THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

Church of England Vision for Education

Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good

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Foreword

by **The Revd Nigel Genders**, Chief Education Officer

The Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking at a conference for Church of England secondary school headteachers in September 2016, commented on the present global context saying that those offering education to this and future generations need to make a contribution founded in hope. He said that "in the midst of economic, social and political challenges, we need a vision for what we think education is for." The Archbishop then outlined the four core strands of the Church of England's vision for education found in this document, referring to it as "a profound piece of work and one that I wholeheartedly commend."

This vision for education has been overwhelmingly welcomed by the House of Bishops and endorsed by the General Synod of the Church of England. It is a fresh articulation of the Church's vision and is offered to renew our confidence in all that the church is seeking to do in education.

We are clear that it is not just a vision for Church of England schools, but a Church of England vision for education. At a time when many are looking for a vision of education to enthuse and inspire them, this deeply Christian vision of education is one that is generous and that seeks to allow the riches of Christian life to overflow to those of other faiths or no faith, but who share the bigger vision of what we think education is for.

This vision will be worked out explicitly within the Christian character of thousands of Church schools, but our vision is also about shaping wider educational policy and embracing others who are drawn to it as they recognise something deep and rich for the common good.

We are extremely grateful to the theological reference group and particularly to Professor David Ford who chaired its work to produce this vision. Our hope is that, as you read and are inspired by it, this vision will continue to promote education that is deeply Christian, serving the common good.

The Revd Nigel Genders
Chief Education Officer

Executive Summary

There are fundamental reasons, rooted in the Bible, which have motivated centuries of Christian involvement in schooling in this country and around the world. The God of all creation is concerned with everything related to education.

This is a fresh articulation of the Church of England's vision for education as we meet the challenges and take the opportunities offered by the present situation. It is not simply for Church schools but, recognising the Church of England's involvement in education over many centuries, seeks to promote educational excellence everywhere, for everyone. In Church schools the deeply Christian foundation for this vision will be seen explicitly in teaching and learning both in RE and across the curriculum, and also in the authentically Christian worship and ethos of those schools. In other schools which are not rooted in an explicit Christian ethos, our vision for education can still be expressed and promoted as one of human flourishing that can inspire what the school is and does.

The vision is deeply Christian, with the promise by Jesus of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart. It encompasses schools, colleges, further and higher education, but in this initial articulation our focus is on schools; other work will follow relating more specifically to colleges and universities as well as exploring the connections with our Going for Growth work with children and young people in the church.

Our vision embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people. We offer a vision of human flourishing for all, one that embraces excellence and academic rigour, but sets them in a wider framework. This is worked out theologically and educationally through four basic elements which permeate our vision for education:

- Wisdom
- Hope
- Community
- Dignity

The vision, in line with the Church of England's role as the established Church, is for the common good of the whole human community and its environment, whether national, regional or local. It is hospitable to diversity, respects freedom of religion and belief, and encourages others to contribute from the depths of their own traditions and understandings. It invites collaboration, alliances, negotiation of differences, and the forming of new settlements in order to serve the flourishing of a healthily plural society and democracy, together with a healthily plural educational system.

1. Introduction

Church schools have a reputation for securing transformational outcomes for young people by combining academic rigour with a rounded approach to personal development, rooted in the worship and other shared practices that characterize the life of their community.

Our vision for education reaches beyond Church of England schools: we aim to offer a compelling vision for the education of children and young people in community, independent and church schools, sixth form colleges, colleges of further education and universities.[1] There has never been a more important moment for the Church to offer clarity about its vision for education. As the education system continues to develop and reform in the light of recent legislation[2], the Church needs to be confident about its vision for education.

We aim to deliver excellence in education and want the very best outcomes for children and young people so that they can achieve their fullest potential. With many schools reporting that they feel under increasing pressure to make artificial choices between academic rigour and the wellbeing of their pupils, we are unequivocal in our message that there is no such distinction – a good education must promote life in all its fullness.

What we[3] say here is not intended to be the final word on the Church's vision for education. Rather, we hope that it provides a basis on which others can contribute their own reflections.

This document has been commended and endorsed by members of the House of Bishops and the General Synod of the Church of England. It is leading to further work to help bring the vision alive for different audiences, such as school and education leaders, governors and parents. Other documents will show how this vision fits within the framework of the Archbishops' quinquennial goals, relates to the five marks of mission, and is set within the context of the Church of England's work for renewal and reform, but this fuller vision will underpin them all.

2. Why Should the Church of England be Committed to Education?

There are fundamental reasons, rooted in the Bible, which have motivated centuries of Christian involvement in schooling in this country and around the world. The God of all creation is concerned with everything related to education – wisdom, truth and knowledge; the learning and teaching of understanding, virtues and habits that shape individuals, families and communities; the worth of each person; what is passed on from one generation to another; in whom and what people trust; what people hope for; and more. All things and all people are intrinsically related to Jesus Christ, and that sets the horizon within which he is to be understood and followed. It would be a narrow and unbiblical position, alien to the traditions and current practice of the Church of England, to try to separate the life of the Church from involvement in education.

Our Church's commitment to education[4] is at least as important today as in the past. Considerable changes are taking place, and (as Section 3 below argues) it is vital to sustain and develop the long term educational ecosystem for the benefit of the whole of our society. The Church of England has the opportunity to offer a model of education that is both thoroughly Christian in its foundation and highly attractive to most others in education because of the quality of its outcomes for children and young people. There is no neutrality in education – every school has a particular ethos, with commitments, beliefs and value-laden practices – and, amidst the variety of approaches, we are confident that our vision of education for 'fullness of life' is one that fully deserves its place in twenty-first century Britain. It is a special strength that it achieves educational excellence in a broad framework within which pupils and teachers can pursue the big questions of meaning such as 'Who am I?', 'Why am I here?', 'What do I desire?' and 'How then shall I live?'

