

Church of England Vision for Education – for staff and governors

As all are made in the image of God, all people are of equal worth, to be treated with dignity. Each pupil deserves to be viewed with, and inspired by, hope and to learn how to live well in community, as (s)he grows in knowledge, wisdom and skills.

Jesus said that he came to give life in all its fullness. In the gospel of John, Jesus' actions are all signs of abundant life, such as healing, feeding, and raising the dead. These were not about seeking to make his own life more comfortable or enjoyable, but about making things better for those he met, and showing how God intends life to be. His teaching, like his healing, feeding and forgiving, was not given only to his followers but to 'the crowds', and 'the people'. The 'life in all its fullness' that he offered was intended for all people. In our schools we want the best outcomes for pupils so that they can achieve the best they can. Taking '**life in all its fullness**' in schools seriously means teaching the whole person, not just the mind, but the body and spirit too.

As aspects of 'life in all its fullness', in church schools pupils should have the chance to learn...

.....about **dignity and respect**

Jesus, in his life, shows the love and compassion of God for each person, and Christians are called to follow him in this. He paid special attention to the disadvantaged, excluded, despised and feared. The worth of each person is shown in the Gospels through his teaching, healing, feeding, sharing hospitality, befriending, and forgiving.

Among issues especially relevant to dignity in education are **safeguarding, prevention of bullying, special educational needs** and **disabilities**. Ensuring our children are kept safely from harm and educated in an environment where all God's children are valued is of the highest priority and highlighted in our work on the prevention of homophobic bullying. Special educational needs and disabilities are often associated with humiliation and lack of self-worth. It is vital for the health of our whole educational system that we do well with regard to both issues.

The basic principle of respect for the value of each person is learned every day, every hour, every minute, when it is how people behave towards one another. This means everyone. Everyone matterseven meeven the smallest.

Questions

How do we show that everyone matters in our school?

When we discover that not everyone is treated as if they matter, what do we do about it?

Are there lots of different ways in which pupils can achieve and be affirmed?

In lessons, how is the dignity of pupils who struggle upheld?

Do we see strong test performance as the goal of a good school's activity, as opposed to becoming a 'good citizen, parent, employee or team member', and what does 'good' mean?

.....about **hope and aspiration**

The worth of each student impels us to work to fulfil their God-given potential, whatever the religious or other tradition with which they, or their family identify, and with special consideration given to those who are disadvantaged. Each is to be understood as respectfully and deeply as possible; to be encouraged to stretch themselves spiritually, morally, intellectually, imaginatively and actively, and to aspire to be well-educated. This involves grasping how one's own fulfilment cannot be separated from that of other people or from the flourishing of families, groups, communities, institutions, nations, and the whole of creation, so that hope and aspiration are social as well as individual. However, it also requires being realistic about how much can, and does, go wrong.

Jesus, and the love he demonstrates, are at the heart of the Christian faith, offering hope that wrongdoing, suffering, and death are not the only things that are true about the world. The story of Jesus' life, teaching, death and resurrection, set within the larger story of God's love for the world, shows that life is good, but also points to the importance of facing and finding ways through whatever goes wrong with ourselves and our communities. His story helps us think about how often, and how badly, we make mistakes and can give us a confidence that things can change for the better.

The future is the unknown and we may view it as exciting or scary, or even both. It is good for our spirits to be able to look forward and to see that things can be even better than they are now, even if it is not in the way that we

would choose. Bad experiences and behaviour need not have the last word. Saying sorry, forgiveness, and reconciliation are possible. There is hope in God and God's wisdom, and in the possibilities of reconciliation and transformation. The many ways in which human beings and our communities mess things up is cause for sadness, but not for despair.

Part of this hope is an awareness of Jesus. Pupils should leave a church school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, having had a life-enhancing engagement with the idea of Jesus, and Christian faith and practice. This can be through good teaching about Christianity in RE, done in a spirit of respect for world faiths traditions and beliefs, and for the religious freedom of each person. Another part of the hope is finding out how Christians worship God. Collective worship which draws upon the rich tradition of Christian practice, and expression of the way that the story of Jesus and the larger biblical narrative is relevant today can help schools to do this.

Questions

What confidence do we have that what we hope for will happen?
How do we respond when experiences or relationships go wrong?
Do we let 'bad experiences have the last word'? Do we learn how to fail well?
Do we label people based on the past? How many times should we forgive?
How can we be part of the hope for things to get better in the world?
How we help our students see their future, seeing them with God's eyes?

.....wisdom, knowledge and skills

The Bible says that the source of wisdom is God. Wisdom is knowing about the world and about God, but also about our relationship to our planet and the other living things upon it. The Bible also includes laws about how to live and teaching about use of money as well as learning from history; and about how to live before God in family, friendship, community and nation. The Bible says that God is infinite, that the universe is vast and that life is an amazing mystery.

We need to find out about the world and how to live in it, and the skills needed to shape life well. We need to learn how to express what we feel and to look after our body, mind and spirit as well as how to be a good person, team member or leader, citizen, employee, parent. Wisdom is part of many of our religious traditions and it is important not just to accept that wisdom but to question it, and to listen to each other.

Questions

What does our curriculum teach about the vast universe and the mystery of life?
Do pupils learn how to make sound ethical judgements in their learning?
Is there also space to pursue the big questions such as "Who am I?; Why am I here?;
What is worthy of my attention?; How shall I live?"
How does the school show hospitality for different viewpoints, and disagreeing wisely?

.....about living well together in Community

Living before God and living with, and for others, are seen together in Jesus. He shows how important relationships are by the way he showed love, compassion, generosity, truth-telling, forgiveness, and gathering together a community. In this community people are called to love God and live for others. This follows the Jewish scriptures that Jesus taught: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' and 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'.

Each school is to be a hospitable community that seeks to embody an ethos of living well together. Here the flourishing of the pupils goes along with the flourishing of the staff. We all have relationships and commitments. It is important that we discover the qualities we need to enable people to flourish together. Even though we only see a small number of the world's people, we share our planet with all of them.

Questions

What have school members found helpful in learning to live together well with others?
What can be done to increase the sense of community in school?
How do staff and governors embody love/hope/grace/forgiveness/generosity in serving one another?
Are classrooms places of hospitality and welcome for people who visit or stay?
Are partnerships with those beyond the school thought of as giving, or receiving?
What does it mean to be a good neighbour in this school?