

# The Commissioning Service The Affirmation Service

Notes on two services for use when **commissioning** a new head teacher and when **affirming** a head teacher who is already in post

## Introduction

The aim of these two short services is to introduce a new Head teacher to the wider community and to affirm and celebrate the work of an existing Head teacher to that same community.

The relationship between education and the Church goes back to the dawn of Christianity itself. Our Lord was a teacher and He had special words to say about the role of children in the Kingdom. Closer to our time, King Alfred could be said to be the founder of English education with the founding of schools and the translation of books into English. Nearer our time, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw a great outpouring of effort as the Church founded thousands of Church Schools for the education of its young people. It wasn't until 1870 that the state took on responsibility for the education of its young. Local Education Authorities were founded in 1905.

The 1944 Education Act saw Church Schools making a choice between being *aided* or *controlled*. Voluntary Controlled schools are closer to their local authority. Aided schools have a majority of foundation Governors and, although part of the maintained sector, have a closer allegiance to the Church. Whether Voluntary Controlled or Voluntary Aided, Church Schools are part of the same family and have a distinctive nature rooted in the Gospel.

All schools are deeply moral places. These services are aimed not only at the Church "family" of schools but at *all* schools if they feel that a public act of introduction or affirmation is appropriate. These services are rooted in the Anglican tradition but that, in turn, is rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition that lies at, or near, the heart of all education in our country. These services are offered in that spirit.

These services are designed to reflect the flexibility that is vital for a living liturgy, especially that rooted in the needs of young people. It can, we hope, rest easily as a stand alone service in church but also be used in whole or in part during a family Eucharist in the school's local church or a school based act of worship.

They aim to help the school community present or affirm its head teacher to the wider (worship) community. As such, they will probably take place in the parish church where the new or existing head is "presented" to the wider community. In primary schools, where the parish community is relatively obvious, this may be easy. In the case of secondary schools the link between the school and its constituency may not be so obvious because it is wider and, perhaps, diffuse. It could be said that in these cases that there is even more need to make the connection between the school and its parish constituency. Wide advertising may make obvious the link between a secondary school and the community it serves and the school or a local church could then be used as the venue.

In the Diocese of Bath and Wells there are over 33,000 children in Church of England schools. This means that over 50% of children up to the age of eleven are taught in Church of England schools. The percentage of those over eleven is thirteen per cent.

Members of the advisory team of the Education Department of the Diocese of Bath and Wells would, of course, be more than happy to discuss any aspect of these services and offer advice

and help on how they can be adapted for use in your community.

## The Commissioning and Affirmation Services

### Introduction

The aim of the Commissioning service is to present a new head teacher to the wider community. The aim of the Affirmation service is to publicly reaffirm the work of an existing head. Both services also aim to be flexible so that they can stand alone or be incorporated into a Family Eucharist or other service. They aim, also, to involve all the members of the schools' "constituency": the staff, the pupils, the parents, the Governors and the wider community. This last takes the form of the local community but also of the Diocese and the LA. Outward and visible signs of partnership and mutual support are key to its success.

### The Services

Each service is divided into five sections.

#### The Commissioning

This section, after a brief, but expandable, introduction, sees the Incumbent asking each of the vital constituents to support their new Head teacher. The new Head starts, followed by parents, children, Governors, staff and the wider Christian community. It may be that the Incumbent will not be the only main contributor. Pupils could play a role. Or a representative from each "constituency" could ask the question of the others.

#### The Presentation of Gifts

Here the various bodies could give the new Head an outward and visible sign of his/her new role. Again, the number of groups presenting gifts could be expanded. The model here described keeps the number to three to emphasise the importance of the groups outside the school itself that will play a vital role in supporting the Head and the School: the Churchwardens on behalf of the Parish(es), the Diocesan Director on behalf of the Diocesan Bishop and the Diocesan Board of Education and the Local Authority Officer on behalf of the responsible LA.

#### The Intercessions

Again there is much opportunity for flexibility here. The pupils may play a greater role.

#### The Acclamation

This aims to be an act of union as all the people, young and old, local or Diocese or County wide, share a vision of our faith and how it is lived out by each of us as we meet and work and play.

## **The Blessing**

This brings the service to a close with another reminder of God's gift to us and our responsibility to Him and to each other.

## **Schools other than Church Schools**

The sort of public celebration and mutual support that these services offer will, we hope, be of value to Schools other than Church schools. As is said else where in this document, schools are very *moral* places and they are places that celebrate more than the everyday. They are vitally rooted in the world and yet they also all take account of the non utilitarian, the awareness of *otherness*, that lies at the heart of the educative process.

