



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



# The Church School of the Future Review

March 2012

# Contents

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| <b>Forewords</b> .....  | Page 1  |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....   | Page 2  |
| <b>Executive Summary</b> .....  | Page 3  |
| <b>The background, purpose and methodology of the Review</b> .....                            | Page 5  |
| <b>Chapter One: Mission and purpose – the Church’s involvement in schooling</b> .....         | Page 8  |
| <b>Chapter Two: Achievements in the past decade and challenges for the future</b> .....       | Page 10 |
| <b>Chapter Three: What it means to be a Church school</b> .....                               | Page 15 |
| <b>Chapter Four: Church schools in the wider context</b> .....                                | Page 18 |
| <b>Chapter Five: The role and work of the National Society</b> .....                          | Page 26 |
| <b>Chapter Six: The roles and work of Diocesan Boards of Education and directorates</b> ..... | Page 32 |
| <b>Overall recommendations</b> .....  | Page 36 |
| <b>Acknowledgements</b> .....   | Page 39 |
| <b>Glossary of terms</b> .....  | Page 39 |

## Church School of the Future Review Group

Dr Priscilla Chadwick – Chair  
The Revd Janina Ainsworth  
Dr Robert Gwynne  
Lorraine O’Reilly  
David Brown



# Forewords

## FROM THE CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY COUNCIL AND BOARD OF EDUCATION

## FROM THE CHAIR OF THE REVIEW



The celebration of the National Society's bicentenary in 2011 recognised and affirmed the Church of England's witness and service to children, families and communities through its schools. The commitment to partnership with the State had found its unique form in the 1944 Education Act, which guaranteed state funding for Church schools but allowed the Churches to retain considerable independence and control as major providers with the State in the maintained-school dual system.

In 2001, *The Way Ahead; Church of England schools in the new millennium*, also known as the Dearing report, laid out an ambitious programme for action at the national, diocesan and school levels, and led to a major expansion of school provision, particularly Church secondary schools, and encouraged Church schools to be "distinctive and inclusive". In recognition of the importance of its work with children and young people and to encourage further development in this area of mission, the Church of England published *Going for Growth: Transformation for children, young people and the Church* in 2010.

The changes brought in by the current Government present significant opportunities and challenges to the Church of England's continued involvement in the public education system. The changed rationale for and development of academies require action now to ensure the continuation of our provision. That provision will be affected by how the commitment to being distinctive and inclusive is understood and embodied in the future. The threats to religious education in current government policies bring into focus the overall health of this important subject and the potential for the Church of England to make a major contribution on behalf of all schools.

This report is offered not only in response to the bicentenary celebrations, but also as a call to action to maintain the proud history of the Church of England's significant contribution to education in this country.

### John Oxon

The Rt Revd John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford



It is my pleasure to present this timely report on the future of Church schools.

The 2001 Dearing report undoubtedly set the agenda for the first decade of the 21st century by emphasising that church schools stand at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation. Part of that vision has been realised over the past decade, particularly in the expansion of Anglican secondary schools, but there is much still to address.

The Church of England needs constantly to clarify its mission in education. Church schools aim to be distinctive and inclusive, excellent but not elitist, and to be witness to their own religious foundations while serving increasingly secular and multifaith communities.

Diocesan Boards of Education are statutory bodies, not just another stakeholder in the expanding education marketplace. Traditional partnerships (e.g. with local authorities) are changing and Diocesan Directors of Education need to be entrepreneurial, creative and confident in engaging with new strategic partners. Additionally, the central functions of the National Society and the General Synod Board of Education must develop greater coherence and flexibility to respond to new initiatives.

This Review, although more limited in scope than the Dearing report, aims to offer a coherent picture of recent policy changes and their implications. It does not present a specific blueprint for the future of Church schools. Rather, it describes a strong framework within which the continuing work of the Church can be developed and shaped through its schools as we seek to ensure that the Church's voice in education is valued for the next decade and beyond.

### Dr Priscilla Chadwick

Chair of the Church School of the Future Review Group



## Introduction

The Church of England is the largest single provider of schools in England with more than 4,800 schools. It plays a key role in shaping change in the education system.

The structure and nature of state-funded education in England have changed dramatically in the past few years. Changes, driven by central government's commitment to raising standards, are based around a free market principle of competition, diversity of provision and the development of a significant role for commercial providers of education through sponsorship of academies. This is set against a diminishing role for local authorities and financial restrictions in the provision of support services. Therefore opportunities exist for Church schools to develop partnerships and collaborate with other providers while preserving their distinctive character.

Pupils and their parents in Church schools are entitled to - and should be encouraged to - expect the highest standards of teaching and opportunities for learning. Church schools must be responsive to parents and the communities they serve while celebrating their distinctive Christian ethos. More than ever, as economic pressures drive a utilitarian approach to education, children in Church schools should experience Christianity as part of their moral and spiritual development, reflected throughout the curriculum.

We believe that the opportunities afforded by such significant changes should be grasped confidently. The Church needs to review current provision and address any constraints in terms of capacity and resourcing at the diocesan and national levels. The chance further to reinvigorate the Church of England school system and to reconfirm and refresh its vital importance to children, young people and their families is an opportunity that must under no circumstances be missed.



# Executive summary

## THE CHURCH'S MISSION IN EDUCATION

- The Church of England clearly reaffirms that Church schools stand at the centre of its mission. It educates approximately 1 million of the nation's children in primary and secondary schools, which enables more direct engagement with children and their families than any other contact, including regular Sunday worship.
- At this time of educational change, the Church as a major provider of schools needs to strengthen and clarify the assertion of this role at governmental, synodical, diocesan and local levels. This approach is essential if the Church's mission and ministry to education through its school system is to thrive.
- The Church as a whole is called to recognise the forthcoming challenges and opportunities fully to meet the needs and expectations of all children in the Church school system.

## THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF PROVISION

- The Church has created a strong and distinctive 'brand' of schools and proven it can manage them successfully. The changes and challenges ahead must not dilute or compromise this brand. The Church school system has the capability to become even better and stronger.
- Distinctiveness is about more than organisational arrangements and designation as a school of religious character. It must include a wholehearted commitment to putting faith and spiritual development at the heart of the curriculum and ensuring that a Christian ethos permeates the whole educational experience.
- High-quality religious education (RE) and collective worship should continue to make major contributions to the Church school's Christian ethos, to allow pupils to engage seriously with and develop an understanding of the person and teachings of Jesus Christ.
- The drive for excellence and effectiveness in Church schools is paramount, but not merely because the Government says so. The enabling of every child to flourish in their potential as a child of God, is a sign and expression of the Kingdom and is at the heart of the Church's distinctive mission.
- In response to parental demand, there may be opportunities for new Church schools to be established to offer that distinctiveness within an inclusive community framework.

## CENTRAL ORGANISATION

- New approaches are required in the central operation of the Church school system. The role and purpose of the centre will need to be reassessed, the operational aspects re-engineered and the organisation rebranded. Serious consideration should be given to the creation of a single Church of England Education Office.
- New approaches are needed to ensure that the Church's mission is more widely known through schools and is fully understood. Improvements in advocacy and clarity of explanations will be required across society in general and among opinion formers in particular.

## DIOCESAN ORGANISATION

- Church schools need new levels and types of support and guidance, along with a guarantee that these will be forthcoming through central, regional and diocesan structures. The Church school system must deliver on the requirement to take responsibility for school performance and must commit to ensuring sufficient capacity to achieve it.
- Increases in collaborative working within and across diocesan boundaries are likely to be required to ensure a fully professional and cost-effective diocesan support service.

## RETHINKING OF PARTNERSHIPS

- Church schools have always worked in partnership with local and central government, but in the future will have to include new and different partners. A commitment to partnership working at all levels and for all purposes is required, and must be based on clear outcomes, strongly held core values and the essential Christian ethos.
- Partnerships between parishes and their local schools could be strengthened, which will facilitate shared use of premises and staff expertise to enhance the opportunities for children and young people in the community. The relationship between the incumbent and the church school is of critical importance, and this understanding must be incorporated into the training of clergy and the appointments of head teachers and clergy.
- Small rural Church of England schools face additional challenges in the current environment. The Church, for example through a specific working group, needs urgently to advise heads and governors of appropriate ways forward.
- Ecumenical collaboration in education, which is already well established with Methodists and Roman Catholics, could be further expanded where appropriate to provide strong Christian or multifaith schools.
- Partnerships between maintained Church schools and independent schools with Anglican foundations could be significantly developed to mutual advantage within dioceses, enhanced by chaplaincy support and episcopal endorsement.
- Free schools sponsored by parents or Christian groups could become affiliated to the diocesan family, as is already being seen with community schools wishing to enhance their Christian values and ethos.

These key issues, combined with the detailed recommendations, will form the basis for *The Church School of the Future* development plan, which will aim to implement the recommendations of this Review as part of a 2-year programme.



# The background, purpose and methodology of the Review

## THE DEARING REPORT AND A DECADE OF PROGRESS

*The Way ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium*, which was published in 2001, was a major report that offered an exciting vision and a seminal repertoire of recommendations for the future. A decade later it is important to recognise what has been and what remains to be achieved.

Expansion of the Church school system, particularly in the secondary sector, has been remarkable. Over 100 new schools and academies have been formed since 2001, and they are now developing their distinctive characters and demonstrating their performance. The understanding and practice of establishing the principle of 'inclusive but distinctive' schools have advanced considerably.

Other facets of the report are progressing effectively, but much work remains to be done. In particular, there is still scope for progression in schools and parishes working together, the training and engagement of clergy, and the recruitment and retention of teachers with a Christian background. These aspects lie to some extent outside the scope of this report, but they do have a bearing on what needs to happen next if the Church school system is to be developed holistically.

The report "urged all elements in the Church community to look afresh at the way they work together" in the interest of schools. Despite huge advances, the challenge is as great now as it was a decade ago.

The Dearing report provides a reference point. Although the principles originally advocated remain relevant today, the situation and context are different, and analysis of these aspects is the foundation upon which the recommendations of this Review are based.

## THE PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The Review has provided an opportunity to take stock of the current situation, hear the views of many stakeholders and to consider future needs and demands.

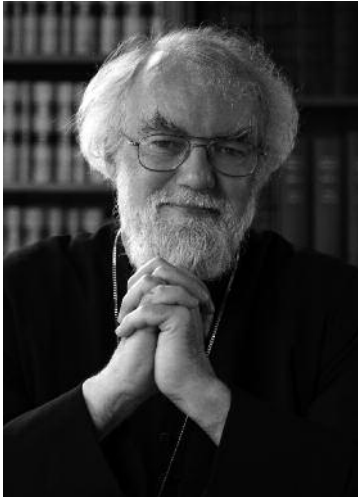
Wide-ranging views were sought in four broad areas:

- The challenges facing the Church school system in the future
- The defining characteristics of Church schools
- How the Church school family might develop and grow
- How schools should be supported at diocesan and national levels

The evidence obtained has been incorporated into the Report through chapter headings which provide a structured route through the issues.

The bicentenary of the National Society in 2011 and the celebrations of the achievements of its founder Joshua Watson, provided a fitting backdrop for the repositioning of Church schools for the future. The results of 200 years of Church schooling are legion and are appropriately described elsewhere, but the legacy is the foundation on which to build. This legacy is energising and must be regarded as such. If it is not, then the task simply becomes the protection of historical assets, which would not be good enough for either the children in our communities or the Church's mission in education.

The climate and time for this Review are right. The working in partnership with DDEs and other strategic allies is well developed and robust. The Government welcomes and needs our support. Church schools are as popular as ever, and we are in a strong position to move forward to the next stages of both the Watson and Dearing missions.



### *Terms of reference*

The General Synod paper entitled *Education and the Church: into the next 200 years (GS 1845)* stated the need for an external review of the current situation in the light of the fundamental changes to the education system related to recent legislation and government policy. This statement was affirmed by Synod during the education debate in June 2011.

This Review takes into account the Welsh aspect. Many of the general principles, viewpoints and recommendations are equally applicable to English and Welsh dioceses and their schools. Specific differences in the statutory underpinning for Wales, however, mean that detailed interpretation will differ.

