



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



# Working Together

## The Future of Rural Church of England Schools

October 2014

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*Pictures by: Keith Blundy/Aegies Associates*



**Revd Nigel Genders**

Chief Education Officer  
The Church of England's National  
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## Foreword

**Rural schools are a significant part of the Church of England's contribution to education: 57% of Church of England schools are located in a rural setting and are highly valued by parents for the education they offer as well as the role they fulfil within the local community. However, in the current education landscape they also pose some tough challenges which are not simple to resolve and are often expressed in negative terms.**

In producing this report I have been impressed and encouraged by the many stories of excellent practice and the concrete ways in which small rural schools have made a significant difference to the lives of individual children and their communities. The Report draws on some of that good practice and tries to capture much of it in the general narrative, as well as through some of the case studies. It is not suggesting that these ideas are all new or that they are not already being put into practice across dioceses, but case studies are included as encouragement to do more and to go further; and for every individual governing body to assess its own future in the light of the demographic facts for their locality and the continued reality of limited resources for education.

The Report offers an exploration of the issues facing our rural schools, not a simple set of solutions that will somehow solve these issues. However, one thing I am convinced about is the need for schools to form effective structural partnerships and collaborations if they are to survive into the future. The need to offer a broad educational experience, whilst facing the challenge of sustaining experienced leadership under increasing financial pressure, is such that the days of the individual autonomous small school are numbered. It is only as our schools work more intentionally in structural collaborations that they will find the strength and resilience they need to continue to offer an outstanding education in the heart of local rural communities.

*The Church School of the Future Review* recommended that: "A working party should be established to explore the specific issues of rural schools and to set out recommendations for dioceses on a way forward."

This booklet is the product of that working group<sup>1</sup> and is offered for use by: diocesan senior staff; Diocesan Boards of Education (DBEs); Headteachers and their leadership teams and school Governing Bodies as they find a way forward for rural schools in their specific local context. The Working Group recognises that the issues for each diocese will vary, depending on their local demographics, not least because one diocese's small school is another diocese's larger school.

The general issues facing rural schools have been the subject of extensive research and a number of much more detailed reports. This booklet does not set out to match or replace these: instead it offers more of a toolkit, summarising our rural school provision, providing a framework within which schools can discuss tough questions about the sustainability and quality of their education provision and opening up that dialogue. It presents some case studies of good practice and seeks to offer some possible solutions to the issues facing our rural schools. The toolkit concludes with two sets of questions: one for the DBE, as it formulates its own strategy and policy in this area, and the other for individual governing bodies to use to help them with their own strategic planning.

### **Revd Nigel Genders**

Chief Education Officer, The Church of England's National Education Office  
October 2014

<sup>1</sup> Members of the working group were: Ann Lees (Chair), Rowan Ferguson (Durham & Newcastle), Sue Green (Truro), Andy Mash (Norwich), Ann Mundy (Worcester), Philip Sell (Hereford), Nigel Genders (NS), and additional help from Jill Hopkinson (National Rural Officer) and James Townsend (NS)





## Summary

**The Church of England continues to seek to develop a sustainable and resilient network of schools, striving to offer the highest quality of education for the benefit of all children. In considering the specific issues and future for rural schools the impact of the school on the community is an important factor and the reality of the economic situation is a significant driving force, but the prime responsibility of the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and governing body is to provide a rounded, full and complete education that offers a breadth of curriculum and educational experience to enable the children of the school to truly flourish.**

The continued development of this system will mean embracing new opportunities to enhance our provision, it will require dioceses and schools to be innovative and demonstrate a willingness to seize the initiative rather than sitting back and waiting for something to happen, or someone else to propose a solution. A failure or reluctance to do this, a longing for the status quo, will leave us with a system that was good for yesterday's world, but is not fit for the purposes of education in the modern world; doing nothing is not an option.

DBEs and governing bodies are encouraged to take this initiative under three broad headings:

- Structural Collaboration
- Dare to be Different
- Face the Future

This report offers some examples to stimulate further thinking and commends two sets of questions: one for governing bodies to use to help them assess their own context, the other for DBEs as they determine a policy for rural schools.





# Small Rural Schools: Data and Definitions

## CONTEXT

1. One of the challenges in addressing the specific issues surrounding small rural schools is the lack of a universally agreed definition as to what makes a school small or rural. We have included a report of some of our data at Appendix I, which sets out how we are defining the terms 'small' and 'rural'.

## SIZE

2. Although there is no nationally agreed or fixed definition, the DfE guidance on academy funding for sponsors suggests that a primary school with less than 210 pupils is considered small and, for practical reasons, we have used this figure in this Report. On this basis, Church of England rural primary schools account for 54% of the small rural primary schools in England.
3. Of the 4,443 Church of England primary schools, a majority (65%) have fewer than 210 pupils on roll. This is a significantly greater proportion than is the case for non-Church of England primary schools, of which only 32% have fewer than 210 pupils.
4. Among Church of England primary schools falling within the DfE definition of 'small', the median number of pupils on roll is 110. We have used this figure to further subdivide our small schools into "Very Small" (less than 110); "Small" (111-209) and "210+". This is not simply a matter of abstract calculation – there are different issues, educational and otherwise – facing these schools.'
5. This report focuses on Very Small and Small schools, but the needs of the 210+ schools should not be forgotten: 35% of Church of England schools are considered 'large' by the 210 rule, and just under 300 Church of England primary schools have more than 400 pupils, which makes them very large schools, relative to the national picture.

## RURAL/URBAN

6. Due to the unique history of the Church of England's involvement in education, a significant number of its primary schools are based in rural communities. This has major implications for the distance pupils have to travel to school and how far away the next nearest alternative provision would be.
7. Although there are clear differences between a school in an isolated rural area and one much nearer to a larger village or town, it is a matter of judgement how they might be most accurately categorised. Appendix I shows the basis on which we are making this judgement, revealing that 57% of Church of England primary schools are situated in a 'Rural' areas, compared to only 21% of Non Church of England primary schools.



## NUMBER OF SCHOOLS OR NUMBER OF PUPILS?

8. In understanding the specific issues for rural Church of England schools, it is also important to see the bigger picture of Church of England school provision. Looking at numbers of pupils, rather than numbers of schools, reveals that whilst 65% of our **schools** are small, 60% of our **pupils** are in schools that are larger. And whilst 57% of our schools are rural, 61% of our pupils are in urban schools.
9. In summary, the scale of the Church of England's work with rural schools is significant. The majority of small and rural schools serving communities across England are provided by the Church of England, but it is also crucial to recognise that the majority of Church of England school pupils are in urban or larger schools. Each diocesan Board of Education will need to assess the balance of provision in their own diocese, as part of their development of a policy for small rural schools.





# Challenges and Opportunities for Rural Schools

## SERVING THE COMMUNITY?

10. It is a commonly-held view that having a school within a village strengthens and enhances the community. The Church of England is committed to maintaining a presence in every community, but economic realities, especially during a period of austerity, are such that there has been a steady decline of the services provided to villages. Post offices, pubs, shops, libraries, police and fire stations have all moved away from villages and into the towns; many Local Authorities recognise that they no longer have any meaningful engagement with rural communities, other than through a village school. The school is one of the state's last remaining structural points of contact with rural communities.
11. Advocates for rural schools set out how closing such a school would have a devastating impact on that community, so in order to systematically assess that impact there needs to be a proper understanding of how a particular school serves its community: Among the key questions to ask in carrying out such an analysis are:
  - a. How inclusive is it of the children of the community?
  - b. Do all children go to this school or do some choose to go elsewhere? If so, why?
  - c. What story do local demographics tell about the future for such a school?
  - d. Is the village one where families with children choose (or can afford) to live?
  - e. If there are not enough local children, where does the school draw its pupils from: neighbouring villages without a school, or nearby towns from which parents prefer to send their children out to the village school?
  - f. And if the latter is the case, what impact does that, in turn, have on those urban schools, and what are the sociological factors in play?
12. It is only with a detailed understanding of these issues and realities that a diocesan board or a rural school's governing body will be able to develop a strategic plan to use their resources for the good of all children, enabling the distinctive rural school ethos to draw in, benefit and support the disadvantaged from outside of the immediate community, as well as those children who are fortunate enough to have parents who are able to make such choices for themselves.
13. If rural schools are described as being at the heart of and serving the community, we need to ask what 'serving the community' really means:
  - a. Is the school a focal point where children grow up together and families meet, thus creating social capital?
  - b. How often does the community use the school's facilities?
  - c. What can the school offer to the community beyond the normal school day?
14. Many schools are also used for nurseries, after-school clubs and holiday clubs, but given the lack of other facilities within the village, serving the community might also mean using the school site for the provision of other services: a post office or community centre, for example. Of course, the development of such additional community functions would need to ensure proper safeguarding of children and young people, and should not in anyway detract from the core purpose of the school in providing high quality education, but innovative use of the school site could make the difference between a school being financially viable and able to stay open or not.



