



## **Diocesan Board of Education Summary for Diocesan Synod 16 March 2024**

The purpose of this report is to update Diocesan Synod on the activity and impact of the Diocesan Board of Education in the last twelve months.

### **1. DBE Purpose**

The DBE is a committee of the DBF with specific responsibilities as per the DBE Measure 2021. There are four main powers of duty of the DBE and numerous supplementary responsibilities:

- (a) promote or assist in the promotion of education in the diocese that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England;
- (b) promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese;
- (c) promote or assist in the promotion of church schools in the diocese;
- (d) promote co-operation between itself and other persons concerned with education in the diocese.

Membership comprises + Viv Faull, + Neil Warwick (Chair), Archdeacon Adam Beaumont (Vice Chair) and those with experience of education including incumbents, headteachers and governor, and non voting Under 18s.

There are seven officers in the team providing educational support and challenge as directed by the DBE.

#### **1.1 DBE Vision**

A new DBE Vision statement (Appendix 1) and Strategy incorporating the TC.T 'Under 18s' workstream and Growing Faith agenda was written in September 2023 with 5 goals:

1. Developing opportunities to explore, experience and encounter God
2. Shaping culture and advocating for justice
3. Developing and sustaining the quality of education, Christian character and leadership
4. Enabling Structural collaboration, governance and compliance
5. Building relationships through robust systems and processes

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While the DBE argue it's a great strategy, this report is broken into more easily accessible - and hopefully enjoyable chunks.

## **2. Church schools in Bristol Diocese**

The diocese has 71 church schools, 68 primaries (including 2 infant/ 2 junior) and 3 secondaries, covering 4 Local Authority areas.

### **2.1 LA schools**

48 schools are Local Authority controlled, 6 are Single Academy Trusts and 16 are within Multi Academy Trusts. Of the 48 LA maintained schools, 42 are Voluntary Controlled. In VC schools, general school improvement, business, HR and Property services are largely managed through the LA. An LA 'Voluntary Controlled' (VC) school must have 25% foundation (DBE appointed) governors with a minimum of two. 6 schools are Voluntary Aided and responsibilities additional to those of the VC school are held by governors, site trustees and the DBE). An LA Voluntary Aided (VA) school must have all governors appointed by the DBE, with the exception of staff and parent governors.

All Church schools have 'site trustees', sometimes the churchwardens or incumbent, often the DBF. In VC schools, the building is usually held by the site trustees, but not the surrounding land and playing fields, which remain LA. In VA arrangements, all is often held by diocesan site trustees.

### **2.2 Academies**

When schools become academies, the governance and financial structure changes. There are nearly always complex land negotiations when ancient footpaths come to light; the land is leased to trusts under a Church Supplemental Agreement. The VA/ VC titles are removed but the individual schools retain their majority or minority foundation (church) governance at local school level.

At Board level, the foundation governance must be minority, equality or majority, depending on the church schools within the trust because a MAT is a single legal entity and not the individual schools. All DBE schools can enter 'mixed' MATs with both church schools and those without religious designation in the family, as long as the Articles of Association are correct providing for the Church of England schools to remain so in perpetuity. This means the protection of the Christian character through

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governance, property and curriculum arrangements. The Bishop of Bristol or her representative is a diocesan corporate member on every trust with church schools.

Note that schools without religious designation are often called 'community schools'. Calling a school 'non-church' feels unhelpful and inaccurate, and 'schools without religious designation' is a mouthful. Take your pick. We understand why this has happened but it is potentially misleading because most schools, with or without religious designation or academy status, consider themselves schools for their local or specialist community, often explicitly articulating this within their vision statement.

### **3. The Academy Trust Landscape**

The landscape has been rapidly changing landscape over the last year. As of March 2024, there are three Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) that are homes to Church schools within the Diocese:

- Cathedral Schools Trust (CST) includes two Church schools – Bristol Cathedral Choir School and Cathedral Primary School
- The Leaf Trust includes two Church schools – Mangotsfield CE Primary School and St Barnabas CE Primary School, Warmley
- The Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust (DBAT) is made up of 15 schools, all of which are Church schools. (See update below)

The Mosaic Learning Partnership is a new Trust launching in spring 2024, initially with three Church schools.