### *Scope*

Given the speed of change in central government policy and direction, and the diminution of the role and funding of local authorities, the Review needed to respond quickly and clearly. Academic research and therefore the production of an interim report were not possible. Nevertheless, the consultation period of September to December 2011 yielded high numbers of responses and well-informed comment.

Although the Review touched on the teaching of religious education in England, it did not focus in detail on policy and operational delivery in this area. Similarly the Review makes recommendations that affect the National Society Framework for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS), the DBE Measure, and the academies programme or the Church's role in school improvement, but it does not attempt to suggest detailed action related to these changes. Rather it signals the directions for change in these fundamental areas of the Church's activity.

A fully detailed delivery action plan will be drawn up to implement the Review's recommendations.

### *The Review team*

The Review has been undertaken by the following group:

- Dr Priscilla Chadwick – an experienced independent chairperson appointed by the National Society
- Revd Janina Ainsworth – Chief Education Officer of the Church of England
- Dr Robert Gwynne – Head of School Strategy and Deputy General Secretary of the National Society
- Lorraine O'Reilly and David Brown – experienced Directors of Children's Services

David Brown was appointed the Review secretariat. The team members were asked to draw upon their experience of working on behalf of the Church of England with dioceses and the Department for Education. They undertook an analysis of the issues and helped shape the recommendations.

### *The reading group*

A reading group made up of Bishops, DDEs and head teachers reviewed the draft report. The group was asked to consider consistency, coherence and comprehensiveness, but not to change the recommendations or make additions.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Survey*

An online questionnaire with 26 questions under various headings was sent to a wide range of stakeholders during the autumn of 2011. It included structured questions on key issues and provided the opportunity for open responses. Of more than 5,000 questionnaires sent out, 848 were returned – a statistically valid proportion. Some respondents replied anonymously, but multiple responses from 95% of dioceses could be confirmed from respondents who declared their background, which represents an excellent geographic spread. In terms of the roles and organisations, the survey achieved a broadly balanced sample in line with the numbers of people employed by or who volunteer in specific Church education settings. Quotations from the respondents are provided throughout the following chapters, where appropriate.





### *Interviews*

The views and expert opinions of members of 13 organisations were gathered in extended face-to-face interviews with the Review team. These sessions explored the four key areas of the Review and gave the opportunity for comprehensive and in-depth consideration of how they might impact on the particular organisation concerned and what changes would need to be made to enable successful change in the future. These perspectives also provided further insight on a relevant range of issues examined through the questionnaire.

The organisations and groups represented during the interviews comprised the following:

- Bishops
- Chairs of Diocesan Boards of Education
- The Association of Anglican Directors of Education
- Diocesan Secretaries
- Church colleges and universities
- SIAS inspectors
- Representatives from other providers of faith-based schooling
- Capital and premises officers
- Primary school head teachers
- Secondary school head teachers and academy principals
- Organisations providing services to schools
- The Department for Education
- Representatives of the three main political parties



“If our objectives as Christians are for good education, then that in itself is a mission.”

Diocesan Secretary

“I think in terms of the rationale for our Church schools, a Christian understanding of life... has things of great value to introduce, which will work for the common good... It’s about understanding what it means to be human, what it means to develop as a human being. That has a great value for the common good, whether people believe or not.”

Senior Clergy

# Chapter One: Mission and purpose – the Church’s involvement in schooling

## WHY IS THE CHURCH IN THE SCHOOLS BUSINESS?

- 1.1 In 2011 the Church of England celebrated the bicentenary of the founding of the National Society and its 200-year role in providing schools across England and Wales. The Christian Church had, of course, been involved in providing schools for centuries, but the founding of the National Society marked a commitment to systematic provision across England and Wales. The original motivation was expressed in the full name of the Society, the National Society for the Promotion of the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. Building on the legacy of educational work in Christian communities before and following the Reformation, the Church of England, along with other denominations, felt the moral and economic obligation to provide education for all, especially the poorest and most vulnerable. They responded to this sense of obligation a full 60 years before education was recognised as a responsibility of the Government in the 1870 Education Act.
- 1.2 From the start, the commitment of the Church to provide basic education through its schools was seen in the context of a higher purpose. Schooling was also all about character. For the pioneers it was inconceivable that education could be divorced from a firm emphasis on the spiritual and moral education of the pupils. The commitment was to be met through frequent exposure to “the most excellent Liturgy and Catechism provided by our Church” – that is, learning the tenets of the faith and worshipping regularly.
- 1.3 Over the succeeding 200 years, the Church continued to build and resource schools, increasingly in partnership with government. Although supported to some extent even from the earliest days by public money, the definitive incorporation of Church schools into the publicly funded system was established through the 1944 Education Act.
- 1.4 Voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools were created that allowed, respectively, for greater or lesser Church influence in the governance and management of Church schools. The Church of England foundation was secured through worship and religious education according to the principles of the Church, and through the capacity to appoint and admit committed Anglicans to the school.
- 1.5 The social context has changed greatly since 1944, and the historic settlement achieved at that time is no longer the only statutory framework for the publicly funded school system. The increased prominence of other world faiths and new religious movements has been a challenge to all schools, not least Church schools. The continued controversy around the role of faith in public institutions and discourse has also focused on schools with a religious foundation.
- 1.6 The Church itself revisited its own understanding of why it had schools. The debate led in 2000 to the commissioning of the Dearing report. Schools were seen as standing at the centre of the Church’s mission to the nation, in clear recognition that in many dioceses there are as many children in Church schools as there are Sunday worshippers in churches.
- 1.7 One expression of the mission’s purpose is shown in a sense of obligation to share an enduring narrative, a set of values and ways of behaving that stem from and express the Christian foundation of the school, thereby sharing the faith with all members of the school community. A second way of expressing the mission’s purpose is that of engagement with and service to society: the provision of education as a common good, open to all and of benefit to all. Both these purposes were restated in *The Way Ahead: Church schools in the new millennium* where they were described as witness and service. These features are explored further in Chapter Two.



“I think the church school has a really important part to play in our education system, because a church school educates the whole child: healthy mind, healthy body, healthy spirit. I think the healthy spirit aspect is often left out in community schools.”

Primary School Head Teacher

“I think we can offer a prophetic lead to the Church, by showing what it is to be engaged on a daily basis with people who live on the margins.”

Senior Clergy

“We need to provide people with a moral compass, which will equip them for their life, which is absent from so many institutions, families and communities. It is actually something which could be constantly rooted in the Gospel narrative.”

Senior Clergy

## CLEAR UNDERPINNING

- 1.8 In 2010, *Going for Growth: Transformation for children, young people and the Church*, set out a rationale and programme for Christian nurture of children and young people. It issued a call at national, diocesan and parochial levels for action based on three key premises that apply equally to children of the faith, of other faiths and of no faith:
- Work towards every child and young person having a life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ
  - Bring about transformation, both in the Church and in the world, and recognise and enable the capacity of children and young people to be agents of change both for themselves and for others
  - Provide support and development for all professionals working with children and young people in the name of the Church, so that they might demonstrate the highest qualities in their practice and personal life.
- 1.9 The call to make explicit the basis in faith of the Church’s work in schools alongside the freely offered service to the nation was echoed many times in the responses to the Review survey questions and in discussion. *Going for Growth: Transformation for children, young people and the Church* set the service rationale in the context of the call to build a society based on the demands of the Kingdom of God, with its emphasis on the establishment of justice, peace and freedom for all to flourish.
- 1.10 The call to action has clear implications that clarify what underpins the Church’s involvement in schools. It places the mission of schools at the heart of the work of the Church and provides a basis for future action.
- 1.11 In coming years, communities will be increasingly affected by the difficult economic climate, accompanied by the reduction of state-funded support. The expectation that progressively more welfare support will be provided by voluntary groups poses huge challenges, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- 1.12 If the Church is serious about transforming society, its school system is the principal arena within which to express this intention.
- 1.13 The presence of Church schools, as history has shown, can have an enormous impact. The pressure is always there for education to be solely driven by economic and utilitarian pressures, but the unapologetic presence of Church schools can be an appropriate counterpoise. Their accent on spiritual and moral flourishing builds social and emotional capital contributing to community and individual well-being and resilience.



“Dearing did a lot of good work locating Church schools at the heart of the mission of the Church.”

DDE

## Chapter Two: Achievements in the past decade and challenges for the future

### THE DEARING REPORT

- 2.1 In 1999 the General Synod debated a full report on Church schools and passed a strongly supportive motion affirming that “Church schools stand at the heart of the mission to the nation”. Following on from this debate, the Church Schools Review Group was formed, under the chairmanship of Lord Dearing, and was funded by the National Society and central Church funds. The remit of this group was to review the achievements of Church of England schools and to make proposals for their future development.
- 2.2 The report, *The Way Ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium*, was published in 2001, following nearly 2 years’ work and an interim report, and offered further opportunity for comment. The main theme of the report, which followed the Synod’s motion, was the central importance of Church schools to the mission of the Church, not only to children and young people, but also to the long-term well-being of the Church of England.
- 2.3 Most significant of all the recommendations was the call for an increase in the number of secondary school places by the equivalent of 100 new schools over the following 7-8 years, with particular focus on deprived areas. To achieve this major expansion and to improve access to primary schools, a fundraising campaign was proposed, with the objective of raising £25 million over 7 years.
- 2.4 For schools to achieve the Church’s mission, they must be distinctively Christian and have close partnerships with worshipping communities and consequent implications for clergy training. The report also stressed the crucial importance of employing Christian teachers and school leaders, with a number of recommendations about their training and support. It urged increased recognition of teaching as a Christian vocation and for the Church universities and university colleges to secure and enhance their Christian distinctiveness so that there were places where teacher training could take place in that context.
- 2.5 A short section was devoted to religious education and urged dioceses to set targets for improving standards of teaching and learning in their schools. The recommendations included the expectation that every pupil in a Church secondary school should take at least the GCSE short course for religious education and preferably the full course. Space was given to the issue of admissions to Church schools, in recognition of a wide variety in practices, and to advocating a balance in all schools between open places allocated to the local community and foundation places reserved for children of Church families.
- 2.6 A clear message came from the Dearing report: that the role of Church schools was to be less concentrated on so-called domestic provision and more on general provision, which is to say that the schools should be seen as a service to the whole community and not solely as a service to the Church.
- 2.7 The group supported an ecumenical approach to new schools and looked to the strengthening of links between maintained and independent Anglican schools.

### A SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTSTANDING ISSUES

- 2.8 A full assessment of the impact of *The Way Ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium* demands more space and research than are possible in this Review, as the report had a significant effect on Church school context nationally and locally. Thus, the following summary should be seen as only a starting point.



