

What is a Church of England School?

“A community school with a distinctive Christian character.”

Before the government became involved with providing education for everyone in England – there were church schools and other charitable schools.

The majority of church schools were built in the 1800’s and most have the following or similar words in their trust deed.

“a School for the instruction of children and adults or children only of the labouring manufacturing and other poorer classes in the parish of”

There were two requirements, the first was to teach Christianity through “Religious Instruction” and the second to hold a regular act of worship.

When the state became involved with providing mass education, church schools became integrated into the education provided by the state. All these schools are known as maintained schools – they are funded by the state.

All maintained schools including the Church school have to teach Religious Education and hold a daily act of collective worship. So church schools work on the same basis as community schools.

The purpose of a Church of England is to offer a spiritual dimension to the lives of young people, within the traditions of the Church of England, in an increasingly secular world.

25% of primary schools in England have a Church foundation.

In our dioceses there are over 30,000 children being educated every day in a Church of England school.

What is added by being a Church of England school?

Church schools have Christian beliefs and values at their heart. This means that every child and adult associated with the school is not just important because they are members of the school but also because they are seen as unique individuals within God’s creation.

A church school might have a motto such as “No one left behind!” and the reason would be that everyone is seen as so valuable in God’s eyes that everyone must be supported and encouraged to be the very best they can be. “No one will or can be left behind.”

Church schools recognise that as well as academic and emotional intelligence human beings also have spiritual intelligence. The spiritual aspects of life will be recognised, and nurtured alongside the academic and emotional needs of all.

For families who have a faith, church schools have these principles to help them. Church schools should:

- nourish those of the faith
- encourage those of other faiths

Lord Runcie the former Archbishop of Canterbury went on to say, and

- challenge those who have no faith

In doing so, he recognised that for someone without a faith, being in a place where faith is recognised and lived, could be challenging.

Church schools will be places where the challenge through questioning is to be encouraged as we all try to make sense of the world, the gift of life and the purpose of our own personal lives.

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What differences should you notice?

As a pupil, parent, visitor or member of staff you should find your church school is as good as any other good school but you should feel that the way the school works is different and distinctive. That distinctive difference will be rooted in Christian values that affect the way everyone behaves and in the way everyone is respected.

An Opinion Research Business Survey in 2008 showed that, of those who agree that church schools are different to other state schools:

- 79% agree that church schools help young people develop a sense of right and wrong.
- 75% think that church schools help young people grow into responsible members of society
- 78% agree that they promote good behaviour and positive attitudes
- 85% agree they have a caring approach to students.

Types of Church of England School		
Area	Voluntary Aided (Aided by the Local Authority)	Voluntary Controlled (Controlled by the Local Authority)
Buildings	Owned by trustees. The trust deed determines the basis on which the school is run. Playing fields are provided by the LA.	
	New building and repairs are the responsibility of the governors who must provide 10% towards all costs.	All replacement, repairs and other building costs fall on the LA.
Teaching Staff	Appointed and employed by the governors, paid by the LA.	Appointed by the governors, employed and paid by the LA.
	Governors are bound by National agreements.	Governors are bound by National agreements and LA appointing policies.
	Governors may seek evidence of Christian commitment from applications for teaching posts.	Governors are able to satisfy themselves that a candidate for the post of headteacher is suitable to support and develop the ethos of a Voluntary Controlled school.
Support Staff	Employed either by governors or contractors. If employed by governors they are paid by LA.	Employed either by LA or contractors. LA employees usually appointed by governors.
Worship	Reflects the Anglican tradition and can include worship in the parish church.	

Religious Education	Governors may make use of the diocesan syllabus, where this exists, or the LA syllabus. They may determine a syllabus that reflects the Anglican traditions. They may make use of the diocesan syllabus, where this exists, or the LA syllabus.	The school must follow the LA syllabus unless the parents request a denominational one. The foundation governors have rights in the appointment of staff (called reserved teachers) to teach denominational RE.
Governing body	Church (foundation) governors have an absolute majority over all other governors. A proportion of foundation governors must also be parents.	Church (foundation) governors are in a minority.
	Parish priest is usually an <i>ex officio</i> member of the governing body. All governors combine to elect the Chair.	

What else?

Church schools are encouraged to:

- ensure that the school is led by a headteacher who is committed, with the help of staff, to establish and maintain the Christian character of the school in its day to day activities and in the curriculum
- engage meaningfully in a real act of Christian worship every day
- offer a school life that incorporates the values of the Christian faith
- ensure that religious education is given at least 5% of school time and that the character and quality of religious education are a particular concern of the headteacher and the governing body
- observe the major Christian festivals and in schools in which other faiths are present ensure that those faiths are able and encouraged to mark their major festivals with integrity
- maintain and develop an active and affirming relationship with a parish church
- proclaim that it is a Church of England school on its external signboard and on its stationery and make appropriate use of Christian symbols inside and outside the school.