

## DIOCESE OF CHESTER EDUCATION REPORT

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Chester Diocesan Board of Education, in Christ and for Christ, has a vision to 'Inspire, Engage, Encourage'. We are committed to offering excellence in education for everyone, everywhere, and believe that our schools are at the heart of our ministry and mission. Church schools embody the good news of Jesus for their children and staff, and through them, their families, our churches and communities.



*'We believe that Church schools, and others with which the Church of England is involved, provide an opportunity to set out a vision of what it means to live 'life in all its fullness'. We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ, and with Christian faith and practice, in ways that transform and enhance their lives.'*

***From The Church of England's vision for Education:  
'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good'***

### The Board of Education

The Chester Diocesan Board of Education re-constituted on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 to form a smaller strategic group of 11 members, chaired by the Bishop of Stockport. The new DBE seeks to be more responsive to the changes facing education and ensure proper accountability of the officers of the DBE. The DBE is:

- a) to promote or assist in the promotion of education in the diocese, being education which is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England;
- b) to promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese;
- c) to promote or assist in the promotion of church schools in the diocese and to advise the governors of such schools and trustees of church educational endowments and any other body or person concerned on any matter affecting church schools in the diocese;
- d) to promote co-operation between the Board and bodies or persons concerned in any respect with education in the diocese;

Following the reconstitution of the Board at the start of 2017, structures and committees have been introduced to enable the DBE to become more strategic and responsive and effective in its work with schools.



After twenty-five years of dedicated service to the Diocese, Canon Jeff Turnbull retired from his post as Diocesan Director of Education in April. Jeff had led the work of the DBE in supporting and promoting education across the church schools within the Diocese of Chester during his time in post. His contribution to the Board of Education was both significant and substantial and this was formally marked at a reception at Church House.

Mr Chris Penn took up post as the new Diocesan Director of Education in September. Chris has over twenty years' experience working in education, in schools and with a local authority. This has included fifteen years within church schools and the last ten as a headteacher of a Church of England primary school. He leads the Education team of officers on behalf of the DBE, providing support to the 116 schools across the Diocese of Chester.

## School Standards and Support



Standards in our church schools remain high. 98% of church schools in the Diocese are currently graded 'Outstanding' or 'Good' in their denominational inspection. Schools are also to be congratulated in their success in Ofsted inspections with 93% of our schools now graded 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. Schools are to be congratulated on these outcomes which are above national averages.

Schools rated less than 'Good' by Ofsted have received additional support. Officers of the Regional Schools Commissioners and Ofsted consult Chester DBE officers if our church schools are perceived not to have appropriate standards. A team of consultants provide additional capacity to ensure that the Education team can offer necessary support and expertise to such schools; this often needs to be intensive. Advice, guidance and support is also provided before and after denominational inspections. This provides great benefit in further developing the Christian foundation of our schools.



The DBE offers training to heads, school leadership teams, staff and governors across the range of school life, including, for example Christian Leadership courses, Growing Spirituality in Schools, training in Understanding Christianity as well as continuing professional development.



The Diocesan RE syllabus, produced by advisers and teachers from our schools, is a free resource readily available through the schools' section on the Diocesan website. The national 'Understanding Christianity' materials have been mapped to the RE syllabus and provide schools with an additional resource. Diocesan RE advisers have provided training for RE and school leaders to enable them to utilise the resources within their schools.

Schools continue to face significant changes and challenges. The revision to the curriculum, formal assessments, inspection frameworks and a new National funding formula, continues to create a level of turbulence and some uncertainty for schools. Local Authority support has been further reduced and schools are increasingly looking to the Diocese and the DBE for its support. The DBE's response has been to encourage its schools to work together through the formation of schools' hubs and geographic networks to further encourage and strengthen partnerships and collaborations, whilst also preparing for the possibility of schools converting to academy status.



## Academies



The DBE is being increasingly called upon to assist schools as they consider academy status. Many schools are now considering either forming or joining multi-academy trusts, and the DBE's officers correspond with officials from the Regional Schools Commissioners responsible for academies in the regions.

Two new Multi-Academy Trusts were formed by church schools in the last twelve months. Bunbury Aldersey C of E School, Worleston St Oswald's C of E School and Warmingham C of E School formed the Rural Church Schools Academy Trust in April 2017. A further three schools, Clutton C of E Primary, Little Sutton C of E Primary and Upton Heath C of E Primary formed The Samara Trust on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018.

This further growth of multi-academy trusts will affect the way the DBE works in future and its on-going work and relationship with schools. The Board has determined the framework in which church schools within the Diocese will be able to become academies and join or form multi-academy trusts. This relates to maintaining and protecting the existing governance structures of Voluntary-Aided and Voluntary- Controlled schools, as well as their Christian distinctiveness.



Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) now has three schools in the Trust, with Stalybridge St Paul's C of E School and Wybunbury Delves C of E School joining in 2017. Several other schools are actively seeking to join and the Trust is expected to grow to around 10 schools by the end of 2018. In response to this growth, the CDAT Board have appointed a Chief Operating Officer and a seconded headteacher as Education Officer. CDAT continues to be supported by DBE Officers with both the Director of Education and the Deputy Director acting as CEO and Deputy CEO of the Trust.

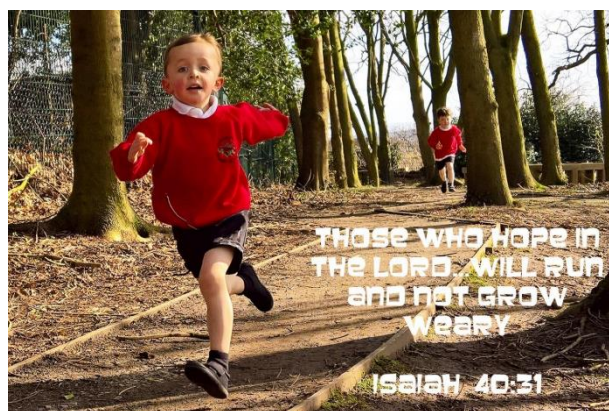


## Buildings

The Department for Education which provides grants for building work in aided schools has continued to provide Devolved Formula Capital to schools, but at a reduced level. The reduction in grants for capital work in schools continues to have an increasingly serious effect on our ability to provide necessary building work. A large proportion of such projects relate to essential maintenance work as opposed to refurbishment or expansion. Only four of our schools have benefited from capital work of over £100,000 in this year.

## Looking Ahead

As part of the strategic alignment, the DBE is currently undertaking a review of the Education team to ensure that it is best placed to support and meet the changing need and demand from its schools in the years ahead.



The 'Chester Diocesan Family of Schools' programme is to be overhauled to provide an 'enhanced offer' of school improvement to schools in the Diocese that includes bespoke school improvement support and a more comprehensive programme of training and professional development.

A new framework for denominational inspections (SIAMS) is to be introduced in the autumn. This has been based around the Church of England Education Office's 'Vision for Education' document. The Education team will be providing training and guidance to schools and governors to aid its implementation.

Further growth is anticipated within the Diocesan multi-academy trust, Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT). The DBE will be reviewing how it can best support this growth both financially and strategically as it develops its relationship with the Trust. A Memorandum of Understanding is to be drawn up to formalize this arrangement.

The DBE is working in partnership, across the diocese and beyond, to enhance its work in leading mission through schools.

