

Strategic Plan for Religious Education in the Diocese of Bath & Wells

July 2013

Context

In 1998 The General Synod and Archbishops' Council identified Church schools as standing at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation. In response to this a review group was set up, chaired by Ron Dearing, to review the achievements of Church of England schools and to make proposals for their future development. In 2001 'The Way Ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium' was published and to a large extent this report has defined the work of Diocesan Boards of Education for the last ten years.

Ten years on, and in part as a response to the National Society bicentenary celebrations, 'The Church School of the Future' review group was set up and chaired by Dr Priscilla Chadwick. The Rt Revd John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford, describes this report as a call to action to maintain the proud history of the Church of England's significant contribution to education in this country.

Introduction

The Church School of the Future Review (Chadwick 2011) identifies multiple challenges to Religious Education, across the school system. These include the exclusion of RE from the English Baccalaureate, the decrease in numbers of specialist teachers and Teacher Training courses, the freedom Academies have in deciding on their own RE syllabus, and the secularist attack on RE and faith schools. Despite these challenges, the Chadwick Review states the Church's intent to fight for RE in the current political and social environment and makes recommendations to the National Society, the Religious Education Council and Diocesan Boards of Education, with the aim of improving the teaching and learning in RE, and in particular of Christianity.

Rationale for a strategy for Religious Education in Bath & Wells

A SIAS inspector, quoted in the Chadwick review said: *'The main concerns I see as an inspector are around the superficiality of RE, because of a lack of understanding. I think there is a lack of subject knowledge, certainly in primary schools.'*

As a Diocese we are keen to endorse the aspiration of Chadwick, that 'The Church should not be satisfied until every church school is outstanding in this subject'. We aim to evaluate our current provision and extend this across all phases and key stages to provide continuity and progression. We will work in partnership with professional agencies and other faith groups, to improve the teaching and learning in religious education across the Diocese. (Diocesan education department development plan 2012-13)

In Bath & Wells it is important to respond to national issues, including those outlined in the report following the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) inquiry, published in March 2013. We will also encourage schools to be mindful of the National Society 'RE Statement of Entitlement' for pupils in Church of England Schools. We also intend to support schools in their preparation for the revised SIAMS inspection schedule, particularly the Voluntary Aided Schools where teaching and learning in RE is inspected.

We acknowledge the good work that it is going on in many of our schools. This strategy aims to sharpen our focus on standards of teaching and learning in RE and provide stronger support to those working in our church schools and academies.

Current provision and support for RE

- Termly newsletters for primary RE subject leaders (in addition to SACRE newsletters from RE consultant)
- Annual RE subject leaders' conference
- Training for NQTs and new RE subject leaders
- Termly training on an aspect of RE eg one of the major faiths, assessment, Foundation Stage RE
- RE staff meetings and INSET days as requested by schools
- In-school support for RE teachers and subject leaders as requested
- Awareness - raising of governor responsibilities for monitoring the provision of religious education
- South West writing group, looking at essential Christian teaching based on the Nicene Creed and a revision of the Festival Matters Resource
- Bath & Wells data contributed to a national survey of Diocesan training in RE and Worship (October 2012)
- Diocesan adviser membership of all three Local Authority SACREs and work with LA RE adviser
- Diocesan adviser attendance at National Society and local training for RE advisers
- Diocesan resource centre, including artefact collections and book boxes to support each unit of the Agreed Syllabus
- Ongoing support for Secondary RE departments in church schools and academies, through the work of an Associate Adviser
- Resource packs for use in Early Years/Foundation Stage, based on bible stories, Christian and other religious festivals

Development Plan for 2013-14

- Begin to develop RE area cluster meetings to support teachers and promote networking
- Plan the CPD brochure over an academic year, to allow for better plan staff training
- Explore working relationships with the Teaching Schools and Higher Education Institutions to extend CPD opportunities
- Promote the work of the current Children's Adviser in overseeing Early Years development in spirituality and awareness of faith, in schools and pre-schools
- Convene a meeting between secondary RE departments
- Promote better links between schools, to ensure continuity and progress in RE across phases and to share good practice, with particular regard to transition
- Encourage all Academies and Free Schools to adopt the locally agreed syllabus 'Awareness, Mystery and Value' to aid continuity, progression and shared training
- Engage with the 'Christianity Project' and its development and promotion of materials for church schools
- Raise awareness of the Diocesan Resource Centre, and new resources to support RE
- Encourage schools to celebrate the RE in their school through national and local competitions and obtain the RE Quality Mark
- Ensure RE is a focus for and in school visits
- Survey a sample of church schools to ascertain their needs for the development of RE
- Scrutinise the RE aspect of SIAS/SIAMS reports for the academic year 2012-13 and make recommendations
- Meet with LA advisers to discuss the quality of RE across the three SACREs