



## Working Together - Relationships between Secondary Schools and Churches

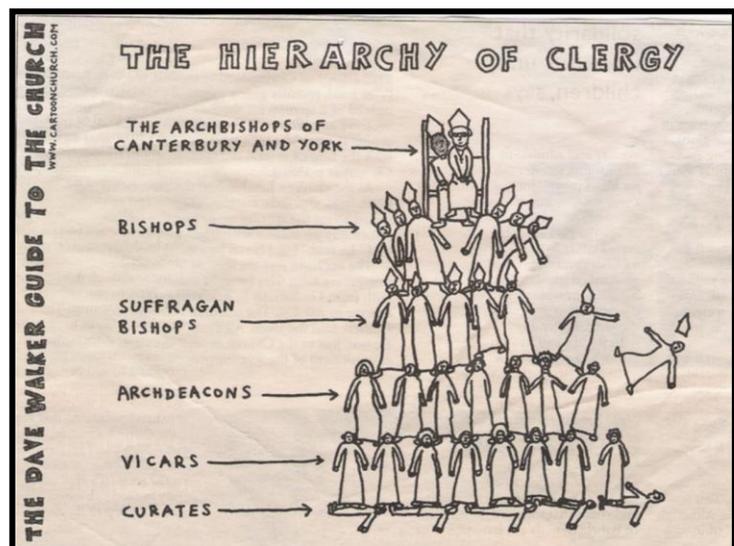
Many parishes have a close working relationship with their local primary school and are involved in a huge variety of ways e.g. governors, helping with reading, visits, services, assemblies etc. When children leave primary school the church link often fades and many parishes lament the loss of this relationship. The purpose of this document is to look at ways for parishes to build a link with a secondary school. Such a link would help parishes to maintain relationships with local children who have moved on, as well as offering a vital form of service to institutions who would welcome input from local churches.

There is usually an automatic working relationship between a primary school head and local parish priest, but this relationship does not exist in the same way with priest and secondary school. This is due to variety of different reasons. The catchment areas for secondary schools often extend beyond the parish/deanery boundary; there are differences in culture. It is unlikely that there will be a long term historic link between a secondary school and a church. All these factors contribute to this less than simple relationship.

The relationship between these key individuals is obviously vital, but unlike in a primary school the head is not involved in the day to day running to the same degree – this is often delegated to members of the senior teaching staff. As the catchment area will undoubtedly cover many parishes, there will also be a larger number of clergy/lay people representing churches. It is important to have an appreciation of how both schools and churches are structured, as this will help mutual understanding and foster good working relationships.

### 1. Church Structure

The Church of England is split into 43 geographical dioceses which are each roughly the size of a county. Each Diocese is headed by a diocesan bishop and supported by other senior staff such as area bishops, archdeacons and rural deans. The diocese is split into a number of smaller administrative units the most relevant to schools of which is the deanery. There are 19 deaneries in Salisbury diocese, each with a rural/area dean as its co-ordinator.

