

Church School and Anglican Distinctiveness. April 2018.

What does it mean to be a Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School?

It includes a wholehearted commitment to placing faith, spiritual development and the Christian ethos at the heart of every aspect of the school. It should however be noted that a Church of England school is not a faith school. A Church of England school differs from those schools and groups which seek to promote their faith to those of that faith. Church of England schools are here to provide high-quality education to all - within a non-proselytising but overt Christian community. The approach to the Christian faith is based on the Anglican tradition of the interplay of Scripture, Reason and Tradition.

Such a school takes seriously the reality of spiritual experience and the value of involvement in a religious community - which may, or may not, be the local Anglican church. The context should be a Christian framework, while recognizing the importance of spiritual development of pupils whose religious conviction and experience lies outside the Christian tradition.

- For the children, staff, parents and governors, the role of a religious faith in a person's life is taken seriously. There is a wholehearted commitment to putting the Christian faith at the heart of the curriculum and the Christian ethos permeates the whole educational experience. Christian values are explicit and articulated. There is no compulsion to believe in any particular faith but the staff and governors try to ensure that Religious Education and Collective Worship are well resourced and of a high standard and that during the children's time at the school they experience a number of different acts of worship.
- Involvement in the local Anglican Church (St. Mary's Masham) is valued and encouraged but not compelled; examples of this include:

Year 6 children attending the Wednesday morning Communion service; this service is structured to be appropriate to their age and provides a link between the children and the regular St. Mary's congregation. Before they attend for the first time a preparation session is held in school.

Throughout the year children and staff take an active part in services in St. Mary's Church; these services include Christmas, Easter, and Leaver's Service and Harvest. Our children are given the opportunity to take an active part in the monthly Family Service during term-time. These experiences provide our children with occasions for reflection whilst promoting confidence and articulation.

Other examples of church/school links include: 'A walk through Holy Week' (a workshop based exploration of Holy week and Easter organised and led by members of the church), 'Questions for God' (where the children have drawn up questions they would like to ask God and the Vicar – or one occasion the Archbishop of York – attempted to answer them), links between the school and church choirs, the older children taking part in a short service by the War Memorial on November 11th and reading out the names of all commemorated thereon, and Confirmation Preparation being offered to all Year 6 children and the meetings normally taking place in the school at the end of the school day.

What effect does this have on the life of the school?

- a holistic approach to developing the whole school community, supported by a strong sense of vision and direction
- valuing individuals within the school:
through a belief in their potential
by forgiveness and in caring for pupils while also challenging them to grow in spiritual, intellectual and emotional maturity
and by encouraging the development of self-respect and respect for others.
fostering the growth of relationships within and beyond the school community based on a commitment to truth and reality and underpinned by a sense of accountability (to God, to the school and to the local community).
- there will be physical evidence that it is a Church of England School – this includes a cross in the entrance and a prayer corner in each classroom

Collective worship is at the heart of daily life where members of the school community meet in reverence and fellowship to develop a rich spiritual awareness, insightful understanding of faith and respect for the beliefs of others. Several times a week all pupils will meet together for worship at least once a week they will be joined by all the staff. The daily act of collective worship is of fundamental importance to a Church school. It is required to fit with the religious character of the school's foundation. In other words the law on collective worship in a community school, that it "should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" does not apply in a Church school, where it should be clearly Christian. There will be a clear focus on Christian beliefs and festivals. Collective Worship will relate to the pupils and their religious development and experience. It will contribute to learners' understanding of Christian theological concepts and beliefs at an appropriate level, reflect the Trinitarian nature of Christianity, have a strong focus on the person of Jesus Christ and give the Bible a significant place.

The daily worship within the school will be one of the key activities contributing to the sense of community and strong Christian ethos that is a feature of Anglican schools.

- Collective Worship will:
- be Anglican and inclusive.
- be curricular, reflecting the broad basis of the National Curriculum and RE.
- be educational.
- contribute to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- have a sense of occasion.
- be shaped to meet the needs of the school.
- be led by a variety of people, including clergy and members of St. Mary's Church.

What will a distinctive contribution of the Anglican tradition include?

- using the Bible as a source for inspiration and learning
- reflecting on the use of Christian symbols in worship
- observing the cycle of the Anglican year
- draw on the liturgical richness of the Anglican tradition through clear and consistent structure
- Identifying a collection of prayers, (including the Lord's Prayer), collects, hymns and psalms to create a framework for worship
- occasional special services reflecting the pattern and order of Anglican worship
- use of meditation and silence
- celebration of shared values and beliefs
- learning traditional responses used by Anglicans

The spiritual development of pupils lies at the heart of the curriculum of a Church school. The context is a Christian framework, while recognizing the importance of spiritual development of pupils whose religious conviction and experience lies outside the Christian tradition.

