



Diocese of Bristol Education Conference 2017

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE WITHIN A CULTURE OF GRACE

STORIES OF WISDOM, HOPE,
COMMUNITY & DIGNITY



Diocese of Bristol
Creating connections

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Introduction

This booklet is provided to support Church schools within the Diocese of Bristol in working out what it means to be a Church School.

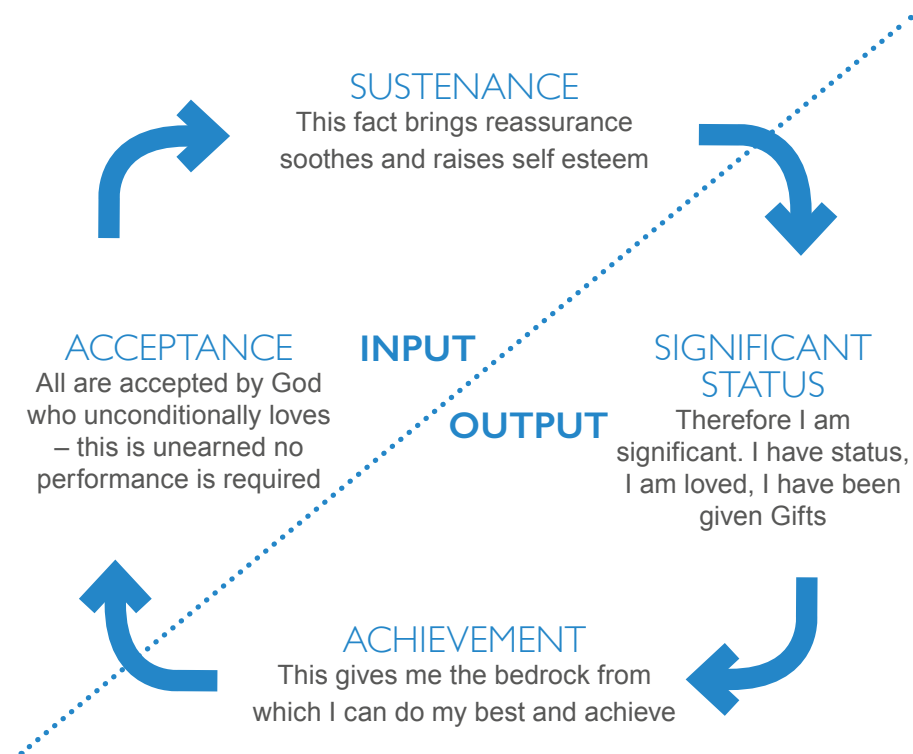
It will offer:

- some questions that school communities might need to ask of themselves
- some answers as they are provided by national thinkers about the Church of England's unique contribution to education
- some lived out stories from schools within the diocese

The Diocese of Bristol – in partnership with its 72 schools seeks for all children educated within its walls to gain an experience that will open minds, eyes and hearts, to the wonders, pains and possibilities of the world. This is in order that they might be equipped to contribute and serve effectively, that they may come to “Life in all its fullness” (John 10:10).

This has to occur within an Ofsted/League Table performance driven culture. Schools sell pupils short when they do not embrace excellence and academic rigour. However our Church school distinctiveness can offer us a greater dignity of purpose. We teach not because of the fear of a bad outcome but for the personal fulfilment of our pupils; not for the inspector but for the unique flourishing of each mysterious and wonderful person.

Imagine a person walking into your school. Does the environment and the way relationships are modelled support the ethos of your school? The ‘Cycle of Grace’ enables a culture to develop where a child can flourish under the acceptance of an unconditional love. This may provide a different foundation for education.



The Cycle of Grace
(after Lawrence 2004)

“Spirituality in a Church School within a Performance Driven Culture”
Anne Lumb (Grove Education eD27)

Working out a Distinctive Vision

Key questions a school may need to ask of itself

- 1) For whom is education an important concern?
- 2) What is the purpose of Education? If the purpose of education is to 'form' the next generation, what do we want the next generation to be like? In order to answer this question, the subsequent questions emerge.
 - a) What does it mean to be human?
 - b) What does it mean to live well?

SOME ANSWERS OFFERED

For whom is education an important concern?

Education is an important concern for pupils, parents, schools, education providers, communities, politicians and nations. We need a well-educated next generation.

However, uniquely for schools with a faith foundation, there is a belief that it is of concern to the Church locally, regionally and nationally because "The God of all creation is concerned with everything related to education." (*p3 Church of England Vision for Education 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good'*)

God seeks educational excellence everywhere for everyone.

Not everyone in a Church school community will accept the label of "Christian" or regularly worship. In the majority of contexts it will be the minority of staff, parents and children who actively practise the Christian faith. However the foundation of the school has a faith. The school walls believe! This foundation upholds that each child is seen and known by a God who loves them unconditionally and yearns for them to thrive.

The role of the foundation governors and the partnership with the local Church is to pilot the school to negotiate its own theology of education under the umbrella of this divine love.

When a member of staff or pupil joins a Church of England school they enter a dialogue with the school's beliefs and will learn more fully what the Christian faith is.

CASE STUDY

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple CEVA Secondary School, Bristol

Simon Stevens *Assistant Headteacher*

For whom is education an important concern? – For us it is God.

ALIVE: The Glory of God is a human being fully alive

WHAT WE ARE DOING

For ten years St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School (SMRT) has put 'Hope' at the heart of both the spiritual and, indeed, the whole life of the school. This is achieved by focussing on three areas: 'Safe Boundaries, Good Relationships and Empowered Learning'.

WHY WE DO IT

There is no such thing as value-neutral education. We seek to be distinctive and inclusive through our Alive programme.

Hope is a core Christian belief. Hope is based on the steadfast love and promises of God and supports faith both in the present age and in the future. Hope is also a key educational concept as schools need to offer students a positive view

of their lives and that of the wider community in which they live. For some students, the transformative nature of Hope is critical to their development. Hope has also become a very effective joint theme for SMRT and Ikoba School, our partner Church of Uganda school.

'Alive' is based on St Irenaeus's 'the glory of God is a human fully alive' and on Jesus' promise in John 10:10 that He came (and continues to come) to 'bring life, and life in all its fullness'.

'Alive' is a character education programme. A successful SMRT student will strive to fulfil their potential not just in their academic studies but also in all areas of their school and wider community life. Such a student will know the call of God on their lives and will flourish in school and will be prepared for their next stage(s).

The 'Alive' programme provides an annual focus on fifteen character attributes for all members of the school community: five values, five qualities and five skills. Each of the Alive attributes has a one sentence summary and a longer descriptive paragraph.

For example, I value Trust & Truth: I am honest and I seek to find out what is true (summary).

I don't tell lies and I don't gossip, I keep my friends' secrets and promises and I am faithful. Other people can rely on me and come to me when they are in need. I am fair. I place trust in myself. I like the truth to be told to me and I value what others say. If people can't trust each other, the world would be a cruel place and this leads to wars because countries wouldn't trust each other. If people do trust each other, they can share things that they don't want others to know and so they don't feel so alone and it helps them to make good friendships and be respected. "The truth will set you free" (Jesus Christ).

A COUPLE OF EXAMPLES OF HOW WE DO IT

Three Alive themes are focussed on each year as part of school development and these cut across all areas of school life, including the curricular, pastoral and spiritual. Each Alive theme is highlighted for a fortnight and is used for the 'weekly worship' (see www.smrt.bristol.sch.uk/index.php/weekly-worship) and for a leadership team led assembly for all of the main school.

The initial impetus came from the newly appointed Headteacher who had done action research into factors that lead to improved KS4 performance. There followed a consultation with governors, parents and carers, staff and students on what they felt was critical to the ethos of the school. Finally, the existing values of SMRT were merged with what had come out thus far to produce what is described above.

'Alive' is a flexible enough programme to allow 'buy-in' at lots of different levels. Ofsted 2015 found that everyone they spoke to, not just the nominated groups, were able to talk knowledgeably about the vision of the school and to describe the positive impact upon them of 'Alive'. Hope, the three foci and 'Alive' have been the driving forces for the annual School Development Plan.