DBE have written a new diocesan Academisation policy and revised all their processes with Stone King to support the 'intentional design' of the system in a geography that avoids isolation of vulnerable schools.

We are also working with an additional five existing Trusts who are hoping to take on Church Articles in the near future in order to be able to include Church schools.

Changes and mergers in trusts are now a common part of the nationally evolving picture of trust consolidation and growth, especially as local authority service offers to schools are dramatically reducing or ended. LA schools are realising the necessity of joining a trust to survive financially,

There is much interest in academising in the next two years from LA church and non-church schools. The DBE have acted as a friendly voice through day conferences and school events to bring together different trusts with church and non church schools for discussion together.

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#### **4. Update on The Diocese of Bristol Academies Trust**

The future of The Deanery CE Academy and Kingfisher CE Primary Academy will be decided formally by the Regional Director's Advisory Board at their meeting in March. These two schools will move together to a new Trust, hopefully for September 2024.

The DBE has given its recommendations to the Regional Directors office outlining which Trusts it believes would be the best homes for the DBAT schools. These transfers are unlikely to take place before the end of 2024.

Once all schools in the Trust have been transferred, the Trust will close. DBAT has met an important need for a robust home for school improvement of schools in the diocese for over ten years and many of these school communities have improved and flourished. But not all. The DBE acknowledge the anxiety of change for all involved in the schools, DBAT central team and their surrounding communities. Thankyou to those who have offered pastoral support at this time. The DBE and officers are working closely with the DfE and DBAT company to ensure smooth transition, the protection of Christian character in law for the CE schools and the training of new trustees and members to understand the responsibilities of having church schools in their trust families.

#### **5. Programme for Church School Flourishing (PCSF)**

As schools group into informal groups pre academisation and then formally into a trust, the DBE is launching the PCSF programme to work strategically with trust governance and executive leaders, grouping the professional development of schools in any one trust together. Diocesan officers took part in 2023/4 in the South West regional training, offered equally to all trusts in the South West and start to be part of this regional delivery from September 2024.

Our school Improvement model is therefore changing. Bespoke support to individual schools will reduce as we work more with groups of schools in trust families, enabling trusts to facilitate their own training and support of church schools.


#### **6. DoBAC**

The Diocese of Bristol Academies Company (DoBAC) was set up in 2012 to be an umbrella trust for academies in the diocese, to act as a firewall protecting the DBF from liabilities should a trust or individual academy fail.

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As DBE has been incorporated into DBF, and the protections within academy companies as separate legal entities are better understood, DoBAC is no longer necessary and we are applying to close the company.

St Barnabas CEVC LA Primary school in St Paul's Bristol closed in August 2023 due to insufficient numbers. Remaining pupils settled well into other local provision. We are negotiating for the next use of the property which DBE wish to remain in educational use.

## **7. Sustaining Christian character & Quality of education Jan 2024**

**Ofsted** – The percentage of schools gaining either a Good or Outstanding grade in their Ofsted is 94% (including those who, strictly speaking, are a new school having changed to become an academy/ amalgamated, or not had an inspection but graded by School Improvement partners).

**SIAMS** – The percentage of schools gaining either a Good or Excellent grade in their SIAMS is now 100%. We are very proud of this, however long it lasts!

## **8. School Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS)**

Every church school has a 5 yearly statutory inspection. The SIAMS framework 2023 was launched in September 23. It removed graded judgements, and now makes a judgement on whether a church school 'is living up to its church foundation and enabling pupils and adults to flourish'. All schools inspected since Sept 2022 (14) have been graded 'good' or 'outstanding'.

We deliver six sets of SIAMS training per year. In 2023, 45 schools attended this training including headteachers, teacher leaders and governors.

Schools advisers offer a strategic plan for the support of CE schools around SIAMS inspection. In 2023, 11 schools received 'pre-inspection' support visits to support them in their preparation for inspection and ensure they are confident in the processes and in the best place for positive outcomes. 14 schools received 'mid-term' visits to check in with their progress two years after inspection and offer support and guidance to maintain their progress in their areas for development.

One of the schools advisers in the education team is a registered SIAMS inspector. This brings excellent knowledge and capacity to our schools in this regard. The second schools adviser will be training as an inspector in the next year.