15. Church schools are at the heart of our mission to the nation. This does not mean, as some critics have suggested, that they are seen simply as ripe fields for a particular model of evangelism, but rather as another expression of the Church of England's presence in a community as it seeks to serve children and people of all ages. That mission often has a striking vibrancy and dynamism about it when the needs of children and young people are taken seriously, and so it is no surprise that churches are growing where there is a local school and a focus on ministry with children and young people.<sup>2</sup>
16. Given this understanding of the Church school being inextricably linked to and an expression of the Church's mission to the community, some parishes have taken the view that, in order to maximise their potential for serving that community, it would make more sense for the church to share the school's site and buildings. To take one example, moving from its church building to worship in a school has brought new life and growth to the congregation of St Laurence's Church, Middleton, in the Diocese of Durham.<sup>3</sup>

## FUNDING

17. The backdrop for this Report is one of limited financial resources, combined with factors that particularly affect small rural schools adversely. Increasingly, small schools are finding it hard to make the books balance and are projecting deficit budgets as they look to the next three years. Recent changes to the way the funding formula for schools is calculated had a detrimental impact on small schools. In setting the lump sum figure that all schools receive, many Local Authorities (LAs) were unable to do so at a level which small schools require if they are to maintain their staffing structures. The impact of this was mitigated by the introduction of a sparsity factor which enabled LAs to direct additional money to rural schools if the next nearest schools is more than two miles away. However, LAs with a significant proportion of rural schools have historically been amongst the most poorly funded. In addition, successful initiatives – such as the London Challenge – are not easy to replicate in a much more poorly-funded authority which also has to deal with population sparsity and the distances between schools. Although the government has delayed the introduction of a national funding formula to address the unfairness in the system, it has introduced extra funding to enable the most poorly funded LAs to get much needed extra resource. Nevertheless, the overall financial constraints make financial planning extremely difficult for all schools and each of the major parties has indicated a period of continued fiscal constraint after 2015.
18. In 2012-2013, the mean spend per pupil in a rural school of 210 pupils was £3,796, whereas in rural schools with under 110 pupils it was £5,439. If a strict national funding formula based entirely on pupil numbers were to be introduced, this £1600 per pupil advantage would not be maintained and small schools would find it even harder to balance their budget. Of course, the issues are much more complex than this. For example, the additional costs of transporting children to another school - assuming that the school had the capacity to take extra pupils - would need to be taken into account. It is because of the complexity of the situation, and the significant social impact such decisions would have, that successive governments have shied away from making sweeping changes. However, the constant salami slicing of budgets means that more radical change to the way our rural schools are organised is essential if they are to continue to provide a high quality education into the future.

<sup>2</sup> *From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-2013*, page 26  
<http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Reports/FromAnecdoteToEvidence1.0.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.churchgrowthrd.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Resourcing\\_Mission\\_Bulletin/June\\_2013/Achieving\\_New\\_Growth.pdf](http://www.churchgrowthrd.org.uk/UserFiles/File/Resourcing_Mission_Bulletin/June_2013/Achieving_New_Growth.pdf)



19. The tension between the desire for an on-going presence in the community and the limited resources available to make that possible is one that the Church of England is used to. The parish system, with a church in every village, is under significant strain; dioceses regularly consider and implement pastoral reorganisations, intended to rationalise the role of stipendiary clergy across a group of parishes and adopt new ways of structuring the local expression of church to meet the challenges of being the church in the modern world. In applying the same thinking to the church's involvement in education, there are opportunities to be innovative and creative, but in doing so we must not lose sight of what our schools are for.

## WHAT ARE RURAL SCHOOLS FOR?

20. We have identified the significant contribution a school might make to the local community and the importance of this cannot be underestimated. However, socio-economic factors have been affecting the country side since the mid-1800's, and perhaps had a particular intensity in the 1920's and 1930's, partly linked to mechanisation of agriculture. The post-2008 financial crisis has had an additional impact, with many services and facilities being withdrawn from villages, but it is clearly that same pressure on funding which drives much of the debate about the future of rural schools. However, whilst relationship to the local community is an extremely important consideration, the prime purpose of any school is to provide a high quality education.

## A HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN

21. A *DBE for the Future*<sup>4</sup> sets out the aspiration for all of our schools to be good or outstanding as judged by Ofsted.
22. Our rural schools have served their children well over the years and regularly outperform their urban neighbours, but it is important to recognise from the data that larger rural schools are more often rated as outstanding than smaller ones. As the bar continues to be raised for academic outcomes and quality of leadership and governance, small and very small schools (particularly those that struggle to secure experienced leadership or high quality strategic governors) will find it harder to achieve an outstanding rating.
23. However, our vision for education goes well beyond what Ofsted may require. We aspire to offer a broad, full and rounded education that enables children to truly flourish. In order to offer this breadth of curricula and extra-curricular opportunities, small schools will increasingly need to work with other schools to benefit from larger cohorts of children (e.g. for sport, music and other extra-curricular activities) and to access subject expertise within the curriculum.

## FORMATION OF CHARACTER

24. The Church of England has, for over 200 years, sought to provide an education which serves the whole child. Effective education is not simply about academic standards, it is also about character formation.
25. There is wide discussion about this: political parties are promising a renewed commitment to a focus on character and resilience; the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts (RSA)<sup>5</sup> has recently published a report with the thought-provoking title 'Schools with Soul'; Ofsted say that spiritual, moral, social and cultural

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1794108/cofe%20dbe%20future%20-%20final%20version.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> RSA, *Schools with Soul*,

[http://www.thersa.org/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/1540762/RSA\\_Schools\\_Executive\\_Summary\\_11\\_3\\_14.pdf](http://www.thersa.org/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1540762/RSA_Schools_Executive_Summary_11_3_14.pdf)



development needs to be given closer attention in their inspection framework and organisations like ourselves and The Children's Society rightly focus on the well-being of children.

26. Church of England schools have always sought to offer an approach to education that is about formation of character, but one which addresses the subject from within a specific narrative rather than with values that are just plucked from the zeitgeist. Church schools root their values in the narrative of Jesus of Nazareth that has sustained millions of people for centuries.
27. Church of England schools seek to be highly effective educationally, and they achieve that by not simply aiming to produce outstanding test and exam results or by striving just to be rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, but by aiming for every child and young person to have a life enhancing encounter with the person of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Through that daily encounter and a focus on spiritual development and the formation of character, our schools seek to enable pupils to show integrity, courage, trustworthiness, emotional intelligence and to be passionate about justice.

## CHURCH/SCHOOL LINKS

28. Our schools and churches, working in partnership, seek to offer an education that enables children to truly grow and flourish. The Church offers a rich resource for schools, both practically and pastorally. Schools can use the church building to enrich the whole curriculum, as well as to promote the spiritual development of all children. In addition to their role as school governors, Church of England clergy currently give over one million hours of time a year to supporting schools and this practical and pastoral support is hugely valued by community schools, as well as the 4,700 Church of England schools. Such a resource is a key part of the Church's gift to the nation and plays a significant role in enabling local communities to flourish.
29. One of the key recommendations of the *Church School of the Future Review* was to produce more material and training opportunities for clergy and all those involved with schools to enable them to develop church/school links more effectively. In developing these materials, some of which will be available in Spring 2015, we recognise that small rural schools will often need to think beyond the immediate parish/school link (since the parish itself may be part of a much larger group ministry) and consider the role of the benefice and deanery in supporting the distinctiveness of the Church schools within it.

## EDUCATION FOR ALL

30. The Church of England's contribution to education in modern times has been marked by its commitment to the mass provision of Christian education for the poor. It was in pursuit of this goal that the National Society was established in 1811 and it is that founding vision (reaffirmed in *The Way Ahead* and *The Church School of the Future Review*) that we seek to recapture as we promote inclusivity in the context of our rural schools.
31. There has been some discussion within the Church of England as to what is meant by 'inclusive'. One view is that it is about Church of England schools being accepting of Christian pupils and non-Christian pupils through their doors. In this sense, the word 'inclusive' might be taken as the opposite of 'divisive'. The vast majority of Church of England schools do not restrict the majority of their places to those of Christian faith, so we are confident in describing Church of England schools as inclusive in these terms. An alternative emphasis is to see being 'inclusive' to mean ensuring that Church



of England schools are effective at serving the most vulnerable groups in society. A more complex question is how the use of faith requirements in admissions policies might impact on way the ability of the school to be inclusive.

32. The almost universally used measure of inclusivity is the percentage of pupils on the roll of a school who are deemed eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). FSM percentages are easily manipulated, but are a readily-understood (if somewhat unsophisticated), binary measure in absolute terms attempting to depict a very broad range of deprivation. IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) is fast becoming the leading measure for deprivation as it provides a much greater level of nuance, allowing us to compare more deprived and less deprived schools. It also takes into account the deprivation of all pupils, making it a more authoritative measure.
33. Against both of these measures, Church of England rural schools appear to attract more pupils from the least deprived sections of the community than the equivalent community schools. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this is due to schools using admissions criteria to influence this pattern and it appears more likely to be a result of house prices, or perhaps a consequence of the way that exercising parental choice is made much harder for all sections of the community in the context of rural sparsity and difficulties with transport.
34. The challenges facing rural schools present an opportunity to reconsider how our schools, working in partnership, can innovate and create new opportunities to ensure that the most disadvantaged in society can access the highest quality of education that Church of England schools seek to provide.
35. In the sections that follow we have summarised some ways in which DBE's and governing bodies might take this initiative under three broad headings:
  - Structural Collaboration
  - Dare to be Different
  - Face the Future

We then go on to offer some case studies to stimulate further thinking and two sets of questions: one for governing bodies to use to help them assess their own context, the other for DBEs as they determine a policy for rural schools.