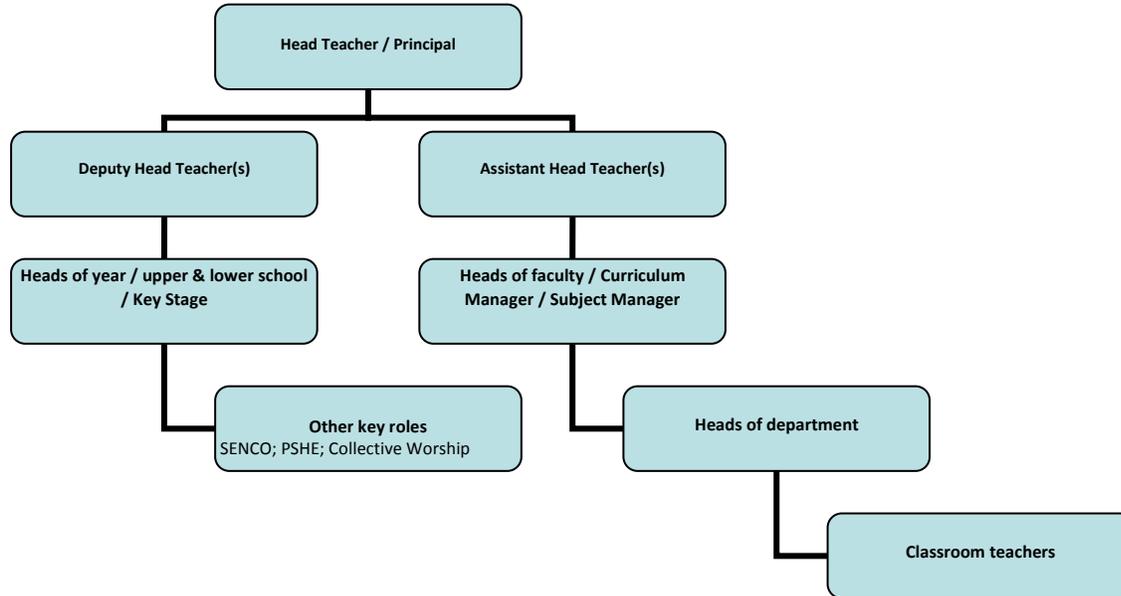


Each deanery has a degree of autonomy as to how it allocates clergy resources; in general a deanery has around 7 clergy split between about 20 parishes, each of which usually has 1 church within it. Clergy who look after a church or group of churches are called Rectors, Vicars or Priests in Charge. There is little practical difference between these role other than the title. Dual role workers split their time between working for their parish(es) and working for their deaneries as a schools link worker.

An increasing number of deaneries are allocating some of their clergy time to secondary schools; often this is in the form of a dual role post, where typically a priest has 70% of their time concentrated on

church and 30% on schools. The clergy appointments process involves very wide consultation which means it can take up to a year for a post to be filled. This is unlikely to change in the near future. During this time (interregnum) there is no parish priest and each parish is administered by the churchwardens.

## 2. School Structure



A secondary school is managed by the Head who is answerable to the board of Governors. Below the Head is a clearly defined senior management team. The primary purpose of a school is the education of children and the success of a school in achieving this is measured in a variety of ways. Schools are guided by many targets and initiatives e.g. “Community Cohesion”, “Every child matters” “Extended schools” “Value Added” etc. These along with the national curriculum shape the way in which decisions are made within a school and affect the funding allocation within the school. It is difficult for schools to direct funding towards initiatives which do not meet one or more of these criteria.

Although schools have the primary responsibility of educating the students who attend them, they also have a responsibility to the wider community and a requirement for them to work with young people outside ‘normal’ school hours. These are both areas in which schools would welcome input from other bodies such as churches.

Schools have an obvious commitment to ensure the safety of students in their care. Issues of child protection and health and safety are very real in schools, which must be seen to be diligent in applying the law and operating good practice. Any person working in a school – whether voluntarily or paid must do so in a professional manner and work within the accepted guidelines and policies of the school. These are neither onerous nor complicated – although they can seem that way to someone not used to it – but simply a way of working and thinking that is easily learnt.

Schools generally welcome input from other professional bodies and from volunteers, but would expect them to fulfil a definite role within the school, give value for money (or value for the time invested in managing them) and be assured that they are both legally allowed to and safe to work within the

institution. A general offer of 'help' is less likely to be accepted than a specific offer that meets an identified need/target or initiative within the school.

### **3. Schools – what you need to know**

All children in England between the ages of five and 16 are entitled to a free place at a state school. Children normally start primary school at the age of four or five, but many schools now have a reception year for four year olds. Children normally leave at the age of 11, moving on to secondary school. In some parts of Dorset, However, we have a three tier system of First, Middle and Upper Schools. Most state schools admit both boys and girls, though some are single-sex. In this diocese this happens where the Grammar school system lingers in Salisbury and in Poole.