- 2.9 In the 10 years since the report, there has been the greatest expansion of Church school places since the National Society was formed. Early on, several Church schools were formed from failing county or community schools. Around 70 so-called Dearing schools were supported with grants from a fundraising campaign to develop a Christian ethos. With the advent of academies in their first phase, a new vehicle for developing schools became available. Intended as a radical solution to persistent underperformance, the involvement of individual or corporate sponsors was meant to inject energy and provide innovation to improve educational opportunities. As most of the schools identified were in areas of social deprivation, they fitted well with the commitment of the Church and the possibilities of Church of England sponsorship were explored across the dioceses.
- 2.10 The resulting first wave of 45 academies sponsored by the Church of England make it the largest provider of academies, and an estimated 54,000 more students are now receiving secondary education in a Church of England establishment than were in 2001. This position is one of strength and should be built upon through the current academy development process.
- 2.11 A small number of new schools or academies are ecumenical, mostly in partnership with Roman Catholic dioceses. This approach has been most notably applied in Liverpool, where the needs of both Churches and the city coincided. A number of new primary schools have also been opened with Methodist involvement. An attempt to develop a multifaith academy with Muslim involvement, although it ultimately failed, was a testimony to the creative thinking taking place in DBEs.
- 2.12 After a feasibility study was conducted, a full fundraising campaign was initiated via a professional company. A measure of success was achieved, especially in identification of one sponsor who worked with three dioceses to develop Church of England academies. Estimation of how much money was actually raised is not easy, as the majority went directly to the individual academy projects rather than through the National Society or central Church funds. (The costs of the fundraising campaign were almost entirely borne by the National Society and it was wound down in 2009.)
- 2.13 Training for Church school leaders has been greatly developed, largely in partnership with the National College for School Leaders. Several grants from the College funded significant work on succession planning and development of black and ethnic minority leadership in Church schools. Many Church higher education institutions have developed credit-bearing courses that focus on Church school leadership. This pathway to continued professional development is now recognised and dioceses are closely involved in the creation and delivery of such courses.
- 2.14 The commitment to religious education across Church schools has been maintained in the new academies, although recruitment of suitable teachers has in some cases been difficult. The number of pupils taking GCSE religious education across schools in general has risen year on year, but the numbers of pupils studying the full course are higher in Church schools and other schools with a religious foundation.
- 2.15 Admissions arrangements continue to be contentious, with renewed attacks on the principle of foundation places from parties hostile to Church schools. The academies are committed to serving their immediate neighbourhood, and only a small number have foundation places. Revised advice produced by the National Society and Church of England Board of Education in 2011 reiterates the Dearing emphasis on all Church schools offering both open and foundation places.
- 2.16 The Dearing recommendations that have had the least effect are those related to clergy training. A day conference was held to explore the implications of the Report shortly after its publication, and brought together DDEs, Diocesan Directors of Ordinands, Continuing Ministerial Education officers, and college and course staff. This meeting, however, was not followed up. A national review of training before and after ordination took place with virtually no reference to schools or children and youth more broadly. Provision in courses or colleges remains *ad hoc* and minimal. DBEs have worked hard to make an impact on local provision, but their success depends too much on the willingness of individual staff to make space.
- 2.17 Inevitably, there are some aspects in which *The Way Ahead: Church of England Schools in the new millennium* is captive to the time in which it arose, especially in its approach to local authorities. However, its role in prompting the great expansion of secondary schools will alone ensure it a place in the next history of Church schools.

“We need to recognise that Dearing was written in a very different context, not only in education, but in our culture and in the nature of our society.”

Senior Clergy

“I think it is going to be a major challenge going forward as to how we find, recruit, retain, promote and develop Christian leaders for our schools.”

DDE

“What financial resources are both the diocese and the Church nationally committing to, to ensure that we are successful? There is a huge reputational risk at the moment if we get things wrong.”

DDE

- 2.18 Despite the change in context, many of the themes identified in the Dearing report remain issues in Church schools today. The supply and development of leaders for Church schools was frequently raised during the consultation for this Review. While there has been considerable development of dedicated training for heads and aspiring heads, there is still a need to provide a systematic offer across the country.
- 2.19 A second repeated theme was the need to ensure that clergy have a full understanding of the role of a Church school in the mission and ministry of the parish. Strong feeling was expressed that the wider Church does not place a high enough value on its schools and the teams that support them.

## NEW CHALLENGES FOR CHURCH SCHOOLS

- 2.20 In addition to the continuing Dearing agenda, the more general changes to the education system pose some specific challenges to the Church of England maintaining and developing its stake in the system.

### *2010 Academies Act*

- 2.21 The commitment eventually to extend the academy programme to all schools signals the most fundamental shift in the school system since 1944. The rationale has changed from a means of bringing in additional resources to improve poor provision to that of removing local authority involvement in schools.
- 2.22 As quasi-independent schools, academies are outside most of the core education legislation and, therefore, are accountable only to themselves for their curriculum, organisation, admissions policies and teachers' pay and conditions.
- 2.23 For a Church of England school to convert to academy status, a number of conditions have to be satisfied: the land and title issues have to be dealt with appropriately; the relation to the wider diocesan family of schools must be maintained; and a continuing commitment must be made to preserve the distinctive character of the foundation. Together with Roman Catholic and Methodist colleagues, the National Society and the Department for Education have drafted appropriate documentation and issued advice to DBEs and schools.
- 2.24 Multiple challenges, many technical in nature, have become apparent since the academy conversion process has begun to be worked out in dioceses. The primary principles driving all negotiations are that the change to academy status should in no way compromise or undermine the things that support and maintain the distinctive character of Church of England schools.

### *The changing role of local authorities*

- 2.25 The acceleration of the academies programme combined with the serious reduction in funding has already had a substantial effect on the ability of local authorities to support schools in the way they had been used to. A number of local authorities were already struggling and many others have been forced to reappraise their programmes to see what they can afford. As this process continues and with lower allocations being predicted for future years, even those schools that do not choose to convert to academies will find their support seriously reduced and be forced to look at whether the local authority is providing value for money.
- 2.26 The number of companies or consultancies offering to supply services to schools has already grown and this trend is set to continue. The operation of free-market principles in education is nowhere more evident than in this aspect. Church schools and the Church school system can see this change as an opportunity. Indeed, some dioceses in the northwest of England already have experience in providing a range of services to schools.
- 2.27 The challenge is to enable Church schools across the country to choose suppliers or providers in keeping with the Church school ethos. There is a clear imperative to assess with all reasonable speed the capacity of diocesan structures to provide services to schools, singly, in collaboration or with external partners, and to create the framework within which that can happen.



### School improvement

- 2.28 *“I think the thing we need to understand about Dearing, is that it was relatively light on the quality of what we are delivering. We see the expectations now articulated very sharply by the politicians and it is finding us wanting in our own understanding of why we have schools. In dioceses and with Bishops we do not need to look far to find that they are not even beginning to think about the quality of education; they are too busy counting the numbers of schools.” (Senior clergy)*

Changes to the current system are being justified in terms of school improvement, with specific provisions having been made in the 2010 Academies Act for underperforming schools to be directed by the Secretary of State to become academies with an external sponsor. Schools where results have been below the lowest acceptable targets for several years have received particular attention, and include a number of Church of England schools. Schools deemed to be satisfactory at inspection will undoubtedly be next in the firing line. The National Society has been able to challenge the automatic assumption that an external organisation takes over the school and to establish that, for Church schools, the DBE will be the default sponsor.

- 2.29 The taking on of this formal responsibility for educational quality and performance within Church schools has placed the system under serious pressure. The responsibility had not previously been part of the general remit of DBEs, and the majority are not staffed or equipped to meet that demand. Over the past 18 months there has been much discussion and development within dioceses, and examples of good practice are now evident across the country. How this new work will be resourced is not at all clear. The task is to develop professional expertise and capacity within dioceses at a time when resources across the Church are diminishing. Nevertheless, the Church must demonstrate capability, as without it the schools could be lost to the Church and not recovered. This issue is discussed further in Chapter Four.

### Religious education

- 2.30 The teaching of religious education is subject to multiple challenges across the school system that the Government seems to have no will to address.
- Exclusion of religious education from the new English Baccalaureate is having a more than symbolic effect on its provision within GCSE options, and thereby on numbers of students taking the full-course GCSE
  - Exclusion of any consideration of religious education from the current revision of the National Curriculum is likely to have a damaging effect on the status of the subject despite the retention of the statutory requirement
  - The reduction in the number of Post-Graduate Certificate in Education places for religious education will continue to affect the ability to meet the need for specialist teachers
  - Cuts in local authority funding will lead to a complete stop on any previously agreed syllabus revisions, even if a commitment to fund Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education is retained for the time being, and the local mechanism for producing religious education syllabuses will break down completely
  - Existing anxieties about standards in religious education will not be addressed, thus leaving children vulnerable to inadequate provision in this most sensitive and important subject, which is vital for their understanding of themselves and the world in which they are growing up.
- 2.31 While the Church of England has received some encouragement to work together with other partners to address some of the issues related to religious education, the responses of the Government to these concerns have been disappointing. Realistically, the Church is limited in its ability to influence practice in the classroom even in its own schools. It does, however, have a voice and will continue to press for recognition of the damage being done to religious education.
- 2.32 While none of the above affects Church schools in a more severe way than it does other schools, the impact of the wider climate for religious education does have an effect on Church schools. Voluntary controlled schools are required to teach the agreed syllabus for religious education and that approach may become a liability. Chapter Three suggests ways in which some of these issues might be approached.



#### *Secularist attack*

- 2.33 Church schools continue to be popular with parents and to have good reputations and high standards. Nevertheless, there continues to be a concerted attack on the core elements of the Church school identity. Most of the challenges and claims made are without foundation or are matters of principle on which disagreement is always possible.
- 2.34 Centrally, and locally, a spirited defence of the Church school system is made, but lack of dedicated communications capacity and of detailed data about the schools within the system are handicaps. Specific research into the circumstances and performance of Church schools has been possible to commission (e.g. *Strong schools for strong communities*<sup>1</sup>), but until recently no regular engagement with the data profile of Church schools have been available. This issue is now being addressed through a data dashboard, which will enable regular processing of information about Church schools. Creation of a focused expert communications arm, however, would require additional resources at the centre.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Clergy training and appointments must include an understanding of the role of Church schools in the Church's mission** (Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops)
- **Further work is needed on recruitment and training of Christian teachers and head teachers for Church schools** (Association of Anglican Directors of Education [AADE], Church foundation and other higher education institutions, and Anglican Academies and Secondary School Heads [AASSH])
- **A review of the communications function of the National Society and the Board of Education should be carried out and recommendations brought to the Council and the Board** (National Society Council and Board of Education)

---

<sup>1</sup> Strong schools for strong communities: Reviewing the impact of Church of England schools in promoting community cohesion, available at: <http://www.churchofengland.org/media>





“Church and schools are important, and what we are trying to do, through effective political advocacy, is lose the fear of upsetting Government. Unless we stand up and argue our cause where it matters, then we are losing the plot.”

DBE Chair

“I think we need to champion the narrative of the Christian faith, both out of gospel stories and out of history.”

Senior Clergy

“The main concerns I see as an inspector are the superficiality of RE, because of the lack of understanding. I think there is a lack of subject knowledge, certainly in primary schools. You can't teach RE without an understanding of theology. It becomes very superficial and this is where the values can be difficult as well.”

SIAS Inspector

## Chapter Three: What it means to be a Church school

- 3.1 This chapter explores the elements making up the distinctive identity of Church schools and highlights what needs to be done to protect and secure that identity and to develop it in the new educational environment.
- 3.2 At a time of educational change and challenge, the need to be unambiguous and explicit about the key characteristics of Church schools becomes a priority. Survey respondents clearly expressed an expectation that this task would be dealt with in the central work of the National Society. The promotion of that distinctive nature and vision of education would then be the responsibility of all within the system.
- 3.3 This task is necessary for a number of reasons:
  - Firstly, to ensure that the actual work carried out day-by-day within Church schools is recognisably distinctive and coherent in the way in which it is expressed and embodied across the Church school family, so that parents know what they can expect
  - Secondly, an agreed template against which schools and the system can be held to account and for which tools of evaluation can be developed to reflect the full picture of distinctiveness would enable schools to enrich and deepen the unique expression of their foundation
  - Thirdly, to provide a clear basis on which to create and enter into partnerships with other organisations or schools

### LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.4 At a fundamental level the Church of England character of a school is laid down in statute. The 1944 Education Act settlement confirmed those characteristics and subsequent legislation has not undermined them. Some specific differences exist between voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools and there is an increased risk to the voluntary controlled model owing to the current fragmentation of the educational landscape. Therefore, the Review team recommends the following list of basic requirements for any school within the Church of England family:
  - Formal designation as a school/academy of religious character – Church of England, with a clear relationship to the diocese
  - An appropriate ethos statement incorporated into governance documents indicating accountability to the Church of England in its local representation
  - Church of England purposes secured in trust deeds or other foundation documents
  - Foundation governors, appointed by named Church of England authorities, such as DBE, deanery synod or parochial church council, form a majority on the governing body of voluntary aided type schools
  - Governors' right to appoint staff demonstrating the ability and commitment to maintain and develop the Church of England foundation of the school, including seeking specific faith commitment
  - Religious education and collective worship provided in accordance with the principle and practices of the Church of England
  - School or academy subject to full denominational inspection
  - Admissions policies determined by governors, including identification of places available on the basis of faith
- 3.5 While the specific differences between the voluntary aided and voluntary controlled models will for the most part remain in existing schools, it is recommended that any new Church of England schools are established on the model derived from voluntary aided schools.

