



Christian Character

**A handbook for developing an Anglican ethos in church schools
adapted for use in the Diocese of Peterborough by Church of England schools
and SIAS inspectors**



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	Page
Introduction	3-4
The purpose of this material	
The challenge to schools	
The Church of England/Church in Wales, The National Society and education	
Section One: Christian education in Church of England schools	4-6
Questions for reflection and discussion	
Section Two: Christian leadership	7-9
The role and responsibilities of the governing body	
The role and responsibilities of the head	
The role and responsibilities of the staff	
Questions for reflection and discussion	
Section Three: The Christian character of the school	10-14
Background	
Questions for reflection and discussion	
Main sources of evidence	
Section Four: Worship in the school	14-21
Key elements of school planning and practice	
The tradition of worship	
Questions for reflection and discussion	
Preparing an assessment of the worship in the school	
Section Five: Religious Education in the school	21-29
Areas for review	
The management context	
The standards in RE, and are they high enough?	
The contribution of the subject to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils	
The progress of the pupils	
The quality of learning	
The quality of teaching	
Questions for reflection and discussion	
Preparing an assessment of the religious education in the school	

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this material

This handbook is intended to provide an outline framework for Anglican schools to undertake a self-evaluation of their character and their involvement with the Anglican tradition of education. A second purpose is to provide a resource for those who are engaged in the inspection of Anglican schools as part of the new arrangements for the inspection of Church of England schools in the United Kingdom.

The handbook contains material drawn from National Society's book *Christian character: a handbook for developing an Anglican ethos in independent schools* and other resources used by school inspectors, advisers or consultants to focus their attention on particular issues. Anglican schools vary widely within the sector and, as a result, it is not possible to produce a short set of definitive papers that will apply equally to all schools. The original resource is available on the National Society website: www.natsoc.org.uk.

The challenge to schools

Church schools face a number of challenges as a result of increasing pluralism and secularisation within society. Parents and government have become increasingly demanding of the education system and are insisting that the schools provide ever-higher standards of general education. Given these pressures, it is not surprising that some Anglican schools have found it challenging to sustain those aspects of the school that define its Anglican identity and which many parents value highly.

The Church of England/Church in Wales, the National Society and education

The Church of England/Church in Wales has always been in the forefront of providing schools in this country for the education of the nation's young people. The National Society acquired its name precisely because it was the first *national* society to exist for any purpose – in this case being founded in 1811 in order to promote the establishment of schools across the entire breadth of the land. The schools founded by the National Society and other Anglican bodies in the nineteenth century stand alongside other schools that had already been founded and have been an integral part of the life of the English Church for as long as there has been an English Christianity – St Peter's School in York dates from its foundation by Paulinus, the first Bishop of York, in 627, whilst the King's School in Canterbury looks back to Augustine himself as founder. In January 1997, there were 4,575 Church of England primary schools, and 199 Church of England secondary schools, providing education for some 904,048 children in the maintained sector.

Various National Society publications in the last 25 years have sought to explore what, in theory and practice, are the areas that make an Anglican school distinctive. Each of the sections of this material considers one of these areas. All these are in addition to the very high standards of general education to which all schools should aspire.

The Church of England/Church in Wales seeks to promote good-quality education for the children and young people of this country through its support for teachers, parents and governors, by influencing the framing and implementation of legislation and by its involvement in curricular issues, particularly those associated with religious education.

The Church of England considers Church schools to be at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation. A resolution to that effect was given the overwhelming support of General Synod in November 1998. The resolution went on to call each diocese and parish to support the work of Christian education through Church schools.

SECTION ONE

Christian education in Church of England schools

Education involves the conveying and acquisition of the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes considered necessary or important by those providing the education. Those responsible for education impart their own attitudes and values in what they do and say. Pupils are quick to discern discontinuities between what any individual does and says or between what an individual does within an institution and what that institution claims to believe. Education therefore is replete with beliefs and values. Some may attempt to conceal these but they are revealed constantly through the process of being educated. The best of current educational practice attempts, therefore, to be explicit about the values underpinning the curriculum. Clearly young pupils will be less equipped to understand these values, but they should be explicit nevertheless, at least among the adults who are involved in the school. Christian education will be explicit not only about the values underpinning it but also about the beliefs about the nature of God that give rise to those values, deriving from the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Following the example and teaching of Jesus Christ, Christians throughout the history of the Church have engaged in the work of education. The Church in these islands, acting largely through the individual initiative of clergy and lay people, has undertaken the work through the provision of large numbers of schools, of which, at the end of the second millennium, some are independent and others are maintained by local education authorities. It is not always clear in practice how Christian values should be applied to education. There is often considerable debate, for example, about the extent to which such values can be reflected in the 'secular' curriculum.

Beliefs and values are often presented in British society, as a matter of opinion and of personal and private choice about which there can be no public discourse. By contrast Christian education will seek to represent:

- God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist
- God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again
- God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world

(taken from the alternative profession of faith, Baptism Service, Common Worship)

Powerful secular and material forces operate through many media in British society, encouraging a selfish concern for the acquisition of possessions or power and a denial of the community. Christian education will seek to provide a coherent alternative world view in which, for example, the denial of self and the life of service provide the route to real happiness and perfect freedom. Such

counterbalances to secular messages will not indoctrinate the young but free them for personal choices on the basis of understanding.

