



ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

Introduction

Nelson Mandela said that education 'is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'. Education gives young people the power to choose how to live, the power to make a difference in the world and the power to shape their own destiny. As one former Secretary of State for Education put it, education 'allows us all to become authors of our own life stories'.

I am hugely proud of our schools which are outward facing, community serving and committed to the raising of standards across the board. At the heart of our schools (and central to all that we do) are our children - who are loved unconditionally, enabled ambitiously, supported compassionately and championed relentlessly. This is how the great power of education is unleashed.

The work of our teachers and school leaders is carried out against the backdrop of the aftermath of a major epidemic that disrupted the lives and schooling of millions of young people. This has coincided with the chronic underfunding of state education, the challenges in recruiting staff and the nightmare for some of our schools of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC). The resilience of those who work in education and their unshakable commitment helping children achieve and thrive are qualities to acknowledge and celebrate.

His Majesty's Government is committed to ensuring that children are safe, healthy, happy and treated fairly. This commitment is to be enshrined in its Children's Wellbeing Bill. In the Church of England, we put it very simply. We want children to flourish. Flourishing children in flourishing schools will be experiencing the liberating power of education. Flourishing children will become 'authors of their own life stories' and nothing will hold them back or prevent them from realising their full potential.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my first year as Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education. I have the enormous privilege of working with a first-rate Education Team. I have also been hugely impressed by all that I have seen during my many school visits. I am seeing the power of education at work – and it is awesome!

The Right Reverend Roger Morris

Bishop of Colchester & Chair of the Diocesan Board of Education



ORGANISATIONAL & FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION (DBE)

The DBE continues to focus on its duty to promote education, as required by Section 2(1) of the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021. This includes:

- promoting or assisting in the promotion of education in the Diocese that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England
- promoting or assisting in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the Diocese
- promoting or assisting in the promotion of church schools in the Diocese
- promoting co-operation between itself and other persons concerned with education in the Diocese.

The Diocesan Board of Education Scheme 2021 came into operation on 17th June 2022 as certified by the Archbishop's Council. At the Strategy Day on 11 September 2024, the DBE and Education Team reflected on the achievements of the previous 12 months and worked collaboratively on the production of the 24/25 strategic plan. During June 2024 the DBE engaged in a training day led by Professor Paul Miller, to further explore the opportunities available for embedding a strategic approach to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. There are currently 9 members on the Board of Education with 3 vacancies. The Board is chaired by Bishop of Colchester, The Right Reverend Roger Morris.

DBE Members

- DBE Chair: The Bishop of Colchester, The Right Reverend Roger Morris
- Bishops Appointment: Revd Rob Merchant, Dean of Mission, Ministry & Education
- Bishops Appointment: *Vacant*
- Barking Clergy: *Vacant*
- Barking Laity: *Vacant*
- Bradwell Clergy: Revd Sue Wise
- Bradwell Laity: Dr Gill Holmes
- Colchester Clergy: Revd Sara Batts-Neale
- Colchester Laity: *Vacant*
- Co-opted Member: Aleishia Lewis
- Co-opted Member: John Hayes
- Co-opted Member: Marlene Wylie
- Co-opted Member: Chris Speller

Please see <https://www.cdbe.org.uk/about/diocesan-board-of-education> to find out more about DBE Members and their role.

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THE CHELMSFORD DIOCESAN EDUCATION TRUST (CDET)

CDET is the incorporated company through which the DBE manages its relationship with our diocesan Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), The Vine Schools Trust, and our other MAT partners. There are currently 7 CDET Directors. CDET is chaired by Revd Rob Merchant, Dean of Mission, Ministry & Education. All statutory filing requirements have been met and CDET continues to report to the DBE three times a year.

Please see <https://www.cdbe.org.uk/about/chelmsford-diocese-educational-trust> to find out more about our CDET Directors.

DBE FINANCE

The DBE budget follows the Diocesan financial year of January to December. As an unincorporated board the budget is the responsibility of the Diocesan Board of Finance (DBF). Funding is provided from the DBF General Fund, as well as Restricted Income from Education investments and grants, including the Hockerill Foundation and St Monica's Trust. Revenues are generated from payment for services delivered under the Partnership Agreement, and a small amount of consultancy work.

