

Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education

Report to Diocesan Synod

for the Year Ended 31 December 2023

1. Constitution

As approved by Diocesan Synod and effective from 1st January 2022, the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) is a committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), established under s.3(7) of the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 (the 2021 Measure).

The DBE Committee exercises powers and duties conferred on it by or pursuant to the 2021 Measure, delegated by the DBF. For practical purposes, whilst members of the DBE Committee are not charity trustees, they act on the assumption that they have the duties of charity trustees in discharging the DBE's functions on behalf of the DBF.

2. Vision

The DBE maintains a bold commitment to education. It supports diocesan Church of England (CE) schools to live out a theologically rooted Christian vision which is generous and enriching; that nurtures a culture of deep reflection and compassion for God's world, encourages spiritual development and provides a rich experience and appreciation of the Christian faith, enabling all children and adults to flourish.

3. Scope of the DBE

The DBE serves 105 CE schools within the diocese, equating to approximately 26 000 pupils. These schools are supported through school improvement and buildings advice, consultancy and training, in addition to materials, policy and guidance on issues relating to Christian distinctiveness and inclusiveness.

3.1 Statutory responsibilities

The DBE is required to provide an annual report to Diocesan Synod on its statutory functions and responsibilities, as defined in the 2021 Measure:

3.1.1 To promote education within the Diocese of Canterbury, according to the faith and practice of the Church of England

- A new Framework for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) was launched by the CE Education Office and implemented from September 2023. Graded judgements have been removed, replaced with strengths and areas for development. These relate to seven inspection questions which explore how, through its theologically rooted Christian vision and practice, a church school is living up to its foundation, enabling pupils and adults to flourish. The DBE officer team prioritised school visits for those schools most likely to be inspected (according to a nationally published list), providing specialist support and monitoring progress against previous areas for development.
- The team has continued to provide a flexible and accessible training offer, plus regular email updates, in-person visits and pastoral conversations with leaders and local ministers.

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3.1.2 Promote religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese

- The InspiREd Religious Education (RE) subject leader development programme, originally authored and delivered by our Canterbury team in conjunction with St. Alban's Diocese, ran for the fourth consecutive year. It expanded to include colleagues from Rochester, London, Southwark, Chichester and Ely Dioceses.
- Over 55 teachers attended an RE Leaders' conference in conjunction with Rochester Diocese, at which diocesan officers and local RE leaders shared good practice and ideas to strengthen and develop provision in schools.
- We have continued to explore 'Religion and World Views' with schools and empower RE leaders to adjust their school's RE curriculum to meet contextual needs; weaving the golden threads (God, identity, community) through each unit and year group and incorporating new units from the Kent Agreed Syllabus for RE.
- All schools are aware of the expectations of Collective Worship under the new SIAMS framework, with the ambition that it enables all pupils and adults to flourish spiritually and is invitational, inclusive and inspirational.
- The team organised an inaugural Year 2 Leavers' Service in Canterbury Cathedral for CE Infant Schools - a day of celebration, learning, prayer and worship. The theme was 'Be Brave', inspired by the words in Jeremiah 29:11, and culminated in a special shared worship in the Crypt.

3.1.3 Watch over the interests of church schools and secure the provision of new schools

- The DBE published a '[Strategy for the Church school system](#)', responding to contemporary, systemic pressures being felt by schools. The document intentionally adopts a narrative of promoting system resilience; an approach that is apolitical, recognises real issues of finance and sustainability, and within which the structures and pathways open to schools have a clear theological underpinning and help them to express their Christian vision.
- New versions of key documents agreed between the Department for Education (DfE) and CE Education Office were published in September 2023: a revised National Memorandum of Understanding and updated Model Academy Articles of Association for use by Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) with CE schools. Both affirm the authority of each DBE to set strategy and preferences for its own context, stating an expectation that DfE Regional Directors will consult DBE strategies when undertaking consultations or making decisions relating to academies, schools causing concern or opportunities for new schools.
- Officers continue to monitor the '[Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision](#)' for opportunities to extend the availability of a church school education to more children and families, including ways in which they might encounter the Christian faith.

3.1.4 Give advice as to matters affecting church schools and church educational endowments

- We have continued to provide support for church schools, site trustees and Academy Trusts in educational legislation and sites; particularly in relation to governing documents, nursery provision and the use or development of land and buildings.