Schools need affirmation and celebration in their communities. Head teachers and, therefore staff and Governors, need affirming and celebrating in these same communities. These services seek to do that whether it is for Church or Community schools.

They are offered to you in this spirit.

## **Guests**

Some guests are named in the services themselves, ie the LA, the Diocese, but you may also like to consider inviting:

- other local churches;
- local political figures;
- early years representatives;
- head teachers of local secondary and primary schools;
- uniformed organisations.

## **A practical note**

These services are available on disc and via the Internet as well as paper copies. Electronic versions are available from the Diocesan Education Department from:  
[jayne.sims@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:jayne.sims@bathwells.anglican.org)

## **Finally**

The key note of each service is flexibility. Although the vision is that the services will be part of the life of the Church, for reasons stated above this may not always be possible or desirable. I hope that the *spirit* in which these services are offered is clear. I also hope that schools and worshipping communities will feel free to seek the advice of the Diocese of Bath and Wells Education Department when designing the best version of the service that suits their needs.

# The Affirmation

School's badge here

of

XXXXXXX

Head teacher

xxxxxxxxx Church of England School

Date

xxxxxxxxx Church

Time

## The Affirmation

**Incumbent** Education is a key part of the Church's mission in sharing the good news of the Gospel with all people. It recognises that all human experience presents opportunities for developing and deepening our love and knowledge of God and of others.

A, you have been the head teacher of B School for X years.

As the head teacher of B School you have a special responsibility to ensure that everyone in your school is valued and recognised as being created in the image of God and uniquely gifted by Him. You are also responsible for ensuring the school is rooted in Christian values, principles and beliefs and that worship and religious education are central to the whole life and work of the school.

Will you re commit yourself to this work?

**Head teacher** **I will, with the help of God.**

**Incumbent** *Parents*, you are your children's first educators and partners with the school in their education.

Will you commit yourselves to working with the Head teacher, staff and governors of B School by supporting them in their work as they seek to provide educational excellence for your children in a Christian context?

**Parents** **We will, with the help of God.**

**Incumbent** *Children*, will you promise to do your best to help your head teacher and the staff of your school?

**Pupils** **We will, with the help of God.**

**Diocesan Adviser** *Governors, will you re commit yourselves to supporting and ensuring that all pupils receive an education of quality in a Christian context?*

**Governors** **We will, with the help of God.**

**Incumbent** *Staff, will you re commit yourselves to the education and nurture of pupils in a Christian ethos and to working with and supporting your new head teacher?*

**Staff** **We will, with the help of God.**

**Incumbent** *As members of the body of Christ in this place, you have a specific responsibility for B School which was founded by this Church. Will you support the governors, head teacher, staff, pupils and parents with your prayers and active encouragement?*

**Congregation** **We will, with the help of God.**

## The Presentation of gifts

**Incumbent** *A, to be entrusted with the leadership and management of a Church School and the nurture of its pupils is a solemn trust. We pray that God will strengthen you, by His Grace, faithfully to fulfil this task.*

**Churchwardens** *On behalf of the Trustees and the local congregation we affirm you. We present you with the keys of B School as a symbol of your affirmation in headship. May God bless you in all that you do.*

### **Diocesan representative**

*On behalf of the Chairman and Board of Education of the Diocese of Bath and Wells, receive this Bible to mark your affirmation in headship. It is God's Word and the foundation of all true wisdom. Use it to guide and inspire you.*

### **Local Authority Officer**

*On behalf of the Chairman and Board of Education of the County of Somerset/Bath and North East Somerset/ North Somerset, receive this gift to mark your headship. It is a symbol of our partnership and support in your continuing work in this learning community.*

## The Intercessions

**Incumbent** Lord, give to A your special gifts of love, joy, wisdom, grace and understanding that he/she may serve your children with gladness to the honour and glory of your Holy Name.

**Congregation** **Pour out Your Spirit upon us.**

**Incumbent** Grant to A creativity in teaching and learning; insight and understanding in leadership and vision in management.

**Congregation** **Pour out Your Spirit upon us.**

**Incumbent** May he/she lead the school in the ways of Christ through the pursuit of equality, truth, justice, love and peace.