A new Headteachers SIAMS network has been established in South Glos since September 2023. As an opportunity to share experience of the inspection process

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and ideas for delivery and resourcing. Headteachers report this as highly impactful for learning and also for the collegiality as headteachers often report being quite isolated in their work.

*Pupils feel safe and secure as they are quickly assimilated into a loving Christian community. Leaders nurture a genuine family feel at the school where all have a strong sense of belonging, and mutual respect flourishes. SIAMS report*

*The vision's focus on working together encourages pupils to think beyond themselves and their own lives. Pupils are outward facing and are often sparked into action when they feel something is not fair or equal. SIAMS report*

## 9. Religious Education (RE)

Our schools advisers have expert knowledge and expertise in the area of RE and curriculum. They offer professional advisory services and support to the four Standing Advisory Committees for RE (SACREs), statutory Local Authority bodies. Bristol Diocese has a flourishing reputation for RE expertise. All Church and community schools across the Diocese can access training and advice through a network of teacher hubs, CPD events, individual school training, newsletters and guidance materials. Our advisers write curriculum materials and inform syllabus development in the four authorities. This year they have trained 17 governors and 15 Early Careers Teachers (ECTs).

The school adviser team is also proud of its commitment to growing local leaders in RE. Both advisers facilitate and lead training of 'hub' leaders for the subject in each geographical area. Five of these leaders have gone on to achieve advisory positions in the national and regional work of the RE community.

*RE is recognised as an exciting and prominent subject at the heart of this Church school curriculum. It strongly reflects the vision by providing all pupils with broad and rich experiences in which all learn and 'grow together'. SIAMS report*

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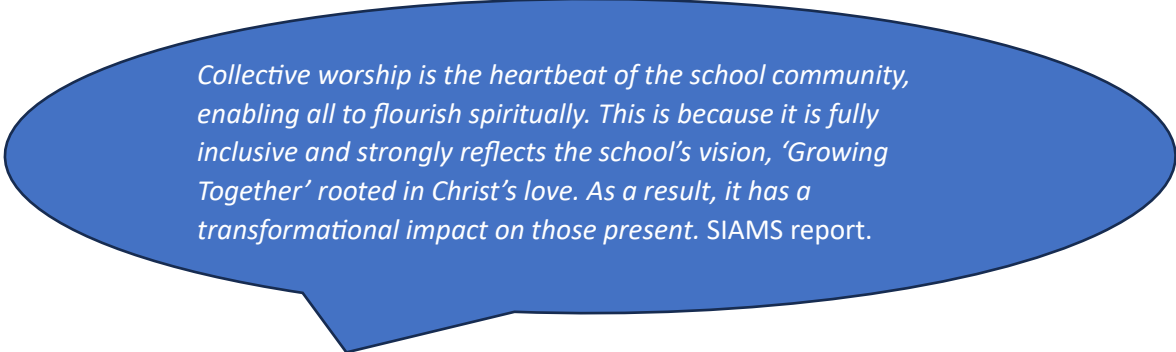
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## 10. Collective Worship

Collective worship, (often within assembly) is a statutory, daily part of every school curriculum, whether or not a church school. As part of the SACRE advisory roles, the advisers develop and offer guidance to all schools in this area.

It is a vital and precious part of every church school day. In 2023 six schools received bespoke training and 17 delegates attended group training on how to deliver 'inclusive, invitational and inspiring' worship. This results in all pupils across the Diocese being welcome in daily worship and receiving the opportunity to grow and flourish both personally, collective and spiritually, regardless of their faith background. The SIAMS reports of 22-23 reflect that this is an area of significant strength for our schools.



*Collective worship is the heartbeat of the school community, enabling all to flourish spiritually. This is because it is fully inclusive and strongly reflects the school's vision, 'Growing Together' rooted in Christ's love. As a result, it has a transformational impact on those present. SIAMS report.*

## 11. Spirituality and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (SMSC)

Spirituality and spiritual development is a central part of maintaining the Christian Character of CE schools. National SIAMS evidence identifies this as a common area needing development therefore this aspect has been a core part of the offer for schools in Bristol Diocese.