OUR SUCCESSES

There have been notable school and personal stories. We have used 'I Can Communicate' to help us to help those students with literacy and numeracy issues. 'I Value Myself' helped us to focus on understanding and improving the mental health of students and staff. 'I Am Interdependent' has helped us form a partnership with Ikoba School, Uganda, far more than a link. This is based on shared Christian faith and a strong sense of justice.

Personal stories include: sixth formers who 'value faith' being confident enough to speak at whole school services; Y10 students who as part of their Values in Practice (PSHCE) lessons persuaded the school to mark 'Earth Hour' by using the least electricity possible during a school afternoon; after a Beginning of Year Service which focussed on 'Active Service' (in 1914-18 and in 2014), a Y7 student decided to abseil for Christian Aid's work in Syria and 'volunteer for rugby', and the 'Active Service' theme confirmed a Y10 student's decision to become a missionary.

THE DIFFERENCE TO OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The impact of Alive is felt by students, staff, parents, carers and visitors to the school. Ofsted 2015 recognised 'The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is extremely impressive and contributes enormously to the welcoming ethos of the school. Equality of opportunity is vigorously promoted; discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Students are highly reflective about matters of faith and personal responsibility; their social awareness is remarkably perceptive.' Behind these official words the inspectors gave us feedback that every person they spoke to understood and valued Alive. One inspector reflected that students gain 'life lessons' that will be carried in their hearts for ever. A student reflected, 'When your time ends at the school, you have learnt so much about yourself and have become the best version of you.'

We do not have plans to lose Hope or 'Alive' as they express the school's ethos so well. The longevity of this approach

is a strength and a potential drawback. A strength as so much in education is transient. A potential drawback as for long serving staff, 'Alive' may become repetitive and have less of an impact. We have found that the strengths outweigh the potential drawbacks. The particular emphases within the overall structure will be what changes year by year.

What is the purpose of Education?

It is about helping children and young people to become adult.
It is about 'forming' people.

So first we need to consider:

What does it mean to be human?

A fully educated person can answer questions of meaning:

'who am I?'

'why am I here?'

'what kind of person do I want to be?'

'what do I desire?'

'how shall I live?'

'what kind of world do we aspire to create?'

(p5 Church of England Vision for Education 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good')

i) **To be human means you will seek wisdom, knowledge and skills**

Jesus of Nazareth as a child "grew in wisdom" (Luke 2:52)

A delight in wisdom and a passionate pursuit of it is key to being a fully educated person. Schools will nurture academic habits and skills, emotional intelligence and creativity seeking knowledge of:

- creation
- culture
- history
- how to live

(p12 Church of England Vision for Education 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good')

In order to be a full human who will seek wisdom, knowledge and skills, pupils will need to be supported in this endeavour through developing certain virtues or values.

In a recent paper on Character Education 'The Fruits of the Spirits' (p7) schools' values (that are a popular vehicle for expressing Christian distinctiveness in collective worship in many of our schools) are categorised as those that are moral or "prosocial" and those that support learning; "epistemic" or "performance" virtues. The sorts of values that support learning might be perseverance (or resilience) and creativity. However other values such as humility (a readiness to learn) and truthfulness (seeking truth) may be useful tools to help to encourage children and young people to want to seek wisdom.

CASE STUDY

Horfield CEVC Primary School, Bristol

Adam Robertson RE Subject Leader

Using whole school learning metaphors to ensure 'a delight and purpose' to seeking wisdom and knowledge

The school year begins with our metaphor. We choose a powerful image that will allow children to reflect and respond deeply. A metaphor is chosen that has its roots in the Christian tradition, but equally can have applicability into other curriculum subjects and areas of learning. We buy some challenging texts for children to read and respond to with art, poetry, drama and writing. Metaphors in the past have included: trees, doors, flight, water and seeds. They are then used in our Harvest, Christmas and other assemblies to show children how faith has used these metaphors. Importantly, they allow children to examine issues in the world, such as flooding through water, or declining bees through flight.

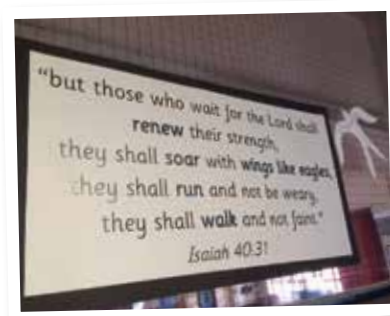
I love the whole school metaphors, such as flight. It says to the children that we're thinking of the wider world, lifting our eyes to a broader context

PARENT

Fundamentally it is our wish that the school year begins with a **unifying theme** that draws us together as **one school**. Whatever year group, children start with a deep and rich idea that allows them to respond in an artistic and creative way. It enables us to share our distinctiveness as Church school in a way that encourages all children to feel part of something.

Secondly, it allows us to link this deep theme with the expectations of the year ahead through class charters.

Thirdly, it inspires children to link their learning and see how it links to the wider world. It enables them to be exposed to deep and meaningful texts, and to reflect on how language can have many layers and meaning.



WHY WE DO IT

The metaphor is chosen by staff and forms the focus of the initial INSET day of the year. The focus is very much on harnessing the **exceptional creative talent** we have in our school to allow teachers to interpret the metaphor in their own ways.

The first two weeks of school introduce the children to the metaphor. This is shown visually by the creation of a **central display** which celebrates children's creative responses. For example, in 2016 we have chosen 'seeds', and each child wrote a poem based on a powerful work, 'A seed is secretive'.

During the first two weeks each class creates a piece of joint art, based on the metaphor. This is then printed as **postcards**. The postcards are then sent to parents whenever children have something to celebrate. Parents love getting these in the post!

The metaphor is also explicitly tied to our **class charters**. These draw out the spiritual and moral ideas underpinning the metaphor and also allow for a visual display of expectations.

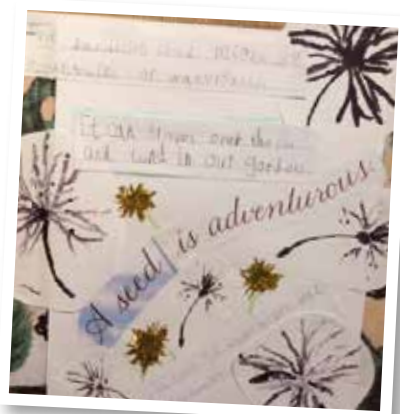
It also ties in with our role as a 'Rights Respecting School' linked to UNICEF. For example the class charters this year speak of 'flourishing' and encouraging the 'seeds of hope' in all children.

In addition, the metaphor is central to our **Collective Worship** during the year. This is a chance to make explicit connections between the metaphor and Christian ideas. For example, linking flight to the story of the flight from Egypt, retold through drama; linking seeds to the Parable of the Sower and the Christian ideas of stewardship and care for creation; linking trees to the wonderful story of the 'man who planted trees', and the Jewish building of a Sukkot.

Finally the metaphor is interpreted by teachers in **class work** throughout the year. For example, in 2015 the theme of 'flight' was used to respond to the crisis in Syria in Years 5 and 6. Children wrote powerful letters to refugees reflecting on the meaning of 'sanctuary' within the Christian tradition, and the images of candles of welcome.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER

This is really a whole school approach. It involves joint planning with our talented music leaders who explicitly link Harvest, Christmas and other songs to the metaphor. Very strong creative leadership comes from the Headteacher who inspires staff at the beginning of the year. The RE leader plans how the metaphor can work in collective worship. The English leader helps to decide on a suite of powerful books that are bought and stored in special 'chests' for teachers to use in planning through the year. Strong links have been developed with the local Church who buy into the metaphor and assist in the collective worship.



The difference it makes

The learning metaphor is recognised by all children and is very popular with parents. It is a distinctive part of our school tradition and acts as a way of drawing us together as a school.

It enables children to create high quality writing, drama and artwork through the work inspired by it. For example, the metaphor of water was explored through Y5 children reading parts of the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner'!

It forms a framework for behaviour and positive attitudes, for example linking the seed metaphor to the 'seeds of hope' planted at the 2016 Olympics. The metaphor becomes a way to reinforce character traits such as resilience, steadfastness, kindness, forgiveness etc.

We plan to continue with the learning metaphor every year. We are looking to enhance collective worship in classrooms through the provision of 'assembly boxes' that will enable children to lead and be part of meaningful worship. The boxes will contain a link to the metaphor, perhaps in the form of prayers or artefacts.



