

Diocese of St Albans: Board of Education

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Flourishing Christ-centred educational communities Living God's Love

Introduction

During 2019, the Board of Education led or facilitated activities within its 138 schools which enabled them to live out their local vision for education and be flourishing Christ-centred educational communities that Live God's Love. Working in partnership with the Diocese of St Albans Multi-Academy Trust to promote Church of England systems leadership, the Board has developed and nurtured Christian educational leaders across the Diocese.

Transforming Communities

The Board of Education and church schools continue to actively support transformation in their communities. Continued support of the Diocese of St Albans Multi-Academy Trust has led to the improvement of six Church of England schools experiencing challenging circumstances, some of which serve the most deprived areas of the Diocese.

To support the implementation of its vision for education, the Board of Education approved the retention of £125,000 of funds to create the *Community Life Fund*. Grants for projects that demonstrate innovative and creative approaches to developing prayer, worship and community, have led, amongst other projects, to the creation of reflective gardens, the establishment of a community drop-in with AV facilities, the purchase of resources for Collective Worship and two 'Godly Play' groups for 0-4yr olds.

During 2019, the Board of Education was pleased to welcome Totternhoe Church of England Academy and Marston Moreteyne Church of England Voluntary Controlled School to the diocesan family of schools. Both schools started their journey towards the assumption of a religious designation because of the existing strong links between their local parish, the incumbent and the school. This is something to celebrate and the Board is thankful for the amazing work undertaken by parish priests in their local schools, both church and community.

In 2019, the Barley and Barkway Federation formed a partnership with Margaret House Residential Home in Barley, with children from the schools visiting residents on a weekly basis, reading their books and sharing pieces of work. The project is still in its early stages, but already the benefits from this local community partnership are very apparent. The School Council at St John's Primary School Lemsford set up a food donation scheme during 2018-2019. 'Food Bank Friday' has now become an integral part of the school week, with families donating dried goods to go to the local Welwyn Garden City Food Bank run by New Zion Church. The school is so proud of its pupils and their 'courageous advocacy' for those who find themselves in difficult circumstances.

Going Deeper into God

The Board of Education continues to provide training and support to schools as they enable staff and pupils to Go Deeper into God. Working with its schools, the Board has extended its ability to support the spiritual development of its headteachers and senior school leaders. 28 senior leaders attended the three 'Reconnect' days held around the Diocese over the year. These enable school

leaders to spend time out of school reflecting on aspects of their school's work and its vision, or renewing their own personal Christian vision for education. The annual diocesan headteachers' retreat attracted 20 delegates in March 2019, a significant number supported by grants provided by the Board. For the first time, the Board of Education organised a conference to support and inform clergy working in church schools, with over 40 attending. This joined-up approach continues to bear fruit.

A significant number of church schools have, over the past 18 months, formed their own pupil-led worship groups. These groups plan and deliver acts of worship across the school year. To support pupils in their ability to lead worship, and to deepen their understanding of different worship styles and traditions, the DBE is delivering a series of 'Pupil Leaders of Worship' training events. The first of these was held at the church of St Hugh and St John, Chells, on 24 September 2019. Around 90 pupils and staff attended the session led by Revd Ysmena Pentelow which focused on Taizé-style worship. St Augustine's Academy, Dunstable, have worked together as a community to rethink their school's vision and values. The scripture now chosen to be at the heart of the school is "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven", Matthew 5:16. The school community continues to be inspired to flourish by rooting all it does in this scripture.

Making New Disciples

Through the use of targeted grants and restricted funding streams, the Board seeks to support the development and implementation of activities that promote an exploration of discipleship through schools' extra-curricular programmes. The Board was pleased to note that, in 2019, all five of its secondary schools had either appointed a chaplain or had a formalised chaplaincy arrangement with their local parish. The Board also deeply values the contribution of all parish priests who support their local church school, providing extra-curricular activities that encourage an exploration of faith.

All Saints Academy Dunstable officially opened their Reflection Centre on Wednesday 15 May 2019. The centre was built in memory of two brothers who tragically died in a road accident in August 2016. 13-year-old Ethan Houghton attended All Saints Academy, and his brother Joshua was due to start there in September that year. The brand-new Reflection Centre was opened by their father, Doug Houghton, who said that he "could not have asked for anything better". David Fraser, chair of governors for the school, said: "It is a space that people can come to and reflect, and take time out if they are suffering from any tragedies, or anything that they need quiet time for."

Future plans

- A further extension of the Board of Education's training and development programme to include tailored school improvement and effectiveness support
- The development of joint training sessions for clerks of church school governing boards, delivered in partnership with our three main local authorities
- The training of a further three inspectors to facilitate the inspection of Church of England schools under the SIAMS framework
- A second 'Pupil Leaders of Worship' training event in sacramental worship will be held in the St Albans area in June 2020, with a third serving schools in the Bedford area to be held in the spring of 2021

- The delivery of the Lent 2020 prayer and worship course ‘God in this Place’, a six-week resource for the 138 schools and 30,000 pupils in diocesan schools, which will explore the journey Jacob made from recognising ‘God in this Place’ to ‘God in my Life’.
- Implementation of Year 2 of the *Community Life Fund* – a further £20,000 of grant funding released to church schools.

Financial Management

The 2019 budget showed a modest surplus. This was due to an increase in income from courses and the Board’s Service Level Agreement. 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. In 2019, the Board further developed its risk management and disaster recovery planning, responding to an increasingly complex educational landscape. The Board remains grateful to the Hockerill Educational Foundation for its support for the development of Christian ethos and Religious Education across the Diocese’s schools.