In November 2023, 80 delegates attended our annual DBE conference of theory, practice and workshops on 'Spiritual Flourishing'. Advisers delivered further bespoke training to 14 schools on spirituality last year. 9 schools accessed our group training offer on 'The Heartbeat of your school – spiritual development' and were able to return to train their staff teams in developing effective approaches.

Advisers deliver governor training across both church and 'non-church' schools on personal development and SMSC provision. This ensures all schools are compliant with their statutory requirements around Spiritual development and governors are

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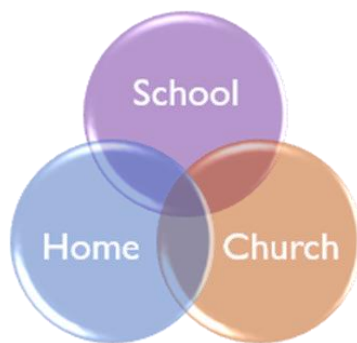
able to offer informed and effective monitoring and evaluation to ensure this is the case.

*The holistic curriculum at Colerne is an expression of its Christian vision. 'Be a light for all to see' ensures pupils' talents are encouraged and nurtured so they shine and are well prepared for life. Leaders and staff have created a transformational environment that encourages big questions and self-reflection.*

One of our schools advisers is currently taking part in the Church of England education Office (CEEO) international racial justice network, to create cross diocese guidance and resources including the ILM Inclusive Curriculum Framework, to enhance school practice.

## 12. Growing Faith

'Growing Faith' describes an approach to understanding where children experience personal and spiritual development and flourishing through a partnership of church, school and home. This approach helps us consider how we intentionally create connections between these areas so that we are able to fully support children in their spiritual development.



The CEEO Growing Faith Strategic Leaders Programme is equipping leaders in this approach. The diocesan Director of Education and Under 18s Strategic Leader have both just completed this excellent programme and we are now seeking to recruit further Bristol interest.

In the Diocese of Bristol we are intentionally trying to create these connections. Acknowledging honestly that a very small proportion of our young people across the

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diocese are in our church communities, our opportunity to support the flourishing of children is significant when we use a schools approach, often the location of the largest worshipping community in the parish.

The Growing Faith Chaplains pilot through TC.T connects the sphere of school, church and home. 21 expressions of interest have been received. We want to develop models of chaplaincy for under 18s which, whilst delivered in schools or other settings where chaplains are meeting children in their context, are intrinsically connected with discipleship pathways and invitational offers to go deeper in faith exploration and growth.

We are very conscious of the need to have the voices of young people at the centre of all we do. Our new Youth Engagement Offer role will enable us to build connection and relationship with young people, enabling their voice to be the driving force of our work, not our underlying assumptions.

Catalyst is a new training programme with Ridley Hall we have started as we seek to understand and support training for those working and volunteering with children and young people (CYP). We are currently preparing two bids for CEEQ for 'FLOURISH', essentially a 'church happening in the school building' project.

The Church and School Partnership Award was revised and relaunched in Autumn 2023. This is a powerful project for schools and parishes, offering a focus for partnership and celebration church and school community connections. To date, 18 schools/parishes have received the award.

### **13. Bristol Children and Families Hub**

In light of the stark and spiralling needs of children and families across our diocese, DBE have committed £30k to a new local project bringing together the cathedral, two CE secondary schools and the DBE to explore forming a support hub for vulnerable families. This is exciting and innovative work; DBE are receiving significant support from REACH and a project manager to scope the work, check viability and develop our bid writing.

We encourage all to ponder their everyday work and non work/ paid and unpaid discipleship through the lens of seeking to create opportunities for the flourishing of children and young people.

### **14. Headteacher Recruitment**

6 headteachers were appointed in 2023. There are currently 7 substantive Headteacher positions in the process of recruiting; an officer supports each one. This

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is not an unusual number at this time of year but it is worth noting that only one of these headteachers has reached a 'usual' retirement age and most are in their 40s/50s in age and not moving on to further headships. Headship has been exhausting in recent years, and our team are increasingly offering pastoral support to very weary leaders. This attrition of experience is concerning and the DBE are considering their next steps to support leaders.