## Structural Collaboration

36. Collaboration is not a new concept in education and there have been some significant recent studies and development of materials and models to help schools think about the importance of collaboration.<sup>6</sup> Schools have worked with their neighbours on a wide range of initiatives and activities. However, developments over the last five years: the pressure on school budgets; the difficulty some schools face in recruiting experienced and outstanding leaders; and the development of the academies programme have all meant that the case for increased collaboration is clear.
37. We have consistently argued for the need for an interdependent school system, rather than a series of independently-led and managed schools. The diocesan family is an excellent way to secure this, particularly for rural schools. What is needed is more than good working relationships between schools: it is the careful development of structural collaborations and formal partnerships and alliances. The fact that so few of our primary schools have so far chosen to convert to academy status demonstrates how difficult it can be for small schools to make the financial and other aspects of being an academy work on an individual basis, a fact which also explains why the larger academy chains are not very keen to take responsibility for small rural primary schools. However, groups of schools converting together in a multi-academy trust (MAT) could provide the kind of structural collaboration necessary to secure the family of schools for the future, in the same way that hard federations have been used effectively in the rest of the maintained sector.
38. The reality of our small rural schools is that three schools may not be enough to provide the strength and depth needed for fruitful and long-term sustainability. In many cases, it is more likely that real interdependence will be best achieved by joining the diocesan MAT. At the moment the DfE incentivises schools to form small MATs with 2 or 3 primary schools by providing a Primary Chains Grant. This policy does not help build the resilient school system we need in rural areas. For small primary schools it would make much more sense for incentives to be given to encourage them to join the Diocesan MAT and find the interdependence that they need by belonging there.
39. Such formal collaboration should not be seen as a means of maintaining the status quo. It will only produce lasting benefit if the leadership, staffing, governance and back-office structures are all designed carefully.

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<sup>6</sup> CfBT Education Trust: *Partnership Working in Small Rural Primary Schools*  
<http://www.cfbt.com/en-GB/Research/Research-library/2014/r-partnership-working-2014>

National College and Ofsted documents:

- <http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/docinfo?id=17450&filename=united-we-stand-full-report.pdf>,
- <http://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/docinfo?id=155373&filename=the-impact-of-school-federation-on-student-outcomes.pdf>
- <http://ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/surveys-and-good-practice//Leadership%20of%20more%20than%20one%20school.pdf>

Ofsted report 2011/12 on positive outcomes of federations, page 18  
<http://ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/ar201112/The%20report%20of%20Her%20Majesty%27s%20Chief%20Inspector%20of%20Education%2C%20Children%27s%20Services%20and%20Skills%20Schools.pdf>



## CHURCH SCHOOL LEADERS FOR THE FUTURE

### CASE STUDY

#### A Primary School Teaching Alliance, Diocese of York

An established group of 8 primary schools (numbers on roll: 38, 93, 51, 41, 20, 34, 44, 37) in a rural, and in some cases isolated, location. Having previously worked together as a Learning Network, the group has now been designated a Teaching School Alliance. Links to another teaching school, a trust of secondary schools and higher education establishments are in place. Working across 2 local authorities with an agenda for school improvement and shared experiences for children with secondary partners, the schools include: 3 Church of England Schools in the Diocese of York; one Roman Catholic School and 4 County Primary Schools and have a wider and ever increasing membership of other schools working as both strategic partners and general members.

The Alliance emerged from recognition that schools could be stronger, more sustainable and provide better outcomes and opportunities for everyone if they improved their work together. It is modelled on the six key focus areas of a Teaching School Alliance. National, Local and Senior Leaders of Education and Professional Partners within the group are involved in school to school support and the delivery of continued professional development. It attributes its success to the excellent relationships between headteachers which is based on trust and mutual respect. The Alliance has a joint long term plan, development plan and shared subject leaders who work in partnership across schools. Data is collected and analysed in all subjects with moderation being part of each subject leader's action plan. Across the Alliance, staff have two shared performance management targets; one is for leadership development at all levels.

The Alliance also works on a number of joint research projects including reading forums, Talk4Maths and a programme on writing. The latter involves teachers of all subjects from primary and secondary working together to develop high quality writing across the curriculum.

The Alliance provides a number of schools with 'School to School' support, and is analysing performance data across all 8 schools, providing challenge partnerships to maintain high standards. It now plans to appoint a School Business Manager and is actively planning for succession of staff and leadership in order to ensure it maintains the high standards in each school.

40. In order to offer the broad, rounded curriculum and holistic approach to education that our children deserve, schools need strong leadership and governance and a highly trained and professional staff.
41. A successful school needs to ensure that staff have opportunities for continued professional development, it needs to secure leaders for the future and it needs to have financial resilience and stability to make all of this possible.
42. Rural schools need to collaborate formally and structurally in order to continue to provide quality education in a village context. To persist in trying to survive on their own, whatever the good intentions, is more likely to lead to closure, whereas real partnership and structural collaboration could secure a high quality education in the rural setting for years to come.



## CASE STUDY

### The Trinity Federation of Church of England School, Norwich Diocese

*Christine Livings, Headteacher of St Peter's Easton, Great Witchingham and Hockering Primaries writes:*

It is a privilege to be part of the Trinity Federation of Church Schools, St Peter's Easton, Great Witchingham and Hockering; working together as one whilst maintaining the individuality of each school.

In 2007 St Peter's VC Primary School and Great Witchingham VA Primary School entered into a partnership with one Headteacher and two governing bodies. Little did we know how well this adventure would turn out and in September 2010 we were joined by Hockering. All three schools actively pursued partnership with another church school as a way of improving their own provision and offering greater opportunities for staff, pupils and governors. This has certainly been the outcome. Five years down the line from the original partnership we now have one governing Body for the three schools and are really reaping the benefits of federation.

We have created an efficient management system which works across the whole federation at all levels. Staff work together to plan and evaluate the curriculum. All staff support each other and share expertise and some work in more than one of the schools. This has enabled us to keep staff and to offer them more in the way of professional development than is usually possible in small rural schools.

The children have benefited through shared residential and day visits and curriculum time where staff across the Federation have shared expertise to provide more opportunities of high quality teaching and learning for the children.

To create a successful federation it is necessary to have a strong but flexible, senior management team with a clear vision of how they want the schools to develop a vision which is shared with the governing body. Financial constraints call for creative thinking and a flexible approach to management but we feel that this is one of our strengths.

The icing on the cake came this year when St Peter's Primary was judged to be outstanding both by Ofsted and by SIAMS; the inspectors acknowledged the management of the federation as being a key strength. To achieve what we have has been possible in part because of help and support from the Local Authority, the Diocesan Board of Education and clear leadership from within the federation.

What next? Things are always evolving; we are now looking to federate the budgets and considering moving to VA status across all three schools.

43. Too often governing bodies put off considering structural collaboration until a moment of crisis: when the financial forecast is poor; when there is a vacancy for headship; or when the school is put in an Ofsted category. Even faced with a leadership vacancy, our experience is that governing bodies would rather try and recruit to the vacant head teacher's role first, before taking a decision to federate or form a MAT or develop some other means of structural collaboration. This results in a reactive approach and reduces the scope for broader strategic decisions.
44. To secure the role and place of rural schools, governing bodies need to plan ahead. We strongly encourage Governing Bodies to be looking each year at the demographics and local challenges and reassessing their future in a more strategic and proactive way. The checklist at appendix 2 is recommended as a way for every governing body of schools smaller than one form of entry to do this annually, and for larger primary schools (with smaller schools nearby) to think about how they can offer real partnership for the good of all children. Simply grouping a number of very small schools together won't really help, we need the larger schools to form structural partnerships with the smaller ones.





45. Collaborations are not a means to avoid closure, but are for mutual benefit as we build a strong family of Church schools. It is common for discussions to be carried out in terms of the strong supporting the weak so that the weak become strong, but it is important to recognise that all schools involved in a structural partnership have things to offer and learn from each other.
46. In thinking about the different options for structural collaboration, it is also important to note the reality of rural sparsity which sometimes means that the most appropriate school to collaborate with may be in a different diocese or LA. We need to think about what really works best for children, rather than be confined by our own structures, so consider the possibilities of dioceses working together to ensure that schools on the edge of their boundaries do not suffer.

### CASE STUDY

#### The Pilgrim Federation of Church of England Schools, Norwich Diocese

*Revd Phil Blamire* Chair of Governors, Kelling Primary School, and Rector, Weybourne Group of Parishes

Well it was like this really... You are Chair of Governors of a very small village primary school with a shrinking population on the beautiful but remote North Norfolk coast. Your excellent Head has moved on to take charge of a large primary school in the city – with no classroom teaching commitment. You're very fortunate that the equally excellent KS2 lead teacher is headship material and, whilst Acting Head successfully leads the school through an Ofsted with 'good and outstanding'; then, through a rigorous process, is appointed Head.

But for how long? Your Head will continue to teach three days a week and the budget indicates it'll be a four day commitment next year. Teaching assistants have already been reduced; their hours will be cut further. As for the wonderful school secretary and finance officer – a reduced part time contract awaits. "We want to be outstanding!" goes up the cry from the energetic governing body. "Good is not good enough." Then it dawns on you: none of this is sustainable. It's crisis management at its worst. The future of your lovely village primary school is in serious jeopardy. The amount of pressure on the ever-pressurised teaching Head and all the staff is unfair, unreasonable and unhealthy. The future is bleak. Twelve months on: a vision shared, a passion articulated, a common purpose realised. Now the future is bright! Four small rural primary schools – Hindringham, Blakeney, Walsingham and Kelling – will become 'The Pilgrim Federation of Church of England Schools'. Applications were received from experienced Headteachers. We have appointed an Executive Headteacher; will appoint a deputy as Head of Teaching & Learning; appoint a business manager; there will be a lead teacher in each school. Staffing and financial security will greatly enable and strengthen teaching and learning working 'irresistibly' towards the raising of standards across the four schools. Future secured. That's the reality.

