside spiritual growth.

Sunday School Day was celebrated across the UK with special prayers and teacher gatherings, reaffirming the mission of Christian education within parish life. Printed Sunday School textbooks were successfully delivered to all units by March 2026, ensuring timely availability for the academic year.

The OSSAE UEA Core Curriculum Committee experienced a productive and grace-filled year focused on strengthening faith formation through curriculum development, mentor training, and digital innovation. We extend sincere gratitude to our Diocesan Metropolitan H.E. Abraham Mar Stephanos, OSSAE Director Rev. Fr. Anoop Abraham, Rev. Fr. Dr. Jacob Mathew, Mr. Joe Varghese, and all Vicars, Head Teachers, Assistant Head Teachers, and teachers of the UEA Diocese for their continued guidance and support. Following the introduction of the updated curriculum in September 2024, the Core Curriculum Committee—Rev. Fr. Anoop Abraham (Director), Mr. Suresh Daniel and Mr. Febe Francis (Curriculum Coordinators), Mr. Vinod Philip (Secretary), Mr. Robin Thomas (Joint Secretary), and Mr. Simon Chacko (Examination Controller)—successfully adapted and released the curriculum for implementation in January 2025. A virtual Teacher Orientation Programme and zonal conferences equipped mentors to effectively use the Talmido platform and the newly introduced AI assistant M'adrono, presented by Rev. Fr. Dr. Jacob Mathew and Mr. Joe Varghese, supporting lesson planning and ministry activities. A dedicated mentor team comprising Mr. Suresh Daniel, Mr. Sam Chacko, Mrs. Mini John, Mrs. Shiji Baboy, Mr. Divya Shaji, Mrs. Princy Shibu, and Mrs. Ancy Bijo initiated the Learning Outcome Video Project, completing Grade 12 scripts and commencing Grade 11, with special appreciation to Rev. Fr. Dr. Jacob Mathew for training and guidance. The launch of the Malphone WhatsApp Community further strengthened collaboration among mentors from Pre-KG to Grade 12. Through these initiatives, OSSAE UEA continues its mission of nurturing young disciples of Christ through relevant, engaging, and spiritually enriching Sunday School education.

Ireland Zone: The Ireland Zone experienced notable expansion and spiritual growth, increasing to around 13 participating Sunday Schools. Educational reforms focused on interactive learning, continuous assessment, and early childhood faith formation, while major achievements included strong participation in zonal and diocesan talent events, the preparation of OVBS textbooks for the Senior category, the establishment of structured safeguarding systems, an educators' conference under the Anatole initiative, and a youth spiritual conference (Quo Vadis) that encouraged faith-based leadership among teenagers.

During the academic year 2025–2026, over 2,000 students and 600 teachers actively participated in Sunday School ministry across the UK, Ireland, Europe, and Africa. By the end of the financial year, the Diocese had 54 Sunday School units in the UK, 13 in Ireland, 4 in Europe, and 1 in Africa, reflecting encouraging growth and strong engagement.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our Diocesan Metropolitan, Sunday School Director, Treasurer, Zonal Presidents and Coordinators, DBS Coordinators, Examination Controller and Board Members, Vicars, parents, and teachers for their unwavering support and dedication to nurturing our children in faith. May God continue to bless all our future Sunday School endeavours as we guide the next generation in Christ's path.

Mr Vinod Philip

Secretary, OSSAE- UK

Report Presented on: 25th April, 2026