There is a collaborative approach to the budget setting process with the DDE and Finance Director working well together. Reporting of management accounts is now well established, with Finance attending DBE meetings to present latest figures. There is a close working relationship between the Education and Finance teams, with regular transaction reports provided and reviewed to closely monitor spend against budget. This careful oversight of funding commitments means greater opportunities to think differently about how best to support our schools and work more closely with parishes.

DIOCESE OF CHELMSFORD VINE SCHOOLS TRUST

The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust has been through a significant period of improvement over the past few years following the appointment of a new CEO in 2020 followed by a new Executive Team. They have had a hugely successful year and the impact of these changes in leadership is now evident. The Trust is now sufficiently strong and well-resourced and is able to offer a range of high-quality services to schools. Auditors praised the new centralised finance structure; centralising finance means that there are high level staff members with exceptional knowledge that are able to support key stakeholders with effective decision making. Five expert Finance Partners focus solely on school finance, other areas such as HR, catering, IT, GDPR and estates are managed through the central teams. The staff wellbeing survey this year showed that 100% of staff who responded, believed that The Vine Schools Trust was a great organisation to work for.

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In 2019, 50% (12 schools) of the 23 Church of England Primary and Junior Schools were classed as being 'at risk' with only 9% (2 schools) being judged as secure. This meant that 12 of the schools were at risk of an Ofsted category, some of the Trust schools had not been judged to be 'good' in over 12 years, there was very little strength within the organisation. Targeted school improvement work has been undertaken resulting in eight positive Ofsted inspection outcomes this year alone. Currently **87% (20 schools) are judged to be 'good'** by Ofsted. This includes a school previously in 'special measures' having never received a good judgement since it was opened and two schools who had not been judged to be 'good' in over 12 years.

The Trust has also had four positive SIAMs inspections in the last two years, one school judged to be 'outstanding,' another with 'outstanding' quality of worship and two schools judged to be living up to their foundations as Church Schools.

Throughout this academic year, Ofsted reports have noted that, *'The Trust knows the schools very well. They hold the leaders to account through challenge and support...'* *'The Trust have high expectations...'* *'Together, school leaders, Trust leaders and the Trust Intervention board have brought about rapid and sustained improvements...'* *'The approach from the Trust ensures that pupils are at the centre of school improvement...'* *'The Trust and school have ensured that they promote pupils' mental health.'*

This has not been a year without challenge and the issues with RAAC in the Mistley Norman school building have continued. This has resulted in the movement of both Mistley Norman and Two Village schools into a neighbouring Trust, Canonium Learning Trust. The Trust believe that Canonium will have the focus and resource to better meet the needs of these two schools in terms of school improvement and the DfE new school building programme. Losing these two highly vulnerable schools from The Vine will mean that the Trust will have the capacity to better serve the large family of schools with their own vulnerabilities.

The next steps for the Vine are to build on these Ofsted 'good' judgements and to impact positively on pupil outcomes at KS2. Currently the Trust hold a legacy of underperformance, and planned strategies are in place to fill some vast gaps in pupil learning. This is evident in stronger outcomes in EYFS and KS1 this year. Work is needed over the upcoming school year to ensure that outcomes are in line or above national expectations for KS2.

Another focus for The Vine is to further develop the strategy for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Around 15% of the Trust pupils have SEND needs which is greater than the 12% nationally. With the recruitment of an Assistant CEO and a small team of 'Trust Inclusion Leads,' improving provision for the most vulnerable pupils will be a focus for the Trust.

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EDUCATION TEAM

The Director of Education is Carrie Prior. During 2023 the Assistant Director, Katrina Carroll was appointed. Katrina joined the team on 1st January 2024. The School Adviser team consists of a mixture of full and part time staff:

- Maire O'Regan – Grief & Trauma Lead, P/T -2 days
- Ruth Everett – RE Lead, P/T 3 days
- Helen Craig – Collective Worship Lead, P/T -2.5 days
- Richard Hopkins – Christian Vision Lead, P/T- 3 days
- Julie Sarti – Courageous Advocacy Lead, P/T – 2.5 days
- Ann Sharp – Early Years Lead, P/T -3 days

Additional support is provided by Mike Simmonds the Governance Consultant.