## SECURING THE CHRISTIAN ETHOS

47. The Church of England has always made its offer of education as being for the common good and for the whole nation. The Church's involvement with community schools, especially in the rural setting, is significant and highly valued. Ways have already been found to enable community schools to join in diocesan led MATs to make continued partnership possible, but all structural collaborations involving a mixture of community and Church of England schools need to be established in a way that secures the Christian character of the Church schools.



48. Our long tradition of providing a rounded Christian education in the rural setting must not be diluted by the desire to maintain just any educational presence if such a solution loses its distinctively Christian approach. This means that particular care must be taken in establishing appropriate governance arrangements and with the appointment of the schools' leadership.
49. Our commitment to partnership and collaboration must be within a framework that it is still able to offer an education which sees the formation of children set within the context of the Christian narrative.
50. It makes sense for neighbouring schools to find ways to collaborate, but in thinking through the local context and weighing the strengths and weaknesses of different combinations of schools, it is particularly important to ensure that Church of England schools are secure in their ethos and character.
51. The DBE has a particular responsibility for ensuring that the Christian foundation of its schools is secure, in accordance with each school's trust deeds, so before embarking on discussions between schools it is vitally important that the DBE is involved. Indeed, the DBE will be encouraging such discussions as a result of its engagement with schools as they respond to the self-review questions at Appendix 2.

## THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

52. Our primary purpose is to ensure the highest quality of education for all the children we serve. This means that, as a national church as well as at diocesan level, we should be less concerned about the number of schools we have in our estate and more concerned about the number of pupils who are able to benefit from that rich educational experience. So, rather than schools remaining as individual autonomous units which we have traditionally 'counted' as schools, we might seek to maintain a high quality educational presence in the community by enabling one larger school to operate with several satellites in different villages. Thinking of that presence in small villages as 'a classroom' or even 'a key stage' may give the flexibility we need to build effective and innovative collaborations.
53. Small village schools often struggle with a restricted site or challenging buildings, so using one village for Key Stage 1 and another for Key Stage 2 may enable a creative solution to be found which has the added benefit of seeing larger cohorts of children in each year group, with all the added educational advantage that would bring. Obviously care would need to be taken to stagger start and finish times to the school day to enable parents with children in different year groups to drop off and pick up - or there may be the possibility of providing additional transport across a group of schools in order to ensure flexibility for staff and pupils – but if the result is broader curricular opportunities and a more effective education, then the benefit is clear.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

54. Market forces and the ability for larger schools to pay higher salaries have meant that the natural career progression for a Headteacher is from a small school to a larger school. But the challenge of being the Head of a small or very small school is often underestimated.
55. Governing bodies and parent communities will often argue that their school needs to have its own Head, but the reality has been that, in order to make that school economically sustainable, its Headteacher normally has a substantial teaching commitment and can only fulfil their senior leadership function for a very limited part



of each day, with enormous pressure on their time. This is not really what the governors and parents intended. In our experience, what parents and governing bodies really mean is that they want someone in the school who can take a lead on teaching and learning and who can be the direct point of contact for parents. A structural collaboration still enables this to happen at local level, whilst the wider, strategic leadership and the management of personnel and finances can be provided as a function for the whole group of schools, resourced by a more experienced leader.

56. In a structural collaboration, (whether it is a MAT, a hard federation or an amalgamation of schools) functioning effectively as one school that is operating on several sites also increases the opportunities for staff development.
57. This sharing of expertise across a group of schools enables other staff to develop and will be the catalyst for growing the next generation of school leaders. A lead teacher or head of school operating within the supportive framework and under the guidance of the experienced leader of such a collaboration will grow and develop and may well become the next Headteacher of the partnership. It is a model that is more likely to be sustainable for the future, whilst offering a better quality of education for the children of today.

## GOVERNANCE

58. Governors and governing bodies continue to be a focus for attention across the education system as there is shared recognition that more needs to be done to support and equip them.<sup>7</sup> It is widely recognised that the demands on school governors are increasing. The need for governors to be able to offer strategic oversight, effective challenge and hold school leaders to account for the performance and effectiveness of the education in their school, all as volunteers with other pressures on their time, means that it is increasingly difficult, at least in some areas of the country, to find a sufficient number of people able to or offering to carry out this role.
59. In more densely populated areas, local businesses often provide a good and supportive source for school governors, but in the rural context this is frequently harder to achieve.
60. The advantage of a structural collaboration (a MAT, a hard federation or an amalgamation) is that it reduces the need for several governing bodies. Having one main governing body where the strategic oversight takes place and where there is the ability to use and interpret data effectively to ensure the highest quality of education is offered, requires fewer people with the right skills and expertise to be attracted to serve. It is likely to be easier to attract visionary and effective strategic thinkers to a governing body if that body has oversight over a number of schools, rather than being focused on one very small school. But there is still a vital role for local community engagement and those with less confidence about interpreting data, providing financial scrutiny or setting a strategy can still make a valuable contribution at a local level.
61. Church of England school governors need to be able to achieve all of this in the context of the Christian character of the school and ensure that the ethos and very nature of the education offered is in harmony with the school's Trust Deeds.

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/353107/Open\\_letter\\_to\\_Chairs\\_-\\_Lord\\_Nash.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353107/Open_letter_to_Chairs_-_Lord_Nash.pdf)



62. In rural settings, the clergy are often responsible for several parishes and may have a number of Church of England schools for which the incumbent is an ex-officio governor; this provides a very real challenge. The need for clergy to be actively involved in the life and mission of the schools is clear, but the importance of the governance role cannot be underestimated, especially at a time when governors have so much influence in setting the strategic direction of schools for the future. Balancing these needs is difficult. Some dioceses make good use of the ability to provide an archdeacon's nominee in place of the incumbent. Others have developed an approach which provides for a 'bishop's appointed governor' rather than naming the incumbent as the ex-officio governor. Such an approach has the advantage of creating a bigger pool from which governors with the right skills can be chosen.
63. Foundation Governors, whether appointed by the DBE or PCC or by another church body, do not have to live in the village but they need to be chosen to provide the strategic leadership required. There could be a positive role for the deanery here, as there will be talented people from parishes without any Church of England schools that would be pleased to offer their services in this way. In order to make this possible, DBEs should consider whether they can make some funds available to reimburse travel expenses for governors who are being asked to travel to rural schools. Truro Diocese has found this to be a successful approach.
64. Even with all the demands and many challenges, the role of school governor is a very rewarding one and should be promoted as a significant opportunity for Christian service and stewardship so that a vocation to be a school governor is encouraged.



## Dare to be Different

65. The fact that there are so many small Church of England schools in rural communities is a consequence of history. When the National Society set out to provide a school for the education of the poor in every parish, the population was distributed across the country in different ways to how it is today. One significant response to the changing population distribution has been the rationalisation of much of the school estate and the opening of many new Church of England schools in more urban settings to realign school provision in post-war industrial England. In order to continue to meet the needs of the nation, we must allow our system to evolve and develop in line with continuing demographic trends, whilst not turning our back on those who live in rural areas.
66. Structural partnerships and formal collaborations are the best way to ensure the ongoing provision of a resilient school system. But in order for such partnerships to flourish they need to be innovative and creative.
67. A small school based in a village where there are very few children, will not prosper in the long term by trying to remain independent and autonomous and simply boost its pupil numbers from 30 to 50. The wider family of schools is not served well if such schools only adopt the strategy of trying to persuade enough parents to make the effort to drive their children out to the school, because that will often have a detrimental impact on the school nearest to the family's home, by attracting the more mobile and affluent families away from the schools in their own community. A better approach is for schools working in formal partnerships to ensure that a diversity of provision is offered. It is here that the small rural school is uniquely placed to offer something special and significant for the poor and disadvantaged as well as for those children who would benefit from a different and innovative approach to education made possible by the rural environment.
68. Parents of children with special educational needs may choose a smaller school because they sense that their child will be given more individual attention and benefit from the unique environment. However, the way SEN funding is calculated and the inability to make economies of scale work in favour of a school with so few pupils, means that the challenge to provide resources that really make a difference for such children is significant.
69. A similar problem is encountered in the effective use of pupil premium for the benefit of children from disadvantaged families, bearing in mind that there are real pockets of significant deprivation in rural communities. However, given the small numbers involved in a given locality, the combined resource from a very few pupils attracting pupil premium is not sufficient to make the kind of difference that can be achieved by adding together the pupil premium for a much greater number of pupils in a larger school. Research shows that urban schools have slightly more types of support than rural<sup>8</sup> but also that most schools pool resources and work with other schools and external providers. The National Society's Unlocking Gifts project will contribute significantly to our thinking in this area.
70. One solution may be for small rural schools within a formal and structural partnership with other schools, to consider specialising in SEN or to tailor their curriculum to meet the needs of particularly disadvantaged groups and thereby enable economies of scale to be used to ensure that the provision is extremely well resourced.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/243919/DFE-RR282.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/243919/DFE-RR282.pdf)



71. Other innovative models where schools have dared to be different include an agricultural school and a recently opened forest school.