What does it mean to be human?

ii) It means you will have hope and aspiration

“Pupils will know how to approach the future; they will be offered open horizons. They can cope wisely when things go wrong. They will know that bad experiences and behaviour, wrong doing and evil need not have the last word.” (p9 *Church of England Vision for Education ‘Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good’*)

The worth of each student impels us to help them to know and enjoy who they are, to reach their ‘God given’ potential, whatever their background, and with special consideration to the disadvantaged.

CASE STUDY

St Peter’s CEVC Primary School, Bishopsworth, Bristol

Ms Livvy Sinclair-Gieben *Headteacher*

A school that has offered hope and aspiration to all pupils irrespective of background

CHOOSING A CHURCH SCHOOL: A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

The school community worked together to produce a guide for parents and carers to support them in understanding what a church school is like – what are the characteristics and special features of the life of a church school, and St Peter’s specifically. Some text and guidance was taken from the Christian ‘Values for Schools’ website. Parents have found the document very useful to guide them in making a positive choice for a school that is Christianly distinctive, and to know how this will have an impact on the children’s learning and their ability to thrive.

The following are extracts only from this document, designed to whet your appetite. You may wish to consider what a similar leaflet would look like for your community.



VISION STATEMENT

Learning Is Our Key To A World of Opportunities

MISSION STATEMENT

We help our children learn through...

Offering high quality first teaching	Giving excellent care, guidance and support	Creating a perfect learning environment
Motivating through an inspirational curriculum	Modelling our school values	Providing a safe and secure school
Working with different people	Working on their own, with partners and in groups	Expecting the best from all of our learners

VALUES

Values: (we offer)	Aims: Because we...	As a church school...
Friendship	Want people to be kind to us and we think about feelings	We link each value closely to stories and acts based in Christianity
Thankfulness	Cultivate thankfulness for the beauty in the world around us and the people who help us	
Resilience	Keep trying and set goals	
Service	Want to help others including those in need	
Forgiveness	Learn from our mistakes, learn how to accept forgiveness and forgive others	
Bravery	Try new things, stand up for our beliefs and respect beliefs of others	

At St. Peter's we strive to provide a learning environment that will contribute to children's real lives both as they live them and as a preparation for their futures. We want to give our children memories that are golden and useful and as such we offer a broad and engaging curriculum that is literacy and numeracy rich. We believe that successful people of the future will be those who are resilient in the face of challenge, resourceful and full of strategies when uncertain and who are reflective learners, well aware of themselves and their own strengths and capabilities. On top of all this we want our children to develop the capacity and desire to learn in any context.



OUR SCHOOL PRAYER

Oh Lord,
Who is with us always and never leaves our side.
Thank you for our world, our school and everyone in it.
Please help us to learn together and look after each other.
Amen

We all helped write the school prayer. I like it when it says, "never leaves our side." It feels like you've always got someone.

LUCY, AGE 7



OUR VALUES

Our values are common to many faiths and to those who choose not to have a faith. However we explore with the children what they mean to a Christian and we often spend time looking at their roots in Christianity.

We explore a different value each term both in class and at a whole school level. On our 'achievement tree' hang values books. Each term a child who has really modelled our school's values has an award which goes in the book for that term.



ZAK, AGE 9

In Term 6 I got a values award. I got it for being brave and trying something new.

WE MAKE FRIENDS:

We generally explore friendship and kindness in Term 1 when the children are settling into their new classes/a new school.

Friendship is an undisputed value in our society, with children often spending more time with their friends than with family. It is a key concept in the Christian framework, with Jesus being criticised for being 'the friend of sinners' and eating with those whom society rejected. Sharing a meal with someone is an explicit sign of friendship and the word 'companion' literally means 'one with whom you share bread'. Our children enjoy sharing meals together sitting with friends at lunchtime and having picnics in the secret garden. The values awards are given to those who have shown that they can be a good friend. **Stories such as Ruth and Naomi and the friends who help a disabled friend visit Jesus are shared with the children.**



Some of us have been at this school for a very long time. Friendships have to be worked on and tricky things make friendships stronger.

CHLOE, AGE 10

WE ARE THANKFUL:

Thankfulness has always been at the centre of the life and worship of God's people. **We generally explore thankfulness in Term 2 as the luxuries of Christmas are with us and all the gifts we generally receive start to be shared.** Under the Law of Moses, there were not only sacrifices for forgiveness; there were 'thanks offerings' as well. 'Songs of thankfulness and praise...' are at the heart of Christian worship. Thankfulness is directed towards God who gives and sustains life. Seeing the world as God's creating underpins the way we approach everything in life, seeing it as a gift and not as a right. **We sing everyday with the children and say Grace on a daily basis.**

PHOEBE, AGE 4

I have lots of friends in my new class. Some of my friends were also at Nursery. We play together.



WE ARE RESILIENT:

At its root, endurance is recognition that life is sometimes difficult and painful, and that it is important not to give up in the face of adversity. **We learn phrases such as 'If at first you do not succeed...' and we explore the lives of people who have struggled on even during times of adversity.**

We also note the constant assurance in the Bible that God's love, mercy, faithfulness and righteousness endure forever (e.g. Psalm 118, 136)

Emphasis upon endurance is common in the New Testament where it is linked with patience and suffering. St. Paul is certain that endurance is honed by suffering, is character building and is characterised by love (Romans 5:3-4; I Corinthians 4:12-13). It is linked with self-control, godliness (2 Peter 1:6) and steadfastness.



We all say 'keep trying' and 'keep going'. Mary Jones walked 25 miles for a bible. I like to think what I would walk 25 miles for.

JORDAN, AGE 9

We look at the life of St. Paul and other leaders who have stood by their faiths.

At St. Peter's we spend a lot of time thinking about helping others and we try to put some of our thoughts into action. **We call this giving 'Service'.**

Jesus said that he **'came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many'**. He washed the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. This turned upside down the normal relationship between master and disciples, leader and follower. Jesus is very clear about the meaning of his action: 'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done.'

In this term we read that parable of the Good Samaritan which shows we should serve those in need whoever they are. We also try to understand that such service is not offered to gain some advantage for ourselves. 'Going the extra mile' involves sacrifice, putting ourselves out for someone else's benefit.

We try to find different ways to help people. We sang at Coffee Pot and made gifts for people too.

ABIGAIL, AGE 9

WE FORGIVE AND LET OURSELVES BE FORGIVEN

Paul says: *'Be compassionate and kind to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.'* (Ephesians 4:32)

In our school we help children to understand the meaning of the word **'sorry'** we also look at the concept of **forgiveness**.

Jesus was uncompromising in his command to forgive. 'Forgive,' he said, 'seventy times seven' (Matthew 18:21).

Forgiveness was at the heart of everything he did and is at the heart of the **Lord's Prayer which we learn and revisit during this term.**

Too often 'sorry' is said very easily, implying: 'All I need to do is say I'm sorry and everything will be OK'. Real repentance demands that we take what we have done wrong with the utmost seriousness and have a deep desire not to do it again.

Part of this value is also spending time on the idea of reflection.

Reflection is a hugely important part of our school. We regularly take time to reflect on how lucky we are, what is happening around us and what we want for ourselves and others now and in the future. We also look at how reflection helps us to change parts of ourselves that are not as good or kind as they could be.



It can be hard to say sorry but it's also hard when someone says sorry and you're still upset. We learn to forgive and be friends again.

CHLOE, AGE 7

Sharing the Christian Story through RE

Part of offering the hope and aspiration of the Christian vision for life in all its fullness is through offering pupils a thorough understanding of Christianity. To that end we are offering training to RE Subject Leaders that takes a fresh approach: 'Understanding Christianity'. A rolling programme is now offered to all schools within the diocese.



www.understandingchristianity.org.uk

One of the key ways we continually invite members of our school community into a life of hope and aspiration is through Collective Worship. Following the Church calendar, this can offer moments of stillness, prayer, readings, reflections, music and a space for imagination and inspiration.