The Church of England's approach is also well-suited to the diversity of our country today. After the Reformation, it contributed a key part of the political settlement which brought together conflicting forms of religious expression within a single national project. The settlement allowed the continuation (and not the elimination) of intense commitments, but harnessed them within an over-riding commitment to the common good, the well-being of the population. This settlement - unique in a European setting - has developed further and has proved of enduring value. It allows for considerable diversity of opinion and freedom of expression, while at the same time calling for the ability to come to settlements with views at variance with those each particular party holds. It is clear that this complex and generous model has a continuing contribution to make in a situation of increasing religious and ethnic diversity, and where the State has to expand its partners in delivering welfare, health and education. The vision of an education that is at once deeply Christian in its inspiration and healthily plural in its operation is consistent with the best in our history.

Given this vision for education in service to the whole community, we see the present as a time of opportunity that is unlikely to recur in our lifetimes. There are unprecedented opportunities to renew, improve and interrelate existing schools and to found new ones. Yet there are also matching challenges which will be ongoing, and in order to grasp and meet them, we hope the Church will enter into the vision, devoting attention, time, energy, funding and leadership to realizing it in dioceses.

3. Our Educational Ecosystem

We have a complex educational system that has developed over a long period. It has been shaped by the interaction of many stakeholders in response to diverse visions and pressures, and through extensive negotiations. It is like a rich ecosystem that has to be understood in its complexity, as its long-term and newer elements interact with each other.

Because education is transgenerational, and its effects, for better or for worse, often only become clear over decades, it is especially important to take account of long-term perspectives. In practice this means that the policies and pressures of democratic cycles, which inevitably tend to focus attention onto shorter-term priorities, need to be held in balance with the needs of organisations with a longer-term commitment to education. The latter include a range of intermediate bodies important for the flourishing of civil society, such as charitable educational foundations, scientific and scholarly associations, universities, hospitals, professional associations (in civil service, law, health, business, finance, industry, agriculture, sport, media, and more), corporate bodies of many sorts, and religious communities. All of these have educational commitments, and in order to flourish, need good quality education.

The Church of England is embedded in this system, which is plural in several respects, not least religiously. We are committed to sustaining the health of the system and supporting wise improvement and innovation. Healthy religious plurality recognizes deep differences in religion, belief and worldview, understands the history that has led to the present situation, and creates settings where there can be ongoing negotiation in which the diversity of voices is taken seriously.

The Church of England has learned this lesson for itself over the course of its formation and history, as the previous section described. Over the centuries we have learned much (often very painfully) about teaching and learning, tolerance, mutual hospitality with other Christians and other faiths, and coping with challenges from the social and natural sciences, agnosticism, atheism, secularism and other quarters. These lessons (widely shared with others) have helped us to shape our approach to education, and to seek to shape settings in which we can be true to the depths of our faith and others can be similarly true to their deep commitments. We recognize that this diversity of multiple depths is sometimes more a vision than a reality, but we are committed to realizing the vision in the long term, and we invite others to join us in this.

4. Educating for Life in All its Fullness

This vision sets out the sort of education the Church of England advocates and seeks to enable.

As we have listened, discussed and reflected with many of those involved, and have drawn on past and present resources, we have been seeking a wisdom that rings true not only with the wisdom of the Bible and the best in our Christian history but also with wise and experienced educational understanding and practice in twenty-first century England. The distillation that follows is what has gripped and inspired us. It is a vision of education that seeks to serve all in the country today. It embodies our goals of church schools serving whole communities, and other schools enhanced by Christian participation and wisdom – goals already being achieved in many schools.

This Church of England approach to education will, we hope, find many resonances more widely across the education sector, and also with other Christians, those of other faiths, and many who identify with no particular religion. It is offered partly as a stimulus to others to distil and share their wisdom, and is open to continuing discernment, critique, discussion and development. It is both deeply rooted in our Christian understanding and has also stood the test of experience in schools around the country.

We have confidence in it as an approach that works in practice by giving a habitable framework within which the daily business in schools of learning, teaching, leading, governing, guiding, encouraging, counselling, feeding, exercising, celebrating and inspiring can go on. But beyond that it also gives a vision that can gently yet firmly stretch and challenge everyone.

A core desire that we have found expressed in many ways is for 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). It is about 'educating the whole person', what the 1988 Education Reform Act (in a programmatic statement that remains in force and is deservedly influential) sees as physical and intellectual development united with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

There are many forms of school ethos that could be true to those basics; for us, the overall orientation is to life in all its fullness, enabled by excellent education. 'Excellence' can be defined in many ways, but we believe there is a desire among most people in England to have an education whose horizon is as broad as possible, without sacrificing the more narrowly defined forms of excellence, and that this is not only possible but is in fact happening in Church of England schools.

5. Wisdom, Hope, Community and Dignity

There are four basic elements that run through the whole approach. Together they form an 'ecology' of the fullness of life, each in interplay with all the others.

Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

Good schools foster confidence, delight and discipline in seeking wisdom, knowledge, truth, understanding, know-how, and the skills needed to shape life well. They nurture academic habits and skills, emotional intelligence and creativity across the whole range of school subjects, including areas such as music, drama and the arts, information and other technologies, sustainable development, sport, and what one needs to understand and practise in order to be a good person, citizen, parent, employee, team or group member, or leader.

Educating for Hope and Aspiration

In the drama of ongoing life, how we learn to approach the future is crucial. Good schools open up horizons of hope and aspiration, and guide pupils into ways of fulfilling them. They also cope wisely with things and people going wrong. Bad experiences and behaviour, wrongdoing and evil need not have the last word. There are resources for healing, repair and renewal; repentance, forgiveness, truth and reconciliation are possible; and meaning, trust, generosity, compassion and hope are more fundamental than meaninglessness, suspicion, selfishness, hardheartedness and despair.

Educating for Community and Living Well Together

We are only persons with each other: our humanity is 'co-humanity', inextricably involved with others, utterly relational, both in our humanity and our shared life on a finite planet. If those others are of ultimate worth then we are each called to responsibility towards them and to contribute responsibly to our communities. The good life is 'with and for others in just institutions' (Paul Ricoeur)[5]. So education needs to have a core focus on relationships and commitments, participation in communities and institutions, and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together.