### **CASE STUDY**

#### **Barrow 1618 Church of England Free School, Diocese of Hereford**

In the Autumn of 2010, Shropshire LA announced a review of provision which affected around 25% of diocesan schools in that area. Barrow was one of several schools identified for closure. The school community's response was a vigorous opposition to closure. They took up the challenge presented by the DDE to 'dare to be different'; to put themselves on the map as a school which offered something special and unique.

A working party of governors and parents constructed an application to set up one of the country's first Free Schools. From the outset their view was to have a school with a curriculum which reflected very much the community it served. The new School was named Barrow 1618 to reflect its historic foundation. It offers an innovative curriculum for pupils, centring on learning opportunities presented by the natural environment and learning through 'hands-on' experience. The children spend as much time as possible learning outdoors, in the spirit of the Forest School tradition. Skills and competences learned in the classroom are applied and practiced in the outdoor environment. Whether that is when they are working in the polytunnels, tending crops, looking after the chickens, measuring trees, learning country skills and crafts, collecting data from the weather station or tending the shire horses housed on site.

The school opened with 36 children in September 2012 and has quickly grown to its 70 capacity, with waiting lists for many year groups. It is set for further growth as it has already outgrown the existing space. A new hall and kitchen has been built, in which children cook and serve some of their own produce. The school has various parent helper groups and is working towards green flag status, healthy eating and safety mark.

Pupils are ambassadors of 'Barrow Values' and develop, through their own learning, an awareness of how their unique skills, strengths and attributes can have a positive impact on the lives of others around them.

The Barrow 1618 school motto, 'Supportive, Understanding, Reassuring Education' sums up the school's vision. Barrow is a lively, inspiring school where children can excel in a supportive, caring environment with a strong Christian ethos.

## **VIRTUAL SCHOOLS**

72. We have already discussed the possibility of seeing individual rural schools as satellites of a larger school network, offering a core education to children living in rural areas when the only other alternative might be them spending extraordinarily long hours travelling to school some distance away. In order to do this, it may be necessary to bring the teacher with expert subject knowledge to the child, rather than the child to the teacher. By harnessing the many opportunities that advancements in technology bring, it is no longer essential for this to mean that the two are physically in the same room. Increasingly, both commercial companies and individual families are used to engaging with each other via video conferencing links and other virtual platforms. However, this can pose a significant challenge in rural areas, where the broadband provision may be less consistent. A technological solution for areas that have been neglected in the development of technological infrastructure is beset with further difficulties.



73. However, in remote parts of Australia and Canada, or, nearer home, in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, there are examples of schools using technology effectively to ensure that children in rural villages still have access to the very best teaching. For such children, going to school often means being in the classroom with other children from their village, having proper supervision and real life help from adults, teachers and teaching assistants, but for the core lessons to be taught by one very skilled teacher who is actually delivering the lesson simultaneously to a number of different 'schools'.
74. Technology should also be better harnessed to ensure that, across a group of schools working in partnership, or even across a whole network of such partnerships, there is effective sharing of knowledge to help with the planning and delivery of high quality lessons. Accessing resources locally to enhance curriculum through technology would result in an effective 'classroom in the community' sustained by a virtual link providing subject specialists, expertise and experience on a scale that individual schools could never afford.

### CASE STUDY

#### Harnessing Technology for the Rural Classroom

Initial discussions with EdisonLearning have identified a potential project under the following headings, and we are seeking funding to enable a pilot to take place to develop these ideas:

##### *Technology*

- a learning platform that holds a shared set of resources that can be accessed directly by children as well as teachers in any of the locations
- a broadcast facility that would enable teachers to interact with groups of children, from any location to any location

##### *Pedagogy*

- an analysis of the current, all encompassing, role of the teacher as coach/motivator, facilitator and subject matter expert
- rethinking how the above could be successfully re-distributed across teachers, teaching assistants and technology to provide children with great learning opportunities that have less reliance on the close presence of a teacher at all times

##### *Resources*

- a shared framework for the creation and assemblage of learning resources- enabling teachers to share the load of planning/preparation and ensuring that children, teaching assistants and teachers know when and how these are deployed (linked to the pedagogical model)
- the incorporation of some proprietary software that provides an underpinning and is built systematically into their delivery of core subjects
- assessment and data streams that provide views of progress and performance at MAT, school and child level and prompt the need for additional intervention



## Face the Future

75. Proposals to close a school are always emotive and often get caught up in wider arguments about community, societal change or local politics. However, the quality of education being offered needs to be our primary concern. Through effective and formal collaboration and partnership and by daring to be different we believe that it is possible to sustain significant educational presence using school buildings in rural villages, but there are occasions when the best and most strategic option will be the closure of a school.
76. There is still a government presumption against closure which was introduced in 1998, in recognition of the need to maintain access to a local school in rural areas, as part of an overall policy to provide a diversity of provision which offers parents a variety of choice. The presumption does not mean that rural primary schools will never close, but it does require LAs to ensure that the case for closure is strong and in the best interests of the overall education provision for an area.
77. One of the consequences of the move towards academy status is that, as diocesan MATs take responsibility for the running of schools, they will also be the ones faced with difficult decisions about the viability of an individual school and whether or not it should be closed. However, the statutory responsibility for the provision of pupil places still rests with the LA and any proposed closure must be considered in the light of the wider context.

### AN ECONOMIC ARGUMENT?

78. When proposing the closure of small schools, the argument is sometimes made that the cost of educating a pupil in a small rural school is higher than at a larger school; but the hidden costs such as transport, not to mention the unseen emotional cost to the young child of taking them out of their home village and bussing them to a nearby town, are not always factored in. There is a cost in keeping schools open, but also significant costs in closure: redundancy, transport, extending nearby schools etc. and these additional costs should not be transferred from the education system to parents.
79. Similarly, there is an assumption that the larger urban schools have plenty of physical space to accommodate the additional pupils from the rural schools, but this is not always the case. In fact, with the continued population growth in urban areas, the likelihood is that they won't be able to. The surplus places are often in the rural schools and, even if suitable sites could be found, significant investment would be needed to expand larger schools to accommodate the pupils from unviable small schools.

### A LAST RESORT?

80. We have already discussed the significant contribution and impact a school makes to its local community and the need to maximise this relationship. However, even with all these important caveats, changing demographics sometimes mean that it will be necessary to close a school.
81. But closure should not be seen as the worst option or the last resort, it should be considered as part of a wider strategic discussion about the educational provision in an area. Closing one school might be the positive and necessary step to enable another school to flourish, whereas persisting with both might lead to the ultimate





failure and closure of both or it might hinder the ability to maintain a quality of education in the area as a whole, especially a quality of education that we can be rightly proud of.

82. We have already referenced the toolkit at Appendix 2 and urge all governing bodies to use it to frame an appropriate discussion about the future of their school. The DBE will want to triangulate the school's annual submission of its self-review framework with its own assessment of the schools strengths and weaknesses. It will also need to consider how it resources any offer to facilitate discussion and the resulting work that may be required.
83. We also recommend that DBEs use the questions in Appendix 3 to reassess their policy for small schools so that they are better placed to offer support and advice to schools within the strategic framework of a diocesan vision. It is vital for such a policy to be formed with the widest possible involvement of senior leaders within the diocese, because any proposal to reorganise school provision will generate strong feeling and it is essential that the Bishop's senior staff and DBE are united in their policy position.

## NEXT STEPS?

84. In offering these two lists of questions for self-review and strategic development, we hope that they will provide something of a catalyst to enable a school's strategic thinking and the DBE's strategic thinking to be aligned, thereby ensuring that all are working towards a common goal of providing the very highest quality of education across the whole diocese.
85. There is a pressing need for schools to form effective structural partnerships and collaborations if they are to survive into the future. Offering a broad educational experience, whilst facing the challenge of sustaining experienced leadership under increasing financial pressure, is such that the days of the individual autonomous small school are numbered. It is only as our schools work more intentionally in structural collaborations that they will find the strength and resilience they need to continue to offer an outstanding education in the heart of local rural communities.





