



Church of England Schools Diocese of St Albans

Information about Church Schools

February 2017

What is a Church School?

Church of England National Society

The National Society acquired its name because it was the first *national* society to exist for any purpose – in this case being founded in 1811 in order to promote the establishment of schools across the entire breadth of the land. The schools founded by the National Society and other Anglican bodies in the nineteenth century stand alongside other schools that had already been founded and have been an integral part of the life of the English Church for as long as there has been English Christianity. When it was founded in 1811, the National Society's aim was that "the National Religion should be made the foundation of National Education": education for all, firmly based on the Christian Gospel and Anglican principles. The Society established a national system of education, supplemented by the State from 1870 onwards. Five thousand Church of England and Church in Wales schools, educating almost a million children and young people, are the heirs of that tradition.

Church of England School History

Pre-1870

- Churches were the main providers of education
- The National Society aims were for there to be a school in every parish to provide education 'for the poor of the parish'
- Sites were donated by benefactors in trust to the vicar and church wardens
- Buildings were provided by donations and grants from the National Society

1870

- Board schools were created where church schools didn't exist.

1902

- LEAs became financially responsible for both voluntary and Board schools.
- Governors maintained voluntary school buildings.

1944

- Voluntary schools chose to be 'aided' or 'controlled'
- Differences in membership of the governing body, RE teaching, employment of staff, responsibility for building repairs and improvements

1991

- Church schools are subject to Charity law, Education law, Employment law and Church of England Parliamentary Measures

Trust Deeds

- All VA schools and many VC schools have a Trust Deed
- Some schools have lost the deed
- All church schools have a generic Ethos statement, provided by the National Society, which can be found in the Instruments of Government

Church School Ethos Statement

The following Ethos Statement was sent by the National Society to all church school governors to adopt or adapt:

The school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level

The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice

It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils

Church School Vision Statement

Church schools work with staff, governors, clergy and pupils to provide a visible statement of their vision as a church school. This may be seen as a visible statement in the entrance hall, website, letterhead etc. The vision may be based on the diocesan or national vision statements (see over). Some schools may also have a list of school aims.

St Albans Diocesan Vision

Living God's Love is the vision of the parishes, church schools and chaplaincies across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Luton and Barnet. This vision is grounded in the love of God and love of neighbour flowing from God's love for us. Its three priorities are:

- going deeper into God
- transforming communities
- making new disciples

The vision of the DBE is to see church schools at the heart of the diocese's mission. This is articulated in its vision statement:

Church Schools in the Diocese of St Albans Live God's Love by being Distinctively Christian, Community-Focussed and by Serving the Common Good.

In aiming to achieve this goal the Board has established the following priorities:

Priorities

Building on the excellent contribution of 136 church schools (with more in the pipeline) of which 91.9% are either Outstanding or Good, the priorities of the DBE are:

- Community-focussed schools serving the common good
- Outstanding education delivered in a distinctively Christian setting
- Church schools at the centre of the diocesan vision Living God's Love
- High quality Religious Education
- The creation of new church schools within new housing developments
- Strong and fruitful school/parish relationships
- Rigorous safeguarding that ensures church school pupils are celebrated as children of God

These priorities are delivered in ways that recognise the unique local context of each of our schools.

Church of England Vision Statement

Our vision for education is deeply Christian, with this promise by Jesus of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart. Our vision embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people. We offer a vision of human flourishing for all, one that embraces excellence and academic rigour, but sets them in a wider framework.

This framework is rooted in four basic elements:

- **Educating for wisdom, knowledge and skills:** enabling discipline, confidence and delight in seeking wisdom and knowledge, and developing talents in all areas of life.
- **Educating for hope and aspiration:** enabling healing, repair and renewal, coping wisely with things and people going wrong, opening horizons and guiding people into ways of fulfilling them.
- **Educating for community and living well together:** a core focus on relationships, participation in communities and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together.
- **Educating for dignity and respect:** the basic principle of respect for the value and preciousness of each person, treating each person as a unique individual of inherent worth.

Our vision, in line with the Church of England's role as the established Church, is for the common good of the whole community and its environment, whether national, regional or local. It is hospitable to diversity, respects freedom of religion and belief, and encourages others to contribute from the depths of their own traditions and understandings. It invites collaboration, alliances, negotiation of differences, and the forming of new settlements in order to serve the flourishing of a healthily plural society and democracy, together with a healthily plural educational system.

Church School Ethos

What are the distinctive characteristics of church schools?

- There is no such thing as a 'typical' Anglican school.
- Visual evidence: prospectus, signs and symbols, mission/vision statement, displays, prayer areas, charity board, general care for the environment
- Trust Deed: Ethos statement, vision of the senior management and governors
- Community: Christian values, good relationships, pastoral care of staff and pupils, prayers, links with local community/parish, visitors welcomed, pupils are happy and motivated, everyone understands what it means to be a church school
- Organisation: leadership vision and management style informed by Christian values and beliefs about the nature of God deriving from the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; policies reflect church school vision; the school is welcoming of other faiths and cultures; inclusive; RE and creative arts are highly valued
- Learning: pupils achieve their potential; awareness of global Christianity; race, creed, disability are not barriers to inclusion and learning; spiritual development is good across the curriculum; staff training on church school vision

Leadership and Management

Governing body: preserves Trust Deed, spiritual and moral character of the school

Headteacher: ensures high quality education, sustains and develops the Christian character of the school

Staff: contribute to the Christian character of the school, which is reflected in the relationships with other staff and pupils

RE Co-ordinator: leads and manages RE teachers; responsibility for RE curriculum

Key Features of Church Schools

- Promoting a Christian vision
- Encouraging, monitoring and challenging others to achieve the vision
- Valuing and involving staff in putting the vision into practice
- Involving all stakeholders in evaluating progress
- Brokering effective partnerships with others

