

Annual Report 2018

Introduction

2018 was a significant year in the life of the Board of Education, seeing a number of changes to its organisational structure and the vision for its work. During the year, the Board oversaw a number of developments that enabled its 136 schools to flourish as Church of England schools and continued to offer support to church schools and school leaders working in increasingly challenging circumstances.

Re-constitution and reorganisation

The Board of Education successfully applied for its reconstitution to the Department for Education during 2018. This took effect on 1st January 2019, reducing the Board to a membership of thirteen. Simultaneously, the Board moved from three to six meetings a year and took the decision to incorporate the work of its committees and advisory groups within its main meeting structure. The new structure, which will allow the Board to be more strategic in operation, strengthens the links with the Board of Finance whilst recognising that the Board of Education is, under the terms of the DBE Measure (1991), a statutory freestanding unincorporated body.

Financial Management

Rigorous monitoring of management accounts and investments has led to the Board being able to effectively manage its budget for 2018. Most costs continue to be met from the restricted Consolidated Fund for Statutory Education, a small subvention provided by the Board of Finance and external grant funding from the Hockerill Educational Foundation. The 2018 budget was brought in within the budget set, due to good financial management and prudent spending. Future budget setting across the period 2019-2023 has been planned to deliver small deficit budgets to support the Board in meeting its increasing responsibilities. In 2018, the Board completely reviewed its risk management plan, updating it to reflect an increasingly complex educational landscape. The Board remains grateful to the Hockerill Educational Foundation for its contributions to staffing costs and other discretionary grants to support the development of Christian ethos and Religious Education across the Diocese's schools.

Revised Diocesan Board of Education Vision

Throughout 2018, the Board of Education worked to develop a revised vision for education:

'Living God's Love in Education: Enabling Life in all its Fullness'.

'Living God's Love in Education; Enabling Life in all its Fullness' is a contemporary interpretation of the historic vision that saw Joshua Watson form the National Society in 1811 with the aim of placing a Church of England school in every parish to educate the poor. The vision promotes the development of church schools as Christian communities centred on a common Christian vision for education. At the heart of this Christian vision is the commitment to high-quality education, to a shared life together, to worship and to prayer.

Transforming Communities

The Board of Education continues to support initiatives that promote transformation in and across communities within the Diocese, nationally and overseas.

One consistent area of support delivered to Voluntary Aided church schools is that of improving provision. This is delivered through the Local Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme (LCVAP). As a result of working in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, St Michael's VA Primary School in St Albans were delighted to open new dining facilities at their Lower School site, with two new classrooms being created at their top site to help the school move towards becoming a one-form-entry school. The school and the Board were thrilled that the development of the Lower School site was awarded a Commendation in the Trevelyan Prize category of the St Albans Civic Society Awards.

The Board's commitment to *Transforming Communities* leads it to open new Church of England schools, especially in areas where there is no existing provision. Watford St John's Church of England Primary School is such an example. On 19th August 2018, the Lord Bishop of St Albans, the Right Reverend Dr Alan Smith, led the Blessing and Dedication of St John's new school building. It was extremely encouraging to see that even though it took place during the summer holidays, the event was fully attended by both current and new families, governors and long-term supporters of the school.

Going Deeper into God

Through the creation of Christian communities committed to a shared life together, the Board encourages all who attend its 136 schools to go deeper into God.

In October 2018, the church schools' Harvest celebration took place with just under 2,000 pupils and staff attending over the three services held at the Cathedral. Pupils from several schools participated in each service by leading readings, prayers or through choir performances. The service itself was slightly different to previous years and was more liturgical in nature to give the children a different experience to what they might encounter in their school's local Harvest services. The feedback received was extremely positive, including comments such as:

"[I liked] the way lots of schools were able to participate and the range of music performed and sung together. It was a fabulous opportunity to bring children from a diverse range of backgrounds, who will rarely, if ever, visit a place of Christian worship outside of school, so it will be a significant experience and memory in their life. The presence of the Bishop of Hertford and Dean was encouraging and helped us as a school to feel a sense of belonging to a wider church community."

Local acts of worship and special events help pupils and staff place the school year within the context of worship and the liturgical calendar. In September 2018, St John's Digswell C of E Primary School celebrated a special 'back to school' Eucharist at St John's Church. The school were extremely excited that the Bishop of Hertford was able to join them for the service, and readings and prayers were led by year 6 pupils. Whilst at Wenlock C of E Junior School, pupils had the opportunity to experience Pentecost at St Christopher's Church, Luton. This helped them to better understand how God's Holy Spirit helped his disciples begin to spread the good news of God's love.

Making New Disciples

Church schools in the Diocese of St Albans serve the communities in which they are located, nurturing those from the Christian tradition and serving others. Through special events and extra-curricular activities, pupils are given the opportunity to explore what it means to have a personal faith in Jesus. In Leighton Buzzard, All Saints Church and Pulford VA C of E Lower School once again came together to provide an interactive and educational experience for the town. Over 450 children from many of the lower schools in Leighton and Linslade visited All Saints Church in the

week leading up to Easter to take part in 'Experience Easter'. The engaging and hands-on trail around the church enabled the children to revisit and learn about the events of the first Holy week.

One way in which pupils can freely explore their own faith is through becoming pupil leaders of worship. Some of Cockernhoe Endowed School's year 6 pupils, like many others across the Diocese, have recently formed a Collective Worship Group for the school. To date they have led an outside Harvest Celebration and an evening Remembrance Service, as well as running a monthly collective worship assembly based on their value of the month.

Diocese of St Albans Multi-Academy Trust

The Trust, established in October 2016 to support Church of England schools within the Diocese, now consists of seven academies and is currently awaiting the outcome of the application by Totternhoe Academy to assume a religious designation as a Church of England Academy.

In November 2018, the Trust experienced its first Ofsted inspection which occurred at Churchfield CE Academy. It was delighted with the outcome, particularly welcoming the comments of the lead inspector:

'The support and challenge that DSAMAT offers the school is very effective. The trust board and the regional hub boards have clearly defined areas of responsibility that are communicated clearly to school leaders; both bodies play an important role in supporting school improvement. Leaders value the strategic contributions made by the chief executive officer (CEO), trustees and hub board member.'

A second set of unqualified set of accounts were approved by the Trust's Directors and Members at their respective meetings on 13th December 2018 and these were subsequently submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The Trust is now responsible for over 2,000 pupils and 350 staff, and has a turnover of approximately £12.5 million per annum.

School Inspections

90% of church schools supported by the Board of Education are currently graded 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. The Board continues to offer excellent service to schools in preparation for both Ofsted and church school inspections (SIAMS). 49.3% of our schools are graded 'outstanding' at being effective church schools.

Training and Development

The Schools Team runs courses for headteachers, teachers, governors, clergy and readers on a variety of topics on an annual cycle. In 2018, 972 people were trained through the delivery of 42 courses. The 2018 programme saw successful training on the new SIAMS framework as well as delivering two very well received conferences to launch the new Bedfordshire RE Agreed Syllabus. Alongside the regular courses on topics such as collective worship, admissions, media training and governance, the 2018 programme included training for schools to help promote financial education as well as conferences looking at raising standards in Literacy and for those schools expanding to Primary status. Alongside courses held centrally, there was also training provided by officers and consultants to a number of governing bodies exploring the Distinctive Christian Character of their schools and their role in the new SIAMS framework. 93% of the Diocese's 136 church schools have joined the Board of Education's Service Level Agreement, the highest ever recorded membership.