The Operations Team consists of four members of staff.

- IAG – Business Manager P/T – 3 days
- Peter Palmer – Buildings Officer F/T
- Dawn Wightman – Admin Officer P/T 3 days
- Jill Smylie – Admin Officer P/T 5 days am only

The team continue to develop a close working relationship with the Mustard Seed Team, supporting work with children and young people across the Diocese.

SCHOOLS

We currently support 139 Church of England schools across the Diocese, working with 8 different Local Authorities. This has increased by 1 school, since receiving confirmation, from the Regional Director Team, that Davenant Foundation Schools' request to be redesignated as a Church of England School had been approved. We also have affiliated partnerships with 2 additional schools and 1 independent preparatory school, all of whom have a Christian Foundation. This has decreased by 1 school due to Davenant Foundation School's significant change.



We are delighted with the positive response we receive from our schools with 96% signing up to our Partnership Agreement in 2023/24, a 3% increase from last year. This strengthens our relationships and ensures our School Advisers are making regular contact and offering additional support. Those schools not joining our Partnership Agreement continue to receive one keeping in touch visit per year.

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43% of our schools currently belong to one of the DBE Approved Multi-Academy Trusts. We work with 14 Multi Academy Trusts and 1 Stand Alone Academy Trust. Of those 14, 6 are Majority Church School Trusts being able to welcome both Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools.

Both Ofsted & SIAMS Inspections took place throughout the academic year. Ofsted undertook 37 Graded & Ungraded Inspections across the Diocese. Of those schools inspected 97% achieved or maintained their good judgement, while 5% achieved or maintained their outstanding judgement. Ongoing support from the Adviser Team is provided for those schools with Requires Improvement or Inadequate judgements. Looking at the overview of Ofsted Outcomes across the Diocese 91% of schools have a good or outstanding judgement, this is above the National figure of 88% released by the DfE in July 2024.

21 schools received their SIAMS Inspection during 2023/24. 100% of schools inspected in our Diocese received a Judgement 1 outcome indicating that the schools are living up to their foundation as a Church school, and are enabling pupils and adults to flourish. Nationally there have been 11 Judgement 2 outcomes, which indicate schools that have strengths, but also issues that leaders need to address as a matter of priority. This represents 1.5% of the total schools inspected and continues to mirror the percentage of ineffective judgements under the 2018 SIAMS Schedule.

BUILDINGS & ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Capital / School Condition Allocation (SCA) Projects

The DBE received an SCA grant allocation of £1.645m for the 2023/24 academic year and have completed a total of 8 projects. These included a full decarbonisation project at St Marys Saffron Walden (£448k) with Air Sourced Heat Pumps, a new heating and hot water system including HydroMX, solar roof panels, significant increase of insulation and replacement of all lighting to LED. The school is no longer reliant on fossil fuel and can start to reap the benefits of cost savings and a significantly reduced carbon footprint. We also carried out an environmental/cost reduction project (£341k) within one of our larger schools in Southend-on-Sea that included a new heating and hot water system, LED lighting throughout and water reduction measures.

A new roof was installed on a Brentwood School over the summer period (£802k). This will reduce the requirement of multiple buckets during rainy days and will significantly improve their heating costs due to the specification of high-grade insulated roofing materials. All our new roofs come with a 20-year manufacturer's warranty.

Due to the success of the pilot trial of HydroMX within the initial 8 VA schools we allocated funds to install the product into 25 further VA schools (£333k) to reduce both running costs and gas/oil usage helping towards our overall Diocesan carbon reduction targets. In most schools we also upgraded the radiator valve controls to allow the schools greater control of each classroom and area to further reduce usage. HydroMX has a warrantied lifespan of 25 years and is recyclable, therefore, will continue to assist the school in reduction of carbon and running costs for many years into the future.