Pupils who are developing spiritually are likely to be developing some or all of the following characteristics:

- a set of values, principles and beliefs, which may or may not be religious, which inform their perspective on life and their patterns of behaviour
- an awareness and understanding of their own and others' beliefs
- a respect for themselves and for others
- a sense of empathy with others, concern and compassion
- an ability to show courage in defence of their beliefs
- a readiness to challenge all that would constrain the human spirit - for example, poverty of aspiration, lack of self-confidence and belief, moral neutrality or indifference, force, fanaticism, aggression, greed, injustice, narrowness of vision, self-interest, sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination
- an appreciation of the intangible - for example, beauty, truth, love, goodness, order, as well as of mystery, paradox and ambiguity
- a respect for insight as well as for knowledge and reason
- an expressive and/or creative impulse
- an ability to think in terms of the 'whole' - for example, concepts such as harmony, interdependence, scale, perspective
- an understanding of feelings and emotions and their likely impact.

Schools that are encouraging pupils' spiritual development are likely to be:

- giving pupils the opportunity to explore values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and the way in which they impact on people's lives
- encouraging pupils to explore and develop what animates themselves and others
- giving pupils the opportunity to understand human feelings and emotions, the way they impact on people and how an understanding of them can be helpful
- developing a climate or ethos within which all pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected
- accommodating difference and respecting the integrity of individuals

- promoting teaching styles which value pupils' questions and give them space for their own thoughts, ideas and concerns and enables pupils to make connections between aspects of their learning
- encouraging pupils to relate their learning to a wider frame of reference - for example, asking 'why', 'how' and 'where' as well as 'what'
- monitoring in simple, pragmatic ways the success of what is provided

Religious Education

High-quality religious education should continue to be central to the distinctiveness of Masham School and our work. To do this credibly staff and governors must be seen to invest resources in RE, subject leadership and the delivery of teaching and learning. Some governors have taken part in R.E. training alongside members of staff.

Religious Education will have a high profile within the school curriculum. The RE curriculum will be rich and varied and enable learners to acquire a thorough knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith through a wide range of learning opportunities. Links with the Christian values of the school will be intrinsic to the RE curriculum and subject leadership will have the highest level of subject expertise. The diocesan syllabus is used.

RE will offer opportunities to think deeply around questions of faith and belief and will enable all children to develop an age-appropriate understanding of the person and teaching of Jesus Christ, it will work across the curriculum to develop awe and wonder and there will be time to reflect.

Staff and pupils will understand the nature and purpose of prayer and reflection and the part this may play within an individual's life and in the life of the worshipping community.

Teaching about the Anglican liturgical year is included in Religious Education.

Children will gain knowledge and experience of a range of characteristics of being rooted in the Anglican tradition, e.g. the parish system - a church called to serve all in its locality – examples include local provision for Weddings and Funerals for all who seek them and other civic occasions in which the Church is seen to play a pivotal role. At a national level pupils may develop some knowledge of the Church's involvement in national events such as coronations, royal weddings, and national thanksgivings etc. arising from its role as the established Church.

Children will also gain an age appropriate understanding of the valuing of sacraments of Baptism, Marriage and Holy Communion; the ordering of ministry (bishops, priests, deacons and the ministry of lay people). Pupils should be offered opportunities to experience these sacraments in ways that they can learn from them as well as about them. There should be a sense not just of the rituals themselves, but of their significance in the life of Church and its members and, where appropriate, to their own lives.

Anglican belief holds that the Holy Scriptures 'contain all things necessary to salvation' and that its common faith can be summarised in the historic Creeds (especially the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds); so knowledge and understanding of the Bible and the Creeds may be communicated at appropriate levels to pupils.

Children will be given opportunities to learn from the past and those who have trodden the path of faith before them. They might do this through learning of prominent Anglicans (e.g. William Wilberforce, Mary Williams, Mary Sumner, Desmond Tutu); or Anglican projects (e.g. The Children's Society, Church Mission Society – drawing, where possible, on local expertise), through discovering the story of St. Mary's Church, local saints (e.g. Wilfrid, Cuthbert, Aidan) and through dialogue with older members of the parish family.

Across the whole curriculum the school will prepare children for life as global citizens and responsible stewards in a rapidly changing world and religiously diverse country which includes the acceptance of those of different faiths, cultures and races.

Moral development

Moral development needs to take place within the context of Christian values.