# Appendix 1

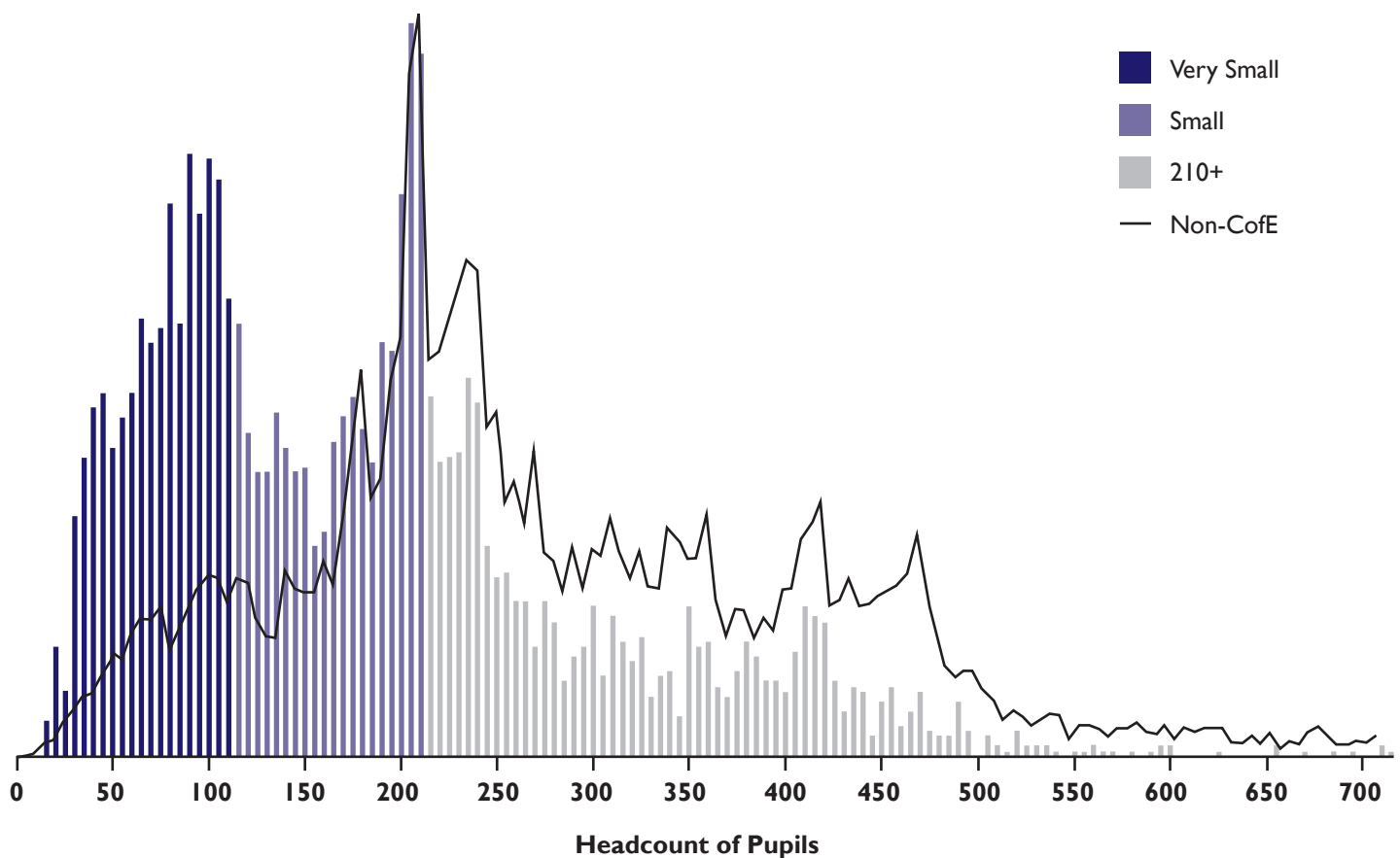
## Church of England Primary Schools Data

### SCHOOL SIZE

The data included in this report is for last full academic year for which a complete data set is available i.e. 2012-13. Therefore these data represent a snapshot of August 2013.

One of the most striking characteristics of Church of England primary schools is their size.

The following figure compares the distribution of Church of England primary schools against Non Church of England primary schools according to their number of pupils on roll.<sup>1</sup> It is the shape of the graph that is important, rather than the detail of the numbers. There are two peaks in the distribution of Church of England schools – one at just under 100 pupils, and another at 200. The higher peak matches a national trend, and represents the majority of one-form entry primary schools. The lower peak is peculiar to the Church of England distribution, and shows a large number of schools with less than one-form entry.



<sup>1</sup> School Census, Department for Education, January 2013; Census data not available for 247 schools (1.5% of all schools) due to academy conversion. These have been included in the 210+ category.

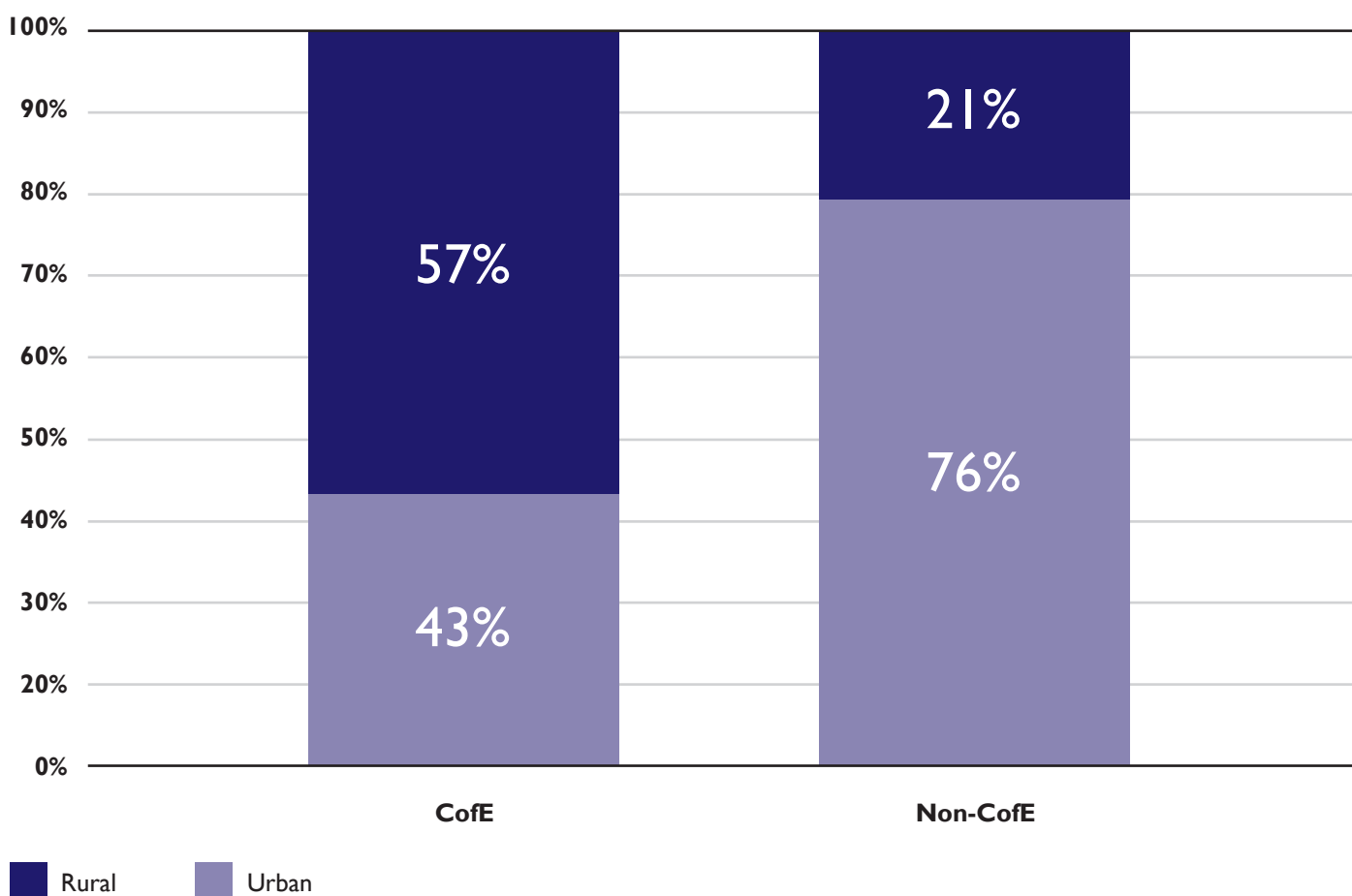
## RURAL URBAN CLASSIFICATION

Due to the unique history of the Church of England's involvement in education, a significant number of its primary schools are based in rural communities. This goes some way to explaining the peculiarities of headcount, but also has significant implications of itself, relating to distances pupil travel to school, and the nearest alternative provision.

Categorisation of a school as 'Rural' or 'Urban' is inevitably complex, and any approach will fail to capture every element of a school's context. However, for the purposes of this paper the definition used by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) is sufficient.<sup>2</sup> It offers a classification of the Output Area (OA) in which the school is physically situated. One caveat is that OAs are the smallest unit for which census data is available, and therefore do not represent the whole catchment area for the school.

Under the 2011 Rural Urban Classification, any settlement with a population of over 10,000 is considered 'urban'. Where the majority of households within an OA are part of such a settlement according to 2011 Census data, that OA is considered 'urban'. For the purposes of this paper, all OAs not classified as 'urban' are considered simply 'rural' although a certain amount of nuance can be introduced, on the basis of population sparsity (i.e. Hamlet, Village, Town & Fringe).

Using this categorisation, 57% of Church of England primary schools are situated in a 'Rural' OA compared to only 21% of Non Church of England primary schools.



