

Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education, An update on our work, January 2024

Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education, SDBE, supports 192 Church of England schools in securing their Christian foundation and enabling them to flourish. Our principal objects are: -

- To promote and assist in the promotion of education in the Diocese that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England.
- To promote and assist in the promotion of religious education and religious work in schools in the Diocese.
- To promote and assist in the promotion of Church schools in the Diocese.
- To promote co-operation between itself and other persons concerned with education in the Diocese.
- To promote and encourage the Christian nature of children and young people within the parishes of the Diocese.

The board lives out the diocesan vision of “Making Jesus Known” and a strategic vision that...

“Being present, we will show compassion, speak truth, and offer hope.”

Underpinning these objects and the strategic vision, are work streams arranged under three core aims – courageous leadership and governance, empowering Christian flourishing, and astute stewardship. Full details are in the [SDBE Strategic Plan](#)

As we step into 2024, it is a chance to reflect on the work of SDBE over the last year. The themes we will cover here are our work on governance, RE and collective worship, our work to support our academy trust partners including our Programme for Church School Flourishing (PCSF), academy conversion support, and our support for schools.

Our support for schools

Here we outline the range of support we offer to schools, whether academies or maintained, and in our work on RE and collective worship what we can offer to all schools.

Partnership Service Agreement

The Partnership Service Agreement (PSA) supports the development of a deeply Christian ethos in every church school. In the academic year 2022-23, 91% of schools engaged through direct subscription or through a PCSF trust. In 2023-24 88% of schools have already engaged through direct subscription or through a PCSF trust, with budget restrictions impacting schools and resulting in the small decrease. The main focus for PSA visits is on preparing schools for inspection against the 2023 SIAMS Framework, deepening and understanding of vision rooted theology, spiritual flourishing for all and developing spirituality across the school curriculum.

SIAMS support

The focus of SIAMS support in 2022-23 has been equipping and updating schools with the changes to the new SIAMS Framework. The 2023 SIAMS Framework, billed as ‘radically the same, radically different’, has

seen considerable sharpening in some key areas of church school distinctiveness - the rooting of the school vision in contextual theology, the shifting prominence of spirituality so that this becomes embedded within the school curriculum, and the expectation that collective worship should bring about pupil and adult spiritual flourishing. The SDBE SIAMS leader has updated their inspection training, cascaded this to the SDBE advisor team and led numerous CPD sessions for schools and trusts. In the Autumn term of 2023 twenty SIAMS inspections took place, and all of these identified that the schools were living up to their Church school foundations.

Recruiting and inducting headteachers

In the financial year 2023-24, 25 new headteachers have taken up a new substantive position and one has already been recruited for September 2024. Recruitment panels of trusts and maintained schools remain supported by SDBE advisors which continues to be well received. One chair of governors said, 'Thank you so much for your support during the recruitment process... your knowledge and experience has been such a positive impact on the experience.' (April 2023)

The induction and welcome to the Diocese has grown significantly in the last year - we have now held four commissioning services led by Bishop Stephen at Salisbury Cathedral, welcoming 20 new headteachers and their colleagues, family and friends. We know from informal feedback how impactful these events have been. One headteacher shared their thoughts: 'I just wanted to send a quick message to you and the team to say thank you for Thursday's commissioning service. It was a truly special evening and a gorgeous official welcome to the diocese family. It was lovely to meet Bishop Stephen, other school leaders and members of the diocese. It's very re-assuring to know that we are not alone in the challenges we are facing. The evening felt like a real privilege and was a wonderful touch to be able to share the moment with family. All in all, a perfect opportunity to reflect amidst the busyness of the role. Please also pass my thanks on to Bishop Stephen and his wife for being so hospitable and welcoming us into their home.'

Pastoral Support

The SDBE team, from advisors, to the Education Services Team, to the leadership team, offer ongoing and available pastoral support to our schools. This can take the form of information sharing via email or phone calls, practical support for buildings issues and inspection support. This has meant both turning up to help clear up after a fire and arranging to visit following a tragic incident. The whole team is committed to supporting our schools which is valued by school leaders, those who volunteer in governance at all levels, and trust teams. Sadly, our support has been much in demand this year. The team pull together to support our schools and those around them, valuing the fantastic support provided by local clergy and parish teams as part of this.

Our work on Religion and Worldviews Education and Collective Worship

Religious Education / RE and Worldviews

The SDBE has continued to run training for RE subject leaders and those new to leading RE through online courses, as well as facilitating hubs of practice to support schools. We have led innovative projects to develop resources, liaising with the Local Authority and other key partners to secure the best possible provision for the delivery of high-quality RE.