The four main types of state school all receive funding from local authorities. They all follow the National Curriculum and are regularly inspected by Ofsted. Church Schools are also inspected under SIAMS - Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools.

#### **Community schools**

A community school is run by the local authority (LA). The LA employs the staff, owns the land and buildings and decides which 'admissions criteria' to use. Community schools look to develop strong links with the local community, sometimes offering use of their facilities and providing services like childcare and adult learning classes. RE is taught according to the Local Authority Agreed Syllabus. Collective worship should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character'

#### **Foundation and Trust schools**

Foundation and Trust schools are run by their own governing body, which employs the staff and sets the admissions criteria. Land and buildings are usually owned by the governing body or a charitable foundation. RE is taught according to the Local Authority Agreed Syllabus. Collective worship should be according to the schools trust deed. '



#### **Voluntary-aided schools**

Voluntary-aided schools are mainly religious or 'faith' schools, although anyone can apply for a place. As with foundation schools, the governing body employs the staff and sets the admissions criteria. School buildings and land are normally owned by a charitable foundation, often a religious organisation such as the church. The governing body contributes to building and maintenance costs. RE is taught according to the schools trust deed; Collective worship is also according to the schools trust deed.

#### **Voluntary-controlled schools**

Voluntary-controlled schools are similar to voluntary aided schools, but are run by the local authority. RE is taught as in a community school, although collective worship reflects the nature of the school's trust deed.

**But...** as this is England it is not as simple as that. Over the past few years successive government initiatives have created a myriad of new categories of schools. This process shows no sign of slowing so you may come across any of the following

#### **Specialist Schools**

Though they follow the National Curriculum, specialist schools focus on a particular subject area. Examples include sports, technology or visual arts. Most Secondary schools now have one two or even

three 'specialism's'. They will have gained this status through proving particular success or extra provision in their given area. Often this will include sharing their expertise with feeder primary schools.

### **Academies**

The Coalition government has been extending this program to all schools and initially those schools, both Primary and Secondary, which were considered to be good or outstanding. This is still imbedding but it will mean some new categories of schools.

#### **First: *the old 'Labour style' Academies.***

These secondary schools were often failing schools in which the leadership of the school was handed over to a new provider and the school reopened with a new name and new management. Often extra funding and investment in new buildings was part of this process. There are three of these schools in the diocese: St Aldhelms' (formally Rossmore) in Poole and Sarum Academy (formally Salisbury High School) in Salisbury. Both of these are Church of England Academies. The third is Wellington Academy at Tidworth which is run by Wellington Independent School.

#### **Second: *the new coalition Academies.***

This is where the existing school adopts Academy status giving the school greater autonomy from the Local Authority. They have freedom to buy services from any provider. They are managed by a Trust that the school sets up. The existing management stays in place. Many Schools will go academy with other schools in the area.

### **Free Schools**

This is a new idea where by groups of parents or teachers club together to set up a new school in order to meet parental demand for a particular style of education or to have a school in a particular area to serve local needs. These will take a while to work into the system.

### **City Technology Colleges'**

These are independently managed, non-fee-paying schools in urban areas for pupils of all abilities aged 11 to 18. They are geared towards science, technology and the world of work, offering a range of vocational qualifications as well as GCSEs and A levels. We have none of these in our diocese.

### **Community and foundation special schools**

Special schools cater for children with specific special educational needs. These may include physical disabilities or learning difficulties. There is a network of these schools across our diocese.

### **Grammar schools**

Grammar schools select all or most of their pupils based on academic ability. These persist in Salisbury and Poole

### **Independent Schools**

There are around 2,300 independent schools in England. These schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies. They are funded by fees paid by parents and income from investments. Just over half have charitable status.

Every independent school must be registered with the Department for Children, Schools and Families. Standards are regularly monitored by either Ofsted or an inspectorate approved by the Secretary of State, ensuring that the school maintains the standards set out in its registration document.

