

Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education

Report to Diocesan Synod

for the Year Ended 31 December 2024

1. Constitution

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE, “the Board”) is a committee of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF), established under s.3(7) of the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021 (the 2021 Measure). The DBE Committee exercises powers and duties conferred on it by or pursuant to the 2021 Measure, delegated by the DBF. For practical purposes, whilst members of the DBE Committee are not charity trustees, they act on the assumption that they have the duties of charity trustees in discharging the DBE's functions on behalf of the DBF.

2. Vision

The DBE maintains a bold commitment to education. It aspires to build a resilient school system and collaborative, family ethos in an often fragmented landscape, striving for excellence in church schools and enabling them to share light with their communities as beacons of Christian values.

The DBE supports diocesan Church of England (CE) schools to live out a theologically rooted Christian vision which is generous and enriching; that nurtures a culture of deep reflection and compassion for God’s world, encourages spiritual development and provides a rich experience and appreciation of the Christian faith, enabling all children and adults to flourish.

3. Scope of the DBE

The DBE serves 105 CE schools within the diocese, equating to approximately 26 200 pupils. These schools are supported operationally and pastorally; through networks, conferences and training, leadership development programmes and governance advice, school improvement and estates/buildings support, along with materials, policy and guidance on issues relating to Christian character and their Anglican foundation.

3.1 Statutory responsibilities

The DBE is required to provide an annual report to Diocesan Synod on its statutory functions and responsibilities, as defined in the 2021 Measure:

3.1.1 *To promote education within the Diocese of Canterbury, according to the faith and practice of the Church of England*

- The Board has approved the adoption of a new Strategic Plan for 2025-30. This affirms its priorities in supporting church schools to live out a theologically-rooted Christian vision and outlines how it plans to engage with projects and ambitions which help children and young people grow in faith and discipleship
- An Affiliate Scheme is evolving whereby schools without a religious character can access resources and training from the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) team, helping the DBE to contribute to the well-being and support of the wider education community
- The Board has approved a Governance Strategy and received updates on its outworking

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- The DBE officer team has prioritised visits for those schools most likely to be inspected under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS), providing specialist support and monitoring progress against previous areas for development
- A new series of collaborative events under the banner 'Changing our Gaze' has been developed, creating opportunities for church school leaders to have wider influence on important educational matters, in the context of a partnership built on Christian principles of inclusion, compassion, service and equity. An initial workshop day focused on supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, within the context of Local Authority changes to service provision
- The team has continued to provide a flexible and accessible training offer, plus regular email updates, in-person visits and pastoral conversations with leaders and local ministers.

3.1.2 Promote religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese

- Over 100 leaders from Canterbury and Rochester Dioceses attended our annual Religious Education (RE) Conference. The morning explored what effective assessment in RE might look like, with the afternoon session focused on how to teach Humanism well (an organised worldview included in the latest Kent Agreed Syllabus and referenced in the CE RE Statement of Entitlement)
- The InspiREd RE subject leader development programme, authored and delivered by our Canterbury team in conjunction with St. Alban's Diocese, has gone from strength to strength and is currently running across six dioceses
- Our annual Collective Worship Conference explored the theme of spirituality in schools; what is meant by spiritual flourishing, how it can be promoted in Collective Worship and what it might look like for children with additional needs
- Guidance is being developed for church schools (as a toolkit and training) to help leaders and governors put together a 3-5 year plan for spirituality and creating a culture of justice and responsibility
- At the Cathedral in June, Leavers' Days celebrated Year 2 children leaving a CE Infant School at the end of the academic year. They were structured around the themes of hope and bravery; children explored the Cathedral with a trail and were encouraged to see, think and wonder, then joined worship in the Crypt, with Bishop Rose giving a short talk based on Jeremiah 29:11
- During the Autumn, invitations went to the four Church of England secondary schools in the diocese to attend 'The Retreat'. The day's theme focused on Matthew 13:1-23 and the Parable of the Sower; Year 11s and Sixth Formers were encouraged to take part in a variety of workshops, fellowship and an act of worship with Bishop Rose
- The Board celebrated the publication of 'Spiritual Agents: Pupils as Leaders of Collective Worship' (Grove Education Series, eD61), written by Deputy Director of Education Rebecca Swansbury

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3.1.3 *Watch over the interests of church schools and secure the provision of new schools*

- The DBE holds an important system leadership role, using its detailed local knowledge to develop and promote a coherent strategy for all church schools. The Board reviewed its 'Strategy for the Church school system'; a document with a clear theological underpinning outlining different structures and pathways open to schools to promote system resilience and help them to express their Christian vision
- Officers continue to monitor the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, for opportunities to extend the availability of a church school education to more children and families. A rebuild and expansion is presently underway at Teynham Parochial CE Primary School, creating an additional form of entry to serve additional housing in the area