Promoting the Vision

- The school's Christian character is distinctive in documents and displays
- Christian values show through in personal actions
- The head and governors have had a strong focus on this area
- Pastoral and spiritual links with the church support the vision

Encouraging, Monitoring and Challenging

- Systematic processes in place for evaluating this area
- Embedded in school improvement planning, Ofsted & S48 Inspection
- Improvement is evident
- Staff receive good support and strong challenge

Valuing and Involving Staff

- Effective communication of vision to all and staff promote it
- Staff benefit from high quality CPD
- Recruitment and induction effective in getting staff on board with church status

Stakeholders Evaluating

- All stakeholders contribute to school improvement
- Parents reflect the way the school values their views
- Evaluation results in a clear and strategic view of improvement as a church school

Effective Partnerships

- Productive links with the local church community
- Active and regular support of parents through worship
- Purposeful and productive involvement in the school by local groups

Assemblies and Collective Acts of Worship

Current requirements for collective worship

- The 1944 Education Act required a daily act of collective worship in all state schools, at the start of the day, with the whole school together
- Legal right of withdrawal available to all parents (in prospectus and policy)
- The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) specified that Collective worship should be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”. SACREs were set up (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education). It allowed “determinations”, allowing community schools to ask for acts of worship not to be largely Christian in character. It permitted schools to have acts of worship at different times of the day and in smaller groups if required.
- Many schools, particularly secondary do not comply with legislation and are dissatisfied with the law
- Most primary schools work well within the law
- CW is the responsibility of governors with the headteacher in Voluntary Controlled and Voluntary Aided schools

Assemblies

- Pupils and staff are brought together for an act of collective worship
- Notices are given out
- Stories are told to reinforce school aims and values
- Visitors contribute, offering awards, information, reflections about life

Collective Worship

- Legally, every pupil in every school must attend an act of worship in school every day unless parents withdraw their child
- In community schools the majority acts of collective worship will be of a broadly Christian character
- In church schools worship may be in the tradition of the church
- School worship is educational and must be appropriate – it is not church. It should take account of age, aptitude, diversity, progression and continuity

Religious Education

RE in schools

- Voluntary Aided C of E schools reflect their Trust Deed and Ethos Statement and may use Diocesan RE Guidelines and/or the local Agreed Syllabus
- All schools are encouraged to use Understanding Christianity as a resource to improve teaching and learning <http://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk/>
- Voluntary Controlled schools follow the locally Agreed Syllabus (Herts, Beds, Luton, Barnet)
- Community schools follow the locally Agreed Syllabus

Agreed Syllabus (AS) for Religious Education

- Agreed Syllabus Conference every five years to review RE locally
- Local Authority (LA) works with Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and teacher working parties

Understanding Christianity

'Understanding Christianity' is a set of comprehensive materials, linked to training, offering a clear and coherent approach to teaching and learning about Christianity in RE for pupils aged 4-14. It is compatible with the Agreed Syllabus for RE.

Church of England VA Schools in the Diocese of St Albans

Church of England VA schools in the Diocese of St Albans may design a programme of study with the Diocese, using Diocesan Guidelines and the locally Agreed Syllabus

Church of England VC Schools in the Diocese of St Albans

Church of England VC schools in the Diocese of St Albans most follow the LA Agreed Syllabus, but can, where permitted, use the Diocesan Guidelines for supplementary work on Christian units.

A Statement of Entitlement from the Church of England Education Office

Please see the website: https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/re_statement_of_entitlement_ratified_national_society_council_june_16.pdf

1. The aims of Religious Education **in Church schools** are:
 - To enable pupils to know about and understand Christianity as a living faith that influences the lives of people worldwide and as the religion that shapes British culture and heritage
 - To enable pupils to know and understand about other major world religions and world views, their impact on society, culture and the wider world enabling pupils to express ideas and insights
 - To contribute to the development of pupils' own spiritual/philosophical convictions, exploring and enriching their own beliefs and worldviews

2. At the end of their education **in Church schools** the expectation is that as a minimum pupils are able to:
 - Give a theologically informed and thoughtful account of Christianity as a living and diverse faith
 - Show an informed and respectful attitude to other religions and world views in their search for God and meaning
 - Reflect critically and responsibly on their own spiritual, philosophical and ethical convictions

3. Christianity should be the majority study in RE in every school. **In Church schools** that should be clearly adhered to.
 - KS 1 – 3 at least 2/3 Christianity
 - KS 4 the study of Christianity will be a significant and substantial part of any public qualification
 - KS 5 continue the study of religion and world views within the provision of core RE in an appropriate format for all students

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools

All Church of England schools have a SIAMS Inspection (Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools) under Section 48 of the 2005 Education Act within eight weeks of an Ofsted inspection.

Schools are encouraged to evaluate their church school, using four key questions set by the National Society ((the Church of England's national body for education):

- **How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?**
- **What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?**
- **How effective is the religious education? (VA schools)**
- **How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a Church school?**

A toolkit was produced for all schools to help them in this evaluation process. Experience has suggested that schools may either wish to blend their answers to the four key questions into the school/Ofsted SEF, or prefer to use the church school SEF (see website <http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/schools/inspections-sias-siams/>).

Headteachers have a folder of all the materials the Diocese has produced so far, to aid church school self-evaluation. The most important thing is that staff in church schools are able to evaluate the areas of church school life they are proud of and select some areas for development. The toolkit is there to help, but should not overwhelm the school!

There are school improvement issues that arise from the self-evaluation of church schools and from the SIAS inspection which could also affect the CPD in the school. These may be included in the performance management of some members of staff and the headteacher.

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