Educating for Dignity and Respect

Human dignity, the ultimate worth of each person, is central to good education. The basic principle of respect for the value of each person involves continual discernment, deliberation and action, and schools are one of the main places where this happens, and where the understanding and practices it requires are learned. This includes vigilant safeguarding. It is especially important that the equal worth of those with and without special educational needs and disabilities is recognized in practice. For the first time in history, there is now something approaching global agreement on the worth of each person through the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and its successor declarations, covenants and conventions, including that in 2006 on the rights of persons with disabilities. How that is worked out in each nation and each school is a massive task that calls on the inspiration and resources offered by each tradition of faith and belief.

Given those basics focusing on the pursuit of wisdom, knowledge and skills, on trust and hope in the good as more fundamental than the bad, on the centrality of relationships and community, and on the dignity of each person, there is endless scope for deeper thinking and further applications, improvisations and creativity. This is what we mean by life in all its fullness.

6. Our Christian Inspiration

Our deepest inspiration is our Church of England tradition of Christian faith and practice. This has been part of education in England for many centuries, and we are committed to sustaining and renewing it, alongside and in conversation and collaboration with others, so that it can be a creative and responsible contributor to the field in the twenty-first century. In this section we point to Christian resources for deepening and nourishing education for fullness of life, focussed through wisdom, hope, community and dignity.

In John's Gospel, Jesus' signs are all signs of abundant life, such as healing, feeding, and raising the dead. And the first, archetypal sign is gallons and gallons of water turned into wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2:11). It is a sign that does what is necessary to save the day, and far more than is necessary. It was a quiet, untrumpeted sign, done for the common good of the host and guests, to celebrate one of the most universal social realities, coming together in marriage; and it seems that most of those present were not even aware that Jesus was responsible for it. Yet some, his disciples did have eyes to see it, and believed.

In the previous chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus had begun to gather a community of disciples, learners. His first words to his first disciples were the fundamental question for any learning community: 'What are you looking for? What are you searching for? What do you desire?' and his disciples' first title for him is Rabbi, Teacher (John 1:38). And as Jesus later breathes his Spirit into his disciples, he says: 'As the Father sent me, so I send you.' (John 20:21). If we put together Jesus as teacher with Jesus giving signs of abundant life for the common good, and ourselves sent as he was sent, then 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good' makes deep sense as part of our mission. Schools are signs of fullness of life for all, as they educate children for wisdom, knowledge and skills, for hope and aspiration, for community and living well together, and for dignity and respect. Many will enjoy the wine and not recognize where it comes from; some will, with our help, trace it to who is responsible for it; but whether our inspiration for doing what we do is acknowledged or not, it is the right thing to do - as followers of the One who came to bring life in all its fullness, to do signs that give glory to God.

Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

The Bible is passionate about both wisdom-seeking and the importance of teaching and learning. Its wisdom literature is substantial and diverse: Job, many Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, and much else. As part of that tradition, Jesus of Nazareth as a child 'grew in wisdom' (Luke 2:52).

That wisdom has been distilled over many centuries, and in interaction with many events, cultures, religions and civilizations. It finds the source of wisdom ultimately in the God of all creation, who is also the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Elijah and other prophets, and Jesus. The wisdom literature, that shaped much education in biblical times and later in Christianity and Judaism, was by no means limited to what we would see as 'religion'. It was about knowledge of and relationship to creation, including the cosmos, animals and plants – a matter of considerable importance for our own environmental crisis; about understanding the whole of culture, including its economic, legal, political, literary, artistic, technical and craft dimensions; about learning from history; and about how to live before God in family, friendship, community and nation.

That is the horizon for wise education. At its heart is a delight in wisdom and a passionate pursuit of it. There is dedication to the importance of teaching and learning across the generations, embodying all four of our basic elements in God-related ways:

- There is confidence that the pursuit of wisdom, knowledge and skills is consistent with how God has shaped the world and ourselves.
- There is hope in God and God's wisdom, and in the possibilities of reconciliation and transformation. The many ways in which human beings and our communities go wrong is cause for lament, but not for despair.
- The God of wisdom, love, compassion and peace, in whose image we are created, is utterly relational. Hence the essential importance to human worth of fellow human beings, human community and the whole created world of which we are part, of the virtues, of the formation of character, and of relational practices, including service, prayer, worship and contact with the natural world

- The ultimate worth of each person is grounded in being created in the image of God and in God's love and compassion for each.

The wisdom literature can also help to model forms of faith that have been matured through complex experience, engagement with diverse cultures, openness to many types of knowledge, and testing in argument. Many people, even among Christians, have never been introduced to examples of questioning, intelligent and wise faith. We think, for example, of the Book of Job and its vindication of Job's wrestling with God in the face of terrible suffering. Job's friends, with whom he argues, have a packaged faith with neat answers, and this is rejected. Job's faith is not only about what is to be believed and done, but also includes radical questioning, imaginative and daring exploration, and, above all, a desire for wisdom and for God. In a world where a great many people identify with religious traditions (the global estimate is over 80% and growing) but where religious faith is often neatly packaged, unquestioning, unimaginative, and even dangerous, it is vital to have examples of wise faith. The Church of England has tried to model this in the way that it has sought to understand scripture through God-given wisdom in the living tradition of the Church.

The wisdom traditions offer models of staying true to our roots while also being hospitably open. This uniting of the 'given' and the 'found' – what has been given by the past and what is found in the present through experience, new events, new knowledge and other people – is a challenge to every tradition, every society and every education system. How do we combine continuity and innovation wisely? It is a matter of affirming what is of worth in the past and the present, rejecting courageously things that we judge unwise, and working to transform those that are valuable but need improvement. The Church of England has long experience in doing this and applying the results in education.

Because everyone else involved in education is also faced with this task of combining continuity and innovation, it makes sense for the different traditions and approaches to share their wisdom in mutual hospitality. We hope to offer such a hospitable space, allowing for healthily diverse debate, agreement and disagreement. It may be that one of the things our pluralist society and its educational system most needs is a wisdom of long term disagreement. That could enable the quality of our disagreements to be improved so that it leads, not to bitter conflict, alienation or even violence, but to deeper mutual understanding and to peaceful, negotiated settlements that can live with ongoing disagreement. There are many examples of this already happening in and beyond our schools.