“I think there is a clear philosophy which comes from a Christian perspective, because there is a massive pressure towards a functional and utilitarian educational philosophy. Christian understanding of educational philosophy is so important in our schools.”

Secondary School Head  
Teacher

“The National Society should continue to uphold the distinctiveness of Church school education and to be in that political arena to stand up and strongly say what we have already provided for children nationwide.”

Primary School Head Teacher

## EXISTING EXPECTATIONS

- 3.6 Some aspects of Church school distinctiveness are written into the foundation of the school. Others aspects have been expressed through the denominational inspection process or formal policy processes of the Church.
- Admissions policies will reflect the historic commitment to serve the local community as well as Christian families (2011 Admissions Guidance<sup>2</sup>)
  - The religious education curriculum will include other major world faiths but will ensure that the teaching of Christianity is given appropriate priority (Statement of Entitlement<sup>3</sup>)
  - The life of the school is developed around an explicit commitment to Christian values and ethos (SIAS inspection questions and toolkit<sup>4</sup>)
  - The learning environment, including premises and grounds, will reflect the Church of England foundation and the centrality of spiritual development (SIAS inspection questions and toolkit)
  - Close working relationships with the Church community, through parish or deanery, will be fostered (SIAS inspection questions and toolkit)

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.7 The Review showed that all aspects of Church school identity were well understood within the Church school community. Respondents did, however, express a need for further development in both the understanding and practice of distinctiveness. For some, the greatest need related to the quality of religious education in Church schools.
- 3.8 While religious education is seen as an essential component of distinctiveness, anxieties were expressed about the quality of teaching and learning.
- 3.9 The current environment presents a number of threats to the place of religious education in all schools, from which Church of England schools are not entirely immune. However, within schools where religious education is identified as essential to their character, there should be a firm commitment to maintaining a high level of resources and raising standards.
- 3.10 While some work is already in train in this area through the encouragement of rigour in inspection of religious education, that alone will not raise the level of teaching, especially in primary schools. A project to develop a new resource for the teaching of Christianity in Church schools is in development that could be a short-term means of increasing subject knowledge as well as ensuring some consistency of content and methodology across the Church of England sector. However, in the long term there needs to be an explicit expectation that religious education is a priority and must be made a focus of both initial teacher education and professional development. The Church should not be satisfied until every Church school is outstanding in this subject.
- 3.11 Survey respondents called for the Christian foundation to be seen to be having an influence on the whole curriculum. Repeatedly, they expressed a conviction that the Church of England system provides an alternative philosophy of education in a context where economic concerns seem to be driving educational priorities.
- 3.12 Some of the comments related to being clear about the values bases of Church schools. In this context the work arising from the development of the Christian values for schools project ([www.christianvalues4schools.co.uk](http://www.christianvalues4schools.co.uk)) was commended a number of times. The importance of clearly ascribed Christian values and their outworking in the life of schools is widely accepted. Many respondents to the survey referred to this as a key marker of the distinctive character of Church schools.

<sup>2</sup> Admissions to Church of England Schools: Board of Education/National Society Advice to Diocesan Boards of Education, available at <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1359589/natsocadmissionguidance%20june%2011final.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Religious education in Church of England Schools: a statement of entitlement from the Board of Education/National Society Council, available at <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1384868/statement%20of%20entitlement%20to%20re%20in%20ce%20schools%20%283%29.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Statutory inspection of Anglican schools: a framework for inspection and self-evaluation of Church of England, Methodist and Ecumenical schools, available at <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/1157118/framework%20september%2009.pdf>. Updates are available at <http://www.churchofengland.org/education/national-society/inspecting-our-schools/resources-for-sias-inspectors.aspx>



“We need to define Christian approaches to behaviour management, teaching and learning and areas of core purpose. We are doing that through a Christian ethos group, working with students, staff, parents, governors and local clergy.”

Secondary School Head  
Teacher

- 3.13 The National Society began some thinking about how the whole curriculum might be shaped by the Christian foundation. This took the discussion beyond values and ethos into questions about the nature and purpose of education. The underlying assumptions behind curriculum content and delivery should be examined in the light of Christian theology. Many respondents were passionate about remaining committed to a bold and broad view of education in the face of what they saw as a utilitarian, economically driven, narrowly test-oriented system.
- 3.14 The approach to the curriculum needs to be developed in a focused way in the new educational context, by working with partners to create a model that takes seriously the Christian foundation in relation to pedagogy, content and school organisation.
- 3.15 In parallel, with that, the denominational inspection system will need to reflect this wider understanding. SIAS is recognised as having a significant impact on practice in schools and is highly valued for both the support and challenge it brings. If a broader understanding of distinctiveness emerges from the development of the Church school curriculum, SIAS may need to be supplemented with an evaluative framework that can support high standards of attainment, distinctive Christian ethos and the well-being of the children served by the schools.
- 3.16 Several well-being indicators are already in use or are being developed by organisations, such as the Children’s Society. A pilot study is recommended to establish well-being indicators adapted to the Christian framework for Church schools.
- 3.17 The Church of England has always been committed to working in partnership. In the past that has been clearly focused on partnership with local authorities. The new context enables a much wider group of organisations and schools to be seen as partners, and the future development of the system will see many more formal and informal working relationships evolving. The improved identification of the elements of Church school distinctiveness will enable these partnerships to be established with those core elements at their hearts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **While the specific differences between the voluntary aided and voluntary controlled models will for the most part remain in existing schools, the establishing of new Church of England schools on the basis of the voluntary aided schools model is recommended** (Department for Education, National Society and DBEs)
- **In partnership with professional associations and other faiths, strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning in religious education should be identified** (National Society and Board of Education, Religious Education Council of England and Wales [REC], Department for Education, DBE teams and AASSH)
- **Partnerships should be developed with Church foundation higher education institutions and outstanding schools to address the level of subject knowledge for religious education and the supply of specialist teachers** (Cathedrals Group, REC and DBE teams)
- **The proposal of a new resource for the teaching of Christianity should be developed with all reasonable speed** (National Society and Board of Education, higher education partners)
- **The National Society must work with educationalists and schools to model a Church school curriculum that includes implications for pedagogy, curriculum content and school organisation** (Cathedrals Group, schools)
- **A study needs to be undertaken to establish ‘well-being’ indicators stemming from or adapted to the Christian framework for Church schools** (Cathedrals Group, Children’s Society)



“We need to define our role as one among many providers. We are switching from the established dual system, and are now part of a market-driven system which does not appear to have very much heart. We are, however, the provider with heart and soul.”

DBE Chair

## Chapter Four: Church schools in the wider context

4.1 Church schools exist as part of the state-funded sector. As such, they are in relationship with several key agencies. Broadly speaking these are:

- Central government and related political structures
- Local government political and administrative structures
- Other providers of schooling, such as other faiths and other sponsors
- Other types of schools, such as community schools and independent schools
- Providers of services, support and goods

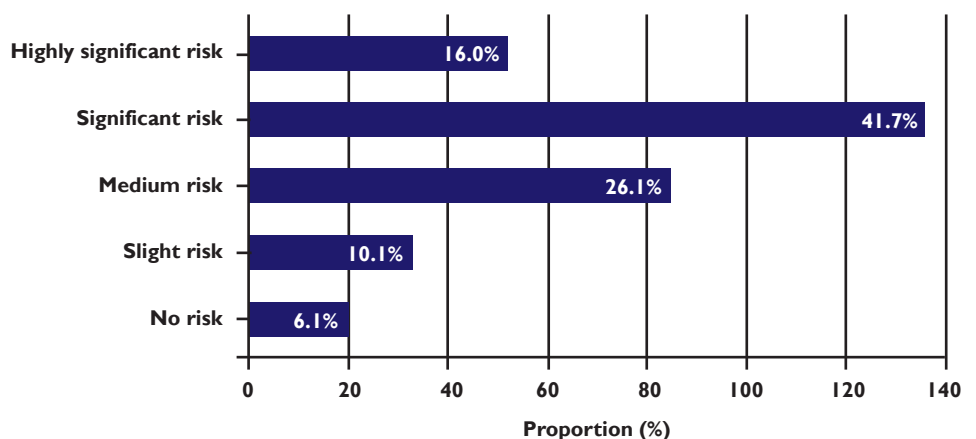
### A SYSTEM AT RISK IN A TIME OF CHANGE

4.2 The changing nature of the education system means that we now have to look beyond the 1944 Education Act settlement, which formalised the dual system of voluntary schools and local authority schools. The Church school system will need to adapt to an environment in which there is increasing independence for schools, many different types of schools (e.g. community schools, academies, free schools, university technical colleges, studio schools, special schools and traditional independent schools) and many different providers and sponsors. A DBE Chair summarised the problem and the unique place of the Church school system:

*“We need to define our role as one among many providers. We are switching from the established dual system, and are now part of a market-driven system, which does not appear to have very much heart. We are, however, the provider with heart and soul.”* (DBE Chair)

4.3 In their responses to the survey, respondents were very clear that the system is at risk:

**To what extent does the current agenda pose a risk to the Church of England school system?**





“We see all Church schools and the community schools they are linked to (through federations and academy chains) as part of our Church school family. We believe the diocese is here to serve the needs of all children and young people – not just those in Church schools and will offer support whenever asked. We need to be inclusive in our support and distinctive.”

Survey

- 4.4 The threats were variously described. Fragmentation and the loss of sense of family come high on the list. As schools become increasingly autonomous, the commitment to the Christian foundation could diminish, for example owing to the difficulty in appointing suitable teachers and head teachers. Small schools feeling cast adrift from the security of the local authority could find themselves pressured into collaborations working with partners that have no interest or respect for the Church foundation. Diocesan support could become too thinly stretched to be of any real use to schools facing the strain. The maintenance of distinctiveness could simply become too hard. On the other hand, the opportunity to be clearer about the distinctive nature of Church schools is growing as the established categories of voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools become superseded by one category of Church schools.

## THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

- 4.5 The Review team spoke to representatives of the three main political parties. They all had a particular interest in Church matters and spoke with positive conviction about the place of the Church school system. The purpose of the discussions was not to hear about party policies (which are well documented elsewhere) but to hear reflections from senior politicians about the direction of the education system in general and the Church system in particular. Several important and common threads emerged:
- There is strong affirmation for the work of Church schools and for the future of the Church school system
  - The possibility of any future government reversing or seriously changing the general trends in education represented in current legislation is small
  - The Church school system must continue to ensure through development its ability to deliver high-quality schooling
  - Church schools have a continuing and highly valued role in serving all communities, for which it is highly respected

The politicians involved were also uncompromising in their expectations of the Church school system enabling every pupil to achieve. It was clear to the Review team that time spent advocating and discussing the Church school system with politicians is important and invaluable.

## AFFILIATION WITH OTHER TYPES OF SCHOOLS

- 4.6 Other categories of school are likely to wish to become affiliated in some way with the Church of England through close association with the DBEs. Several dioceses already operate affiliation schemes that merit closer examination and analysis.

*“We have moved forward with affiliation and we do have some affiliated schools. We are keen to see such schools as part of our mission and we feel that we don’t have to own these schools. So, through having affiliated schools with a clear link between diocese, school and parish, we are doing what we want to do, which is to promote the Christian ethos.”*(Diocesan Secretary)

- 4.7 Similar perspectives from the survey respondents indicated a theme:

*“We see all Church schools and the community schools they are linked to (through federations and academy chains) as part of our Church school family. We believe the diocese is here to serve the needs of all children and young people – not just those in Church schools and will offer support – whenever asked. We need to be inclusive in our support and distinctive.”* (Survey)

*“We should embrace community schools as partners.”* (Survey)

*“[There is] acceptance of shifting sands and the need for Church schools to work collaboratively and not always with other Church schools.”* (Survey)



“We would enjoy working in partnerships with shared strategies for school improvement but would not wish Church of England schools to be sponsored by another provider.”