In addition to the above we carried out a number of essential maintenance projects including emergency roof works to an older listed school hall and the installation of new automated main school gates for one of our London Borough schools where security and safeguarding was the main focus.



Land & Legal

Several standard land and legal matters have been completed over the year with the most notable being academisation applications. We currently have 5 schools going through the Academisation process that should complete subject to DfE timescales within the first two terms of the new academic year (2024/25). In addition, we have two schools that are being re-brokered between two existing Diocesan Trusts. This should be completed within the first term of the new academic year.

We continue to work with ECC on two outstanding Land Determinations from disposal of land and old school sites dating back to 2009 and 2010 with a combined value of circa. £310K payable to ECC.

Carbon Net Zero / Environmental

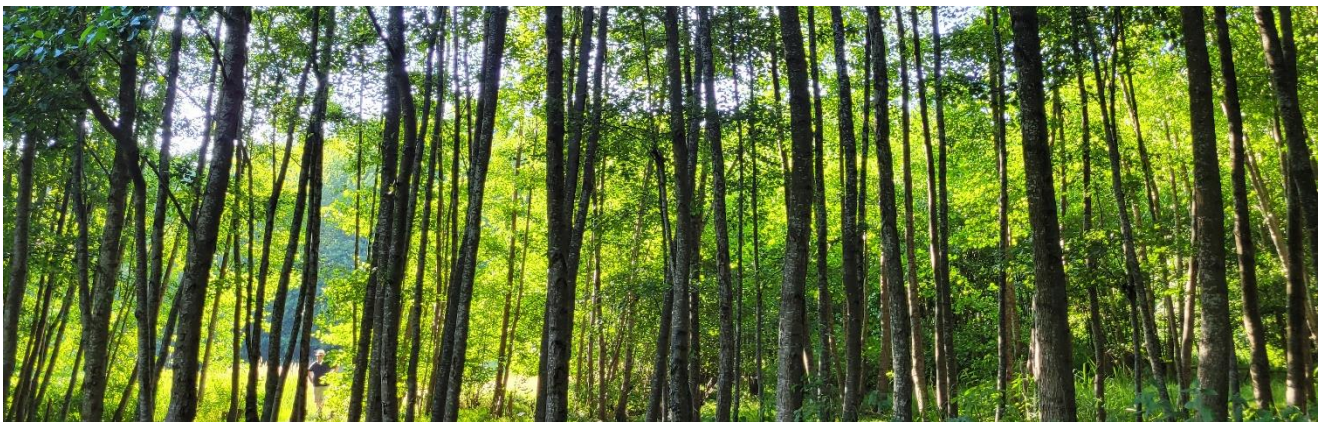
The DBE continue to maintain a focus on environmental projects moving towards the Carbon Net Zero goal. The following projects have been completed that will count towards our decarbonisation targets:

- £442k decarbonisation project for St Marys Saffron Walden. Funded with SALIX grant and Diocesan SCA.
- £341k environmental and efficiency improvements at St Marys Prittlewell. Funded with Diocesan SCA.
- £337k in total on installation and upgrading of oil and gas heating systems in 35 of 38 VA schools with HydroMX. Funded with Diocesan SCA.
- Most VA schools have now utilised their DfE energy grant toward the installation of LED lighting offering an improved brighter learning environment and a meaningful reduction in energy usage and costs.



We continue to explore the possibility of Solar PV to our school estate with recommended and approved partners whilst safeguarding the assets of our school buildings.

With increased focus on Carbon Net Zero we are starting to see the benefits of working with larger organisations and government departments, however, funding continues to be the most significant challenge. We continue to make the most of the funding we receive by ensuring we take into consideration the environmental impact of all building projects carried out, however, without additional grants or funding initiatives there is a fine balancing act between maintenance and repair of existing buildings vs investment of carbon reduction schemes.



RESOURCING SCHOOLS, FAMILIES & CHURCHES

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

The Education Team actively engage with national networking opportunities. This includes networks on Collective Worship, Governance, Admissions, RE & Growing Faith. The DDE attends National training including opportunities to work collaboratively with other DDEs around the country. This helps support and direct key strategic actions.