Jesus Christ was himself a reader and interpreter of his Jewish scriptures and was steeped in their wisdom, as well as in their traditions of law and ethics, prophecy, and worship. Early in his public ministry he gathered disciples (literally 'learners'), and during his ministry a great deal of his time was spent in teaching and conversation as he formed a community of learners. His own vivid, imaginative, challenging teaching has been among the most influential in human history. Like his healing, feeding and forgiving, his teaching was not given only to his committed followers but to 'the crowds', 'the people'. The 'life in all its fullness' that he offered was intended for all people.

Jesus also breathed his Spirit into his followers so that they could be led further into the truth (John 16:13) and carry on doing as he did (John 20:21-22), initiating communities of teaching and learning that are now present in every country. We understand Jesus to be the Word of God, the self-expression and self-giving of God, who relates to the whole of creation (John 1:1-5; Colossians 1:15-20; Ephesians 1:8-10). This sets the horizon for education that looks to him, seeking truth and wisdom in relation to all reality – areas of knowledge and know-how, religions, cultures, the sciences, the arts and crafts, economics, law, politics, and more.

The biblical wisdom tradition, in Job, Proverbs and in the teaching of Jesus, also saw the natural world as a place of wonder, exploration, reflection and self-discovery. The pedagogical potential of study in and of the natural world should not be squeezed out through timetabling pressures. In an age of multiple ecological challenges and increasing disconnection between many people and first-hand experiences of nature, it is more important than ever.

Surprisingly, wisdom is not a word that is much used in contemporary discussions of education. We see it as the most adequate framing concept for education, one that is not only deeply rooted in Christianity, but is also at home in other religious and non-religious traditions represented in our schools. It offers a healthily deep, broad and long-term context within which to consider other key educational

concepts and practices such as knowledge, information, skills, excellence, academic rigour, critical thinking, measurement and assessment[6], appraisal, outcomes, ethos, values, and religious or other forms of literacy.[7] Wisdom is about ethics as well as cognition, values and purposes as well as facts, and above all tries to make sound judgements that do justice to the whole 'ecology' of life.

Christian wisdom-seeking has engaged for two millennia with one civilization, worldview and development in knowledge after another, and those engagements have lessons for today. The past century has been an especially fruitful period, probably the richest and most diverse in the history of Christian thought and education. There have been many new voices, those of women above all, together with others from a variety of continents, cultures, races, sexual orientations, backgrounds, and academic disciplines. There have also been many initiatives to communicate and collaborate across deep divisions between Christians, between different religions, and between the religions and those who identify with no religion. We want the wisdom of such engagements to nourish education in our schools.[8]

Educating for Hope and Aspiration

Hope in God's future for the world, in God's ongoing love and compassion for all people, and for the whole of creation, and in God's promise of life in all its fullness are at the root of our dedication to educating for hope and aspiration.

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

Jesus and the love he embodies are at the heart of our faith, offering hope that wrongdoing and sin, suffering, evil and death are not the last word about reality. The drama of his life, teaching, death and resurrection, set within the larger story of God's involvement with the whole of creation and history, is fundamental not only to affirming the goodness of life but also to facing and finding ways through whatever goes wrong with ourselves and our communities. He inspires both a realism about how flawed and fallible we are and a confidence in transformation for the better. Even while involved in much difficulty, disappointment, failure, suffering and even tragedy, our trust and hope in Jesus inspires perseverance, patience, gratitude, openness to surprises, and celebration.

Church schools and others with which the Church of England is involved, provide the opportunity to set out this vision of what it means to live life in all its fullness. We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way which enhances their lives. To this end we have been developing a fresh approach to religious education in Christianity, Understanding Christianity, which is designed for use in any school. It is an understanding within which our Christian inspiration with regard to wisdom, hope, life together, and dignity both makes sense and can also be connected with other sources of inspiration. Such an approach is offered through a commitment to generous hospitality, being true to our underpinning faith, but with a deep respect for the integrity of other traditions and beliefs, and for the religious freedom of each person.

The Church of England is (along with many others) a liturgical tradition, and encountering its worship is essential to understanding it and the God in whom we believe. The seasons of the church year rehearse the drama of Jesus Christ in the context of the larger biblical narrative, and they offer a means through which that narrative can be grasped and inhabited. Collective worship in schools, including prayer, reading and reflecting on the Bible, liturgy, sacrament and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity, provide a vital opportunity for this.

There is much discussion of the role of worship within school, raising many issues that a future document will cover more fully. For present purposes we propose three points: first, that there is a strong educational case for experience of worship being part of school life, since its omission lessens the possibility of understanding traditions to which worship is essential; second, there is a great deal of wise, imaginative practice in this area that deserves to be better known; and third, we should host discussion, share good practice, and sponsor research in this area so that worship in schools promotes theological and religious literacy and liberates participants to an imagining of a different order of justice, mercy and hope.

Hope in God's future can often stimulate prophetic responses, both critical and constructive, to the present situation. The combining of hope with particular aspirations for our society, for each school, and for each pupil is crucial to the continuing health of society and its educational ecology.

Educating for Community and Living Well Together

The conviction that we are created and sustained by God for living together in families and communities is at the root of our dedication to educating for life together.

Living before God and living with and for others go together in Jesus. He embodies the centrality of relationships in love, compassion, generosity, truth-telling, forgiveness, and gathering a community. The community of his followers is bound together in a covenant that commits us to love God and be good neighbours to all, in line with his Jewish scriptures that Jesus taught: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' and 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; see Matthew 7:12, 22:36-40; Luke 10:27). Jesus's Sermon on the Mount gives a vision of life as part of the family of a God who is fully inclusive in loving, 'making the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous' (Matthew 5:45). The centrality of relationships in education is inspired by our conviction that the love Jesus taught and lived is at the heart of reality.

