



Work of the Board of Education—an Overview for Synod

Purpose of the ODBE

The Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE) serves the Local Authority (LA) areas of Bracknell, Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Reading, Slough, West Berkshire, Windsor and Maidenhead, and Wokingham. There are 284 Church of England schools across the Diocese serving 58,000 pupils.

The ODBE, like other diocesan boards of education in England, has the following main responsibilities:

- to promote excellent education which is consistent with practice of the Church of England;
- to promote the development of religious education and collective worship in schools of the Diocese;
- to support church schools and to advise the governors, trustees of church educational endowments and others concerned with matters affecting these church schools;
- to promote co-operation and partnership between the Board and bodies or persons concerned in any respect with education in the Diocese.

The ODBE is committed to the education of the whole person to their fullest potential, to the development of moral and spiritual understanding, to the uniqueness of the individual and to the education of all within the maintained system. It works within statutory education on behalf of the Diocese of Oxford in developing a Christian vision of education. It fulfils this commitment to all schools through the provision of a range of advice and support.

Our Work in Schools

Through our advisory services ODBE promotes RE, Collective Worship and the spiritual development of pupils. The work of the advisory team also focusses on school improvement in order to support schools in dealing with the requirements of Ofsted inspection and (where appropriate) relationships with HMI. It ensures that Church schools are provided with specialist support for building development and legal matters. Among the churches of the Diocese, the Board promotes Church related education and provides advice for clergy, governors and parishes in support of their schools.

The vision and priorities of the Diocese and the pastoral role of the Church underpin all the work of the ODBE. More about this vision especially 'Living Faith for the Future' can be found on the Diocese of Oxford website.

Service Level Agreement (SLA)

Most church schools subscribe to the diocesan Service Level Agreement (SLA). As part of this agreement, church schools receive regular visits from their adviser. The diocesan team also offers regular training and visits for clergy, governors and staff. This includes pre- and post- SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) support. The new SLA has been in schools since April 2016 and to date 70% of schools have bought in for the next academic year. We were acutely aware of the risk to the SLA in the light of significant budget cuts.

Academies

In recent months there has been a significant shift in the context within which our schools work. The Education and Adoption Act came into force in April 2016 perhaps the most important part of which provides for schools in special measures to be directed to become academies and for schools to be identified as 'coasting'. This is

alongside the white paper Educational Excellence Everywhere which laid out plans for all schools to become academies. The 'u-turn' which followed this did not really change the intent of the paper, just the language. The policy still stands. We are keen to support any school which wishes to explore academy options – more information can be found at <http://www.oxford.anglican.org/schools/academy-resources>

Governance

The ODBE continues to recognise the importance of developing and supporting governance within the Diocese. This priority is one that is echoed on a national scale. Long and short term planning is committed to ensuring that the right opportunities and challenges are in place for our Governing Bodies to enable them to be effective and to have a positive and visionary impact on all outcomes for the children and schools we serve. We are currently organising opportunities for those in our parishes who might like to serve on a Governing Body to meet in a social setting to hear about governance and how they might be able to contribute to a school community as a foundation governor.

Church Academies are always set up as charitable companies with the Diocesan Board of Education as a member. We therefore appoint directors to our Academy companies. In stand-alone Academies those directors are also the governors; in a multi-academy trust, the school will have a local governing body in addition to the Board of Directors which will have governors appointed by the church.

Parish Engagement

The majority of Church of England schools are set within the worshipping community of the parish family. The implications of this setting vary, especially between Primary and Secondary schools, but in all cases there should be a commitment to partnership between parish and school which is built upon a common quest for the outworking of shared values and spiritual growth. This partnership sees the Church school working with the parish to engage parents (and indeed the whole community) in education and the broader life of the child.

It is recognised by the Board that relationships with parishes are of great importance to our work. To this end we have engaged in a number of ways with clergy and parishes. The following form the key objectives for our work over the next year.

- **To work to create and support effective relationships between churches and schools** : to be achieved by the implementation of the Deanery Day cycle; to encourage and support schools/MATs in developing effective, meaningful engagement with local churches
- **To provide direct clergy support**: to be achieved by signposting to and distribution of a clergy information pack; Advisers attending chapter meetings. To improve training by working with the Board of Mission, Worship Workshop and Hard skills days.
- **To develop models of chaplaincy**: to be achieved by formalising existing model already explored and engaging in dialogue with other contexts to develop other models.
- **To develop sustainable patterns of liaison between advisers and clergy**: to be achieved by meetings with Bishops; Meetings with Area Deans; Meetings with individual clergy

The Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST)

ODST is a not for profit multi-academy trust set up in July 2012 to provide a suitable vehicle for schools in the Oxford Diocese to come together in a multi-academy Trust. Open to both convertor academies and those requiring sponsorship, the Trust's objects also allow for community schools to join. Already containing a mix of schools, we aim to offer a meaningful partnership built on the Christian principles of fellowship, where schools can share best practice, and work in support of one another, with the added benefit of the central resource which the Diocese itself can provide.

The Trust is open to both primary and secondary schools across the Diocese. Central support services include school effectiveness support, adviser time to enhance collective worship, RE and aspects of church school leadership, including preparation for SIAMS. We also provide finance systems through PS Financials, a leading provider to multi-academy trusts, HR, premises and resources support, admissions advice and training for local governing body members.

With 18 schools either already part of the Trust, more soon to join and a significant number expressing interest for the future, schools wishing to be considered for the next wave of conversions are encouraged to contact us at the earliest opportunity.

Challenges Ahead

As we look towards a new academic year, the challenges as we seek to meet the emerging needs of schools in a very different landscape are clear; we need to ensure all schools in the Diocese find an appropriate academy home, and work with parishes and churches to support this; continue to build up a range of services to schools to become an acknowledged provider of excellent support for schools, ensuring and improving their overall effectiveness alongside their Christian character and ethos whilst, as far as possible, generating income to maintain an effective and relevant service to schools.

Five Year Vision of the ODBE

In the light of significant new structural changes to education, ODBE must review its current strategic plan to ensure it is both fit for purpose and able to meet the new needs of schools as the MAT landscape develops. It must also ensure it retains a pertinent and meaningful role in its Church schools and indeed work to develop new roles as opportunities arise. There is no question we are at an important juncture and the next 5 years will be critical for both schools and the ODBE itself.

The following key areas of work have come into sharp focus as the Senior Leadership Team have discussed and debated both the near and longer-term future and this summary vision document has now been discussed and ratified by DBE on 13.7.12. The RSC has also had sight of the main strategic priorities and actions and has indicated his outline agreement with the direction of travel. The following strategic priorities and success criteria will now form the basis of the new ODBE strategic plan, which will be written and reviewed annually.

The Strategic Priorities 2017 -2022 are as follows:

- Multi Academy Trusts Development
- School Improvement
- Leadership Investment
- Support Services Establishment
- Parish Engagement
- Land and Trust Management
- Marketing and Communications Development

***The significance of the spiritual centre is vital and integral to all aspects of our work.
Training and support always draws from and returns to this in order to sustain
and develop distinctive leadership in Church schools.***

**Anne Davey
Diocesan Director of Education
October 2016**