The DBE have been actively working on the Academisation Strategy for the Diocese. This was launched in Spring 2024 and was developed alongside advice and guidance from the Church of England's Education Office. The Strategy has been shared with school leaders, governors and MAT CEOs and prioritises the growth of Church Majority Mats whilst maintaining strong partnerships with all MAT Partners. The strategy is available at <https://www.cdbe.org.uk/support-for-schools/school-organisation/becoming-an-academy>

The DBE continues to respond to the recommendations in 'Lament into Action' and 'From Action to Real Change'. Equity & Justice is given a high profile in the Diocesan run Church School Leaders Course, advisers promote the Anti-Racist RE resources (RE Today) to schools, and best practice has been shared in Network Meetings. We signpost schools and leaders to the National 'Leaders Like Us' programme, an opportunity for all aspiring UKME leaders to engage in bespoke leadership training. Recent training



provided for the DBE and the Education Team by Professor Paul Miller has developed thinking to allow for the strategy to be further embedded in 2024/25. The Education Team are currently planning a 2025 conference on the theme of Diversity, Equity & Justice.

We are delighted that many of our School Leaders are engaging with the CofE National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). Several are also supporting the programmes by offering their skills and expertise as facilitators and coaches. We continue to signpost both senior and middle leaders to the courses.

GOVERNANCE

Our Governance support is provided by the Governance Consultant, Mike Simmonds. Mike provides advice on governance issues directly to schools, as well as to the School Adviser team. Mike has worked closely with schools where conversations with headteachers and/or chairs of governors have helped them tackle challenges they were facing. Each term a range of virtual training courses is provided (increasingly jointly with the Diocese of Chichester) as well as input into Curates training and sessions for new headteachers. All sessions are accompanied by an online Learning Page providing further resources.

The Governance Podcast (a collaboration with the Diocese of Chichester & Liverpool) is a valuable resource and a further way to support governance, share ideas, training information and reflective material. A three-part series on the new SIAMS Framework was particularly popular.

An External Review of Governance (reviewing their overall practice and effectiveness) has been provided for one School, bringing about positive improvement. Mike also developed and managed the process of the (re)appointment of Foundation Governors on behalf of the DDE and DBE. The new DBE policy of governors usually only serving two terms has been introduced effectively in a few contexts.

In addition to financial constraints and building issues, governing boards face the ongoing challenges of recruiting foundation governors, dealing with parental complaints, and being prepared for inspections. Training and supportive conversations are enabling governance boards to respond effectively.

The Diocese's unique online Induction Course, which all Foundation Governors are expected to complete, was launched in the Autumn term. Conversations have continued to provide this for other dioceses.

Support to schools in multi-academies trusts is provided by the Education Team, and all governance virtual training is available for Local Governing Boards. Assistance with the nomination process of Foundation Governors has been taken up by one trust and is still available to all.

Appreciation must be shown for the hundreds who volunteer as school governors, trustees, local board members (academies) and particularly Foundation Governors representing both their local Parish Church and the DBE. They are integral to the strategic leadership and success of the Church School family of schools.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The RE Lead for the Education Team is Ruth Everett, RE development has focused on equipping the school advisers to support their schools to develop religious literacy, ensuring they can hold a balanced and informed conversation about religion and worldviews, including non-religious worldviews while engaging with curriculum expectations and meeting the Diocesan Guidelines for Religious Education (January 2024). Ruth has also engaged with the wider conversation of RE in the curriculum and ensured that all schools have access to support. This has included supporting identified Trust RE Leads, and leaders across Primary and Secondary.

RE support was provided through ongoing RE Lead meetings, including a joint Secondary Meeting with St Albans and Southwark Diocese in the summer, this will continue into next academic year. Training has been delivered on assessment principles and progression in RE, joint RE audits with school advisers, reviewing of school documentation and feedback to schools and Trusts. Our relationship with RE departments in secondary schools has been further embedded.

Ruth continues to engage with National RE issues and facilitates opportunities to engage our leaders and celebrate achievements. Many Church schools access training and resources through NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education) and access resources of the national RE Hubs website.