Each school is to be a hospitable community that seeks to embody an ethos of living well together. Here the flourishing of the pupils goes along with the flourishing of the teachers and other staff. Management practices are assessed not only by ethical standards but by whether they are as wise as possible. We have been deeply impressed by the many examples of this that we found among all types of school. These schools are also highly varied in their inspiration and practice, which encourages our commitment to the system's healthy diversity rather than pursuing 'one size fits all'. We aim to bring together a network of schools that have similar concerns and challenges, to encourage and enable the sharing of good practice (both directly and through incorporation into training courses and resources on our website), and to sponsor research that assesses, supports and extends good practice. A notable recent initiative to improve education for living well together has been on character education in schools.[9]

Beyond the individual school or group of schools, the large-scale institutional setting is also important. The Church of England has three main commitments that embrace the whole country. One is to local, regional and national presence in parishes, dioceses and central bodies, with a network of congregations and other organisations. Another is to chaplaincy, with thousands of workers, both paid and volunteer, involved in schools, colleges of further education, universities, hospitals, workplaces, prisons, the armed forces, airports, and other settings. The third is to educational institutions. Each of these three settings benefit from interaction and cooperation with the other two, and all are concerned with the quality of life together in this country. The Church of England works in close partnership with the Methodist Church, especially through joint schools and the provision of an inspection framework for denominational schools. Of other educational providers, only the Roman Catholic Church has anything like the scope of this national coverage, involvement and commitment to the common good, and the Church of England seeks to collaborate with it when possible, including through joint schools[10]

A crucial task is to enable both new synergies between the Church of England's three commitments (above all by realizing the immense potential it has through connecting its national network of church communities and organisations more fully with their local schools), and also a new level of collaboration with others, which is even more vital with the blurring of boundaries between education which is based in schools, in colleges and in universities. The Church of England wants a healthy plurality of providers, who converse and collaborate as much as possible together, and are able to respond critically and constructively to governmental initiatives and other challenges, negotiating settlements in the light of the vision for education we are describing here.

Educating for Dignity and Respect

Our commitment to the dignity and ultimate worth of each person, rooted in each being created in the image of God and loved by God, is further shaped by the person, teaching and example of Jesus.

Jesus embodies the love and compassion of God for each person, and Christians are called to follow him in this, and to join with others in demonstrating it. He paid special attention to the disadvantaged, excluded, despised and feared. The ultimate worth of each person is shown in the Gospels through his teaching, healing, feeding, sharing hospitality, befriending, and forgiving. In some of the earliest Christian writings, Jesus is himself understood as 'the image of the invisible God', who renews that image in human beings across differences of religion, race, nationality, gender, and economic or social status (Colossians 1:15, 3:10-11; Galatians 3:28). To encounter Jesus is to be invited into 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

Among issues especially relevant to dignity in education are safeguarding, prevention of bullying, special educational needs and disabilities. Ensuring our children are kept safely from harm and educated in an environment where all God's children are valued is of the highest priority and highlighted in our work on the prevention of homophobic bullying.[11] Special educational needs and disabilities are often associated with

shame, humiliation and lack of self-worth. We see it as vital for the health of our whole educational system that we do well with regard to both issues, and we will search out and spread good practice.

Our Christian conception of the human person is not limited to dignity, or even to dignity in association with our other basic elements of wisdom, knowledge and skills, hope and aspiration, and relationships with others. Fullness of life can include many other elements. We name just five as examples especially relevant to what inspires our vision for education.

- *Blessing i*s a central biblical activity, forming what might be called a dynamic ecology of blessing: God blesses human beings and creation; creation and human beings can bless God; humans can bless each other; and the dynamic crosses generations and peoples. Like other ecologies, it can go terribly wrong, but the vision is of God-given fullness of life in which each person is both blessed and a blessing. Education can be one of the greatest blessings in anyone's life, and our commitment is to help this happen for as many as possible.

- *Creativity* is not limited to God: if human beings are in God's image, then they too can be creative. In education, this is partly about the importance of art, design, music, drama, dance, poetry, fiction, and film; it is also about discovery and innovation in the sciences and technology, constructive as well as critical thinking in the humanities, entrepreneurship in business, leadership in all spheres, and inspiration, imagination and improvisation in ethics and religion.

- *Joy* in learning is a mark of the good teacher and the well-taught pupil. The Book of Proverbs (8:30-31) poetically imagines wisdom playing before God at creation. Play and playfulness are part of a full life, and any education that does not communicate joy, wonder, amazement, fascination and delight has failed.

- *Reconciling* is a crucial element of wisely negotiating the multi-layered and diverse reality of the society in which we live. It is usually not too difficult to honour the dignity of those who seem to be 'one of us', similar to ourselves, 'normal' by our own measure. The challenge is how we treat those who seem alien, abnormal, disturbingly or dangerously different. How schools deal with such difference is a crucial indicator of their quality. On many issues there can be no decisive resolution, and a wisdom of living with long-term disagreement is often needed. The Church of England is continually negotiating divisive issues, and has much experience of trying to find settlements that give priority to human flourishing while honouring the demands of conscience. Schools need to debate and deliberate on sensitive matters, but they also need resourcing, and we will host conversations and debates, offer guidance, and conduct relevant research on these. We will seek a Christian wisdom that, as discussed above, is open to the wisdom of other traditions, and recognizes that there is often need for rethinking, changing positions, and repentance.

- *Glory* might be seen as the divine dignity, shared with us who can be transformed 'from glory to glory' (2 Corinthians 3:18). God's glory is an overflow of the divine life, holiness and love, to which the core response is awe, adoration, praise and thanks. These are also the deepest springs of honouring and respecting all those created in the image of God. The ultimate horizon for human dignity is the intensity of eternal life in communion with God, enjoyed with others in the loving, infinitely creative and attractive presence of the God of glory.

7. Conclusion

We have presented an educational vision that is both deeply Christian and in the service of the common good, a service which can also be resourced from the depths of other traditions. The vision has at its heart education for fullness of life and is consistent with the Bible and with the best traditions of the Church of England. We have given a theological and educational account of the four basic elements in a long term educational ecology: wisdom, hope, community and dignity.

This version of our vision will be reiterated for other audiences, such as teachers and head teachers, educational leaders in dioceses, parents, governors, other churches and religions, the Government, sponsors of academies, and the media, but these four basic elements will underpin them all.

Finally, we are clear on three related matters.

The first is that parents who send their child to a school formed around this vision will not be disappointed as they discover an education that embraces excellence and academic rigour within the wider framework of spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development and enables their children to flourish. We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way which enhances their lives.