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- Our Schools Officer (Organisation and Estates) worked through the highly publicised issue of possible Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in schools. The DBE engaged with Responsible Bodies to check and monitor sites; reviewing steps taken by both Academy Trusts (academies) and Kent County Council (maintained schools), in addition to employing its retained building surveyors to examine seven Voluntary Aided schools after visual inspections by school staff. The summary outcome is that one Voluntary Controlled school was confirmed as having RAAC and the DfE is implementing a remedial work project.

Note: the path to net zero

For all capital projects in Voluntary Aided schools, for which the DBE holds funds allocated from the DfE, our planning identifies projects which would ideally involve decarbonised solutions. These principally involve boilers considered to be at ‘end of life’; however, the carbon neutral solutions are up to ten times more expensive than like-for-like replacements, potentially affecting the governors’ contribution and the overall distribution of funding. We endeavour to employ creative, mixed solutions, bringing in other energy efficient or ‘greener’ systems such as LED lighting or solar panels.

3.2 Leadership and governance

- Our ‘Rooted’ leadership course is intended as a gift to headteachers who are new or relatively early in role, offering space and time to consider the unique characteristics of church school leadership. Sessions explore personal foundations and sustaining habits, ideas of leading through incompleteness (humility) and transforming community through welcome, inclusion and forgiveness, as well as how to face unjust systems, make brave decisions and be unapologetic about our theological rootedness. Two cohorts have now completed, with a third commencing in October 2023.
- Officers have advised on leadership appointments in schools and afford a high priority to the induction, well-being, and nurture of headteachers, offering time for reflection and renewal through the chaplaincy team at The Living Well.
- Our support offer for school leaders expanded to include ‘Heads’s Space’, an informal, sacred space for connection, friendship and support for headteachers. A series of reflective videos exploring the Beatitudes was also shared with schools to offer moments of personal contemplation during Lent.
- The DBE identified an issue of insufficient foundation governor appointments in church schools, risking a diminished missional opportunity to strengthen relationships between church and school. Consequently, drafting began on a Governance Strategy to create a diocesan-wide approach to reducing vacancies.
- Engagement with governors has included regular mailings, in addition to training for all governors within CE schools to support and equip them in recognising their responsibility in upholding the original foundation of the school.

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3.3 Key statistics and milestones

- ❖ 105 Church of England Schools, serving 26 400 pupils and students
- ❖ 12 church school leaders completed the 'Rooted' leadership course
- ❖ 900 pupils attended our annual Cathedral Schools Days for Year 6 pupils
- ❖ 300 pupils attended our inaugural Year 2 Leavers' Service in Canterbury Cathedral
- ❖ The team ran 35 different training sessions for headteachers, subject leaders and governors
- ❖ All church schools inspected under the new SIAMS Framework received Judgement 1 (the school is living up to its foundation and enabling pupils and adults to flourish)
- ❖ 91% of diocesan CE schools hold an Ofsted grade of 'Good' or better
- ❖ 75% of foundation governor posts are filled
- ❖ Leeds and Broomfield CE Primary School held an event to celebrate 150 years since the school's foundation
- ❖ On 1st April, Eastchurch CE Primary School, previously a single school across two sites in Eastchurch and Leysdown, became two separate church schools - the latter now known as St. Clement's CE Primary School

4. Looking ahead to 2024 – key priorities

- i. Ensure church school teams and communities are confident in articulating and living out their theologically rooted vision, walking alongside them as they prepare for SIAMS inspections
- ii. Embed the updated RE curriculum overview and initiate a Global Christianity project
- iii. Spirituality training for schools: Introduction (what is spirituality, how to recognise and celebrate moments of spirituality) and Going Deeper (what is meant by spiritual development and spiritual flourishing, what can it look like in practice and how can we evidence spiritual development?)
- iv. Implement the DBE's Governance Strategy and Strategy for the Church school system
- v. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - support welcoming spaces in churches for children and adults with SEND and speak into RE and Collective Worship training for school leaders around SEND provision
- vi. Increase engagement with community schools, particularly relating to a high-quality curriculum and teaching practice in RE
- vii. Propose and help initiate cross-departmental working to monitor housing expansion and ensure that the Church has a maximum opportunity for a presence in new communities, particularly through new church schools
- viii. Prepare and support schools and parishes in managing issues around human sexuality
- ix. Further strengthen engagement with Academy Trusts, sharing more regular information on school strengths, challenges and standards

Canon Dr Quentin Roper
Director of Children, Young People
and Education

Dr John Moss
Chair, Diocesan Board of Education

June 2024