Ruth has further developed contact and representation of the eight SACRE's (Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education), providing support to those taking on the role. Regular opportunities for our SACRE representatives to meet with the RE Lead have developed. Ruth continues to be a member of the Religion and Worldviews working group from the Church of England Education Office.

Finally, we have actively engaged with other partners within the Diocese and beyond to explore opportunities to ensure all pupils from Nursery to Sixth Form have access to high quality RE. Alongside this Ruth has worked with AREIAC (Association of Religious Education Inspectors and Consultants), engaging with research reading and new pathways to link practicing teachers with research, contributing to the annual conference, sitting as a member of the executive committee (join chair), and accessing resources to share with strategic leads of RE.

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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The Collective Worship lead for the Education Team is Helen Craig. The highlight of the school year has been the second year of our Primary Leavers Service on the theme of 'Rooted in God's Love' for Year 6 pupils at Chelmsford Cathedral. Helen worked in conjunction with the Mustard Seed Team and the Cathedral Education Team. We were delighted that there was a Bishop at each service to lead a short talk and present a holding cross. Due to high demand for places at these events, we increased our pupil numbers. Over 550 children from across the Diocese attended the events where they engaged in Prayer station activities and attended a service.



Schools have also been offered free termly virtual Collective Worship Network Meetings. These sessions have covered Spirituality in Collective Worship and include sharing resources that will strengthen practice in schools. We have also supported training of new clergy to develop their understanding of Collective Worship in schools. We continue to forge stronger links with other Diocesan Collective Worship Leads to develop our Collective Worship Practice. Collective Worship Leads from across the country meet termly to share good practice and focus on areas of development. There were three meetings in 2023/24. These focused on EYFS and Worship, Flourishing Spirituality through Worship and Global Neighbours Collective Worship support. This information is then shared with other members of the Education Team and with schools through Network meetings and school visits. Helen has also attended training led by the Diocese of Oxford. This training allows Chelmsford Diocese to share a resource to support spirituality in our schools called 'Spacemakers'. This will be shared with schools in 2024/2025.

EARLY YEARS

The Early Years Adviser for the Education Team is Ann Sharp. Ann has been visiting existing toddler groups to provide support, as well as new toddler groups across the Diocese, this has included supporting them to introduce Christian prayers and songs into their group if they wish. Sadly, some pre-schools have closed this year as funding and staff recruitment is becoming difficult for churches to manage, but Ann has helped the teams to look at other ways the churches can offer groups for families of under-fives. Ann also supports staff and managers with well-being and recruitment.

Two Church schools invited Ann to visit. During those visits she worked with the reception classes and provided support on exploring the establishment of a preschool on site. Ruth Everett and Ann have collaborated on a bespoke training course called 'Early Years & Christian Distinctiveness', this was delivered in June to a small group of Headteachers and Early Years leaders. It was well received and plans are in place for the course to run again in the autumn term.



In October, along with the wider Mustard Seed Team, a training day was held for new curates focusing on “talking and listening to children.” This was a good event and is going to be included in the training for the next intake of curates. Ann also wrote a training programme entitled “baptism and confirmation” that was delivered this year. Joint initiatives between the Mustard Seed Team and Education Team have been highly successful including the Year 6 Leavers Service and the Schools Bradwell Pilgrimage.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

The Learning and Development Programme for academic year 2023/24 provided a selection of networking opportunities including events, briefings, training courses and programmes for church school leaders, educators and their pupils. The programme is led by our Schools Adviser team.

The programme offers a wide range of support and development for:

- Headteachers and school leaders
- Governors
- Schools within the SIAMS Inspection window
- Religious Education Leaders
- Collective Worship Leaders
- Newly qualified teachers

Our programme has been facilitated via a mix of in-person and online offerings. 650 delegates registered for 38 learning sessions, courses and multi-session programmes, with an attendance rate of 81%. With free-of-charge attendance for all Church of England schools in our Diocese, bookings and engagement have significantly increased on previous years.