The second is that there is a unique opportunity for the Church of England to renew and enhance its contribution to the education of our nation's children, especially through the expansion of Church of England Free Schools, an opportunity which should be seized wholeheartedly. Standing still is not an option: we will either seize the opportunity or our contribution to State education will decline.

The third is that there is recognition of a pressing need to develop leadership within schools and provide centres of excellence in promoting leadership models that work in the new landscape. Our new Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership will be underpinned by this vision and provide the networks, training and research required to equip leaders to continue to play a vital role in education for this new phase of the Church of England's involvement in education.

We invite you to share the vision, making education that is deeply Christian, serving the common good, a priority now and in the years to come.

Appendix 1 – Headline Data

The Church of England has a long and successful history of involvement in schools, providing education across the whole country for over two hundred years. The Cathedrals Group of universities provide initial teacher education for 20% of all the primary school teachers in the country. There are 135,000 teachers working in Church of England schools, and some 22,500 foundation governors.

Church of England schools constitute 20% of all state-funded schools in England. 26% of primary schools and 6% of secondary schools are designated 'Church of England'. [12]

The Church of England now provides:

- 4,644 schools and academies (65 of which are joint denominational, e.g. Church of England and Methodist)

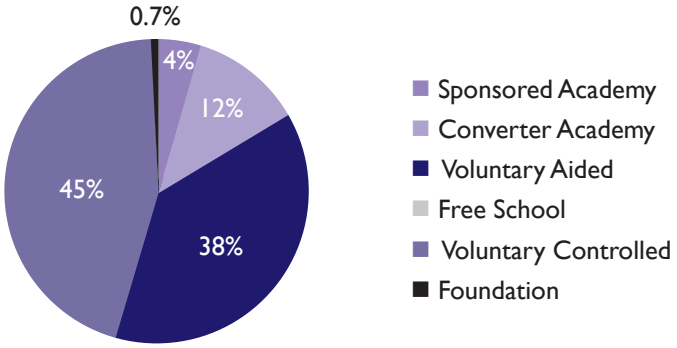
Establishment Type:

- 750 Academies (13 of which are joint denominational)
- 1,767 Voluntary Aided schools (33 of which are joint denominational)
- 2,085 Voluntary Controlled schools (16 of which are joint denominational)
- 31 Foundation schools
- 11 Free schools

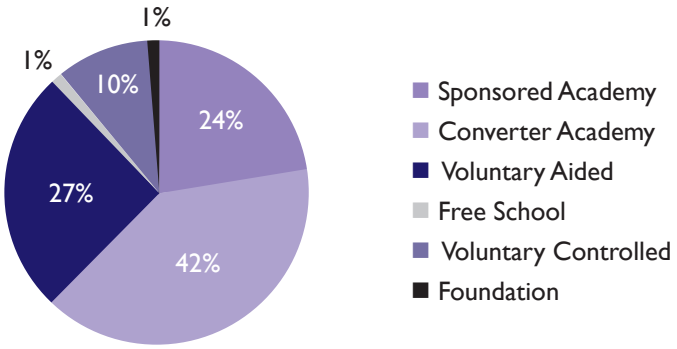
Type of Education:

- 4,417 primary, middle-deemed primary schools and academies
- 209 secondary, middle-deemed secondary schools or academies
  - 17 of which are joint-denominational
  - 148 have sixth form provision
- 18 all-through schools
- There are also 265 independent schools with a Church of England affiliation

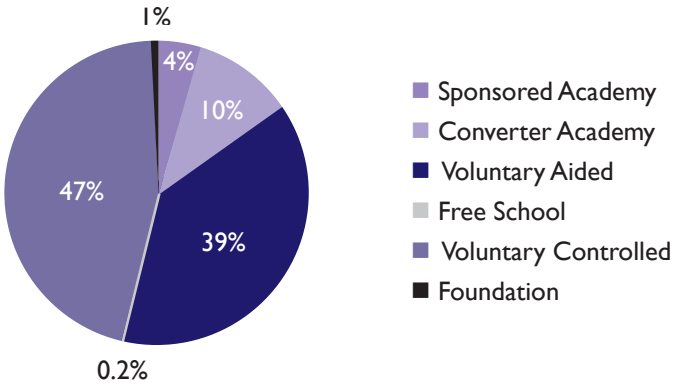
All types of CofE School



Secondary Schools



Primary Schools



The Church in Wales

25,000 children and young people across Wales attend a Church in Wales school. There are 172 primary and secondary schools across the Principality, supported by the six Anglican dioceses.

Church of England Primary Schools[13]

There are 4,510,000 pupils in all state-funded primary education in England.

- 836,000 pupils are in Church of England primary education
- This is 19% of the primary pupil population
- 4,417 primary schools and academies are Church of England
- This is 26% of primary schools

The percentage of pupils is lower than the percentage of schools because we have a higher number of small and very small schools than other providers.

Types of Primary School:

- 611 Academies
- 1,706 Voluntary Aided schools
- 2,063 Voluntary Controlled schools
- 28 Foundation schools
- 9 Free schools

Church of England Secondary Schools

There are 3,184, 000 pupils in all state-funded secondary education.

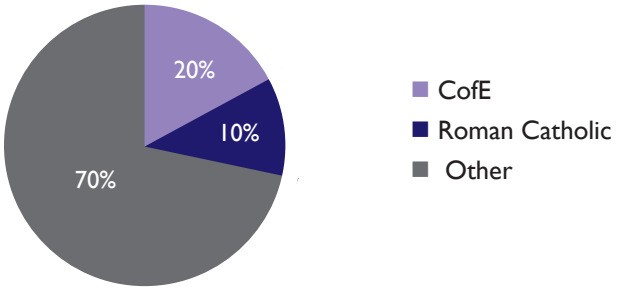
- 191,000 pupils are in Church of England secondary education
- This is 6% of the secondary pupil population
- 209 secondary schools are Church of England
- This is 6% of secondary schools

Types of Secondary School:

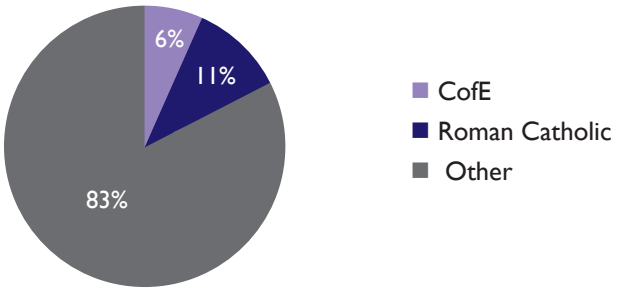
- 127 Academies
- 57 Voluntary Aided
- 20 Voluntary Controlled
- 3 Foundation schools
- 2 Free schools

Church Schools as a proportion of all schools

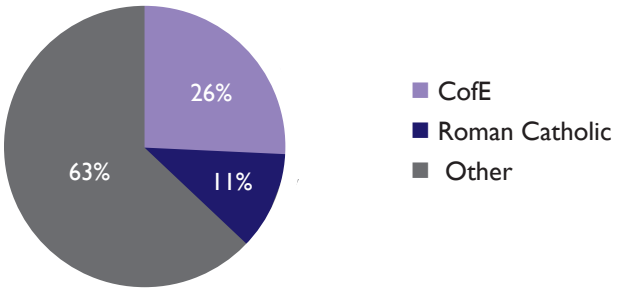
All Schools



Secondary Schools



Primary Schools



Rural Schools and the Church of England

In data published in October 2015[14], 4,906 schools were designated rural by the Department for Education. 2,308 of these schools are Church of England. As such, just under half (47%) of all rural schools are Church of England. It also means that 50% of Church of England schools are in rural areas. 17 of these are interdenominational and all but four of these are primary schools.[15]

The Department for Education classifies a school as small if it has fewer than 210 pupils on the roll. This means that 60% of all Church of England schools are designated small schools.

Appendix 2 – A History of Involvement: from 1811 to the Present Day

The founding of the National Society saw the Church of England at the vanguard of providing mass education for the poor of the country from 1811 onwards. Driven by a desire to serve the common good, Joshua Watson and his colleagues had a vision to establish schools with the clear purpose of educating the poor in suitable learning, works of industry and the principles of the established religion. The fundamental principle that education enables people to discover the liberty which comes through understanding and truth has remained at the heart of our commitment to education.

Fifty years later, the State joined in the educational endeavour, and the subsequent history includes a changing relationship between the Church and the State. In the twentieth century, two formative events were the 1944 Education Act and the 1988 Education Reform Act. These saw the development of a dual system of education with Church and State working in partnership. The Local Authorities played a strategic role in funding and overseeing standards of education within schools, but in the later twentieth century the tendency was towards less financial and supervisory control by Local Authorities. That has been taken further in the twenty-first century as a result of conscious national governmental changes.

Three significant reports published by the National Society in the period 2001 to 2013 (*The Way Ahead; The Church School of the Future Review; A Diocesan Board of Education for the Future*) demonstrate the crucial change as regards Church schools. There is a new expectation placed on dioceses to be responsible for the overall effectiveness of the education delivered in the schools that they have provided over many generations. This new expectation comes at a time when education and schooling are being increasingly seen within a competitive business model.

This changing role for dioceses has been mainly due to the introduction of a programme to convert schools to academy status coming at a time of significant reduction in resources available for Local Authorities. Consequently, Local Authorities have a reduced capacity to provide support and development for schools, and now there is a demand for dioceses, as well as academy chains and commercial providers, to offer a broader range of services directly to schools.

A Diocesan Board of Education for the Future (Education Division, 2013) is one response. The changing role for local authorities and dioceses has been accompanied by a concern that the new emphasis on performance and school improvement runs the risk that dioceses get diverted from the Church's vision for education which seeks to educate the whole child, seeing spiritual, moral, social and cultural development integrated with physical and intellectual development at the heart of human flourishing.

In *The Way Ahead* (The Archbishops' Council, 2001), Lord Dearing challenged the Church to think through its educational purposes and called on governing bodies to adopt practices and policies to ensure that the Christian distinctiveness of their school is promoted. From the outset the report is clear that 'the purpose of Church of England education is to offer a spiritual dimension to the lives of young people' (p.3). It goes on to suggest that Church of England schools should be places within which Christian principles are practised and spiritual development can occur, thus providing a 'spiritual and moral basis for the development of human wholeness and a sure foundation for personal and social values based on the person and ministry of Christ' (p.15).

However, despite this stated desire to develop human wholeness through education, local, diocesan and national leadership of Church schools has tended to focus on external practicalities rather than positively exploring a theological vision to drive education.

The Church School of the Future Review (The Archbishops' Council, 2012) emerged out of the period of rapid change in education policy, gathering pace from 2010, with the newly

elected Coalition government setting out to reshape the state education system through the expansion of the academies programme. The previous Labour government had introduced the concept of academies as a means of giving schools the opportunity for a fresh start. A new building, a new approach to governance and a much more focused concentration on dynamic leadership and the raising of standards were all part of the programme. These academies introduced the concept of external sponsors, and the Church embraced them as an opportunity to serve the community.

This growth in the numbers of secondary schools serving particularly disadvantaged communities falling within the responsibility of Diocesan Boards of Education placed serious demands on dioceses' capacity with regard to the enhanced expectations in relation to standards in Church of England schools, and the extension of the academies programme under the Coalition further increased the demands.

However, the Academies Act (2010) introduced a different emphasis, with a shift away from the most difficult and challenging schools towards an offer of independence from local authority control and autonomy for schools that were judged to be good and outstanding, offering them the freedom to make their own decisions and be much more in control of their finances and curriculum. A significant proportion of secondary schools took up this opportunity, but primary schools were much more reluctant to do so.

In 2011 the emphasis changed once again, with a new focus on underperformance at primary level and a resulting expectation that such schools should be sponsored as academies to enable stronger leadership and governance models to bring about the rapid improvement necessary. However, given the differences of scale between primary and secondary schools, it was clear that such transformation would only be sustainable if schools were to work together. So, the onus was now on dioceses to develop structures and frameworks that would allow schools to be supported and flourish as an interdependent family of schools, rather than creating independent autonomous units.

The consequent expectation from this policy shift has been that, 'if a school has Church of England over the door then the diocese, not simply the Local Authority as in the past, is now held accountable for the quality of education that takes place within the school in a way that was not apparent before 2010.' (*A Diocesan Board of Education for the Future*, p. 3).