## 4. Practicalities



When a parish first approaches a school it is important that the incumbent writes directly to the head. The parish may well have links with teachers, support staff and parents, but making the approach in this way will ensure that the head gives his or her blessing to any future involvement, and will also ensure that there is a formal reply to the first contact.

At the first meeting (which may be with the head or a member of the leadership team) a detailed proposal of what the church can offer has a much greater chance of a warm reception than a vague offer of help. Each school will have a development plan which will detail areas which need to or desire to develop or improve. It is important that parishes familiarise themselves with the development plan of their school as this will give important clues as to the areas that the school might need assistance. Schools will have a website with the development plan included. The website will also give information about what the school is proud of and will inform the parish as to how the school sees itself. A well informed proposal has every chance of being welcomed.

## 5. Possible ways of engaging with schools

There is no one size fits all proposal, but the sorts of areas where schools might wish to work together with churches are:

- Providing governors – there is a shortage of secondary school foundation governors
- Help with special needs provision – e.g. listening to pupils read
- Offering work experience
- Opportunities for pupils to work in Care Homes or clubs for the elderly
- Providing mentoring and support for students
- A Church network relationship is helpful to the School in 'Community Cohesion' (success in OFSTED). This can be a good way in.

## 6. Examples of success



Below are some practical examples of church/school partnerships that have operated successfully in the diocese. Each is of course particular to its context, but they give a flavour of the variety of ways in which Churches can become a resource for schools.

### **Matravers School in Westbury (by Steven Baggs)**

Involving secondary schools in projects for the wider community - Working with students from Matravers School in Westbury, Steven Baggs has held two art exhibitions in All Saints Church that involved hundreds of primary school children visiting as well as members of the public and

the local congregations. In 2009 the life of Jesus was portrayed through the 'Face of Jesus' exhibition, in 2010 the subject of creation and evolution was explored through the '*In the beginning...*' exhibition. Working on these projects created opportunities to get to know students by working alongside them in their art lessons and also met some of the schools aims to engage with community groups. See <http://www.faceofjesus.co.uk> and [www.faceofjesus.co.uk](http://www.faceofjesus.co.uk) for more on these projects.”

### **Vale of Pewsey (by Deborah Larkey)**

As Team Vicar in the Vale of Pewsey with Deanery responsibility for Schools and Youth, I have been keen to find a way of serving and relating to our local Secondary School. I was inspired by the work of Claire Estall (ex Diocesan Youth Adviser) and Rev'd Tim Gomm, who were using an effective pastoral programme to help Secondary Students struggling with their work. From their example, I realised that as well as being a pastoral presence (or would-be-Chaplain), a Church representative going into a Secondary School needed to have something practical to offer. Having trained as a Tutor with Acorn Christian Healing Trust in the past, I decided to offer my 'listening skills'.

I made an appointment with the Head Teacher and asked if I could pilot the new Acorn course: 'Log in, Listen in', to my delight, she said 'Yes'. With the support of the School Council (Students) and two helpful members of Staff, we were able to pilot the Course for the first time during Wednesday lunch-times once a fortnight. The Course encourages the value of 'listening skills' as useful for everyday relationships, helpful for those serving in School as Prefects or as 'buddies' to new pupils and also beneficial for future interviews and career skills. There is also an added optional spiritual dimension, which comes with a light touch.

Despite exam pressure, which meant the older Students could not really attend, together with the lure of fresh air and sunshine in the Summer Term, we had a steady group of younger students: keen and able to role-play and practice the art of 'listening'. Greatly encouraged, I have asked to run the Course again in the Autumn and the Teacher in charge has agreed.