Survey

- 4.8 A key challenge for the future is to develop a fuller understanding of how affiliation might be defined, what it means to be affiliated and what support and help might be on offer. Development of these sorts of affiliations must always be within the framework of a joint commitment to the Christian ethos. Although the Church is not in the business of simply increasing the number of Church or Church-affiliated schools, it would be foolish to ignore the possibilities.

## RELATION TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

- 4.9 Accountability in the school system is increasingly focused towards the Secretary of State for Education. The parameters of the emerging system have been defined in the 2010 Academies Act and the 2011 Education Act. As a consequence, and because of the increasing diversification of the school system, it has never before been so important for the Church school system to be close to government. Closeness does not mean existing in an uncritical or subservient relationship or that the focus should only be on the legal implications of government policy. The Church school system must emerge as a distinctive and strong provider of schools and it must be accorded the appropriate status, clarity and certainty that lead to the support and confidence of government. A primary head teacher commented in the survey:

*“Everybody is desperate to jump on the academy bandwagon and we should not be the last man standing. That does not mean that we are going to lose in any way our Christian distinctiveness. We have all passionately chosen to be heads of Church schools, because that is what is important.”*

- 4.10 The survey responses strongly suggested a potential role Church schools might play:

*“We should be willing partners in setting up academy groups. We must be open to looking at academy groups that are not exclusively Church of England, e.g. ecumenical groups or even mixed with community schools.”* (Survey)

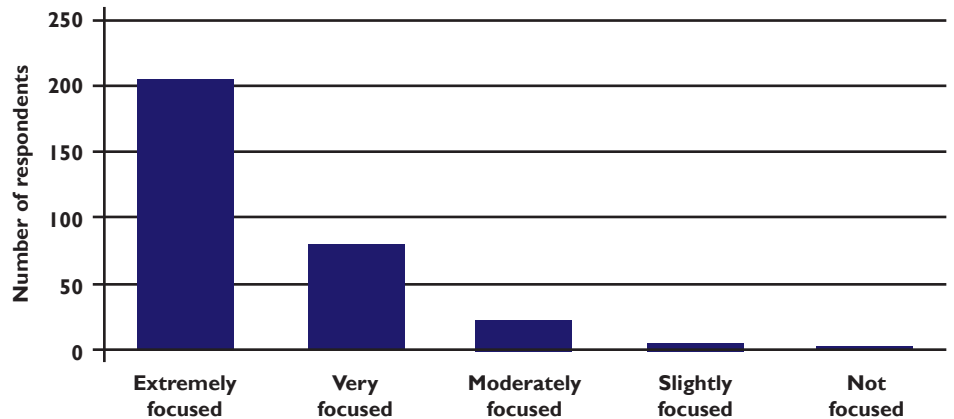
*“We would want to support our leading Church schools acting as sponsors with ourselves as a co-sponsor or taking the lead. We would not want external companies running our schools as academies as this could easily dilute our engagement and the schools’ ethos and distinctiveness.”* (Survey)

*“We would enjoy working in partnerships with shared strategies for school improvement but would not wish Church of England schools to be sponsored by another provider.”* (Survey)

- 4.11 The message is very clear: Church schools can and will take leading roles in transformation but not at the expense of their distinctive contribution or antecedents.
- 4.12 In this respect, much work has been done since the election of the coalition Government. Relationships at ministerial and civil service levels are generally very good and a partnership is developing, as is exemplified by the policy work on academies, where several complex issues are being successfully resolved to a mutually beneficial level. A key resulting document has been a Memorandum of Understanding, issued by the Department for Education in December 2011, that clarifies the way the Church and Government will work together to convert low-performance schools to academies.
- 4.13 Another key part of government policy is raising standards. The survey indicated a high level of awareness about the underperformance of some schools. Many schools and DBEs now place school effectiveness at the centre of the work of the Church in education. The answers to one question in the survey show that the most respondents saw school improvement as their key focus:

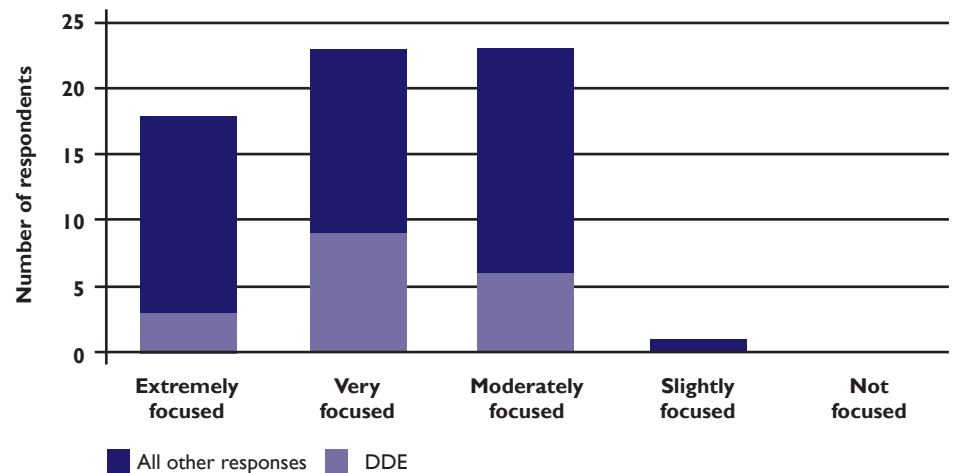


**To what extent is your organisation focused on school improvement/raising standards?**



4.14 DBEs seemed to regard school improvement as a key focus, in a similar way to other organisations, which suggests a significant and recent shift on how DBEs see their role in a changing educational world.

**To what extent is your organisation focused on school improvement/raising standards?**



4.15 Overall, it is very clear that the Church, on behalf of its heritage and unique position as a provider and 'owner' of schools, must present a strong and principled approach to the Government that does not concede important statutory and operational matters to other organisations. As the statutory framework that secures the Church's involvement is superseded in the academy era, a new mechanism needs to be developed. It is strongly recommended that the National Society Council and Board of Education aim to create a new concordat that redefines and re-establishes the Church's relationship with the Government on matters related to schooling. The approach should be to build forward from the 2011 Memorandum of Understanding.



“Our schools are becoming increasingly worried about the decline of local authorities and we are seeing the decline at different rates in different local authorities.”

DDE

## RELATION TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- 4.16 The role of local authorities is changing. A shift has been seen in resources for schools themselves and in local determination of spending. Many local authorities are now unable to provide a full range of services to schools. Hitherto, local authorities had functioned as the operational partners to dioceses. For instance, they had managed the school improvement aspect of Church schools. These changes raise some concerns for Church schools and DBEs. One DDE commented:

*“Our schools are becoming increasingly worried about the decline of local authorities and we are seeing the decline at different rates in different local authorities.” (DDE)*

- 4.17 Many parts of the Church school system regard this change as an opportunity, as was reflected by multiple survey responses:

*“There is presently an opportunity for DBEs to ensure that Church schools' primary belonging and narrative is rooted in the life of the diocese, which is greatly assisted by the sense of belonging to a 200 year old movement! We continue to share knowledge and insight and sometimes joint intervention strategy about our schools with our local authorities, though as local authorities diminish, so will this. On the other hand, opportunities for partnership over school place planning develop.” (Survey)*

*“We have developed a strategy based around our three local authorities which is centred on our view of Church schools – i.e. broader than just standards and which is determined by our local authority's capacity for engagement. One local authority has far greater capacity than the other two, so we will use our strategy to differentiate the level of our involvement. We are negotiating a data sharing agreement with our schools via each local authority.” (Survey)*

*“In the future DBEs will need to be proactive and lead engagement with local authorities through regular meetings and agendas to address the key areas of: school effectiveness and improvement; categorisation; capacity and succession planning; school place planning; co-ordinated admissions; local developments – academies, free schools, university technical colleges; and sharing of data.” (Survey)*

*“We should continue to work with local authorities on pupil place planning, but need to be able to bring our own solutions to the table and not just rely on local authorities preferred options. We should challenge local authorities (including the use of the Adjudicator) where we disagree with local authority decisions – even for community schools. We need to reassert our role as statutory bodies – some local authorities think of us merely as ‘stakeholder!’” (Survey)*

*“We need to change to meet the new world created by the growth in academies and free schools and the decrease in the ability of local authorities to meet the needs of schools for support.” (Survey)*

- 4.18 DBEs find they are entering new relationships with local authorities and that the nature and outworking of each is different. The implications of this change are more fully discussed in Chapter Six, but it is important to note here that there is a real opportunity for further investigation and development work in this area, which will guide and support the dioceses in redefining the relationships between Church schools, local authorities and dioceses.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

### *Providers of support and services*

- 4.19 In the absence of the local authority as the key supplier of services and support, schools will turn increasingly to other agencies. In some cases, schools will be sufficiently able to meet needs on their own, but in many instances they will turn to their DBEs for help. Many organisations are poised to help. Some are commercial and some are in other parts of the school, further education and higher education sectors; some are very good and others are less so. The areas that need to be covered can broadly be classified, in no particular order, as operational services support and goods, school improvement and effectiveness, and building of Christian distinctiveness.





“We need to change to meet the new world created by the growth in academies and free schools and the decrease in the ability of local authorities to meet the needs of schools for support.”

Survey

- 4.20 Support could be factored in at national level through a register of quality-assured organisations. This approach is a natural extension of the National Society Framework developed in 2007 and should be developed as soon as possible. In consequence it is recommended that a protocol be developed for creating and establishing relationships with a range of partners committed to core Church school values and purposes. Successful experience has already been gained at an area level, for example DDE services in the northwest of England, and some has been gained at DBE level through existing trading companies and the trading facilities emerging via umbrella trusts.
- 4.21 The Review has revealed that there is a need for a national initiative to capture and share existing good practice and to support regional and diocesan initiatives as they seek to create appropriate vehicles for delivering effective and efficient support.
- 4.22 Recognition of the new climate in which goods and services are traded was clearly expressed in the survey by one DDE:

*“Setting up traded services and developing DDEs to ensure we are skilled enough are obvious requirements. This is a foreign world for us as we now have to deliver services and that is a huge change. There is a bit of risk in taking on all this but we need to move quickly and responsibly in an educational world, where things change by the day. Waiting two months for a Bishops’ Council meeting, which is then cancelled, is quite frankly not good enough.” (DDE)*

- 4.23 From this response, it is clear that a fundamental culture shift is necessary to ensure that a flexible and responsive service is available to schools. If good service is not available, schools will look elsewhere and a key opportunity for the Church system as a whole will be lost.

*Other school providers*

- 4.24 Through ecumenical initiatives with the Methodists and the Roman Catholics and through co-sponsorship of the original wave of academies, DBEs have already accrued considerable experience of working in collaboration with other providers. That there will be more such collaboration in the future is clear. Not every diocese in every situation is likely to be able to ‘go it alone’ and the system needs to build understanding and capacity to achieve strong strategic partnerships. Several responses that supported this point of view emerged from the survey and hearings:

*“We must learn to work with others without controlling them, whilst being robust about the bottom line of viable partnership. To do this, we need to be much more theologically articulate and confident.” (Survey)*

*“We should seek to work with partners at every turn and be very aware that the Church is a club designed for non-members.” (Survey)*

*“New business models are needed to beef up our school improvement capacity in all aspects, as are new ways of relating business-wise to other dioceses.” (Survey)*

*“We need to become proactive, strategic education organisations, to develop as commissioning bodies and to provide brokerage for school to school support.” (Survey)*

*“We have to develop capacity through strategic partnerships with education providers; enable development and expansion of the Church of England schools network; identify high quality support service providers.” (Survey)*

*“There will be excellent partners that emerge, but this needs careful monitoring in the early stages. Time will tell how effective and cost-effective they are.” (Survey)*

*“I want to be a strong Church school head, I want to be seen as part of a local focus on standards and a local expectation amongst my colleagues that we are not just some kind of elite little group and that we want to work alongside other people.” (Primary School Head Teacher)*



“We should seek to work with partners at every turn and be very aware that the Church is a club designed for non-members.”

Survey

“Supporting schools wishing to expand and at the same time protecting smaller rural schools who serve their communities can be a difficult balance to achieve.”