In order to address this massive change in the landscape, *The Church School of the Future Review* set out a number of recommendations, primarily pragmatic in nature and addressing issues such as the resourcing for dioceses, the training of clergy and the revision of the Diocesan Board of Education Measure to provide greater authority for school improvement activity.

The Church School of the Future Review provided a pragmatic response to the changing landscape without setting out to offer a vision for why the Church of England is involved in education and why it is so important. So, whilst producing detailed comment on policy direction, A Diocesan Board of Education for the Future set out the need for a fuller understanding of the diocesan vision for education and its part in the wider ministry and mission of the diocese (p.6). The report included a practical self-evaluation framework, based on the fuller report and its summary in The Ten Marks of a High Performing Diocesan Board of Education.

Included in these ten marks are a number of practical issues concerning the resourcing of diocesan teams and the training of clergy and governors, but the very first requirement on the list is that there should be 'a clear and compelling statement of why the diocese is involved in education that any person in the structure can understand and recite.' (p.3). The accompanying self-evaluation framework begins by asking whether 'the Diocesan Board of Education has a clearly articulated vision for its schools?' (p.29).

In the rapidly changing educational climate that dioceses are facing, the expectation was clear that a vision and purpose for diocesan education should be at the heart of the diocesan drive for effective provision, but our own analysis and research has revealed that schools are unsure what the Church's vision for education really is, and they want more help to understand and articulate it.

This is now a major priority for the National Society and lies at the heart of the concept of a Foundation to transform the church's approach to educational leadership and the development of a movement which seeks to use the massive scale of our involvement in education to promote afresh our vision for the common good.

Educational Excellence Everywhere and Schools that Work for Everyone

March 2016 saw the publication of a government White Paper, Educational Excellence Everywhere. This White Paper did not lead to new legislation as there was a change of prime minister and a new secretary of state for education resulting in the publication of a further consultation document Schools that work for everyone in September 2016 and further legislation expected later in 2017. Government aspiration for the complete academisation of the system remains, albeit without the element of compulsion and a more permissive time framework. This would certainly require the rewriting of the Church's compact with the State if it were to be achieved,

as it would bring an end to the dual system described above. However, the continued presence of the Church in education is welcomed by many as a stabilising factor and a force for good and so our response to any emerging legislation will need to ensure that the Church is able to continue to work effectively to provide schools across the country and work with others in ensuring quality provision. In doing so we will have to be very alert to the implications of any changes to the way schools are provided and resourced, but the need for a clarity about the church's vision and purpose in education is underlined.

The Department for Education continue to discuss issues of school performance, teacher recruitment, resources and accountability. There is recognition of a pressing need to develop leadership within schools and an aspiration to provide centres of excellence in promoting leadership models that work in the new landscape. In all of this there are many opportunities which the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership will be able to take. Our vision and purpose in education, along with the developing proposals for the Foundation's activities, will equip the Church to continue to play a vital role in education in the years to come.

Notes

1 The main focus of this vision is with schools rather than with further or higher education, but further work will be developed to cover the other areas which are also seeing major changes, mirroring much of what we say in this document about schools.

2 See Appendix 2 for a summary of recent developments in the English education system.

3 The development of this vision has been through the work of a theological reference group (chaired by Professor David Ford, and comprising of Ms Jemma Adams, Professor Trevor Cooling, Revd Nigel Genders, Professor Mike Higton, Canon Dr Ann Holt, Revd Dr Tim Jenkins, Ms Helen Matter, Mr Huw Thomas, Mr James Townsend, Revd Dr James Walters, Ms Tatiana Wilson, Mr Andy Wolfe) following widespread consultation.

4 Some facts about the Church of England's commitment are summarized in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2

5 Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

6 One of the most sensitive areas of education is that of measurement and assessment. Much of this is rightly focused on knowledge, understanding and skills, but acknowledging that the overarching educational concern is for wisdom helps ensure that the broader concern for fullness of life is effective. This also applies to the concern for the economic importance of education and the preparation of pupils for employment. We are clear that there need be no competition between education for employment and education inspired by our four basic elements, and we know many schools where this is demonstrated. But the present regimes of measurement and assessment are often too limited, leaving much scope for wise improvement, and this will be one of the areas for research, deliberation and recommendation we develop in the future.

7 A major concern should be for the literacy required for reading well. The wisdom literature is just one of many examples of texts that cry out to be read and reread carefully, thoughtfully, in conversation with others (fellow learners, teachers, and previous generations of readers), open to being delighted, enlightened, moved, challenged and shaped by their message. An immense amount of what is most valuable in our own and other cultures is passed on in texts that require that sort of reading and conversation if they are to be adequately appreciated. Yet many are not inspired and taught how to do this. Other forms of reading – for pleasure, information, knowledge, know-how, assessment, and so on – are valuable, but reading for depth of meaning and wisdom is also something well worth learning. Learning this at school can give a habit (or at least an idea that this is possible and worth eventually developing) whose value increases over the years. We will seek to encourage schools to be places where such wisdom-seeking reading can happen.

8 One advantage we have in this country is a vigorous tradition of academic engagement with religions, theologies and philosophies. In many of our universities (among which are Church of England foundations that are strong both in theology and religious studies and in teacher training) there are departments dedicated to pursuing, through many disciplines, questions raised about the religions, within and by the religions, and between the religions. These are places that at their best reflect the composition of our complexly multi-faith and 'multi-secular' society, and enable study, conversation, teaching and research relevant to education in schools and elsewhere. If our society is to nurture fuller and wiser understanding of religions and beliefs in the contemporary world it is vital that the available academically-informed understanding be drawn upon.

9 *The Fruit of the Spirit: A Church of England Discussion Paper on Character Education*, Church of England Education Office, October 2015.

10 For statistics for Church schools see Appendix 1.

11 *Valuing All God's Children*, Church of England Education Division, May 2014.

12 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/433680/SFR16_2015_Main_Text.pdf

13 Figures are from April 2016 (from Edubase).

14 https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-primary-schools-designation

15 Two are Middle Deemed Primaries, and two are All Through Schools.

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