CASE STUDY

Frampton Cotterell CEVC Primary School, Bristol

Rosie Brydon *Headteacher*

A school where worship offers hope and aspiration

With the increase in the number of our children displaying signs of anxiety, low resilience and poor mental health, it is increasingly important to have Hope at the heart of Christian distinctiveness. When we went through the process of identifying our core Christian values at Frampton Cotterell CE Primary School, Hope was one of the non-negotiables as far as I was concerned. It is a word that is often used to describe an optimistic wish that all will turn out well. "I hope it doesn't rain" we say feebly as we look out of the window on the morning of Sports Day. This has little to do with Christian Hope which is founded on the belief that God is good, faithful, merciful and constant in His love towards us. It comes from believing God knows all about us, cares for the smallest detail in our lives and has the power to work everything for our good.

"We put our **hope** in the Lord; he is our protector and our help". (Psalm 33v20)

"I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster, plans to bring about the future you **hope** for". (Jeremiah 29v11)

At FCCE all our collective worship reinforces the love of God and His dependability. Our aim is for all children to find something affirming in worship and get a glimpse of God.

Throughout the week, children are provided with a variety of experiences in worship. These draw on different Christian traditions in order to help everyone find a way of worship they feel comfortable with and relate to. They also give children opportunities to lead or participate in worship.

Monday whole school worship tends to be calm and reflective.

I make no apologies for expecting children to come into the hall quietly and sit in silence so they allow everyone the chance to think their own thoughts without being interrupted. There are very few times where this is possible for children unless we plan them intentionally into the day.

Tuesday is whole school singing worship. In the words of the children, this is more “upbeat”. The power of conveying the Christian message through song should never be underestimated and song lyrics are likely to remain with the children through the rest of their lives.

Wednesday is Class worship, led by members of our Worship team. These are the most popular services of the week as far as the majority of children are concerned. They love listening to other children leading the worship and they value the opportunities for discussion that arise during the services. (Early Years have “Jack in the Box” written by Shahne Vickery and Belinda Stowe, Jack being a dog puppet which the children absolutely love).

Thursday is Key Stage worship allowing staff to pitch the service more explicitly to the level of the pupils and to address any current issues that are arising on the playground or class. This helps the children relate the values to their daily lives and the choices they make.



Friday is celebration worship, and is centred round our value of Thankfulness. Children are encouraged to see all learning, whether in school or elsewhere as a joyful experience which we don't take for granted. Awards such as the Golden Book award spring directly from our Christian distinctiveness, and we celebrate children who have explicitly demonstrated our values during the course of the week. At the end of every term, each class chooses their Class Champions; two children who have consistently shown the characteristics we are looking for in FCCE pupils. This really encourages children to look outwards to identify positive

characteristics in others and also to reflect on how these abstract values look when lived out in daily life.

The Worship team consists of Year 5 & 6 volunteers who are assigned to specific classes and take responsibility for leading the worship in that class each week. Initially the children found it very difficult to plan worship so we used the format from “Out of the Box” by Shahne Vickery. This provided a Liturgy with which the children became familiar and helped establish the understanding that Class Worship was a special time, distinct and separate from lessons. For the past year we have used “Roots and Fruits” as the basis for these services. This further developed the pupils' understanding of the structure of a worship service and has enabled them to start planning their own. They have a planning framework of “Gathering, windows, mirrors, doors and sending out” which guides them to include the different elements of the service within the worship. This is in its early days but the children are very keen and it is really encouraging to see them bringing their own ideas and

discussing the values as they plan. This term we have had Class services about Justice, Ghandi, Nelson Mandela, Friendship and Trust.

We are committed to helping children develop their spirituality during their life at school. In addition to our daily acts of worship we have introduced a weekly prayer club. This is run by one of the teachers who opens her classroom every Wednesday lunchtime so that any child who wishes to can go along and engage in some of the thought provoking activities she puts out or just sit and think or pray.



Another initiative has been our Prayer workshop mornings. This has been a carousel of different prayer stations which children have moved around in small groups. There is a short introduction/stimulus to the station and then children are given the opportunity to pray if they would like to do so. This was extremely well received by

the vast majority of pupils. There were only a handful of children who were unable to manage the stillness and lack of physical activity. One of our Year 6 boys summed up exactly what I had hoped to achieve in his feedback:

I found it helpful even though I don't have a religion. I especially enjoyed the library activity because it was relaxing and was fun as well. I think the beads are a good idea and reflecting on yourself is good too. I love how you didn't have to do anything and we weren't forced to do anything so we didn't have to worry about it.

Our gardening club have designed a Peace garden which we are planning to have planted by the end of the academic year in order to provide all pupils with somewhere they can go to be quiet and reflect or pray during the day. In their presentation to the rest of the school, the children in the gardening club were able to explain their reasons for wanting somewhere for reflection and what they were wanting to provide for everyone to enjoy:

It should be somewhere quiet to talk to God. It should be somewhere private and quiet so you could cry or say thank you for things. If you get sad or annoyed with someone, a peace garden would settle you down."



We are now waiting for suggestions from the rest of the school before finalising the design and starting work. I can't wait to see the finished result.

Every child will unfortunately face difficult times in their life. We want them to be able to remember the message of Hope at the heart of Christian worship. "Yet hope returns when I remember this one thing: the Lord's unfailing love and mercy still continue. Fresh as the morning, as sure as the sunrise". (Lamentations 3 v21-22) Collective worship is our opportunity to praise God who is the source of our hope.

CASE STUDY

Box CEVC Primary School, Wiltshire

Jo French *Headteacher*

A school where worship offers hope and aspiration

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

During the last three years we have increased the involvement of pupils in planning and participating in collective worship and made spiritual development explicit in the life of the school by changing our approach to the planning of collective worship.

HOW WE ARE DOING IT

The development of spirituality has been a key focus for the school since October 2013 after a staff development day on spirituality. The day was inspirational for all staff and as a result we have incorporated aspects of spirituality into our approach to collective worship as well as identifying them across the curriculum. We now explore a termly value through a series of 'big questions', generated by the children, which cover different aspects of spirituality – 'self, others, beauty and beyond':

- **Self** – (looking in a mirror) such as the way I see things, the way I react, my conscience, understanding myself, experiences that shape me
- **Others** – (opening a door) empathy, stepping into someone's shoes and understanding of others by considering how others see things, the way others react
- **Beauty** – (looking through a window) our response to music, art, nature, special things etc. and how we express this
- **Beyond** – (looking to the beyond – candle) beyond ourselves, mystery, belonging to something greater

PLANNING COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

All aspects of school life are underpinned by strong Christian values. The Christian values are the focus of collective worship but permeate all other aspects of school life. Twelve values are used as a focus for collective worship on a two year cycle and are illustrated by animal mosaics that were created by the children and a visiting artist. The values have been carefully chosen because they are understood by all members of the school community and are relevant to the lives of even the youngest children.



Big questions, generated by all children in all classes, are collated and developed into a progression of ideas through the value linking aspects of spirituality. The questions asked inspire a high level of spiritual and moral reflection and challenge learners to take responsibility for their own conduct. Opportunities to understand and celebrate the religious festivals in the Church's year are an integral part of the annual cycle for collective worship and key festivals in the Christian calendar such as Harvest, Remembrance, Christmas, Epiphany and Easter are included as a matter of course. Here are two examples:

COMPASSION				
Week beginning	Aspect of Spirituality	Big Question	Class Prayer	Monday Leader
20th Feb	Self	What is compassion?	Beech	Bronwyn
27th Feb	Self	If someone is mean to us do we still need to show compassion?	Willow	Janet
6th March	Others	How does showing compassion to others make them and us feel?	Oak	Helena
13th March	Beauty	Can animals show compassion?	Ash	Clair
20th March	Others	Can you be compassionate to people you don't know? The story of the Good Samaritan Red Nose Day	Sycamore	Pete
27th March	Beyond	Is God compassionate? How did Jesus show compassion? Zaccheaus – the Tax Man	Chestnut	Janet
3rd April	Beyond	Why was Jesus welcomed like a king by the crowds on palm Sunday? Easter	Beech	Pete

FRIENDSHIP				
Week beginning	Aspect of Spirituality	Big Question	Class Prayer	Monday Leader
5th June	Self	What is friendship? David and Jonathan	Beech	Jo
12th June	Self	Why are friends important? Jesus's Friends – the 12 disciples	Willow	Janet
19th June	Others	How can we help friends in difficulty? Feeding of the 5,000 - loaves and fishes	Oak	Helena
26th June	Others	How can we strengthen our friendships? Jesus visits Martha and Mary	Ash	Pete
3rd July	Beauty	What is a true friend? The Paralyse Man	Sycamore	Janet
10th July	Beyond	Can we be a friend to people we don't know? Samuel Hears a Voice	Chestnut	Pete
17th July	Beyond	Can God/Jesus be our friend?	Beech	Clair

WEEKLY STRUCTURE OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The themes and big questions chosen are broad enough to allow all those leading worship to approach the theme from their own perspective. This will mean that by the end of the week the pupils will have had the opportunity to reflect on the theme from a variety of viewpoints. This pattern is flexible and on occasions it is recognised that teachers may feel that they need to respond to local or national events.