Survey

With particular reference to ecumenical and faith-based partnerships, the Review team noted several additional important points among the survey and interview responses:

- Church schools are different from faith schools, as other faiths generally provide schools primarily for followers of their faith, whereas the Church of England provides schools for the whole community, although there is a strong history of interfaith working that should be continued
- The Church of England’s close working with the Methodist Church is of value for both partners and is protected by the covenant between the two churches
- Links with the Roman Catholic Church are well developed through commitments to mutual support and ecumenical schools
- The development of links and partnerships with other Christian churches, such as community churches and black majority Churches, is a natural extension of these relationships
- The current open-minded approach to the possibility of setting up interfaith schools should continue through exploration of opportunities when they arise

- 4.25 Where partnerships have worked well, there is a clear alignment of values and a well-developed mutual understanding of what needs to be done. Likewise, there has been mutual respect for the provenance and ‘rootedness’ of each partner; especially where the position of the Church as the owner and/or trustee of the school and the distinctive character have been fully and appropriately recognised, respected and jointly developed. Where partnerships have worked less well, the diocese has been moved to a subordinate position in terms of governance, trusteeship or both, and the partner organisation has effectively taken over the school and installed its own ethos and branding.

## INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- 4.26 There are new and increasing opportunities for partnerships between independent schools and state schools, such as those already developed through academy sponsorships nationally. As the Dearing Report recommended (4.57), there is significant potential for DDEs to link their Church schools with their Anglican foundation independent schools as members of their diocesan family. This partnership can be facilitated through bishops and senior clergy, many of whom are governors (sometimes *ex officio*) of independent schools. DDEs and members of DBEs may also be governors, and DBEs might similarly co-opt a local independent school representative to their boards.
- 4.27 As the majority of independent schools have Anglican chapels and chaplains licensed by the diocesan bishop, there is significant opportunity for sharing facilities with other diocesan schools. Equally, the chaplains’ experience of working with young people can be shared to mutual advantage with the increasing number of Church secondary school chaplains (c.f. Chaplains’ Conferences and the work of the School Chaplains Association, the Bloxham Project and the Woodard Foundation).

## RURAL SCHOOLS

- 4.28 The dilemma facing rural schools is a key example of the need for partnership working. The nature of the Church school system means that there are large numbers of small (sometimes very small) rural schools. In the new educational era, this arrangement creates problems. On the one hand is the established presumption against closure of rural schools and support for the need to sustain village life, infrastructure and existing proportions of Church school provision across an area. On the other hand there is the issue of sustainability, both economically and educationally.
- 4.29 Considerable thinking and work has been done in various parts of the country. Here are some comments made in the survey and at the hearings:

*“Executive headship has worked in our area as the way of maintaining two Church schools in adjacent villages. This proved to be the way of retaining a head that was ‘on his way out’. We needed his expertise and this gave him a professional development opportunity and raised levels within the school which enabled others to become heads.” (DDE)*



“The current practice of allowing schools to increase their numbers to the limit when there is a perfectly good school nearby, does not fit well with the idea of retaining schools for the community.”

Survey

*“There is still a lot of parochial thinking out there [which has to be overcome]. A twenty minute drive across the town is quite a limiting factor for them. Although there is a Church school a short drive away, it’s just another world. It is quite difficult in some cases, even for the heads and certainly for the governors.” (DDE)*

*“Supporting schools wishing to expand and at the same time protecting smaller rural schools who serve their communities can be a difficult balance to achieve.” (Survey)*

*“Rural schools need a different sort of support to inner city schools. I don’t think much thought is given to this.” (Survey)*

*“If the basic principle of sustaining rural communities is to be pursued, which the Church should surely be supporting, then there should be an overview taken of where vacant places are and what can be done to fill them. The current practice of allowing schools to increase their numbers to the limit when there is a perfectly good school nearby, does not fit well with the idea of retaining schools for the community. Procedures should be put in place to enable children to be taken to a nearby school – everybody will gain through slightly smaller class sizes, better and more focused teaching and making best use of the facilities available within the area. The balance between parental choice and sustainable rural communities needs to be addressed appropriately – extending a local school when there are places at one nearby is neither cost efficient nor supportable!” (Survey)*

- 4.30 The Review team acknowledges the need to explore the specific issues of rural schools and recommends that a working party is set up to come forward with recommendations for dioceses on a way forward.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **A protocol should be developed for partnerships with external organisations** (National Society)
- **Different models of affiliation should be shared among DDEs and their usefulness evaluated** (AADE)
- **Work should be undertaken to achieve a new concordat with the Government that develops and affirms the Church’s relationship with central and local government on matters related to schooling** (National Society and Board of Education, Department for Education)
- **Additional support should be provided for dioceses to aid development of local or regional services for schools, including school improvement** (National Society and Board of Education, AADE and DBE services)
- **More exploratory work should be done to establish collaborative schemes with the independent schools sector and with other service providers** (Bishops and senior clergy, DDEs, DBEs)
- **Further opportunities for joint working with other Christian denominations involved in schools, especially the Roman Catholics and Methodists, should be actively pursued, as well as possible collaboration with other faith groups interested in establishing new schools** (DDEs, DBEs, Bishops)
- **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** (National Society and Board of Education, and AADE)



“I want to be a strong Church school head, I want to be seen as part of a local focus on standards and a local expectation amongst my colleagues that we are not just some kind of elite little group and that we want to work alongside other people.”

Primary School Head Teacher

## Chapter Five: The role and work of the National Society

### BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The governance of the central administration of the Church's involvement in education is in two parts: the National Society and the Archbishops' Council Board of Education. The National Society is a free-standing charity promulgated by Royal Charter that has a venerable history in the establishing of Church schools. Within the Church's education remit as a whole, the school system is largely overseen through the National Society. This organisation is chronicled elsewhere but it currently operates with a small team of officers. The Board of Education's task is to oversee the fulfilment of the national Church's objectives through education in the widest sense. Its structure, constitution and remit are determined through the Church's synodical structures and hence, it has a remit that extends through all phases of education and covers both statutory and non-statutory provision.
- 5.2 The Chief Education Officer of the Board of Education is also the General Secretary of the National Society. Some other officers also are employed by both organisations and have dual titles. During the past three decades, successive chief officers have given one or other of the organisations prominence, which has created a degree of confusion and uncertainty across the system as a whole.
- 5.3 Inevitably, there is considerable overlap between the two facets of the central organisation, which can confuse matters further, especially for those beyond the centre, such as heads and schools right through to ministers and senior civil servants. Indeed, many clergy are unaware of either the function or structure of the central organisation.
- 5.4 For the reasons outlined above, many agencies and organisations (including many schools) do not know what the Board of Education and National Society are or what they do, which is a problem. There is also confusion about the crossover between the two parts of the organisation. For instance, the following comment was made at the hearings:

*“I think if there were a much stronger connection between the National Society and Board of Education, we could thrash out some of these things with other organisations and agree a coherent and joined up direction, which you could put as a national view.”* (Survey)
- 5.5 Huge respect was expressed during the Review for the label National Society, with its many nostalgic and justifiably confident achievements. One response in the survey said:

*“Overall the National Society is fantastic, and I am very proud to be a head of a Church school. This is because you stick to your guns in doing what you believe is right. Please continue to do so.”* (Survey)
- 5.6 But, as indicated earlier, there was considerable evidence that schools are not entirely sure what the National Society does on their behalf, as was made clear by one respondent:

*“I did not know such a central body existed.”* (Survey)
- 5.7 This comment was not an isolated one: many voices were heard on this topic at the hearings, and the survey highlighted similar issues. Thus, for the reasons given, the Review team recommend a complete rethink of the Church school and education service's outward-facing image. The purpose would be to create one external service that could be strongly used throughout the education system and for which a strong brand identity could be established.
- 5.8 One way forward might be to establish a new trust to carry out all the Church of England's work in relation to schools, similar to the Methodist Academy and School Trust. Such a development would help schools in particular and many other agencies fully to understand the work that is done centrally on behalf of schools, especially if it were supported by high-quality communications.



“Can I argue for the importance of political advocacy? This is absolutely critical.”

DBE Chair

## FUNCTION

5.9 Various descriptors are used to describe the central functions. These are under the remit of the Board of Education and the National Society Council, and focus largely on issues that cannot be adequately dealt with at DBE level. There are three key elements:

- Development and promulgation of a vision and sense of direction
- National political engagement
- Development of overarching policy principles that can be interpreted and made functional at DBE level

5.10 Survey respondents offered their own descriptions of what the central organisation does or should do, including “the glue that binds the system together”, “the hub of the operation”, “the connecting point to government and Church policy makers”, “the place to go for advice and support”, “our advocates in high places” and “the architects of overall policy and the enablers of local detailed policy construction”.

5.11 Such descriptors can carry risk and cause confusion. The Church of England does not operate on a “command and control” basis. In the school sector, as in other areas, the dioceses are the point of local delivery, ownership and policy formation. Clarity about exactly who does what is, therefore, important. To this end, the Review team recognises the need to overhaul various aspects of the central function in order to make it increasingly ‘fit for purpose’. The recommendations are in the various sections of this chapter.

5.12 A considerable emphasis on this aspect was discerned throughout the hearings and in the survey. Respondents were very keen to articulate their view of the central functions. Some examples follow:

*“Can I argue for the importance of political advocacy? This is absolutely critical.” (DBE Chair)*

*“Here is my list: liaison with central government regarding policy and lobbying; listening to the needs of dioceses and acting as a channel of communication with the DFE; co-ordinating the standards agenda e.g. data; swift and easy problem-solving facilities; support for new policies – e.g. academies; liaison and direction on other key initiatives; developing policy in order to support dioceses and reducing duplication of time and resources.” (Survey)*

*“The central functions are to provide a forum for debating resources at a national level and engagement with DFE, national bodies and education organisations.” (Survey)*

*“As a national Church of England education ‘think tank’ for DBEs with limited capacity locally, the ‘centre’ provides ongoing advice and guidance and at critical times has offered extended support.” (Survey)*

5.13 Some commentators were concerned that a tightly limited brief should be created that respects the limited resources of the central organisation:

*“In my view the National Society should narrow its focus to purely strategic issues, particularly the interface between the Church and State and it should act as the advocate for the DDEs and DBEs in negotiating with Government and government agencies, so that we get the best possible outcomes for the Church of England’s schools. But the National Society has got very limited resources and it has to be a national face with the Church schools’ permission.” (DDE)*

5.14 The most common request coming from the evidence was that the National Society should be a very strong advocate for Church schools throughout central government, local government, other agencies and the Church as a whole:

*“A voice in Whitehall for Church schools.” (Survey)*

*“The National Society should act as the ‘gearbox’ which harnesses the talents and energies of those around the country that are the collective ‘engine’ of the Church’s schools enterprise.” (Survey)*



**“We need to grab the brave new world with both hands.”**

Survey

*“How do we get here at the centre the resource that is needed for the complexity of the political agenda that is moving on? The political engagement is really important and I have a real concern over the fragility of the National Society with what is expected.” (DBE Chair)*

*“It should raise the profile of the Church’s work; its talents are hidden to many. Even regular Church attenders do not fully appreciate the work.” (Survey)*

*“As a member of the National Society Council, I fully support the National Society and its objectives. However, I believe the way the objectives are achieved needs to be reassessed and the objectives restated in the requirements of education in the 21st Century. I believe the National Society has in the last four years made very considerable changes, not only to its financial platform, but also in its direction. However, I believe further changes would be advantageous.” (Survey)*

*“We need to grab the brave new world with both hands.” (Survey)*

- 5.15 Strong loyalty to and support for the work of the National Society, its officers and its continuing existence were expressed. Desire for strengthening and clarification of the National Society’s work was also articulated, to enable it to find its true place in the overall scheme:

*“This can only be answered through a combination of diocesan, national and governmental thought and discussion. We can all play a part in this ... Getting that conversation working effectively is core National Society business.” (Survey)*

- 5.16 The Review team strongly suggests, in the light of these and many similar comments, that the purpose and function for the new single organisation recommended above should be clearly stated.

## GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION

- 5.17 The current complexity of involving both a board and a council is not helpful. The Review team have formed the view that the structure and constitution of both organisations should be fully reassessed to make them more ‘fit for purpose’.

- 5.18 The venerable nature of the National Society would make this project protracted, but there is potential for changes to its composition. A thorough review of the National Society bye-laws is recommended in order to create a smaller, more-focused council that can steer the National Society, provide effective support, challenge officers, assert and advocate policy and seek to ensure that the Church school system is a strong and assertive part of the state-funded education sector.

*“Just as DBEs need modernising alongside a new DBE Measure, so we suggest that National Society Council needs modernising in its composition and vision of its role.” (Survey)*

- 5.19 The officer structure needs to be kept under constant review. At present it is judged to be just coping with current demands, but recent history has shown that a flexible and adaptable structure will be needed to react to changes in circumstances. The structure requires high-calibre officers and support staff, which is difficult to sustain with current salary levels. Likewise, there is an emerging case for increased officer capacity in order to react to new circumstances and expectations. This issue is considered further under the financial and resources section.

## FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES

- 5.20 The current financing of the central schools’ service is a mixture of funding from Archbishops’ Council, National Society investment income, membership fees and various restricted grants for specific purposes. The overall level of funding is challenging in relation to the expectation of the various stakeholders and there is often an assumption that the National Society can do things on behalf of both dioceses and schools without any recognition of cost. The available resources are low and it is timely to reconsider the whole financial structure.

- 5.21 Some evidence from the survey supports this and other suggested solutions:



“I think the job we ask the National Society to do is staggering in its complexity and its relevance and importance. I think there needs to be a serious look at the resources that have come in for the National Society at Boards, deaneries and parishes.”

DBE Chair

*“I think the job we ask the National Society to do is staggering in its complexity and its relevance and importance. I think there needs to be a serious look at the resources that have come in for the National Society at Boards, deaneries and parishes.” (DBE Chair)*

*“There should be direct payments by DBEs to the 'central institutions' assessed on a realistic basis.” (Survey)*

*“Work should be done with the Association of Diocesan Directors and House of Bishops to establish a protocol whereby dioceses and regions themselves undertake designated and commissioned tasks 'on behalf of the national Church'.” (Survey)*

*“The centre should be funded centrally just as DBEs are funded locally by their diocese and through other locally based funding. The central structure should enable recruitment at appropriate levels to reflect the requirements of the posts.” (Survey)*

*“If the Church views its role as impacting on the world through education, then the Church should fund the centre.” (Survey)*

- 5.22 The Review team recommends that a new method of financing a proportion of the central schools service be configured. This approach could be based on a service-level agreement with the dioceses and schools and would replace the current legal-advice service and subscription arrangements. In such an arrangement there would need to be a clear business model that expressed what service and support the dioceses or school could expect from the central service at no cost, what would come within the terms of the service-level agreement and what would have to be commissioned at a cost.
- 5.23 An associated issue is that of capacity and remuneration of officers. A high-level service requires the recruitment and retention of highly capable and appropriately skilled and experienced officers. At present it is proving very difficult to achieve what is needed and the Review team urges detailed consideration of this area by both the National Society Council and the Board of Education.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

- 5.24 The central function clearly involves the development of high-level policy and its effective communication to all stakeholders. Knowledge also needs to be built up throughout the system and shared widely. Thus, duplication of effort and the failure to learn from mistakes must be reduced. The emerging service will need to develop, in co-operation with dioceses and other stakeholders, new systems for communicating and sharing policy and operational knowledge.

*“I think that there has to be a dialogue between the DDEs' Association and the National Society and communication is absolutely critical. I think we are almost there in terms of developing that partnership, which has grown in value considerably. We do work very closely together on all of these very big strategic issues and I think the way we have worked has been very inclusive and extremely helpful to all of us: but I do think communication is fundamentally important, so all of us understand what goes on, including those colleagues who sometimes do not turn up for DDEs' business meetings. But it is very important that we as a group, the Church of England, stick together and have a coherent consistent line which we are all agreed upon, because that strengthens our position.” (DDE)*

## INITIATIVES

- 5.25 Much of the work done at the national hub surrounds the maintenance and development of the whole system. There is often little scope for initiation of developments and cultivation of new ideas. Many examples can be found, however, where the National Society has been able, through individual effort and external grants, to promote and support important projects, such as the Christian values for schools website ([www.christianvalues4schools.co.uk](http://www.christianvalues4schools.co.uk)) and the recent collective worship project ([www.worshipworkshop.org.uk](http://www.worshipworkshop.org.uk)). Other initiatives that come from places such as dioceses warrant full association and support in principle from the centre. Examples might include the Watson Symposium, held to celebrate 200 years of Church school education, and the International Church Schools Consultation.



“As a national education ‘think tank’ for DBEs with limited capacity locally, the ‘centre’ provides ongoing advice and guidance and at critical times has offered extended support.”

Survey

- 5.26 To continue the flow of these types of creative and important initiatives, the Review team suggests the ways in which creative initiatives can be developed under the auspices of the National Society need to be clarified, including purpose, outcome, roles, responsibilities and financial control.

## PROVISION OF LEGAL AND TECHNICAL ADVICE

- 5.27 The relationship between the National Society and the current legal advisers requires revision and clarification, including the current legal-advice service, which was developed for a different context and is not useful in its present form. Current arrangements can lead to confusion, duplication of effort and a lack of demarcation between policy development (the province of the National Society) and the provision of legal advice (the function of the contracted legal advisers). After many years of invaluable service, all parties recognise the need for overhaul and revision. The evidence, particularly from the current legal advisers, includes the following thought:

*“...the practical arrangements for the Legal Advice Scheme are not very good and its funding wholly inadequate. We all know that there is in general a willingness on the part of DDEs to tackle this, as the re-establishment of a technical guidance website is an urgent necessity.”* (Survey)

- 5.28 The Review team recommends that a full examination be made of how legal advice is provided to the National Society, dioceses and schools; and that a revised, cost-effective, contractual arrangement is put in place as swiftly as possible.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH DBEs AND DDEs

*“As a national education ‘think tank’ for DBEs with limited capacity locally, the ‘centre’ provides ongoing advice and guidance and at critical times has offered extended support.”* (Survey)

- 5.29 The relationship between the National Society and the Board of Education and their staff is generally very good and highly effective, but there is an emerging recognition that the service as a whole would be better served if the working arrangements between the two components were reviewed and clarified. The surveys and hearings highlighted similar points:

*“Working together at a time of immense change in government policy in order to secure our strategic position is essential.”* (Survey)

*“I think that the National Society and the Directors Association are working very closely and I think there is a real strength in us coming together, because we can achieve things, whereas individually we can’t. We often talk about umbrella trusts within dioceses and my thinking is that we go along the line of some kind of formal arrangement between the parties, some kind of national umbrella trust, which enables us to work together and share... At the moment our relationship is based on goodwill and genuine desire but we need to formalise this.”* (DDE)

- 5.30 The Review team considers that it would be beneficial to develop a management charter that establishes and describes the relationship on a who-does-what basis. This approach will clarify what expectations should be held of what happens centrally and what happens at diocesan level. This development will be essential if the Church school system is to respond effectively to many of the challenges that lie ahead.

- 5.31 As exemplified, there is a strong view that the work of the Association of Anglican Directors of Education (AADE) and the National Society needs to become more ‘joined up’ with a clearer recognition that holistic partnership is going to be the most effective way forward. The AADE makes the point that its individual and collective expertise could be used more effectively than at present. This could be achieved by a more structured and mutually agreed approach to development work and a closer sense of engagement between the two organisations. The Review team recommends that structured discussions are held between the two organisations to move this approach forward and to create stable and clear ways of working.





“There is a need to take away that feeling of isolation and promote the solidarity of all working for God together.”

Source

## THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE

5.32 For the Church school system to flourish, there needs to be strong connectivity with the Church structures as a whole. Currently, there is unequivocal support for the work being done and the contribution the school system makes to the mission of the Church. This support was clearly expressed during debate at the General Synod in July 2011, where a unanimous motion of support was passed. Similarly, many of the Review’s survey respondents noted this idea and also suggested ways in which these matters can be further developed:

*“There is a need to take away that feeling of isolation and promote the solidarity of all working for God together.” (Survey)*

5.33 The Review team urges that work is done to encourage a sense of engagement through increased effectiveness and improved communication with the following groups:

- The General Synod
- The House of Bishops
- The diocesan synodical structures
- Diocesan Secretaries.

5.34 A key purpose in developing these links will be to emphasise the need for appropriate levels of resources for DBEs and to reinforce consistently and continually the centrality of the schools service to the mission of the Church as a whole. Comments from senior clerics on this point included the following:

*“Part of it is about getting better debates in General Synod, because every time it is education it is ‘motherhood and apple pie’. It’s never about resources, about recognising our failures in education. It’s never about recognising our need to do as we speak or about joined up thinking on advocacy for young people, engaging with youth, engaging with the disaffected young people and all those issues. It’s always about ‘I saw a nice assembly’.” (Senior Clergy)*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Proposals for creating a single organisation representing the Church of England’s interest in schools should be developed and discussed with relevant stakeholders** (National Society Council and Board of Education)
- **A detailed review of the National Society Charter and bye laws needs to be carried out within the next 5 years and recommendations made for a new Council constitution and its functions** (National Society Council)
- **National Society membership and funding should be reviewed to improve the working income for the Society** (National Society Council)
- **The way legal advice is provided to the National Society, dioceses and schools needs to be carefully examined and a revised cost-effective contractual arrangement put in place** (National Society and Board of Education and AADE)
- **A draft management charter should be developed to identify the respective roles of the central organisation and dioceses** (National Society and Board of Education and AADE)
- **The House of Bishops should be consulted to identify effective support in dioceses for DBEs and their teams** (National Society and Board of Education and AADE)



“I think the DBE Measure is couched in a totally different mindset, within the Church, our society and within our involvement with schools. I think it is no longer fit for purpose.”

Senior Clergy

## Chapter Six: The roles and work of Diocesan Boards of Education and directorates

### BACKGROUND AND THE DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION MEASURE

- 6.1 Each Church of England diocese has a DBE whose powers and duties derive from the DBE Measures, which are passed by the General Synod and Parliament. The purpose of the DBEs is to promote education in their dioceses in a way that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England, to promote religious education and worship in all schools, and to have a specific responsibility towards Church schools.
- 6.2 The DBE Measure gives power and purpose to the DBEs and it has various duties:
- To provide advice in relation to any proposed changes to the status, viability and future of all Church schools
  - To approve all alterations and repairs to aided school buildings
  - To provide advice to the trustees of Church of England education trusts before any changes are made to their trusts
  - To appoint and support foundation governors in all Church schools
  - To attend and give advice in relation to the employment and dismissal of teachers in those aided schools that have granted the same right to the Chief Education Officer of the local authority
  - To be concerned with closed Church schools and their sale proceeds so that they may be used, as laid down by Parliament, for the support of Church schools throughout the diocese
  - To give and consider inspection reports of all Church schools
- 6.3 This specification has served the dioceses well, but there is a growing recognition that in the changing educational landscape the brief will need to be extended. Church schools will in the future be increasingly accountable to DBEs for their performance and standards. Indeed, additional emphasis will need to be placed on the overall effectiveness of the school in delivering services and support. The Review team received many opinions on this issue and noted a general feeling that substantial updates to the brief of the DBEs and the work of diocesan teams are necessary:
- “We need to accustom ourselves to take on a strategic school improvement role, and ensure that we have the skills (or access to the skills) in order to operate with credibility with educational professionals in this regard. We are now viewed by DFE as ‘providers’. New financial structures may be needed. We need to be more entrepreneurial and commercial. Service agreements need to be developed and/or expanded. We have to become more at ease in operating in the marketplace.”* (Survey)
- 6.4 Many respondents suggested that reconsideration of the DBE Measure is required. A senior commentator noted:
- “I think the DBE Measure is couched in a totally different mindset, within the Church, our society and within our involvement with schools. I think it is no longer fit for purpose. It does not deliver much and it means that DBEs are often marginalised. I think they are always a second importance in the life of the diocese, parishes being the main importance.”* (Senior Clergy)
- 6.5 The process of completely revising the DBE Measure would be long and complex and require synodical debate and approval, as well as Parliamentary approval. The Review team recognises the difficulties but recommends that the most effective way forward is to carry through some minor amendments that will ensure that DBEs respond appropriately to the new responsibilities they would acquire.



