

**Romans 15 v13**

**'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the holy spirit'**

Dear Colleagues

I hope this update finds you well - I am startled at how fast February has arrived.

As a team we have been very focused on producing our Rural and Small Schools' Strategy Guidance. We have worked with a strong working group established by the DBE. This document was sent to you as a consultation document last week. It should have been sent to each headteacher and the Chair of Governors. We would greatly appreciate it if you could make sure these have arrived as some schools do not always update us on changes in contact details. We also welcome your thoughts and responses.

We are often asked about "the view of the diocese" when it comes to matter of federations, academies and partnerships. It is fair to say that we do not hold one particular stance. We believe that the way forward is for each school to be considered on a case by case basis. For some, joining a MAT is absolutely right, but for others it clearly isn't. The same applies to federations and other similar partnerships. However, the one common principle that we strongly believe is that our schools need to be working together in as many ways as possible, avoid being isolated and look out for those who are. We are ready and willing to advise and support through all the stages of developing partnerships and we can sign-post you to a wide range of really innovative work of all kinds across our diocese.

However, I do need to stress the importance and value of communicating with us at the earliest stage of any formal partnership development. The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) has statutory duties when it comes to federations and academies which they have to fulfil. As a body they will always seek to support schools when they are confident that change is in the interest of the pupils and community. The purpose of communicating with the Education Team is to enable us to advise and support you and to ensure you do not spend time and effort on work that will not be agreed to by the DBE. Both the DBE and Education team care passionately about our schools and want to be able to support you in the best way to move our schools forward.

The Headteachers' Conference is fast approaching. This is booked for Friday 29 March and is focussed on supporting Mental Health in schools. We now only have a few places left so do please book as soon as possible if you want to come.

Thank you for the warm welcomes I have been receiving on my visits to schools. It is certainly my hope to get to all of you in due course but with 155 schools that is quite a task. Nevertheless, it is both a joy and a privilege to see what is happening in our schools. So many visits have been genuinely uplifting experiences for me and it is so encouraging to see schools thriving both in times of success and in times of challenge.

Thank you for all you are doing.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Cristin  
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