3.1.4 *Give advice as to matters affecting church schools and church educational endowments*

- DBE officers have continued to provide support for church schools, site trustees and Academy Trusts in educational legislation and sites; particularly in relation to governing documents, nursery provision, land registrations and the use or development of sites and buildings.
- A 'Five-year Schools Condition Allocation Programme 2024-30' document identifies projects which may be required to be carried out on Voluntary Aided schools in the future
- It was noted from updates nationally that a roof building system (Folded Plate Timber Roofs) can show defects. Collapse is only likely through long-term factors including water ingress and additional weight; however, the team started a process to identify schools with buildings constructed 1953 – 1970 and to undertake inspections
- For all capital spending in Voluntary Aided schools, where the DBE holds funds allocated from the Department for Education, our planning identifies projects which would ideally involve decarbonised solutions. In addition, all schools have been in receipt of additional 'Devolved Formula Capital' decarbonisation funds for energy efficiency. Suggestions have been circulated as to projects the money could be spent on, with potential savings in costs and energy

3.2 ***Leadership and governance***

- 'Rooted', our leadership programme for headteachers new to church schools, has been well received by all attendees. A further cohort began in October 2024, preceded by an induction morning to introduce them to the team and the services and support on offer
- Headteacher well-being remains a priority area of engagement. We continue to signpost and support senior leaders to access chaplaincy at The Living Well and the 'Heads' Space' retreat morning has continued, with attendees enjoying the spiritual space, peace and connection with other leaders
- Officers have advised on leadership appointments in schools and afford a high priority to the induction, well-being, and nurture of headteachers
- Engagement with governors has included regular mailings, in addition to training for all governors within CE schools to support and equip them in recognising their responsibility in upholding the original foundation of the school

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3.3 ‘Flourish’: new worshipping communities

The recently established national ‘Flourish’ network imagines a major missional engagement between schools and parishes, seeking to build partnership through worshipping communities in or through schools. Using a commitment of DBF project funding, the CYPE team is working with three locations to pilot a concept, structure and activities, appropriate for their unique context, focused on engaging with children and families. It is particularly to develop connections with those who presently do not attend a church of any denomination, building relationships and engaging in discipleship activity.

3.4 Key statistics and milestones

- ❖ 105 Church of England Schools, serving 26 200 pupils and students
- ❖ 14 church school leaders completed the ‘Rooted’ leadership course
- ❖ 895 pupils attended our annual Cathedral Schools Days for Year 6 pupils
- ❖ 400 pupils from 4 CE Infant Schools attended our Year 2 Leavers’ Service in Canterbury Cathedral
- ❖ The team ran 35 different training and development sessions (including conferences, networks, leadership development, information and subject/curriculum knowledge seminars) for headteachers, subject leaders and governors
- ❖ All church schools inspected under the SIAMS Framework received Judgement 1 (the school is living up to its foundation and enabling pupils and adults to flourish)
- ❖ 92% of diocesan CE schools held an Ofsted grade of ‘Good’ or better in July 2024 (note that from September 2024 grades for Overall Effectiveness were removed)
- ❖ 74% of foundation governor posts are filled

4. Looking ahead to 2025 – key priorities

- i. Evolution of work with leaders around SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), creating professional connections for church schools and their senior leaders to work collaboratively. The first key project is a regular network for SEND Co-ordinators, led by experts from CE schools, for practitioners to receive input and support, share experiences and solutions and bring case studies for advice or guidance
- ii. Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice (EDIJ)
 - Support schools in embedding EDIJ curriculum resources, such as Christianity as a Global World Faith
 - Promote representation in school leadership and governance, including through the ‘Leaders Like Us’ programme
 - Consider representation within all CYPE materials, resources and communications
 - Review progress against ‘School’ objectives on the Diocesan Net Zero Action Plan
- iii. Well-being of leaders: equip more people to pastor school leaders, expanding our provision of care

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- iv. First full year of FLOURISH project: making headway with the three locations agreed for the initial pilot; finalising the vision and overview for each project and planning the ongoing parish/school support visits
- v. Develop an Affiliate Scheme for Community schools to access high-quality training for RE, Collective Worship, spiritual development and social justice, and participate in diocesan networks for SEND
- vi. Guidance for school leaders in navigating situations in which different perspectives around human sexuality are presented
- vii. Resilience of existing church schools, including proactive engagement in supporting nursery provision, particularly where schools are small and/or in rural settings
- viii. What does it mean to be an effective church school?
 - Support schools with their understanding of courageous advocacy and spirituality
 - Respond to and act upon the recommendations in the SIAMS annual national report 2023-24
 - Work with schools on how to develop spiritual flourishing through Collective Worship
 - Put in place mechanisms for schools to share best practice

Canon Dr Quentin Roper
Director of Children, Young People
and Education

Dr John Moss
Chair, Diocesan Board of Education

February 2025