**Congregation** **Pour out Your Spirit upon us.**

**Incumbent** May he/she seek to bring peace to those in conflict, warmth to those in distress and an encouraging smile to all

**Congregation** **Pour out Your Spirit upon us.**

## The Acclamation

**Incumbent** There are varieties of gifts:

**Congregation** **but the same Spirit.**

**Incumbent** There are varieties of service:

**Congregation** **but the same Lord.**

**Incumbent** There are different kinds of working:

**Congregation** **but the same God is at work in all.**

**Incumbent** There is one body, one Spirit, one hope in God's call:

**Congregation** **one Lord, one faith, one baptism.**

**Incumbent** There is one God, Father of all, over all and in all:

**Congregation** **to whom Christ ascended on high.**

**Incumbent** Through his Spirit he gives us gifts: some are apostles, some are evangelists, prophets, pastors and teachers

**Congregation** so that we can minister together

**Incumbent** to build up his body:

**Congregation** to be mature in the fullness of Christ.

## The Blessing

**Incumbent:** Almighty God, who for the salvation of the world gives to his people many gifts and ministries to the advancement of his glory, stir up in you the gifts of His grace, sustain each one of you in your ministry; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us all, and those whom you love, now and for ever more. Amen

# The Commissioning

School's badge here

of

XXXXXXXXXX

Head teacher

xxxxxxx Church of England School

Date

xxxxxxx Church

7.30 pm

**An Order of Service  
for the Commissioning of Church of England Headteachers**

# The Commissioning

**Incumbent** Education is a key part of the Church's mission in sharing the good news of the Gospel with all people. It recognises that all human experience presents opportunities for developing and deepening our love and knowledge of God and of others.

A, you have been appointed as the new head teacher of B School.

As the head teacher of B School you have a special responsibility to ensure that everyone in your school is valued and recognised as being created in the image of God and uniquely gifted by him. You are also responsible for ensuring the school is rooted in Christian values, principles and beliefs and that worship and religious education are central to the whole life and work of the school.

Will you commit yourself to this work?

**Head teacher** **I will, with the help of God.**

**Incumbent** *Parents*, you are your children's first educators and partners with the school in their education. Will you commit yourselves to working with the Head teacher, staff and governors of B School by supporting them in their work as they seek to provide educational excellence for your children in a Christian context?

**Parents** **We will, with the help of God.**

**Incumbent** *Children*, will you promise to do your best to help your new head teacher and the staff of your school?

**Pupils** **We will, with the help of God.**

**Diocesan Adviser**

*Governors*, will you commit yourselves to supporting and ensuring that all pupils receive an education of quality in a Christian context?

**Governors** **We will, with the help of God**

**Incumbent** *Staff*, will you commit yourselves to the education and nurture of pupils in a Christian ethos and to working with and supporting your new head teacher?

**Staff** **We will, with the help of God.**

**Incumbent** *As members of the body of Christ in this place, you have a specific responsibility for B School which was founded by this Church. Will you support the governors, head teacher, staff, pupils and parents with your prayers and active encouragement.*

**Congregation** **We will, with the help of God.**

## The Presentation of gifts

**Incumbent** *A, to be entrusted with the leadership and management of a Church School and the nurture of its pupils is a solemn trust. We pray that God will strengthen you faithfully to fulfil this task.*

### **Churchwardens**

*On behalf of the Trustees and the local congregation, we welcome you. We present you with the keys of B School as a symbol of your headship. May God bless you in all that you do.*

### **Diocesan Adviser**

*On behalf of the Chairman and Board of Education of the Diocese of Bath and Wells, receive this Bible to mark your new headship. It is God's word and the foundation of all true wisdom. Use it to guide and inspire you.*

### **Local Authority Officer**

*On behalf of the Chairman and Board of Education of the County of Somerset/Bath and North East Somerset/North Somerset, receive this gift to mark your new headship. It is a symbol of our partnership and support in your work in this learning community.*

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**Incumbent** *Lord, give to A your special gifts of love, joy, wisdom, grace and understanding that he/she may serve your children with gladness to the honour and glory of your Holy Name.*

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**Incumbent** Through his Spirit he gives us gifts: some are apostles, some are evangelists, prophets, pastors and teachers

**Congregation** **so that we can minister together**

**Incumbent** to build up his body:

**Congregation** **to be mature in the fullness of Christ.**

## The Blessing

**Incumbent:** Almighty God, who for the salvation of the world, gives to his people many gifts and ministries to the advancement of his glory, stir up in you the gifts of His grace, sustain each one of you in your ministry; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us all, and those whom we love, now and for ever more. Amen