<sup>2</sup> 2011 Rural Urban Classification, DEFRA, 2013

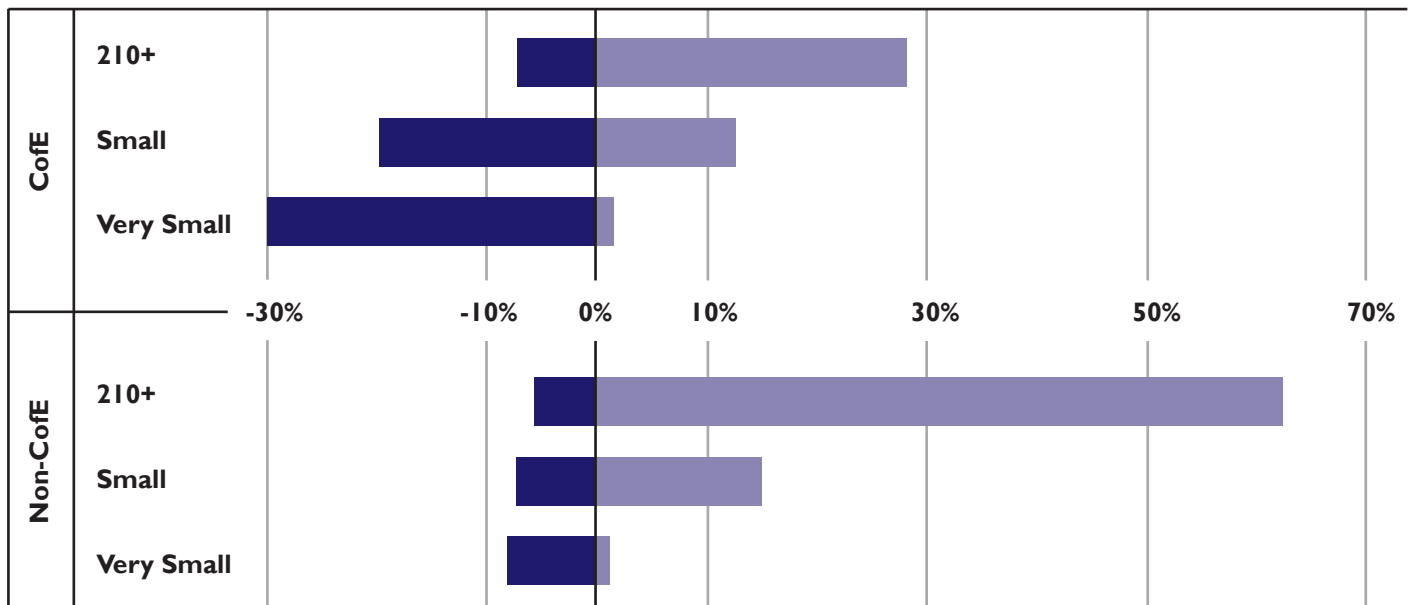


## TYPES OF SCHOOL

When the categorisations of Urban/Rural and Size are combined, all Church of England primary schools fall into six different categories. The spread between the categories is contrasted here with that of Non Church of England schools. This table and the charts highlight the spread of different types of CofE and Non-CofE schools, expressed as a percentage of their constituent groups (i.e. 28% of Church of England primary schools are large schools in an urban context).

### School Type (Numbers of Schools)

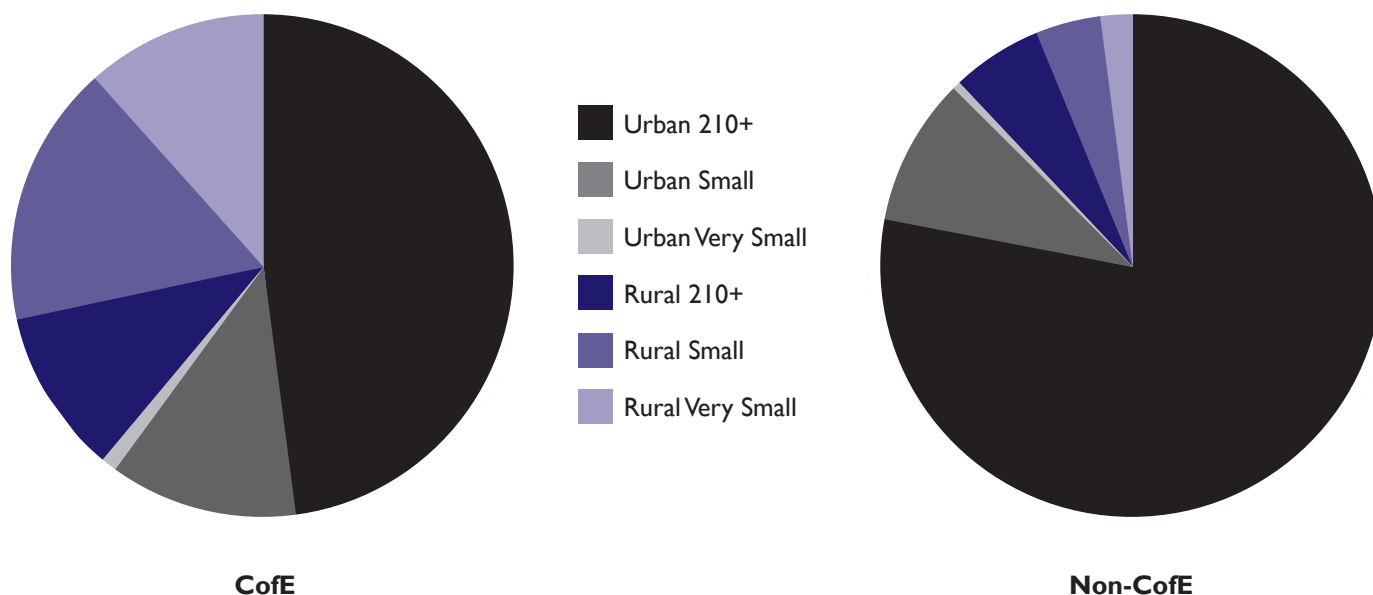
|                  | CofE  |     | Non-CofE |     |
|------------------|-------|-----|----------|-----|
|                  | #     | %   | #        | %   |
| Urban 210+       | 1,261 | 28% | 7,723    | 63% |
| Urban Small      | 564   | 13% | 1,851    | 15% |
| Urban Very Small | 75    | 2%  | 152      | 1%  |
| Rural 210+       | 321   | 7%  | 698      | 6%  |
| Rural Small      | 879   | 20% | 929      | 8%  |
| Rural Very Small | 1,343 | 30% | 995      | 8%  |



## School Type (Headcount of Pupils)

While it is clear from the figures above that rural schools make up a significant number of Church of England primary schools, they tend to be relatively small schools and therefore do not represent the equivalent proportion of the pupil population.

|                         | CofE           |     | Non-CofE         |     |
|-------------------------|----------------|-----|------------------|-----|
|                         | #              | %   | #                | %   |
| <b>Urban 210+</b>       | 387,490        | 48% | 2,678,185        | 78% |
| <b>Urban Small</b>      | 98,135         | 12% | 324,585          | 9%  |
| <b>Urban Very Small</b> | 6,530          | 1%  | 12,185           | 0%  |
| <b>Rural 210+</b>       | 87,075         | 11% | 199,530          | 6%  |
| <b>Rural Small</b>      | 134,645        | 17% | 147,900          | 4%  |
| <b>Rural Very Small</b> | 94,870         | 12% | 71,145           | 2%  |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>808,745</b> |     | <b>3,433,530</b> |     |

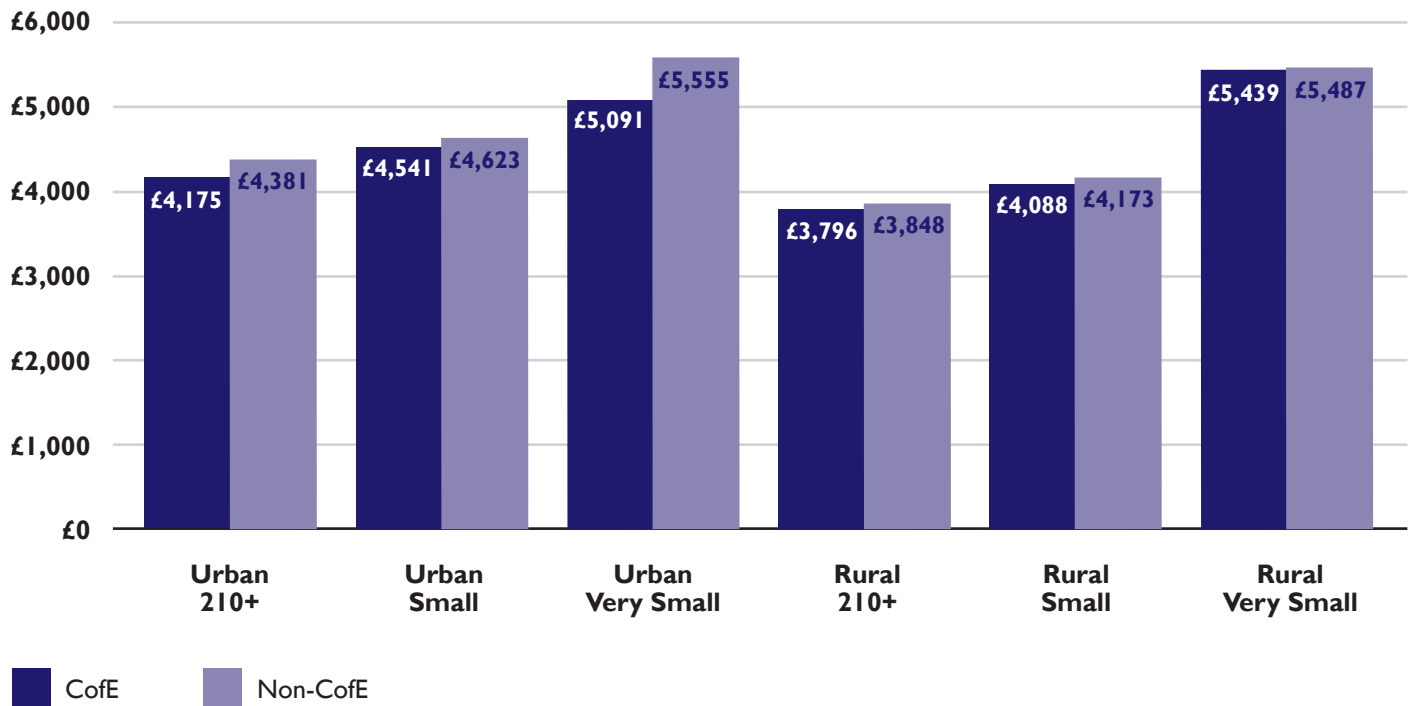




## SPEND PER PUPIL

A basic analysis of 2013 Spend per Pupil Data<sup>3</sup> indicates that the size of a school has a great impact than its rural urban classification on spend per pupil. It is worth noting that Rural 210+ and Rural Small schools have a lower Spend per Pupil than their urban counterparts, but that Rural Very Small schools have a higher Spend per Pupil than Urban Very Small schools. Very Small schools tend to be more expensive, spending roughly £1,000 more per pupil than 210+ and Small schools. There is no significant difference in Spend per Pupil between Church of England and Non Church of England schools.