The weekly structure of collective worship and the invitation to local church leaders to lead collective worship on a Monday means that the week usually begins with an explicit link to the Bible and a Bible story. In subsequent acts of collective worship the link with the Bible is reinforced through other stories and discussion.

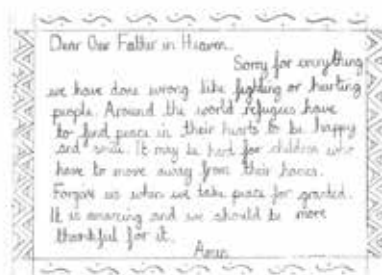
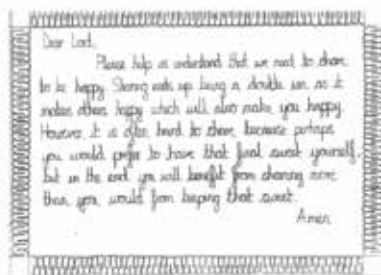
Worship is organised in the following way:

- A whole school act of collective worship on a Monday morning led by a local church leader, headteacher or visitor and attended by the whole school
- Key Stage Two assembly on Tuesday and class assembly on Thursday
- Whole school singing assembly on Wednesday
- Key Stage One assembly on Thursday and class assembly on Tuesday
- Whole school family assembly on Friday led by the headteacher or classes

The weekly class assembly is an exploration and discussion of the weeks' big question which is recorded in floor books by each class, sometimes with the teacher scribing and sometimes the pupils:



The discussion of big questions by the children has been so popular that some parents asked for examples to be put on the school website for discussion at home. Prayers are written each week by a class on a rota linked to the term's value and the week's big question.



PLANNED OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP SPIRITUALITY IN THE CURRICULUM

Throughout the curriculum there are planned opportunities to develop spirituality such as the class assemblies, Yr 6 residential trip to the Stackpole estate in Pembrokeshire, welly walks on the village recreation ground, visits to places such as Westonbirt Arboretum and the National Gallery, through music lessons and instrumental provision, going to concerts in places such as The Wiltshire Music Centre or the Wigmore Hall and the development of our school garden.



WHY WE DO THIS

Through our work with children we aim to help children towards:

- The ability to recognise their own **feelings and emotions**, being moved by beauty and kindness, hurt by injustice or aggression, and developing a growing awareness of when it is important to control emotions and feelings.
- The development of **personal beliefs** and an appreciation that people have individual and shared beliefs on which they base their lives.
- Finding **meaning and purpose** in their lives, reflecting on the origins and purposes of life; responding to challenging experiences of life such as beauty, suffering and death.
- **Self-awareness and self-knowledge** in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences and the development of self-respect.
- Developing **relationships** by recognising and valuing the worth of each individual (including themselves), building up relationships with others and developing a sense of community.
- An ability to **express their own thoughts and feelings creatively** through, for example, art, music, literature and sport.
- The **exercise of imagination**, and the **experience of inspiration and insight**.
- The experience of **awe, wonder and mystery** – of being inspired by the natural world, mystery or human achievement.



THE DIFFERENCE THIS HAS MADE TO OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Children always talk positively about collective worship and particularly enjoy whole school assemblies, especially when they or other children are directly involved. They especially enjoy the discussion of the big questions and learn to express their point of view on complex issues and respectfully listen to the views of others. The structure of collective worship, the variety of visitors and staff leading acts of worship as well as the regular visits to the church for services mean that children leave at the end of Yr 6 with a strong understanding of Christian theological concepts and beliefs.

Professional development for all staff has had a significant impact on the planning of collective worship and a whole school understanding of what is meant by spirituality. Teachers were then confident in their understanding to explore different aspects spirituality and representations of the Trinity with the children.

To be fully human means that you will have developed the character that allows you to live well.

What does it mean to live well?

i) It means you will understand how to live in Community and live well together with others

'Ubuntu' speaks of the very essence of being human, a concept used frequently by Desmond Tutu. He explains it as, 'We say "the so and so has Ubuntu." Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours". We belong in a bundle of life. We say "a person is a person through other persons".'

All educational enterprise is relational. When it loses sight of that it becomes mechanistic and brittle.

"Each school is to be a hospitable community that seeks to embody an ethos of living well together." (p17 *Church of England Vision for Education 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good'*)

Each Church of England school is tasked with the great injunction from Christ to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31)

We invite children and young people in to see us try to 'love our neighbour', modelling this love as best we can. We invite them to conduct their lives under the same universal principle.

Church schools should be known by their relationships and commitments, their participation in community. In this they should be seeking the flourishing of all the children and young people. These same principles will also apply to the care shown for staff for whom their flourishing must also be a priority.

This 'love for neighbour' must be fully inclusive as God's love is for all. None can be left out of the hospitable welcome to 'join in the table of life'; all are welcome at the feast. All voices are listened to and people are affirmed, seen and known as we "share our warm fire with an open door" (p12 *The Fruits of the Spirit*). The pro-social values or virtues such as compassion and friendship will help with the character development which will enable pupils to live in community well.

CASE STUDY

St Barnabas CEVC Primary School, Bristol

Jilly Pridmore *Headteacher*

How we live together well in our context

At St Barnabas CE VC Primary School the whole community looks forwards to the annual star trail, as this event forms an important part of the school's Christmas celebrations. The school sits close to the city centre of Bristol and serves a diverse multi-cultural and multi-faith community. Much of the school population is Muslim. This event allows the school to make good links with the local community, boost the quality of the provision and further develop our strong partnership with our local church and its congregation.

The star trail is supported by the priest in charge and the congregation of our link church St Agnes and the church hosts the pupils, inviting them to learn more about the story of Christmas and its relevance in modern day. The stunning interior of the church is used to

take the children on a journey starting with a letter stating that everyone must pay their taxes and be registered in the City of David. The long journey that Mary and Joseph made is shown on a map.



Next it is a visit to an empty field of sheep in the choir stalls. The children question why the shepherds left in such a hurry.

The children then journey on through the church to a stable where Mary has her baby laying in a manger. Children are invited to ask questions to the new parents (played by Year 6 pupils).

In the vestry the Magi explains how he uses maps and the stars to plot journeys and important events such as the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. The children then have the opportunity to smell frankincense and myrrh, as well as being given a gold (chocolate) coin to take with them. Finally, the children decorate cookies which they then get to enjoy.

All children and parents are invited to attend and although the star trail isn't compulsory it is very well attended and has become a real highlight in the school calendar. For many parents this is the first time they have visited a church and St Agnes is a truly beautiful building. The whole event inspires awe and wonder in everyone and demonstrates how we all live well together at St Barnabas CE VC Primary School.



CASE STUDY

Redland Education Centre, Bristol

Lydia Lodge *Lead Teacher*

How we “Love our Neighbour as ourself”

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Redland Education Centre (REC) was launched by Redland Parish Church 8 years ago and has since formed excellent relationships with many primary and secondary schools across Bristol. REC employs qualified teachers to prepare, resource and deliver Religious Education lessons based around Christian beliefs and practices. We offer a variety of creative, well resourced lessons and our ability to provide a team of teachers and volunteers creates a fresh atmosphere in the classroom – it's not just another RE lesson!

WHY WE DO IT

At REC, we welcome pupils of all faiths and none and seek to value and respect each one's beliefs. We aim to offer an enjoyable and informative educational experience. We encourage a thoughtful,

questioning approach to RE, guided by the Non-Statutory Guidance (2010) in line with the locally agreed syllabus.

