

## Diocesan Board of Education

Chester Diocesan Board of Education, in a context of being deeply Christian and for the common good, has a vision for our school to be communities which are loving in relationships, ambitious in aspirations and bold in actions. We are committed to offering excellence in education for everyone, everywhere, and believe our schools to be 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 support our schools to provide children and young people with a life enhancing experience with Jesus Christ.



### The Board of Education

The Chester Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) is formed of 9 members and comprises:

- a) the Bishop or the Bishop's nominee;
- b) one person nominated by the Bishop;
- c) seven members appointed by the Synod of which three members are from each of the two archdeaconries of the diocese and at least one member is a Clerk in Holy Orders benefited or licensed in the Diocese;



Bishop Libby, as Bishop Peter's nominee, has been Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education since its reconstitution in 2016. During this time, she has been at the forefront of the work of the Board in ensuring a strong partnership with our schools and providing a high level of engagement and support. Bishop Libby has been proactive in her work with our schools and her enthusiasm and passion for 'championing' children has been hugely influential and beneficial to the work of the DBE and its officers. As Bishop Libby steps down as Chair and moves to become Bishop of Derby, it is an opportunity to offer heartfelt thanks for her ministry in

schools and education.

The DBE seeks to be responsive to the changes facing education and to ensure proper accountability of the officers of the DBE. The DBE aims are:

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;

to promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese;

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;

to promote co-operation between the Board and bodies or persons concerned in any respect with education in the diocese;

The work of the Board is largely conducted by two standing committees: Education Effectiveness and Finance and General Purposes, who meet periodically throughout the year. Each committee has clear terms of reference that reflect the aims detailed above that enables each committee to operate in a focused and targeted way, with the Chairs of each committee reporting to the Board. This structure enables the DBE to be strategic, responsive and effective in its work with schools.

### **Diocesan Education team**

The operational duties of the Board are carried out by an Education team of officers, led by the Director of Education and supported by the Deputy Director working with our 115 schools across the Diocese. A review of the Education team was undertaken during 2018 that saw a restructure and led to the creation of two new roles, a part-time Christian Character Officer, who took up post in November 2018 and a full-time School Effectiveness Officer, who will join the team in April 2019. This strengthening of the core team will enable officers to respond rapidly and more effectively in offering support, guidance and direction to our schools.



The Education team also draws on the expertise and experience of a team of school consultants, who provide additional resource and compliment the work of the central team. This has been further strengthened during 2018/19, with the introduction of a team of headteachers from across our church schools, who provide school improvement, leadership support and consultancy directly to schools and is commissioned by the DBE through our 'family of schools' offer.

### **School Standards and Support**



Standards in our church schools remain high. 96% of church schools in the Diocese are currently graded 'Outstanding' or 'Good' in their denominational inspection, Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). A new SIAMS framework was implemented in September 2018, whereby the highest grade awarded was changed from 'Outstanding' to 'Excellent'. In 2018, 19 schools are were judged to be 'Outstanding' or 'Excellent' church schools.

Schools are also to be congratulated in their success in Ofsted inspections with 93% of our schools now graded 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. These outcomes are above national averages.



The DBE makes available additional support to schools rated less than 'Good' by Ofsted and is represented at feedback meetings at the end of inspections. Officers meet with senior members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate to discuss standards in our schools. At the end of 2018, 22 schools within the Diocese, were deemed to be outstanding. Ofsted have amended their inspection process so that schools that would be deemed 'Outstanding' in the judgement of the inspector, no longer receive the judgement on that or a following day but are informed that they are still 'Good' with a full two-day inspection taking place within 18 months. This has impacted on the number of

schools been deemed 'Outstanding' during the current year.

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. Schools receive support before and after denominational inspections. This provides great benefit in further developing the Christian foundation of our schools.

The reduced funding for local authorities has resulted in schools continuing to look for increased support and the DBE has increased the provision it provides. The 'Chester Diocesan Family of Schools' has been further developed this year to offer an increased level of support. The core offer, which is now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, has been widened to include an enhanced service, with a School Improvement Partner (SIP) and option of bespoke support. Nearly all our schools are part of the Family of Schools, with 19 schools opting for the enhanced level of support for the academic year 2018/19.

An expanded programme of courses and training for senior leaders, teachers and governors have continued to be successful and maintain the profile of the DBE. Such courses, some delivered in conjunction with DBE Services, have been run to support the development of Christian leaders at all levels for schools from Newly Qualified Teachers to teachers considering headship, and has also included wider aspects such as safeguarding and data analysis, in response to schools' requests.

A well-being programme held at Foxhill for new and experienced headteachers, has been piloted this year and has received a very positive response. Whilst governors have been supported across a range of areas, including dealing with difficult circumstances. DBE officers and consultants have supported governing bodies in a number of senior leader appointments.





The national 'Understanding Christianity' materials have been mapped to the Diocesan RE syllabus and provide schools with an additional resource. Diocesan RE consultants have provided training for RE and school leaders to enable them to utilise the resources within their schools. The DBE has committed funding to support an exciting project aimed at sharing good practice and encouraging excellence in RE. The project, launched in March 2019, will see the creation and development of RE leader networks across the Diocese.



The annual Year 6 leavers' services were again well-attended and appreciated by all who attended, with two services held in the Cathedral for a fifth year. We are most grateful to the Cathedral and Astbury St Mary's Church for hosting these events.

## Academies



The DBE continues to be called upon to assist schools as they consider academy conversion. 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. The DBE has established an academy committee to receive applications from schools wishing to become academies and to determine whether the DBE will support the application. A new Multi-Academy Trust was formed by church schools in the last twelve months. 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.

Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) has grown to six schools, with Brereton C of E Primary, Christ Church Moreton C of E Primary, and Astbury St Mary's C of E Primary joining the Trust in the last twelve months. The Trust is the largest church school trust in the Diocese and is expected to see further growth in 2019, with several other schools actively seeking to join.

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. However, in response to its growth, and as part of a longer term strategy, the CDAT Board have appointed a full-time Chief Executive Officer from May 2019.

## 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, and these related to re-roofing and increased and improved security.

## Looking Ahead



The DBE is working to further increase and strengthen its partnership work, both across the diocese and beyond, to enhance its work in leading mission through schools. This work has seen the creation of specialized focus groups in the areas of disadvantage and special education needs, as well as a group aimed at supporting small and rural schools. New partnerships with Teaching schools and Multi-Academy Trusts in the Diocese have also been established.

The DBE have been working with its schools in sharing and promoting the Church of England's 'Vision for Education'. As a continuation on from this, the Board have been seeking to create its own vision for education and schools in the Diocese. Preliminary work was undertaken in the autumn, working with an external consultant, to create and agree an initial draft. It is hoped that an overview of this vision will be available for wider consultation later in the year.

The aim of this work is to seek to better define the core purpose and direction of the DBE's work and that of the Education team and ensure that it is best placed to support and meet the changing need and demand from its schools in the years ahead. A vision that is bold in its intentions and one that commits to offering excellence in education for everyone, everywhere, and where our schools are at the heart of our ministry and mission.



**March 2019**