

STRATEGY FOR THE CHURCH SCHOOL SYSTEM

GUIDANCE FOR REVIEWING LONG-TERM PLANS

Audience: Church School Governing Bodies and Senior Leaders

1. Introduction

The Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education (CDBE) published its 'Strategy for the Church School System' in January 2023, which strongly advises schools to carry out an **annual review** of long-term plans, as well as outlining Pathways for church schools to consider. The annual review is an important undertaking to test resilience; analysing and reflecting on how the school's vision is considered achievable within its present context, and whether the school's status and partnerships remain appropriate and sustainable.

2. Structure of the review

A review is the responsibility of the Governing Body and should take place in a supportive, open space in which people listen actively and attentively to one another, wisdom and experience is accumulated, and concerns can be heard. As such, it probably sits best as a separate gathering (approximately 1½ - 2 hours) outside of the usual meeting pattern.

2.1 Who to invite

As a strategic meeting, all governors and senior leaders should contribute. It is also advisable to extend an invitation to the Local Authority (insight into school improvement, finances and area place planning) and one of our diocesan officers (Pathways from the CDBE's Strategy, unique matters pertaining to church schools).

2.2 Example agenda

- i) Aims and objectives
What is the purpose of the review?
- ii) Brief background
Providing clarity on the school's vision and values, and current strategy/agreed actions to achieve the vision.
- iii) Presentation of information/data (suggestions)
Quality of learning, teaching and assessment; external reviews; local place planning/housing developments; staff and pupil well-being; IT investment and asset management; leadership and growing talent; finance/budget information; community engagement (including the parish/school partnership)
- iv) Break-out groups with selection of key questions (see Section 3), then feedback
- v) Refine into SWOT analysis (see Section 4)
- vi) Discuss/agree how to translate into reality
The review process either affirms that the school's current position and context remain appropriate and sustainable, or a decision is made to explore an alternative Pathway to anticipate foreseeable changes and challenges over the next 1-3 years.

2.3 Preparation in advance

- 2.3.1 Decide on timings and venue, as well as who is best placed to lead the session. This could be a governor or an external facilitator.
- 2.3.2 Agree who is collating and presenting the information/data indicated within the agenda (headteacher, senior leaders, governor, diocesan or local authority representative)

3. Key Questions

- What is the identity and core purpose of our school, and what makes it unique and exciting? (Who are we?)
- Are we able to achieve the ambitions we have set for our curriculum and quality of education?
- Is the school at the heart of the village/local area of population, and are parish and school working together effectively in ministry and for the community?
- How do we make vulnerable pupils a priority?
- Are all pupils able to access and experience an exciting and relevant curriculum that enables them to make at least expected progress in their learning?
- What are our concerns?
- How well do our partnerships enhance the quality of our provision?
- Are we looking to expand, or formalise any of our collaborative partnerships?
- Is the school prepared for any turbulence in place planning/housing development in the local area – and are our learning spaces and PAN adequate/appropriate?
- How well does our Governing Body provide support and challenge to drive improvement?
- Do we grow talent well, supporting leadership development and making sure that succession planning is in place?
- How does a commitment to achieving net zero emissions affect our budget and estates planning?

4. SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	Which areas are thriving? How might you enhance these to see more benefits? What differentiates your school from others, that draws families in?
WEAKNESSES	Barriers in achieving desired mission: whether curriculum, outcomes, funding, site and buildings, training, resources or local factors
OPPORTUNITIES	What (often external) opportunities could be grasped to create an advantage for the school, enhancing its strengths or diminishing weaknesses?
THREATS	Potential obstacles (competition, economics, catchment or population changes) which could affect the school