Several members of the Redland Parish congregation are qualified teachers and therefore had existing links with local schools. This was our starting point, which developed over the years as we advertised further afield and gathered positive feedback from both primary and secondary schools around Bristol. We are a Trust and Church-funded community project that employs two qualified teachers, but often relies on volunteers to facilitate sessions in schools.

SUCCESSSES

One particular success story is our Christmas trail, an interactive nativity experience, called 'Christmas: through the keyhole.' It's an opportunity for primary aged children to

experience the Christmas story in a whole new way as they visit the deserted homes of key nativity characters, search for clues about them and discover why they left and where they went.

Over the last 5 years, Churches in Redland and North Bristol have welcomed over 2500 local pupils and built connections with 20 local schools. The pupils love the magic of entering into the nativity story as detectives and

collecting clues as they move along the trail. The teachers are often overwhelmed by the reaction of their pupils and return every year with their next class. The trail is usually held in church halls and rooms, but can be run in schools.

Following the success of the Christmas Trail, we have now created an interactive Easter Trail titled 'The Disciple; An Unexpected Journey'.

ISSUES

We rely on the dedication of many volunteers who give their time to dress up in character, lead the children through each zone, serve refreshments or put on their best grumpy Inn Keeper voice. A lot of hard work and preparation is needed to create this magical atmosphere; from gathering props to baking hundreds of shortbread keyholes, but we have found that people are always willing to give their time and energy as it is an excellent opportunity for a church congregation to work together and serve the school community.

The Christmas trail in particular serves the local community in providing a new and fresh perspective of the Christmas story. Pupils who visit during the week are often so enthused by the experience that they return with their parents on Saturday for our Community day. It's an opportunity to show that we are an active and hospitable church with a desire to bless and care for the families in our local area.

THE DIFFERENCE THIS MAKES TO SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

REC is a free resource for schools, which makes us extremely accessible to those with less funding and less opportunities for their students. Knowing how overwhelming full time teaching can be, we offer some light relief for teachers as we lead an hour, a morning or even a whole day of activities for students that engage and challenge, 'I really enjoyed that session Miss, it made me think about body image in a whole new way' (Year 7 student, Fairfield).

We are always developing new lessons, trails and seeking to reach further afield to new schools. We are developing lessons to aid the teaching of the new GCSE, a new KS3 'Creation Care' Trail and new website so look out for us!



CASE STUDY

Primary School Chaplaincy with 4 Primary schools in North Wiltshire: **Sherston CE Primary, Hullavington CE Primary, Stanton St Quintin Primary and Luckington Community School, North Wiltshire**

Becky Fisher *Rural Schools and Churches Worker*

How we “Love our Neighbour as ourself”

A thriving church school at the centre of a village is a huge asset to any community. It is a place where our children can develop a firm foundation for their lives and where the adults can learn what Jesus meant when he said that we must become like little children to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Living out Christian values is not easy; we all fall short, often in ways we least expect. But to be a Christian from the local church visiting a school means that every action you take has a potential to teach others – adults as well as children. Can we be humble, trusting, friendly and reverent? Do we have time to give without expecting to receive in return?

It is a great privilege to work in the North of Wiltshire with 8 parishes and 4 schools. Schools in particular are places of opportunity. There is a real possibility to create a generous, caring and listening Christian community where all are valued and nurtured. As a church worker I first ask myself ‘How can I be a visible Christ-like presence here – how can I walk the talk?’

Building relationships of trust with staff and with children has been key to the work here. Being a regular visitor visible in each school two or three times a week means that everyone in the school knows that the church cares about what happens in the school in their parish.

At the beginning of each visit I always check in with admin staff, they know what is happening and if there are any pastoral issues to be aware of. They are in the front line, meeting everyone who comes

to school and making sure that everyone is cared for. They deserve someone who will listen to them and their concerns and perhaps occasionally make them a cup of tea.

Then a quick visit to the head teacher’s office – this is no more than a minute because all teachers have a tightly regulated timetable for each day. We can book in longer if there are issues we need to talk about.

If leading worship, the next place to visit is the kitchen which opens up into the main hall. Greeting the staff here acknowledges their important contribution to the smooth running of the school and to the nourishment that is provided by the kitchen staff. I’m always in awe of their ability to feed so many hungry children and remain so calm. I’m sure they would have been very capable of sharing loaves and fishes that had been blessed by Jesus and still have plenty left over. My visit to the kitchen also gives a message that we are about to worship and although they are not with us in the hall, we will include kitchen staff in our prayers.

Time spent with the children at lunchtime and in clubs is a wonderful way of sharing and teaching which does not demand but rather invites. In the same way spending time in the staffroom at lunchtimes and break times offers opportunities for staff to talk through their own journeys of faith. This networking time helps to build relationships and to give each member of staff an opportunity to share their gifts and their questions. This is a role which is more akin to chaplaincy than teaching and means that the church agenda is put aside in favour of being a discerning listener.

All are made in the image of God and are precious to him. We live in a culture where church going is decreasing. If our children are to hear the Christian message and see it in action schools are a wonderful place to start. Being a Christian visitor to schools means that Christ’s message of love, forgiveness and his invitation to follow are articulated for everyone in the school community.

Before any work can start, it is essential that it is continually supported by prayer. This means regular prayers in the Ministry Team, in our churches and PCCS and by the personal prayer of the member of staff working in the school.

What does it mean to live well?

ii) It means you learn how to live with dignity and respect

A philosophy where all our human relationships are categorised as '*I to Thou*' and never '*I to it*' as first written about by the philosopher and theologian, Martin Buber, in "*I and Thou*" 1923.

In all our human dealings the challenge is to aspire to treat ourselves with reverence and approach the 'other' (person) with honour – as a "Thou" not an "It". This serves as an antidote to some cultural movements which seek to objectify and commodify humans.

This involves continual discernment and action. It includes vigilant safe guarding, prioritising the equal worth of pupils' with SEN, or with disabilities, those of differing races, religions or other beliefs, gender identity or sexual orientation (see '*Valuing all God's Children*' 2014 for strategies for anti-bullying). Efforts will be made to ensure all children are free from bullying for any reason and they have a school experience and curriculum that ensures they can fulfil their potential and feel blessed to be in their own skins.

We want to nurture

"Persons who will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character" (*Martin Luther King*).

We also need pupils to be able to have the self esteem and sense of their own dignity that enables them to not be overwhelmed by contrary opinions, but be prepared to listen well with curiosity and respect, being receptive to the wisdom of others. We need to help pupils be prepared to differ and have the skills to 'disagree well'. They will need to be able to draw on the values or virtues of honesty, kindness, repentance, forgiveness and justice to patiently work towards the goal of peace.

CASE STUDY

Easton CE Academy, Bristol

Jane Gillis *Bristol Schools Connection Development Worker*

How we have taught our pupils to live with difference, showing dignity and respect

THE START OF THE PROJECT

'Children of Bristol, just like me', is a project that was initially conceived and inspired by Peter Overton, Head teacher at Easton CE Academy. Bristol Schools Connection (a charity that is passionate about creating intentional spaces for spiritual development in schools and their wider communities) was asked to help develop and birth the project. The vision behind the project is for participating children to increase their knowledge, understanding and respect of different cultures and faiths in the city of Bristol, whilst celebrating commonality. Participating children will also gain in confidence about sharing their own stories and experiences of life and spirituality.

HOW THE PROJECT WORKS

The project needs two contrasting schools from different areas of the city to work together. From each school, a small group of children (10-12 children) from year 5 or 6 need to be chosen to work on the project. We have so far run a very successful pilot project with 20 year 5 pupils – 10 pupils from St. Stephen's school in Soundwell, and 10 pupils from Easton CE Academy in Easton. The project starts with 4 sessions working with the groups of children in each school talking about the project and what needs to be prepared for the project. During these sessions, and for homework, each pupil worked hard on producing a story sheet about their life, family, culture, faith/world view, hobbies etc. The group also planned how to host a trip to their school and local area for the pupils from the other school.