**Liz Townend and The Education Team, on behalf of Bristol DBE.**

## Appendix 1: DBE **Vision and Theological Statement**

Our Vision is simple: **Flourishing. Together**

**Bristol Diocesan Board of Education 2023**

### **1. Why do children and young people matter?**

The '*Missio Dei*', from the Latin meaning "Mission of God", is a concept that reminds us that mission is primarily the responsibility of God, rather than emanating from the church. The work of the church is part of God's work, a subset of a larger mission of God in the world and not its entirety. The Father's love is the source, motivation for and defining characteristic of the mission of the church. The incarnation, death and resurrection of the Son are the message of and model of love for this mission. The inspiration, guidance and power of the Spirit are the means through which this mission should be carried out, however he leads. So the mission of the church to be 'love' is renewed by the Spirit of God as he guides the *Missio Dei* along new paths.

What does 'love' require of us in this diocese in this season? The Diocesan Board of Education and its work is framed by the leading of the Holy Spirit, enabling schools, educational institutions and the communities in which they operate, to be part of the *Missio dei*, schools as centres of flourishing and places of love. Schools are 'communities' but so are the church, commonly the Parish church or other Christian worshipping communities including those with diverse expressions. As two co-located Christian communities, the inter-dependency of families, churches and schools is critical to abundance of life and we must all hold ourselves accountable to one another delivering this aspiration.


**I have come that you might have life; life in all its fullness (John 10:10)**

The 'life' in all its fullness that the gospel writer, John speaks of is broad and enabling: one of three greek words he could have chosen to use for 'life'. It's a life of flourishing that is more

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than the Greek 'bios', literally a physical 'life' including breath and pulse; it is more than 'psyche', meaning mind, emotion and will. It is 'zoe' life that encompasses an absolute abundance of life – eternal, moral, ethical, social, and cultural in all the richness and depth of experience. Modelled by Jesus, we know what this can look like, feel like and be like, for all.

## 2. Why do children and young people matter to God, wherever they are found.

There is ample evidence of the importance Jesus placed on children, and their status in families and communities:

**Mark 10:14** *Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such as these belong the kingdom of God.*

**Mark 10:15** *Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*

**Mark 9:36** *Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me.*

We see every child matters to God. It's a hopeful theological vision encouraging us to use our ability to engage with, deal with, minister to and learn from children and young people. We can group various biblical perspectives, as described by Marcia Bunge, into three pairs. Holding them all in tension, we see that children are:

- Fully human and made in the image of God, yet also still developing and in need of instruction and guidance;
- Gifts of God and Sources of joy, yet also capable of selfish and sinful actions;
- Strong, insightful and endowed with gifts to serve others and act as models of faith, yet also, vulnerable and in need of protection.

We have much to learn about embracing a child-like approach to God. The Bible encourages us to be teaching and talking about faith with children, and teaching and learning from children all the time as part of normal conversation. The culture change we desire is driven by theological biblical command in Deut 6: 5 – 7:

*<sup>5</sup> And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. <sup>6</sup> And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands that I am giving you today. <sup>7</sup> Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are on the road, when you are going to bed and when you are getting up.'*


We often unconsciously assume but also act in a way to show we are trying to get children to 'grow up' and be ready for adulthood. Childhood is a theological place of flourishing in the eyes of God.

*'The idea that children are in the process of becoming adults assumes that adulthood is what they achieve, where they end up and skews our thinking unhelpfully. We don't look at it the other way round and ask what is lost by becoming an adult and whether*

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*the condition of being a child is in fact exemplary of our theological state before God; we are God's children.'*

From Every child matters to God: Anne Richards (Through the eyes of a child 2018)

Thus the culture in our schools and parishes is not one where children are solely in growth towards adulthood and economically active citizenship. The school and parish cultures see children as gifts and a blessing to their peers and intergenerational communities. They are honoured and worthy of attention so they flourish in childhood and as God's creations.

### 3. Context

The current church culture isn't always welcoming to children. 70% of parishes have single figures for attendees under 16, and a quarter have none. There is a catastrophic decline in the number of children and young people in our churches. And children have insight that adults don't.

Peter Drucker is attributed as saying, 'culture eats strategy for breakfast'. If our culture is the 'way we do things round here', it is influenced by the theology and values that we hold. This may be implicit and needs challenging.

We need to look for a richer vision for children and the church and see what is on the heart of God. So we look for the theological understanding of what God thinks about children. Any vision is not about articulating where we are now, but where we want to get to. Vision demands change.