Sex education should take place in a context that promotes the values underlined in Christian marriage and the integrity of each person as created by, and in the image of, God. The diocesan syllabus is used and notice is taken of 'Valuing All God's Children' – guidance for Church of England Schools on challenging homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, which is published by the Church of England Education Office.

Pupils who are morally aware are likely to be developing an ability to distinguish right from wrong, based on knowledge of the moral codes of the Christian faith and have the confidence to act consistently in accordance with their own principles.

Church schools should contextualize guidance on moral development in terms of the Christian understanding of creation and humankind this will include the ability to reflect on, consider and celebrate the wonders and mysteries of life.

Pupils who are developing morally will be acquiring:

- a knowledge and understanding of traditional and Christian moral rules
- a general willingness to accept and adhere to those rules
- an awareness of the limitations of such rules
- developing a willingness to make an effort to understand, and where necessary forgive, themselves and others

What is distinctive about moral development in a Church School?

- A Church School will place recognition of the unique value of each individual as a child of God securely at the centre of the life of the school.
- It will also set a commitment to living out the challenge of Jesus' teaching as well as exploring the commonly agreed norms in society.
- The Church school will help pupils recognize they are all pilgrims on a journey but they have a tradition, the Church and the Gospel to guide them.

Citizenship Education

The inclusion of citizenship education at each Key Stage will have a distinctive application for Church schools; it will be reflected in collective worship and will reinforce links between the school and its communities. Citizenship, however it is defined, is linked with belonging and brings with it rights and responsibilities. If it is defined and applied universally across the board, confirming the same rights and responsibilities upon all, then there will be a moral obligation to work out what is meant by 'citizenship' in dialogue with the poorest and the least powerful. Good citizenship as good moral and social development may charge Christians to challenge society. The moral values supported in a Church school may encourage pupils to challenge the perceived values of society. The prophetic nature of the gospel will encourage the school to engage pupils in challenging exclusion, social injustice, unfairness and in respecting moral values.

Leadership and Management

School leaders – both staff and foundation governors – will be able to articulate an explicit Christian vision and say how this vision is implemented in the life of the school and how this vision is lived out in their own lives.

The governors should aim to appoint staff with the ability and commitment to maintain and develop the Christian foundation of the school.

A strong partnership between the Parish Church and the School should be mutually beneficial. The relationship between the Headteacher and incumbent is critical: clergy training and the appointment of Headteacher and incumbent should reflect this importance.

There are strong links with the Diocese of Leeds and its education team. There is a sense of belonging between the school, parish and diocese.

Partnerships

When the school works with new partners we must ensure that these partnerships do not endanger the distinctiveness, core values and Christian ethos which is at the heart of a Church school.

A good Church School should:

- not be apologetic about its presence, or its commitment to an education driven by more than economic and utilitarian pressures
- when considering the school curriculum include 'well-being' indicators addressing the Christian nature of the school
- remember that the Christian faith is not an isolationist, world-denying religion but finds its true expression in community
- recognize that at the heart of all the social relationships in a Church school is the person of Jesus Christ
- encourage pupils to recognize and respect cultural diversity as all are created in the image of God
- develop an awareness that, in the words of St Paul, there are three things that last forever: 'faith, hope and love: but the greatest of them all is love'. (1 Corinthians 13.13)

The school should continually ask:

- is our Church school a servant community, identifying the needs of others in our midst and further afield, nationally and internationally?
- does our Church school emphasize sufficiently the love of God; the love of one's neighbour; the pursuit of truth and justice; the challenge of service and duty; and the experience of trust and forgiveness?
- finally – and most critically – is every child enabled to flourish in their potential as a child of God?

Legal requirements

With a Voluntary Aided School, such as Masham, there are various legal differences, for example regarding the appointment of governors and finance - the governors have to fund 10% of all capital works and St. Mary's Church operate a trust fund to meet this liability.

The governors employ the staff, are responsible for the admissions to the school, and determine the content of the religious education syllabus.

The Governing Body includes governors nominated by the Church and the Local Authority and others elected by the parents and the staff; the governors nominated by the Church are always in the majority.

In staff appointments Foundation Governors should form a majority of the appointment committee.

RE and collective worship must be in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.

Denominational inspection (SIAMS) will take place

The Admission Policy may include allocation of some places on the basis of faith.

Monitoring of Anglican Distinctiveness

This will include

- an annual report by the Headteacher to the governors
- governor observation of Collective Worship
- governors listening to the pupil voice by meeting with a group of pupils to discuss what difference it makes that Masham Primary is a church school