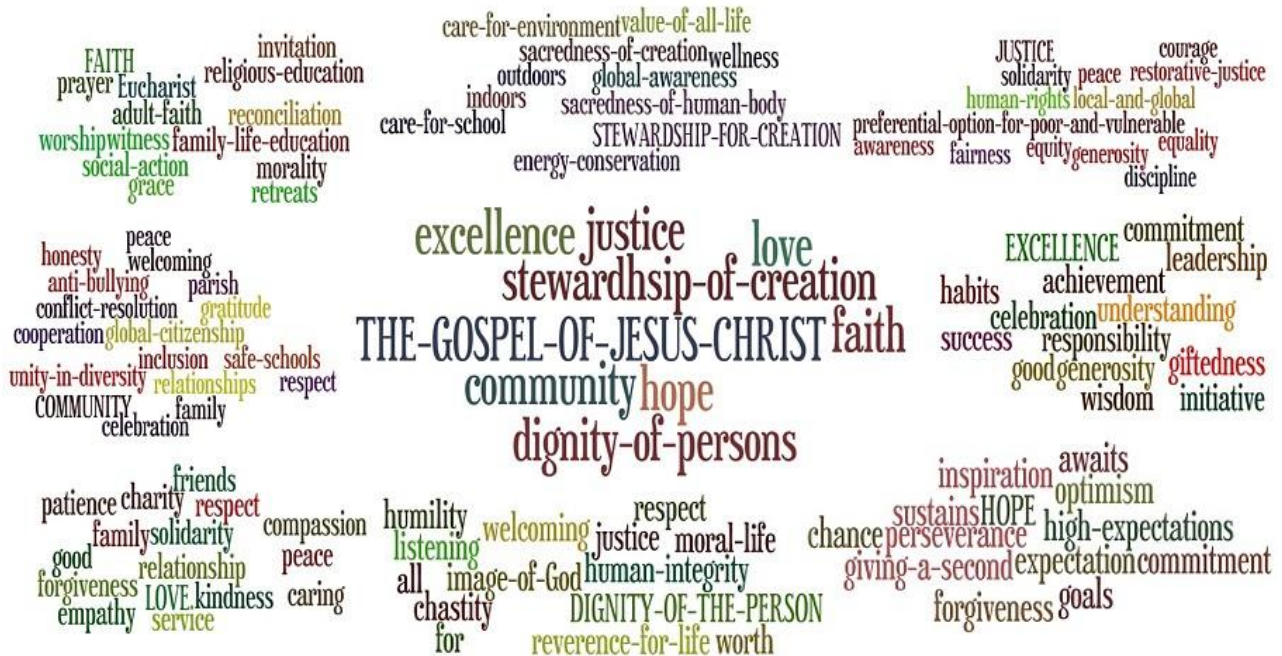




PORTSMOUTH & WINCHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Guidance for New Incumbents



Guidance for incumbents on working with Church schools

Church schools have formed a central aspect of The Church's mission to society since the early nineteenth century. All Church schools and academies are technically 'schools with a religious designation'. The Church of England does not understand this designation as meaning that they are 'schools for the faithful' but rather that they exist to provide education for all children while promoting Christian values and fostering an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith. A full explanation of the Church of England's vision for education can be found in the document 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good' (<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/education-and-schools>). The role of the parish incumbent within the school is crucial in enabling this vision to be realised.

Presence and drawing alongside the whole school community is pivotal, but broadly speaking, there are three aspects of the incumbent's role:

- Leading Collective Worship
- Chaplaincy
- Governance

Your role in leading collective worship

Children in all state schools are expected to take part in a daily act of collective worship. Whereas this will generally be called 'assembly' in community schools, in Church schools the title 'collective worship' will be used. This is to distinguish the event as one which has integrity as an act of Christian worship. It is the norm for the incumbent to lead one of these acts of worship per week. Collective worship in a Church school should aim to:

- Create a time and space where we can come closer to God and God can come closer to us
- Be distinctively Christian whilst avoiding being 'confessional' in character
- Use and promote the clearly identified core Christian values of the school
- Have **Integrity** as acts of Anglican worship whilst being **Invitational, Inclusive** and **inspirational**
- Be based on Biblical text or themes
- Enable participants to develop an understanding of Jesus Christ and a Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- Be central in importance to the life of our school community, which is part of a wider community that embraces the whole world
- Develop a personal spirituality
- Develop understanding of Anglican traditions and the seasons and festivals of the Christian year

A suggested method for delivering worship uses the following 'central attributes':

- Gathering** Making special and significant this part of the day through appropriate symbol and ceremony
- Engaging** Using the best available techniques to stimulate interest in the content
- Responding** Ensuring there is time and opportunity for individual, group reflection and thought, so those attending can respond in a variety of ways
- Sending** Summarising the worship in a meaningful short message used to create an opportunity for those attending to implement the ideas covered and to conclude the worship

In addition to leading a weekly act of collective worship at the school, the incumbent's role could encompass other aspects such as working with staff to develop themes and planning for collective worship, leading services for the school in church, advising teachers on aspects of worship (e.g. prayer), organising prayer spaces, leading an 'Open the Book' team, etc.

Your chaplaincy role

In a Church school, you should be openly welcomed as a member of the school community and your general presence can form a crucial witness to the Gospel through building relationships and service to the common good. As time allows, you might be involved in many aspects of the school's life, such as listening to children read, helping to plan and teach RE, being a presence in the staff room and on the playground before or after school, running a club, helping on school visits, etc. However, it is important to note that the most beneficial school-parish partnerships are those where other members of the parish are encouraged to use their gifts and skills within the school community.

Your governance role

All Church schools have Foundation Governors. These are normally appointed by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) in consultation with the local PCC. One of these Foundation Governors is always identified as the ex-officio governor. There is a requirement originating from the trust deed and the instrument of government for a church school, that the parish priest assumes this role. As parish priest, you have a particular leadership role within the group of foundation governors.

- Your relationship with the Headteacher will be pivotal to the school's development as a place which fulfils the Church of England Vision for Education, 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good.'
- You will be responsible for developing the parish's relationship with its school, helping it towards a fuller understanding of how church and school form a powerful Christian partnership serving the local community.
- You will ensure that the parish (usually through the PCC) finds and nominates foundation governors to serve on the governing body.
- You will keep the Diocesan Board of Education (through the education team) informed over any concerns or issues related to standards, conduct or ethos at the school.
- You will be involved with the work of the sub-committee that takes responsibility for the development of the distinctive Christian character of the school (ethos committee or similar).

- You will be the person who would normally open each meeting of the Governing Body with prayer, setting the tone for meetings and reminding governors of their school's Christian foundation.
- You would normally be involved in the appointment process of a headteacher.

While some clergy may have reservations as to whether they can afford to give the time needed to be a school governor, the importance of this role in demonstrating the continuing relevance of the Church within the wider community cannot be underestimated. However, the diocesan education team do strongly advise that incumbents resist all encouragement to become Chair of Governors. This is a difficult role for the parish priest to perform, especially in times of trouble for the school. It is also extremely time-consuming. We would also advise that incumbents do not sit on more than one governing body. Where two or more Church schools sit within one parish, the incumbent should work with the archdeacon to find an alternative person who can take up the ex officio role on one of the governing bodies.

The Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) is the process that judges the effectiveness of Church schools. You will be an essential part of the process of inspection as part of the process involves examining the relationship between the school and its parish.

Further support

One of the schools advisers from the Diocesan Education Team would be very happy to meet with you discuss any of the above. We offer periodic training and updates on forthcoming events, etc, via emails and newsletters. Once you have taken up your ex officio role, your details will be added to our data base and you should begin to receive these.

A fuller background to the above can be found in the following documents, which should have been supplied to you along with these introductory notes:

- The Schedule for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools
- Diocesan guidelines for Collective Worship
- Diocesan guidance booklet for foundation governors