By the end of the preparation sessions each child has produced a story sheet about their life, and they feel confident about sharing their story of life, family, faith/world view, school, local area, and who they are. Also by the end of the preparation sessions, the group are ready to host a trip to their school and local area for the group of children from the other school. The two day trips then take place, whereby each group visits the other group's school and local area for the day. This enables the children from the other school to have an experience of life in another part of the city, and hear the stories and experiences of children and adults from this area. The trips are hosted by the children from each school, who act as ambassadors for the school and local area. The trip involved: a tour of the school; being involved in school life for part of the day; visiting places in the local area - including places of worship; eating traditional/ cultural food; having fun and playing together; and time and space for spiritual and cultural dialogue.

RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

The pilot project was a great success. The vision for the project was definitely fulfilled. It was incredible to see children bonding from different parts of the city and from very different backgrounds. There was a great sense of celebrating commonality and the joy of being children together in the city of Bristol. There was also a wonderful curiosity from the children about the differences in each other's lives, stories, families, schools and beliefs. The children showed enormous respect for each other's differences, and their respect also grew during the project.

They also grew in their confidence about who they were as individuals, and there was definitely a positive increase in ownership about their own stories. It was amazing to see how their ability to communicate and articulate their stories improved. The feedback from all of the adults involved was extremely positive, with many of them commenting that it was one of the most alternative and powerful experiences that they had been involved in with

children. All of the adults involved were very enthusiastic about wanting to repeat the project with another group of children, due to the huge benefits for the children. The feedback from the children of both schools is below:

What did you enjoy?

- Being with the other children.
- Playing with them.
- Meeting new people and making new friends!
- I enjoyed everything!
- I enjoyed the football match – Easton v Soundwell.
- I enjoyed going in the shops.
- I enjoyed playing with everyone in the park.
- Visiting the mosque.
- Eating some different food.
- The tour of the school.
- I learnt that Muslims can speak in Arabic.

Would you recommend this trip to others?

- Yes, because they would really enjoy it, like I did!

What did you learn?

- I learnt more about other religions.
- That my buddy had different talents to me.
- I learnt more about where the other children were from and their traditional cultures.
- I learnt about other people's beliefs.
- How their school behave in assembly.
- How our schools are different.

CONCLUSION

The project produces deep positive results in the lives of the children that are involved, enabling and equipping them to live well in a multicultural city. Many of the children and the adults involved said that every child in the city should be given the chance to do this project.

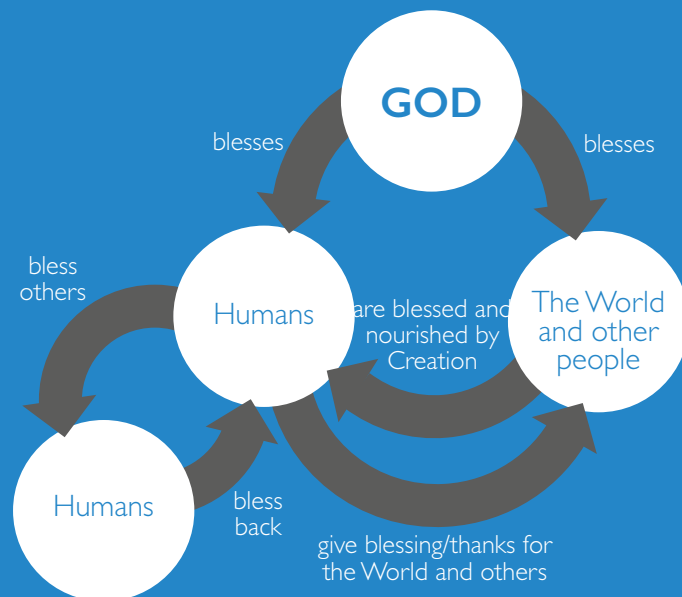
What does it mean to live well?

- iii) **It means you learn to live life abundantly through blessing and creativity; to be called from “Glory into Glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18)**

There should be a vision of offering children and young people an exuberant call into the abundance of life in all its fullness and glory.

BLESSING

“There is a dynamic ecology of blessing” - (p19 Church of England Vision for Education ‘Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good’)



There is an appreciation of being blessed and sharing that with others.

“The Lord bless you that you might be a blessing to others” (Gen 12:2)

This involves us in supporting pupils and staff to understand, ‘I am gifted. Because I am gifted, I use my gifts to help others and in doing so, I understand my gifts more fully.’

This appreciation of blessing as an aim of learning is supported by the value or virtues of Thankfulness and Generosity.

Creativity, Playfulness & Joy

The first action of God was to create (Genesis 1). To fully live and be alive as people made in God’s image is to be creative.

When we ask pupils to create we invite them into a divine act, which is an experience that unlocks. This may be in the form of Art, Drama, music, poetry, fiction, film, the sciences, technology, critical thinking and/or entrepreneurship.

In (Proverbs 8:30-31) wisdom plays before God at Creation. “Joy in learning is the mark of the good teacher and the well taught pupil” (p19 Church of England Vision for Education ‘Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good’).

Play and playfulness are hallmarks of a full life.

If our Church Schools cannot lead children and young people to a place where they continually seek joy, wonder, amazement, fascination and delight we will leave them floundering in the monochrome, rather than the full colour of life.

CASE STUDY

By Brook Valley CE Primary School, Wiltshire

Bev Ball *Headteacher*

A creative curriculum that prioritises Creativity, Playfulness and Joy as hallmarks of a Church school

WHAT WE ARE DOING

At By Brook Valley, creativity is highly valued in its own right but also as a means by which all children can truly know themselves, grow as a person and, if they choose, come to know God. Our village school is set in wonderful grounds with spaces created for play and reflection whilst the natural environment provides constant opportunities, with the changing of the seasons, for awe and wonder at God's creation.

Our school mission statement is

"Nurturing every child as a learner and a citizen"

This acknowledges our important role as educators in its widest sense. We are here to teach the children, to develop them into learners but also to equip them with the skills that are essential for them to be successful 'citizens'. We want our children to be happy, to know themselves and become people who make a valuable contribution to the world in which they live. People who can and do value creativity in all its guises and who bring their skills of observation, reflection, problem solving and appreciation enrich their own lives and those of people around them. In short, we see our job as being about the 'whole child' both now and the person they will become. Developing creativity of thought and deed is an essential part of this.

For some of our children, creativity will support them in their journey to better understanding God, the word of God and the world He has created. Their faith will be an important part of the citizen they become, the part that they play in the world and their creativity will be a demonstration of that faith as a person that was made in God's image.

As in most schools, creativity is embedded into and across our curriculum. Typical examples include the use of film to study character or setting in English; the use of picture books and paintings as a stimuli for a topic and role play or hot seating in history to develop historical understanding and knowledge. 'The Arts' are valued and celebrated in their own right, through musical and dramatic performances and children's art work, in a variety of medium, is displayed throughout the school.

However, for us, creativity goes even deeper. It is a key part of each individual's spiritual journey. A journey which supports them in understanding themselves, others and the world beyond. For us, creativity is about helping our children to embrace uncertainty, to encourage them to explore, debate, question and listen so that they may come to know themselves, others and God better. In an uncertain and constantly changing world being secure in who you are is an important first step.



HOW WE DO IT

This year we have striven to raise the profile of creativity in our school even further through two activities.

Firstly, every class now has 'creative Friday' afternoons. This does not mean that all art, drama, music etc are done then, these are still timetabled each term. This is extra time given to creativity.

Each teacher is free to decide with their class a creative focus. The focus is not the end product but the journey. A journey which embraces learning about themselves and about and from others. It is about trying new things and exploring new ideas. Activities have included Philosophy for Children, Mindfulness, Big Questions, Creative Structures with just cardboard, Problem Solving and we even have a whole class learning to play the ukulele. During this time, children and staff have explored and learned together and from each other.

The second focus we have taken this year is to enhance our school environment to encourage thought, reflection and learning in line with our

Christian foundation. As part of our Art and RE week, children worked with screen print artist Kathy Hutton to create visual representations of Bible stories. The finished screen prints have transformed not just the school hall but also the entrance to our school. Every child contributed to this project, reflecting on the meaning behind their focus story and producing simple but significant images to retell the story to those viewing the finished work. Through the creativity of the children others are now able to appreciate, reflect upon and learn from the teachings of Christ. The images are as powerful as any words and for some have more impact through stimulating other senses and connecting with emotions.