“If we are going to be a serious player, Boards of Education as a whole are going to have to step up their game.”

DBE Chair

## BOARDS OF EDUCATION

- 6.6 The survey and the hearings elicited a large body of opinion that, although the DBE Measure was a problem, to focus on the nature of the changes and the effects they will have on the actual activity and functions of DBEs would be more suitable. As one DBE Chair commented:

*“If we are going to be a serious player, Boards of Education as a whole are going to have to step up their game.”* (DBE Chair)

- 6.7 It is clear that DBEs and their directorates will need to become proactive, strategic, education support organisations that are able to develop as commissioning bodies and to provide brokerage for school-to-school support. In advocating the need for increased capacity and new skill sets, several respondents made suggestions:

*“There is a need for smaller, more sharply focused Boards which will have to revisit the balance between their representative composition across a diocese and their effectiveness to do the work. More will be asked of a smaller body of people.”* (Survey)

*“DBEs might work better as a smaller more committed and focused group.”* (Survey)

*“DBEs should also make sure that they have members who understand the system and have some experience in strategic roles. This may require us to revisit the basis of membership and the balance between election and co-option.”* (Survey)

*“We need to recruit and retain more people with the requisite skills to act as trustees/directors of academies, umbrella trusts, multi-academy trusts etc. We have to become more interventionist in approach.”* (Survey)

- 6.8 DBEs clearly need to reconsider their composition and modus operandi. The Review team recommends that a forum be established to consider innovative approaches and experiences and to recommend ways forward. In the course of the Review, the team heard many comments about the future of DBEs and the work of DDEs. There is an undoubted awareness that change is needed. A detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this report, but the following synopsis of points made to the Review that suggest how DBEs and DDEs will need to be in the future is offered:

- Very clear about their work, continually renewing purpose, vision and values
- More professional and crisper in approach
- Prepared to abandon dearly held but irrelevant areas of current work
- Able to influence and commission others rather than do everything themselves
- Very good delegators and collaborators
- Very alert to the needs of the vulnerable children and adults who are most at risk in the present, fragmented climate
- Engaged in partnership working at every opportunity
- True to the understanding of the Church as a “club designed for non-members”
- More focused on the culture, ethos and performance of their schools than in project management
- Able to ensure that the evolving DBE is not merely a replacement for a local authority, but, rather, something different and unique

## RESOURCING

- 6.9 How the necessary capacity, skills and resources can be achieved to meet this new agenda needs to be considered. Two themes appear to be very important:

- Relationships with the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF) and the Diocesan Secretaries
- The establishing of new business models and ways of working



“I think that the advocacy role is pertinent to the role of the Diocesan Bishop... the Bishop has to stand and argue the case for resourcing Church schools in the diocese, because nobody else is going to be able to do that.”

Senior Clergy

- 6.10 Survey respondents expressed concerns that DBEs and education staff are supported more overtly in some dioceses than in others. Thus, despite some very positive comments about the operations of DBEs and how they are innovating in response to the changing educational situation, the overall sense we had from the evidence was that a change and further support were believed to be critical. Advocacy for Church schools must, therefore, be secured at the highest level, as noted by a senior cleric:

*“I think that the advocacy role is pertinent to the role of the Diocesan Bishop; in other words the Bishop has to stand and argue the case for resourcing Church schools in the diocese, because nobody else is going to be able to do that.”* (Senior clergy)

- 6.11 Alongside responding to a changing agenda, there was also a very strong response about DBEs and dioceses ensuring generally that they focus on the importance of faith, values and community:

*“DBEs will need to be more commercially competitive. They provide a range of services to schools – but so do other organisations and, as pressure mounts on costs, schools will increasingly be drawn to cheaper providers unless there is a greater USP (unique selling point) for the diocese other than the fact that they are the diocese. There has to be a more intense focus on adding value above and beyond the ‘Church focus’ that they provide.”* (DBE Secretary)

- 6.12 Redefinition and clarification of the working relationships and scope of activity between the Diocesan Boards of Finance (DBF), the Diocesan Secretaries and the DBEs and DDEs will also be increasingly important. Evidence suggests that these relationships are often strained and insecure. The key issues surround communication, risk management and unclear responsibility boundaries.
- 6.13 The Review team recommends that a short-term working party comprising DBF chairs, Diocesan Secretaries, DBE chairs and DDEs be established to work up and report on issues surrounding the relationship between these aspects of diocesan structures. The changing landscape and the ensuing difficulties make this an urgent priority.

## COLLABORATIVE WORKING

- 6.14 Significant economies of scale can be achieved by working collaboratively, especially in the area of service provision. Much evidence in the Review supported this point:

*“There is a potentially greater role in developing cross-diocese relationships which then translate to inter-school working not just at higher level.”* (Survey)

*“The system has to become more strategic and entrepreneurial by generating income to offset increasing costs of the DBE and by using the DBE Measure to work with all schools, including community and private Church schools.”* (Survey)

- 6.15 The success of DBE services referred to earlier bears witness to this strategic success, and the Review team recommends that more exploratory work is done to establish other similar regional schemes.

## WORKFORCE STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

- 6.16 The foregoing suggest that it will be necessary to rethink DBE directorate structures in order fully to meet future challenges. Consideration will need to be given at DBE level to the staffing structures and skill sets needed to deliver future requirements. New roles and responsibilities will need to be created and old roles abandoned or, in some cases, consolidated into regional roles. Perhaps a particular function can best be carried out by one expert who operates across several dioceses rather than several people doing the job less well as a minor function in each diocese. Respondents to the survey certainly suggested change:

*“More structured regional collaboration and pooling of professional expertise are essential.”* (Survey)



“More structured regional collaboration and pooling of professional expertise are essential.”

Survey

6.17 A number of pilot schemes have been set up to investigate and trial new ways of collaborative working between dioceses.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Amendments should be made to the DBE Measure that ensure DBEs can respond appropriately to the new responsibilities they will acquire** (National Society and Board of Education and legal advisors)
- **The role and functions of the DDEs and their support staff should be given proper consideration in every diocese to ensure that they are properly resourced and able to meet the challenges of the academy programme and of their responsibilities for school improvement** (AADE, Diocesan Secretaries and Bishops' staff)
- **Dioceses should review the balance of finances between parish and school development services and the allocation of funding to ensure the long-term survival of the Church of England as a provider of education** (AADE, DBE Chairs, Diocesan Secretaries)
- **A number of pilot schemes should be set up to investigate and trial new ways of collaborative working between dioceses** (National Society and Board of Education, and AADE)



# Overall recommendations

## CHAPTER TWO: ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST DECADE AND CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE

1. **Clergy training and appointments must include an understanding of the role of Church schools in the Church's mission** (Ministry Division of the Archbishops' Council and House of Bishops)
2. **Further work is needed on recruitment and training of Christian teachers and head teachers for Church schools** (Association of Anglican Directors of Education [AADE], Church foundation and other higher education institutions, and Anglican Academies and Secondary School Heads [AASSH])
3. **A review of the communications function of the National Society and the Board of Education should be carried out and recommendations brought to the Council and the Board** (National Society Council and Board of Education)

---

## CHAPTER THREE: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHURCH SCHOOL

4. **While the specific differences between the voluntary aided and voluntary controlled models will for the most part remain in existing schools, the establishing of new Church of England schools on the basis of the voluntary aided schools model is recommended** (Department for Education, National Society and DBEs)
5. **In partnership with professional associations and other faiths, strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning in religious education should be identified** (National Society and Board of Education, Religious Education Council of England and Wales [REC], Department for Education, DBE teams and AASSH)
6. **Partnerships should be developed with Church foundation higher education institutions and outstanding schools to address the level of subject knowledge for religious education and the supply of specialist teachers** (Cathedrals Group, REC and DBE teams)
7. **The proposal to develop a new resource for the teaching of Christianity should be developed with all reasonable speed** (National Society and Board of Education, higher education partners)
8. **The National Society must work with educationalists and schools to model a Church school curriculum that includes implications for pedagogy, curriculum content and school organisation** (Cathedrals Group, schools)
9. **A study needs to be undertaken to establish 'well-being' indicators stemming from or adapted to the Christian framework for Church schools** (Cathedrals Group, Children's Society)



## CHAPTER FOUR: CHURCH SCHOOLS IN THE WIDER CONTEXT

10. **A protocol should be developed for partnerships with external organisations** (National Society)
11. **Different models of affiliation should be shared among DDEs and their usefulness evaluated** (AADE)
12. **Work should be undertaken to achieve a new concordat with the Government that develops and affirms the Church's relationship with central and local government on matters related to schooling** (National Society and Board of Education and Department for Education)
13. **Additional support should be provided for dioceses to aid development of local or regional services for schools, including school improvement** (National Society and Board of Education, AADE and DBE services)
14. **More exploratory work should be done to establish collaborative schemes with the independent schools sector and with other service providers** (Bishops and senior clergy, DDEs, DBEs)
15. **Further opportunities for joint working with other Christian denominations involved in schools, especially the Roman Catholics and Methodists, should be actively pursued, as well as possible collaboration with other faith groups interested in establishing new schools** (DDEs, DBEs, Bishops)
16. **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** (National Society and Board of Education, and AADE)

---

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE ROLE AND WORK OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY

17. **Proposals for creating a single organisation representing the Church of England's interest in schools should be developed and discussed with relevant stakeholders** (National Society Council and Board of Education)
18. **A detailed review of the National Society charter and bye-laws needs to be carried out within the next 5 years and recommendations made for a new Council constitution and its functions** (National Society Council)
19. **National Society membership and funding should be reviewed to improve the working income for the Society** (National Society Council)
20. **The way legal advice is provided to the National Society, dioceses and schools need to be carefully examined and a revised cost-effective contractual arrangement put in place** (National Society and Board of Education and AADE)
21. **A draft management charter should be developed to identify the respective roles of the central organisation and dioceses** (National Society and Board of Education and AADE)
22. **The House of Bishops should be consulted to identify effective support in dioceses for DBEs and their teams** (National Society and Board of Education and AADE)



## CHAPTER SIX: THE ROLES AND WORK OF DIOCESAN BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND DIRECTORATES

23. **Amendments should be made to the DBE Measure that ensure DBEs can respond appropriately to the new responsibilities they will acquire** (National Society and Board of Education and legal advisors)
24. **The role and functions of the DDEs and their support staff should be given proper consideration in every diocese to ensure that they are properly resourced and able to meet the challenges of the academy programme and of their responsibilities for school improvement** (AADE, Diocesan Secretaries and Bishops' staff)
25. **Dioceses should review the balance of finances between parish and school development services and the allocation of funding to ensure the long-term survival of the CofE as a provider of education** (AADE, DBE Chairs, Diocesan Secretaries)
26. **A number of pilot schemes should be set up to investigate and trial new ways of collaborative working between dioceses** (National Society and Board of Education, and AADE)





# Acknowledgements

The Review team are most grateful to the many people who have contributed to this Review and who have, through their efforts, enthusiasm and time provided both evidence and constructive critiques.

# Glossary of terms

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>AADE</b>  | Association of Anglican Directors of Education |
| <b>AASSH</b> | Anglican Academy and Secondary School Heads    |
| <b>CME</b>   | Continuing Ministerial Education               |
| <b>DBE</b>   | Diocesan Board of Education                    |
| <b>DBF</b>   | Diocesan Board of Finance                      |
| <b>DDE</b>   | Diocesan Director of Education                 |
| <b>SIAS</b>  | Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools       |



# Notes



CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION





CHURCH OF ENGLAND  
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DIVISION



# The Church School of the Future Review

**Archbishops' Council Education Division, 2012**

[www.churchofengland.org/education](http://www.churchofengland.org/education)