### **Salisbury Deanery (By Jim Findlay)**

This deanery in an earlier phase of strategic planning allocated the role of 'Schools Chaplaincy Officer' to a new appointment of Priest-in-Charge to St. Mark's Church. This allowed for one third of my time to be used in developing links with local secondary schools. Initial engagement generated the usual opportunities of contributing to collective worship and curriculum sessions where a 'Christian' point of view was required. These links enabled other doors to open as trust developed. The most significant fruit of that trust to date is the 'GOAL' mentoring project that has just completed a pilot run at Wyvern College. This work comprises collaboration between the Schools Chaplaincy Officer, The Bridge Project and Jon Langford (Director of Youth & Community Work at St. Paul's Church, Salisbury). This consortium provided a mentoring tool that could be utilised to help students 'Go To Another Level', hence the name. The pilot was run with six students, identified by the pastoral staff of the school. These were then matched to a mentor and the process began. Mentors were supervised by Jon Langford as they implemented his 'TAG' mentoring resource. The Schools Chaplaincy Officer acted as the point of contact for the project and The Bridge Project provided some of the mentors.

The school staff, at the point of review, were deeply encouraged by this scheme and the impact it had produced within these students. They have asked for an end to the pilot phase of the scheme in order that it could be rolled out to more students. We are currently looking to recruit and train further mentors to facilitate this from term two of this academic year.

Alongside GOAL I have also been working with two of the schools on another exciting project and opportunity. Wyvern College and St Edmund's School have agreed to assist in the creation and implementation of a Lay Chaplaincy Team. This will involve a team of volunteer lay chaplains providing a pastoral, supportive, incarnational presence to these two communities. The team will be asked to commit to a consistent and regular presence, being available to students, staff and parents. The role / person specification has been discussed and agreed and applications are being invited from those within churches in Salisbury. We have been encouraged by the quality of the applications and hope that we will be able to put a team in place by the beginning of term two of this academic year.

### **Melksham (By Rev'd Jill Perrett)**

I am in a dual role post which means that I am Priest in Charge of the Benefice of Atworth with Shaw and Whitley (villages outside Melksham) and also portfolio holder for Secondary education within the Melksham group.

When I took up the post 3 years ago, the George Ward School, had never had a person in this role and it was difficult to know what my role exactly was. Initial introduction to the school was made with the Head teacher. Then through being in the school, getting to know the staff and building relationships of trust, more and more opportunities have been given.

I have been linking in with the R.E. curriculum and taking part in lessons, where I have been asked to give a Christian perspective on various subjects- with year 8- Death and dying, and how a Christian Funeral is conducted with year 9- The life and Ministry of Jesus, his death and resurrection; racism, capital punishment.

With year 10- abortion and this involved being a participant in a Big Issues panel which was quite a challenge, not least of all as OFsted were present during this!!!

With AS / A2-Theodicy- the problem of evil- Augustine and Irenaeus  
Spiritual/ religious experience- the Toronto blessing; the Bible as revelation.

I was assigned to a year 7 tutor group which enabled me to get to know a group of students in a different way of relating to them other than through class work.

Taking Collective Worship- from year 8 to sixth form with one of the assistant heads was one of the most challenging experiences.

Another key area I have been involved in is with Pastoral Support of staff and students. This means to provide a confidential listening ear.

Under the auspices of the reading programme I am able to support 2 students, pastorally. To develop this further, I was sent on a restorative justice training course with 3 staff members.

Now George Ward School is no more with the completion of the new school build- Melksham Oak Community School has been 'born'.

I regard it as a huge privilege that I have been welcomed into the school; I am there by grace and I feel greatly blessed. It is extremely rewarding work.

## **Mothers Union Virtual Baby Project**

This project has run in secondary schools across the diocese. Volunteers from local churches work with the Mothers Union to run sessions that help young people consider the responsibilities of being a parent. They work with the pupils to prepare them for caring for a 'baby' for the weekend and meet with them to debrief after the experience. The pupils take home a virtual baby, a very life like doll that is programmed to cry and respond to the care that is given. So pupils have to feed it, change its nappy and handle it in the correct way. For further information about this project contact the Mothers Union Project Development Worker on [pdo.mothersunion@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pdo.mothersunion@yahoo.co.uk)