

Children, Schools and Young People Framework

Strategic Plan 2016 - 'Seeing the Child'

A. Underpinning principles – our wellspring

In accordance with the Diocesan objectives of growing the church numerically and spiritually, re-imagining ministry and building partnerships that enrich communities, the Children, Schools and Young People Framework has developed the following vision statement:

'To ensure that every child and young person in the Diocese is at the heart of mission, having the opportunity of a life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ; that they reach their God-given potential and are an integral part of church life.'

Our approach is not specifically geographical but relational; we seek to respond to a rapidly evolving context, culture and attitudes, reflecting sensitively and habitually on how we might view and relate to children and young people. Our vision and activity is focused firmly on deepening these relationships and nourishing those we support and walk alongside.

We advocate a ministry with children and young people that focuses on service and that imagines schools and churches as places of community in which people get the distinct sense that God loves them. The Church's task, wherever it is engaged with children and young people, is to accompany them, to equip them in asking questions in a complex world, to encourage values of open-mindedness and an exploration of truth.

Embracing the strength and ambition of collaboration, we urge all Frameworks to bring schools, children and young people to the heart of our conversations, our culture, and our service; seeing the child alongside us in pilgrimage, discipleship and spirituality.

B. Aspirations and Priorities

1. Communion and Communication

Exploring our ***shared identity*** and ***how this might be voiced***

Proposed Actions

- Learning from officers' professional development and research will feed into our review of priorities; a shared identity, language and ambition will inform our strategy and actions
- Create and implement a development plan in response to the Church of England Discussion Paper on Character Education
- Research-led work with schools on the enactment of Christian Values
- Prepare an annual publication of action research undertaken

2. Soaring on wings like eagles – achieving the best possible outcomes for children

We are seeking to continue to deliver effective, distinctive and inclusive Church of England schools to our communities, in a changing landscape of school status and governance. We aim to maintain our percentage representation in line with increasing county demand for school places. In addition, we hope to extend our offer; promoting Religious Education and Collective Worship in community schools within the diocese, delivering training and broadening our sources of income.

Proposed Actions

- Second phase growth for Aquila – an ambitious Trust Business Plan
- Continue conversation around organisational options, education legislation and maintaining a resilient system for church schools; includes links with Communities and Partnerships Framework in developing a rural (and small) school strategy
- Monitor and/or review leadership and collaboration arrangements in church schools with 150 pupils or fewer
- Focus on additional church school places in areas of greatest need and vulnerability; seek expansion of existing provision and pursue possibility of bidding for new schools with the objective of securing 800-1000 more church school places by 2019
- Mapping/data analysis to inform training and school improvement offer, promoted through a printed brochure and via website/email

3. A Vocation to Children

Addressing the need to identify and equip Christian leaders at all ages and at every level, including: expressing our engagement in the training and formation of clergy; a response to the shortage of applications for senior positions in schools by effective (Christian) leaders; a thirst for a theological underpinning to headship and exploration of the term 'spiritual leader'.

Proposed Actions

- Developing Young Vocations
- Creating opportunities for a conversation around 'Vocation to children'
- Invest time and funds in organising or facilitating school leadership development courses at all levels including Christian leadership and ministry in schools and regular support for cohorts of new headteachers
- Enhance pastoral/well-being support: supervision for leaders, Pastoral Visitors, annual celebration for those leading ministry with children and young people

4. Whole Church

An intergenerational approach that challenges the current perception of children and young people as empty vessels – changing the conversation

Proposed Actions

- Investing in following up the conversation started at Diocesan Synod in March 2015 through Deanery Gatherings in order to raise the perception of children and young people in parishes.
- Faith and Nurture Project: A three year project that will explore the Whole Church idea, recognising the child in the three spheres of church, household and school
- Explore hosting a national 'Fellow Pilgrims' conference in 2016.