We have to learn intergenerationally, from one another, and fast, how to find and build on signs of hope. For there are signs of hope: those who care about children need to be involved, engaged, take children seriously, listen to them and create environments for questions, exploration and discovery. [HA1]

Schools, particularly CE schools, exhibit some excellent practice. Parents say they want to raise their children well and want support to do so. However good a school is, the home - or an environment as much like home as possible, with known, loving, caring support, remains the most significant influence in children's lives.

Our schools and churches have a unique opportunity to educate and support the flourishing of our children and young people, not wishing them to be anything else but dwelling in and seeking flourishing within their families and communities in this God given stage of life

Our 2023 DBE vision and mission is informed by

- a) **Church of England Vision for Education 2016** 'Deeply Christian; Serving the Common Good'

This is a vision setting out an ecology of flourishing through

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- Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge, And Skills;
- Educating for Hope and Aspiration
- Educating for Community and Living well together
- Educating for Dignity and respect.

*‘Church schools have a reputation for securing transformational outcomes for young people by combining academic rigour with a rounded approach to personal development, rooted in the worship and other shared practices that characterize the life of their community.*

*The vision of an education that is at once deeply Christian in its inspiration and healthily plural in its operation is consistent with the best in our history.’* DBE Vision

**Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System 2023** is an additional and practical iteration of some of the key themes of the vision in light of the many changes in education culture over the last years.

#### b) **Diocese of Bristol Vision:** Humanity Reconciled; Creation Restored

Diocesan Strategy: Transforming Church. Together

Noting our understanding of Missio Dei, the DBE, schools and their communities are an integral part of God’s mission of transformation, in order that communities may flourish. The DBE recognise and desire to hear the Holy Spirit’s leading in this mission.

Our Values, informed by our understanding of Jesus, underpins everything we do and say across the diocese and DBE: Openness; Generosity; Creativity and Bravery.

*‘We want our communities to feel empowered as they are listened to, supported, and partnered with in seeking transformational change. The collective voices and actions of our community will help to bring about transformational change. Our values, informed by our understanding of Jesus, underpin everything we do and say, and will play a critical role in delivering the strategy.’* TC.T 2023

#### c) **Growing Faith**

The story of family life in the Bible, is a story about love that is shared, nurtured, and sometimes rejected or lost. Families, all of them, whatever their constitution, are a sign of God’s presence. God is revealed in families uniquely and personally, for *God is love and those who live in love, live in God and God dwells in them* (1 Jn. 4:16). Schools are uniquely placed to both demonstrate a model of family love within the community and to work closely alongside families to support and build nurturing environments for children and young people.

Growing Faith is the movement that exists to put children, young people and families instinctively at the heart of all the mission and ministry of the Church by changing the culture

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of the Church of England. It involves churches, schools and households working together to help children, young people and families have life in all its fullness.

## **The DBE Vision**

Therefore, we have a hopeful vision for the work of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Education and those with whom we partner; we join in as part of the Missio Dei to be sent out by God:

### **Our Vision is simple: Flourishing. Together**

**DBE Mission:** To inspire, influence and enable all involved in education to flourish through advocacy, partnership, guidance and training.

### **Our Strategic Priorities for 2023 – 26** (see the current strategic plan)

1. Developing opportunities to explore, experience and encounter God
2. Shaping culture and advocating for justice
3. Developing and sustaining the quality of education, Christian character and leadership
4. Enabling Structural collaboration, governance and compliance
5. Building relationships through robust systems and processes

### **DBE Education team design process**

The Bristol DBE incorporated as a committee into the Diocesan Board of Finance in September 2022 when a new DBE Board membership began. Several further factors have indicated the need for a rethink in our direction and strategy: the end of the previous DBE strategy; stark figures indicating decline in children and young people engaging in faith and traditional CofE activity; recognition of the changing educational landscape including academisation and governance; severe financial pressures affecting schools and families; the ongoing effect of covid and mental health concerns; increased capacity and a wider brief to be more integrated in to the work of churches and families; a new diocesan strategy; and a new Bishop of Swindon as Chair of Board.

### **DBE Sept 2023**

**Liz Townend, Director of Education/Education**

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