EVENTS PROGRAMME

Our Events programme for staff and pupils continues to expand. During the summer term we enjoyed holding the Year 6 Leavers Services and the Secondary Schools Music Event in Chelmsford Cathedral. The Bradwell Schools Pilgrimage took place over three days in July and is now well established. We held a successful public Art Exhibition within the Cathedral where pupils from our schools were invited to submit artwork, poetry and sculpture on the theme of Creative Courageous Advocacy, as well as a Pupil Justice Day focusing on Growing Young Leaders in the spring term. In June we held a Reflection Day for Headteachers. This is a day of reflection away from the busy school environment and a chance to focus on individual wellbeing. In July, a Service of Thanksgiving for leaving Headteachers provided an opportunity to give thanks for their commitment and dedication to our Church of England schools. A Commissioning Service took place in September to welcome Headteachers new to our Diocesan schools.



COURAGOUS ADVOCACY

The Courageous Advocacy lead for the Education Team is Julie Sarti. Schools have been keen to develop their work in this area, and we continue to work with them to encourage a deeper understanding of global injustice, equipping children to tackle this and become courageous advocates for change.

Our collaboration with Christian Aid is growing stronger all the time – and we have had good attendance at the six network meetings that we have jointly run this year, to encourage and support schools to take part in the accredited Global Neighbours scheme. We now have several schools who have either achieved, or are in the process of accreditation for bronze, silver and even a gold award. This work will continue into the new year - and we hope to be one of the first to become an accredited Global Neighbours diocese.

In mid-December, the Creative for the Climate young people's art exhibition took place in the Houses of Parliament. This was a joint project run by Christian Aid, Oxfam, CAFOD, Send My Friend to School and the Climate Coalition. Children created artwork to demonstrate how they felt about all that they had learned. Eight of our schools in the Chelmsford Diocese submitted their work and we were delighted when pupils from two of our schools – St Peter's C of E Primary school in Sible Hedingham and Great Waltham C of E Primary school – were then selected as part of a small team of young people from across the country, to curate the exhibition.

In February 2024, we held our first pupil justice summit, on the theme 'Growing Future Leaders'. The day was designed and led by Aleishia Lewis, with percussion and drumming workshops for each element, led by musician and educator, Mark Cecil. The event culminated in a musical performance and a moment for the delegates to share their reflections about leadership for the common good.

Further collaboration with Oxfam led to two of our primary schools - Colne Engaine and Holy Trinity Halstead - being chosen to create of a beautiful Climate Justice banner which was displayed at Glastonbury Festival in June 2024. We also introduced schools to Citizens Essex and are delighted that there is a thriving partnership with The Cathedral School, with some brilliant courageous advocacy work taking place.

In this year of launching courageous advocacy projects across our schools, a highlight was the Creative for Courageous Advocacy Exhibition which we held at Chelmsford Cathedral during the summer term. We were delighted when we received some truly inspiring contributions from 33 of our schools, to share their messages of courageous advocacy across a wide range of issues. We were thrilled that so many people came to visit the exhibition.





GROWING FAITH

Ruth Everett is the Growing Faith link for the Education Team. Ruth has been working collaboratively on three specific projects (Serving the Local Schools Network, Prayerfully Learning Together & the Bradwell Pilgrimage). In addition, Ruth has been working in partnership with the Mustard Seed Team contributing to seasonal collective worship resources that support Home, School and Church, delivering a course on 'Christian Distinctiveness in Early Years' with Ann Sharp and has attended the Growing Faith National Event in January. This has led to consideration about how to engage effectively with the Difference Resource for Schools.

Serving the Local Schools Network

Working with Emma Anderton, this network ran from April 2023 – April 2024. It involved a national session followed by the delivery of a Local Network. The purpose of this network was to provide peer support for people working in their local schools, to equip and empower churches to serve their local school, to share stories, ideas, resources and encouragement, to broaden horizons of what is possible and to build relationships and regional support.

The sessions facilitated by Emma and Ruth provided reflection, conversations and identification of further lines of enquiry within our Diocese. The content included exploring what schools are already doing and currently facing, the importance of relationships and building trust, chaplaincy, SIAMS, Christian vision and partnering with other organisations.