### Mean Spend per Pupil



<sup>3</sup> 2012-2013 Spend per Pupil Data, Department for Education, 2014. Based on available data for 91% of schools.

## OFSTED INSPECTIONS

The table provides a comparative view of the percentage of schools in each of Ofsted's judgement categories for each school type and overall.<sup>4</sup> From this we can see that:<sup>5</sup>

- Most 'Inadequate' schools are Urban 210+ or Urban Small, and there is little difference between Church of England and non-Church of England schools.
- Larger rural schools are more often rated 'Outstanding'.
- Urban schools area more often rated 'Requires Improvement'.

|                                       |   | Urban 210+ | Urban Small | Urban Very Small | Rural 210+ | Rural Small | Rural Very Small | All Schools |             |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------|-------------|------------------|------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ofsted Rating (Overall Effectiveness) | 1 | CofE       | 21% (258)   | 11% (59)         | 13% (9)    | 27% (85)    | 19% (168)        | 15% (197)   | 18% (776)   |
|                                       |   | Non-CofE   | 19% (1,383) | 13% (236)        | 14% (18)   | 19% (127)   | 17% (155)        | 14% (135)   | 17% (2,054) |
|                                       | 2 | CofE       | 58% (712)   | 67% (373)        | 69% (49)   | 50% (158)   | 64% (562)        | 69% (920)   | 63% (2,774) |
|                                       |   | Non-CofE   | 59% (4,328) | 62% (1,128)      | 54% (67)   | 61% (412)   | 63% (583)        | 68% (675)   | 60% (7,193) |
|                                       | 3 | CofE       | 18% (221)   | 19% (108)        | 18% (13)   | 21% (65)    | 15% (134)        | 16% (214)   | 17% (755)   |
|                                       |   | Non-CofE   | 20% (1,489) | 22% (405)        | 29% (36)   | 18% (125)   | 18% (168)        | 17% (171)   | 20% (2,394) |
|                                       | 4 | CofE       | 3% (34)     | 4% (20)          | 0% (0)     | 2% (5)      | 1% (13)          | 1% (11)     | 2% (83)     |
|                                       |   | Non-CofE   | 2% (182)    | 3% (52)          | 3% (4)     | 2% (13)     | 2% (16)          | 1% (10)     | 2% (277)    |

<sup>4</sup> *Maintained Schools Inspections and Outcomes*, Ofsted, August 2013

<sup>5</sup> Tables based on sample of available inspection outcomes (97%). Percentages refer to school type and denomination. E.g. 21% of CofE Urban 210+ schools.





## Appendix 2

# Self-Review Questions for Governing Bodies

These self-review questions are intended to help Governing Bodies build a picture and analyse the context of the school dispassionately, and then to consider their options on the basis of that analysis. It is recommended for use by Governing Bodies to help them continue to reflect on their strategic plans and their need to work in partnership with other schools.

DBEs encourage self-determination and respect the autonomy of individual governing bodies, at the same time seeking to work with you at an early stage, to ensure that the wider good of the whole family of Church of England schools can be promoted. The DBE therefore has an expectation that the governing bodies of all rural schools will conduct this review of their school's strategic position each year.

The checklist is not intended to provide a formulaic approach that determines how and in what ways schools should collaborate, but it does identify some key issues for consideration. It is vital to understand the context for any school and for the DBE and local schools to work in partnership to provide a secure future for education.

As indicated in the body of this report, all schools are encouraged to complete the review. Schools with less than one form of entry must use the self-review every year and completed forms should be returned to DBE to assist it with its responsibility for strategic planning. This is not intended to be a further burden for schools but a helpful tool to enable the DBE to have a dialogue with governing bodies. It is intended to be proactive and should lead to a discussion about next steps and a suitable action plan. The DBE will be happy to facilitate this discussion with governing bodies.

With each question grade yourself red, amber or green and add comments to explain your judgement.

| 1. Quality of Education  | Rating | Comments |
|--|--------|----------|
| a. Does the school provide a high quality sustainable standard of education that is appropriate for the 21st century?  |        |          |
| b. What is the whole educational experience of children attending this school?   |        |          |
| c. What progress do pupils make?   |        |          |
| d. What was the outcome of your most recent Ofsted and SIAMS inspections?  |        |          |
| e. Given that the Ofsted framework has changed, what is your prediction for future Ofsted and SIAMS inspections based on your SEF and three-year projected attainment? |        |          |
| f. What is the condition and suitability of the school's buildings?  |        |          |
| g. How secure are the school's finances? – are you having to set a deficit budget within the next three years?   |        |          |

| 2. Leadership and Staffing  | Rating | Comments |
|---|--------|----------|
| a. How easy is it to recruit and retain high quality teaching staff?  |        |          |
| b. What is your leadership structure, how does it assist your strategy for succession planning?   |        |          |
| c. How long is it likely to be before your current head leaves? What do you expect to happen then?  |        |          |
| 3. Governance   |        |          |
| a. How many governor vacancies have you got?  |        |          |
| b. How easy is it to find capable governors who have time and skill to give to the school?  |        |          |
| c. Do governors receive regular training and are they suitably equipped to fulfil all of their responsibilities?  |        |          |
| 4. Demographics   |        |          |
| a. Where do your pupils live?   |        |          |
| b. How many of your pupils live within the village or catchment area of the school?   |        |          |
| c. How many school age children live in the village or catchment area of the school but choose to attend other schools instead?   |        |          |
| d. What are your projected pupil numbers for the next few years, based on an assessment of local demographics (e.g. new housing that is likely to produce new primary aged children, how many?) |        |          |



## 5. Links with Community

|   | Rating | Comments |
|---|--------|----------|
| a. What is the school's place within the community - how integrated is the school in the life of the community? |        |          |
| b. How are the school's facilities used for/by the community?   |        |          |
| c. How good are the links with the Church?  |        |          |
| d. Is the school used for worship/ Sunday school/after school clubs/holiday clubs etc?                          |        |          |

## 6. Partnership and Collaboration

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| a. What collaborative arrangements are already or should be in place?  |  |  |
| b. Has the governing body discussed the challenges and opportunities of such arrangements with HT and staff? |  |  |
| c. Where are the next nearest / surrounding schools and what is their position re numbers/demographics?      |  |  |
| d. What are the next steps you need to take to develop effective structural partnerships with other schools? |  |  |

# Appendix 3

## Towards a Policy for Rural Schools

### TEN QUESTIONS FOR THE DBE ABOUT THEIR RURAL SCHOOLS

Whilst acknowledging the distinctiveness of each diocese and the need for local context to be taken into account, the working group offers these questions as a starting point for each diocese to consider as it forms its own policy for rural schools. Such a policy needs to be set within a wider framework of ensuring that there is high quality sustainable education for all of the children in its schools?

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>How do schools fit into the diocese's wider vision for its rural communities?</b>  |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>How does the DBE determine where its own resources are deployed (is it based on number of schools, number of pupils, Ofsted outcomes, SIAMS, something else)?</b>  |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>What criteria are used to determine the future sustainability of individual schools? How should this be developed?</b>   |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>How will the DBE use the school's self-review to weigh the quality of provision and whether the school is viable, sustainable and essential as part of the diocese's education offer?</b>  |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>How does the DBE develop and maintain the distinctiveness of its school provision in rural communities and are the foundation governor places filled with suitably equipped people?</b>  |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>What mechanisms exist/need to be developed in order to encourage and support schools to work in formal collaborations?</b>   |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Does/should the DBE offer preferred models for collaboration: MATs, LCTs, Federations etc.?</b>  |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>How does the DBE encourage larger schools to offer support and collaborate with smaller rural schools as part of its development of a strong diocesan wide family of schools?</b>  |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>What would the likely impact of a national funding formula or the removal of the sparsity allowance be on the funding for small schools within the LAs that the diocese serves and how is the DBE planning for such scenarios?</b> |
| <b>10</b> | <b>How does the diocese maintain its influence and connection with communities where there is no school or where the Church of England school may need to close?</b>  |



# Notes

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# Working Together

## The Future of Rural Church of England Schools

**The Church of England's National Education Office, 2014**  
[www.churchofengland.org/education](http://www.churchofengland.org/education)