Building the faculty of RE in trusts is a core part of the Programme for Church School Flourishing (PCSF); developing trust-based expertise and effective network support. Each of these elements helps SDBE play its part in ensuring RE is of high quality for young people in all schools, not just CE schools.

Collective Worship

The SDBE has worked to develop practice around schools' delivery of collective worship, ensuring it is invitational, inclusive and inspiring. A part of the work we have led was around young people leading worship, underlining our support to schools in enabling young people to develop spiritually and to be confident leaders of worship. Often this work draws on the support of clergy and provides an opportunity to further strengthen links. We have also worked with the ministry team to provide a chance for clergy to join this, a great way to enable closer relationships with all schools in a parish or benefice.

In our PCSF work, we now have 14 Collective Worship Faculty Leads (CWFLs) trained to work across 6 Academy Trusts and DBE-led quality assurance has taken place for two trusts in cohort 1. SDBE has also led a working party in Wiltshire SACRE to create a Collective Worship Guide for Community Schools to be launched in 2024. Our advisor is presenting on this work at the southwest conference for SACRES in March 2024.

Supporting Academy Conversion

2023 saw significant numbers of enquiries and completions of academy conversions. This work requires a range of support from the team covering governance and finance and estates. For the team, this draws on skills of our finance and estates leads to ensure that conversion processes go smoothly. The team has been working proactively to identify potential issues and resolve them early. Our role has been increasingly to offer system level solutions as the only agency which has sight across the whole system, with connections at school level, with trusts and across local authorities.

Our work with trusts

This year has seen significant progress in our Programme for Church School Flourishing (PCSF), culminating in our first accreditation event and the rolling out of the programme to all southwest dioceses. This sees five Diocesan Board of Education teams and of their twelve trusts participating with the programme.

Within the Salisbury Diocese, growth in engagement with the PCSF has continued; two cohorts of leaders have completed their training and a third cohort commenced training in September 2023. This now sees 52 trust leaders from 13 different trusts who have engaged with training. In 2022-23 all the trusts in cohort 1 delivered their own visits to monitor, determine and progress the Christian distinctiveness of their church schools. The SDBE-led Quality Assurance visits identify impact of the training and trust holding, protecting and developing the church school character of their schools. This all links up to maintain and grow our strong relationships to the benefit of the children and young people in our schools.

Estates and Net Zero

The SDBE Estates and Finance team work to support the DBE church school estate to be sustainable and respond to the national net zero target, helping innovative project secure funding and expert help. One example of the outcomes this generates was at Chilmark Primary School. On 18th July 2023 Bishop Stephen visited the school to meet the children and celebrate the successful installation of the air source heat pump.

Decarbonisation plans have been instructed for two more schools, to identify areas of improvement, focusing on reducing energy consumption and potential works to move away from a reliance on fossil fuels. SDBE continues to develop a strong relationship with RAFT (RetroFit Action for Tomorrow), who support The Church of England at a national level.

SDBE continues working with Local Authority partners to access monies for school development projects, delivering improvements in energy efficiency and comfort and creating an environment focussing on improving educational outcomes for the children. In 2023/24, 25 DfE funded projects were instructed across 19 VA schools totalling £735,000 of funding administered by the DBE estates team all for the benefit of children in the diocese.

The SDBE works closely with their DBF colleagues, especially given the opportunities afforded by the new working arrangements at Emmaus House and will continue to proactively work to support the environmental strand of the Diocesan vision.

Our work on governance

Supporting foundation governance encompasses work with local bodies, trustees and members, which includes assisting with and confirming appointments, providing ongoing support and guidance, and leading training. This sees our officers attending governance meetings, supporting trust boards and advocating wherever needed.

This year has seen over a hundred governance appointments across all levels, yet we still see vacancies running at 30%. It is an ongoing piece of work with schools and trusts to recruit, train and support. This work is also linked to the PCSF, ensuring that our trusts are equipped to support governance rooted in its Christian foundation at every level.

This report seeks to give an overview of our work with our schools, be that on our own or in connection with the DBF, with clergy and parish facing teams, with multi academy trusts, with local authorities, with the national church or with the Department for Education. Through our system leadership, we are sharing what works and also ensuring we can benefit from the expertise of others. We are grateful to all those who support our schools, either in their work roles or as volunteers, and we never take this support for granted.

Thank you.