Prayerfully Learning Together

This project involved working with Dot Salmon (during Autumn Term) /Belinda Ramsey and members of para-organisations (Christian Education Project, Barking Area, CYO Colchester, Colchester Area and Brentwood Schools Workers Christian Trust, Bradwell Area). During the first year of this project Ruth overseen and delivered input on research, developed questions for pupil interviews, shared knowledge of schools, and met regularly to review information gathered from partners and to frame the next steps. Engagement in this project, with a focus on prayer, has also enabled Ruth to begin to explore the teaching of prayer within our schools.

Bradwell Pilgrimage

Being part of the planning team throughout this year has enabled active engagement. This resulted in school advisers leading a planned session during the four days. Ruth contributed to the development of workshops and supported Emma Anderton throughout the planning and delivery. This opportunity will be further developed next year with the education team planning and leading a session.





GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

Over half term in October 2023, a group of 12 teachers and school leaders - and two Diocesan School Advisers - were lucky enough to spend the week working alongside colleagues in schools in the Kenya Diocesan areas of Embu, Kirinyaga, Mbeere and Meru.

The group spent time developing projects based on one or more of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, both in our own schools and in our partner schools in Kenya, working with children and their teachers in both settings, to develop long lasting and meaningful partnerships.

The Education Team continue to keep in touch with Kenya via our Global Partnerships School Advisor, Julie Sarti. Julie is in regular contact with the Education Secretaries for Embu, Kirinyaga and Mbeere and with various head teachers in Kenya. Every participating school continues to build the relationship – and we meet regularly to keep this commitment strong, sharing ideas and experiences.



We have also managed to form two new partnerships with schools that were previously not involved – and we are currently exploring links for three more schools. We look forward to nurturing these to grow and develop in the coming year.

Julie is working with Sandra Eldridge, the Diocesan Environmental Officer and Evelyn Murithi, a priest from the Diocese of Mbeere, to explore further connections and partnerships with our schools and churches, through the climate justice agenda. We are also pleased to report that Julie Sarti has been invited to work in partnership with Chrisitan Aid, to support development of resources to encourage global school partnerships in schools across the UK.

GRIEF & TRAUMA SUPPORT

The Education Team continue to provide support, training and resources for our schools enabling them to support their pupils with issues linked to grief and trauma. The model Bereavement Policy is available for schools on the DBE website. Maire O'Regan, as the Grief & Trauma lead, has supported schools this academic year, who have suffered tragedies within their communities. This included staff training, CPD and counselling for individuals. Well-being training continues termly with all advisers so that they are skilled to support all schools in the diocese, during stressful and challenging times.



FUTURE PLANS

In the academic year 2024/25 there are several key priorities for the DBE. These form a detailed Strategic plan covering the focus areas of children & young people, mission, school improvement, sustainability, school leaders, governance, and school estate. The DBE have committed to focusing on:

- Ensuring all Church of England schools live up to their foundation as Church schools, enabling children and adults to flourish.
- Securing a rich experience and understanding of Christianity and other world faiths, along with the opportunity to be spiritually curious, allowing children and young people to explore and develop their own worldview.
- Providing children and adults the opportunity to encounter Collective Worship that is inclusive, invitational, inspiring and exemplifies the principles of Christian hospitality.
- Promoting and facilitating outstanding leadership and governance which supports excellence in schools and Multi Academy Trusts.
- Actively seeking to ensure that each and every child and young person is treated with dignity, and provided with the opportunities to thrive and flourish.
- Embracing academic rigour and encouraging high outcomes within a wider framework that includes spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development.
- Enabling schools to develop strong, vibrant and sustainable partnerships with key stakeholders including the Local Authority, MATs, other schools, churches and homes.
- Supporting children and young people to be courageous advocates, seeking to provide them with the skills, tools, confidence and opportunity to speak up and take action on issues of justice.
- Prioritising equity, diversity, belonging, inclusion and justice at every opportunity, including working to dismantle systemic racism and discrimination.
- Equipping clergy and parishes to work collaboratively with children and young people in early years settings, church and community schools, higher and further education colleges and universities across the Diocese.