Our focus on creativity gives balance to our curriculum and celebrates our Christian foundation. It ensures that reading, writing and maths, whilst important, are not the sole purpose of our school or indeed our lives or those of the children we teach. It enriches and stimulates the core curriculum but also develops the 'whole child'. It celebrates the creativity of the world that God has given

to us and the joy it is to be human within this world. Our pupils are self-assured learners, learning in an environment which reflects and stimulates creativity of thought and deed. Our children appreciate the beauty, difference and diversity of God's world and are now much more comfortable with challenge, uncertainty and 'getting things wrong' but equally.

Finding time is always an issue but we believe that time can always be found if something is important. It is about practising what we ask the children to do. It's easy to say 'I can't do it', but we all need to think 'What could the solution be?'

It is about valuing time and getting the most value from time. Whilst our children are being creative they are learning to face and overcome challenges, to solve problems and communicate with others, both verbally and through their finished pieces. All these are transferable life enhancing skills which also support success in all curriculum areas.



A 'Tapestry' of a well-educated person

"Why is your school a distinctive Church School?"

"Because we all share the same values; we try to forgive each other, we persevere in our learning when it is hard" This would be the most common and positive response from a teacher or child asked such a question by an inspector.

Most Church of England Schools have become really good at values work. Our children are being offered rich experiences, stories and expectations to help them develop their virtues or their habits of character.

How does this excellent character education relate to our vision or core purpose. The Church of England's vision is for all people to have "Life in all its fullness" and it has defined that fullness as having four strands: Wisdom, Hope, Community and Dignity.

This tapestry diagram hopes to encapsulate both the vision and the character education that is central to our Church school distinctiveness. The golden threads of RE, Worship, Spiritual Development and Church Partnership provide a richness to illuminate the fabric of Church School life.

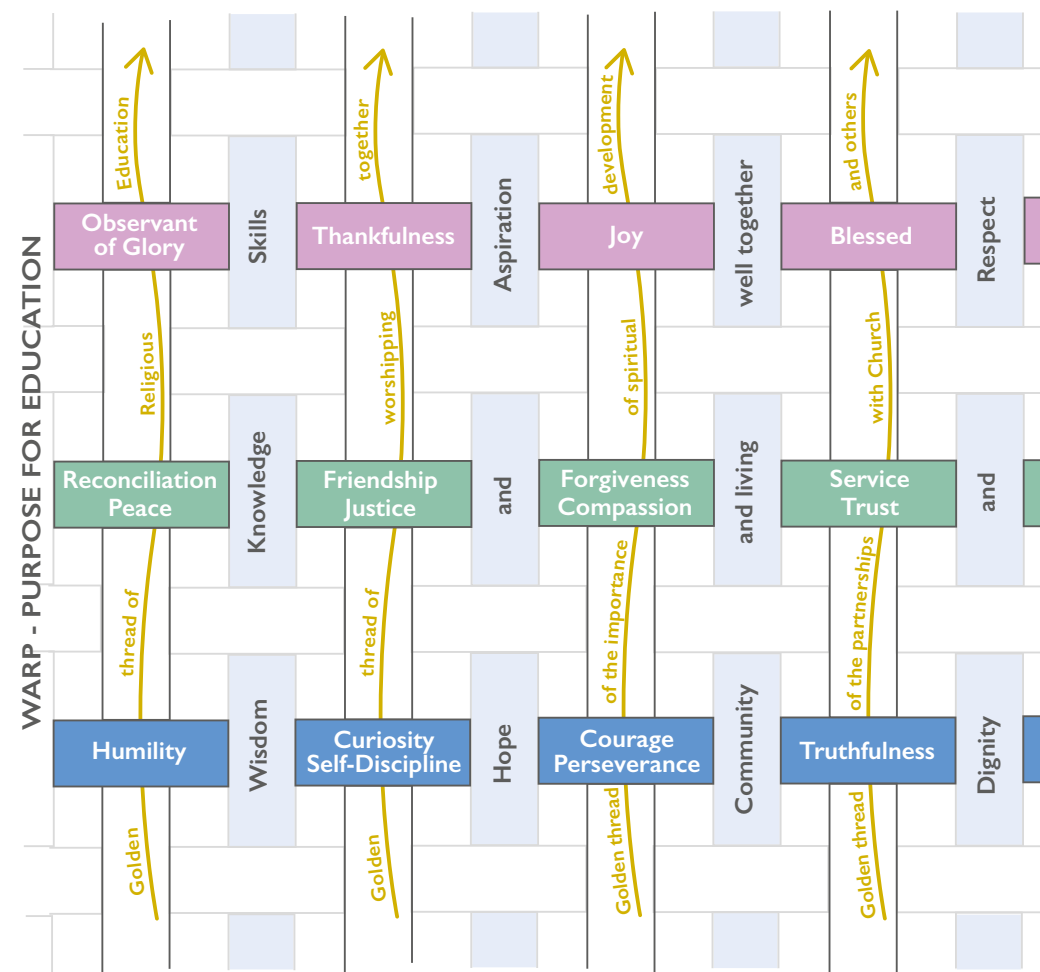
LIFE ABUNDANT

An attempt has been made to categorise the values, but they will overlap and all weave into one texture of 'character'.

Values to help you have well being

Values to help you live with others

Values to help you learn



WEFT - THE CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OR 'FORMATION' WHICH HELP PUPILS ACHIEVE THEIR PURPOSE FOR LIFE

Working out your school's Christian Distinctiveness

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER?

SCHOOL CONTEXT + LOCAL COMMUNITY & PARENTS/CARERS + OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER



SCHOOL VALUES + CHURCH OF ENGLAND VISION + SCHOOL VISION
 are aspirations of the community, staff and governors
 Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good
 existing and embedded



What does your school community see as its purpose of education?
 What life does it hope its pupils will have?
 What world do you hope your pupils will help to build?



If your pupils are going to be able to have wonderful lives and build a thriving, joyful and peaceful future world – what personal qualities do they need?



CHARACTER EDUCATION → GROWING VIRTUES

A clear understanding of Christian distinctiveness in your school for your school community



How will you negotiate and communicate this to:
 staff, pupils, parents, carers, community?



delivery through story, metaphors, pictures, communication strategies
 (e.g. strapline, visual representations)



SO WHAT?

What will this look like in the school?
 How will you know you've been successful?
 What changes do we need to make?

OVERLEAF

GOVERNOR TEMPLATE FOR REVIEWING YOUR SCHOOL'S VISION AND CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

The recommendation is that this is completed and discussed annually at a Full Governor's Meeting.

For a school in a MAT this should be shared at Local, Director and Member Level.

It is the responsibility of the governors to set the vision of the school.

		VISION
	Key questions – answer in order	Explanation
8	How does the school's vision challenge leaders' thinking about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Leadership 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving and growing community partnerships 	

		CHRISTIAN CHARACTER
	Key questions – answer in order	Explanation
9	How do the values link to the school's vision? Wholly or partially? <i>List them.</i>	
10	How are values understood to have a Christian context?	
11	How are the Christian values of the school evident in enabling children to flourish? Comment on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-being 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMSC development 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes to diversity and difference (<i>hospitality</i>) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courageous advocacy of equality and social justice 	

Concrete examples	Next steps (a few each year)
and how it transforms the lives of pupils	
Concrete examples	Next steps (a few each year)

ONE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE TO THEIR SCHOOL ETHOS (EXAMPLE)

'a take care school'

ABOUT LEARNING

How do I keep seeking wisdom?

How can I keep wondering?

How do I keep going when it's difficult?

OF THE WORLD

How can I carefully see how wonderful it is?

How can I help to look after it?

How do I make things to make it a better, more colourful peaceful place?

How can I challenge injustice?

TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD

Is there a God?

What do Christians think God is like?

How do Christians think God makes a difference?

What do I think about God and does that make a difference?

**Helping
Children to
become people
who care**

OF OTHERS

How can I make sure others can learn and are safe in my school?

How can I enjoy other people's gifts?

How can I get on with others when we disagree?

How do I weep with those who weep and laugh with those who laugh?

How will I do when other people hurt me?

ABOUT THEMSELVES

How do I look after the gift of me?

How do I reach my potential?

How can I be healthy in Body, Mind & Spirit?

How can I be happy and enjoy being me?

How do I work out who I am?

St Saviour's CE Primary School
(pg16-17 'Spirituality in a Church School with a
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