In an Anglican school, Christian education is not restricted to some aspects of the curriculum, such as worship or religious education. Schools recognise that all aspects of the life of the school contribute to the moral and social development of their pupils. Similarly, all aspects of the life of the school contribute to pupils' spiritual and cultural development, so an Anglican school will find opportunities throughout the school curriculum, explicit and implicit, and through relationships at all levels, to share the Christian gospel and to exemplify the life of faith. Such proclamation of the gospel, like the teaching of Christ himself, will be powerful and attractive but not overwhelming. Faith cannot be evoked through coercion. One of the reasons why worship is so important in the life of a Church school is that it is within the context of worship that some of these fundamental ideas are best communicated.

Those who seek an education or a post in an Anglican school should be able to discern that the Christian faith is at the heart of the character and life of the school. Not everyone within the school will be able to claim the Christian faith as their own with equal conviction. It may be important for the school to ensure that other views and beliefs are present and respected among the staff, as they will be among the pupils. Governors and the senior managers who appoint the staff have a responsibility to ensure that the school's commitment to the Christian faith is clear within a lively and stimulating diversity. They should have an agreed view of the proportions of Christian believers and others on the staff that are necessary and desirable in order to achieve this.

A Church school may be able to welcome those of other faiths and those of no particular faith who, for whatever reason, seek a place or a post. Preference, however, may need to be given to the appointment of Christian teachers in order to maintain the balance referred to in the previous paragraph. Staff will be required, according to their conscience, to contribute professionally and personally to the religious life of the school. They will be required at the very least not to undermine the faith of the school. Where the school recruits significant numbers of pupils of other faiths, the school will need to consider the extent to which it can make provision for alternative religious practice. The school may also need to consider the extent to which its Christian practice shows respect for the range of beliefs that are held within the school community. In character and mission statements, in the school prospectus, in aims and objectives, in policies and schemes of work, a Church school will express the centrality of the Christian faith to the life of the school, not as an additional or incidental feature, but as a fundamental and guiding principle. Thus it will be central to the Church's mission.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

Christian education and school life

- 1 What are the key documents or traditions that identify this school as
 - a Christian school
 - an Anglican school
- 2 Are these documents and traditions well known to governors and staff? Are they used to inform school policy and the decisions of the school management team?
- 3 Is their existence known to parents?
- 4 Are their implications for pupils' education communicated to parents and to pupils?
- 5 How do the school's policies on multicultural education and equal opportunities, if the school has them, contribute to the character of the school?
- 6 What action has the school taken to promote the spiritual development of the pupils?
- 7 What action has the school taken to promote the moral development of the pupils? How does the discipline policy of the school contribute to this?
- 8 How do the general curriculum areas in the school contribute to:
 - the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils?
 - the development of relationships founded on the teachings of Christ?
 - care for the environment?
 - respect for all people?
- 9 What contribution do the support staff of the school make to:
 - the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils?
 - the development of relationships founded on the teachings of Christ?
 - care for the environment?
 - respect for all people?

SECTION TWO

Christian leadership

The role and responsibilities of the governing body

The governing body has a significant role in preserving and maintaining the spiritual and moral character of a school. In the case of Christian schools the governing body is responsible for ensuring that the Christian and denominational requirements of the school's trust deed are being implemented. Where the governing document (trust deed, constitution of the statutes, etc) clearly defines the purpose for which a school was founded, the governing body has the responsibility for maintaining and enhancing the school's foundation. This is not a responsibility limited to those on the governing body who are ordained or who are nominated by Church bodies. Every member of the governing body shares in responsibilities that are derived from the documents that define the charitable status and purposes of the school.

The day-to-day management of the school is of course in the hands of the head and the senior management team, but governors have distinct responsibilities and they should ensure that they have taken the time to understand them clearly. Perhaps the most significant task that they undertake is the appointment of the head. When a school is beginning the process of seeking a new head it is very important that governors reflect on their own understanding of Christian leadership and ensure that this is included within the person specification for the post. At a later stage they will also seek to establish how the short-listed candidates understand the nature of Christian leadership, how they will reflect this in their own leadership and how they will set about preserving and developing the character of the school.

The role and responsibilities of the head

The head of an Anglican school has a vast range of responsibilities and must decide which of them they will discharge directly and which they will delegate to others. The head will be concerned to ensure that, throughout the school, pupils are offered the highest quality of teaching and are enabled to reach the highest levels of performance of which they are capable. This is not a distinctive quality of Anglican schools, but it is a necessary aspiration of the heads of all schools. It is included here in order to make it clear that nothing that follows in any way detracts from the overall imperative for the school to be offering a good education.

In Anglican schools there are additional imperatives. These are set in part by the trust deeds or other foundation documents of the school that set a context within which the Christian character of the school should be developed. Ensuring that the character of the school is sustained and developed is the overall responsibility of the head. It should not be delegated to the head of religious education. It should not be left to those members of the governing body who are ordained or are nominees of the Church. The head and other members of the management team must be active in this area. Their personal example will set the tone for the whole school and will demonstrate to pupils and to other members of the staff that the character of the school is a matter to be taken seriously. A simple example will illustrate this point: if senior members of the school staff are regularly missing from school worship, this will quickly be perceived and will undermine an activity that should be at the heart of the school.

More challenging than ensuring regular attendance at worship is demonstrating in practice that the senior members of staff and particularly the head have thought out their role as leaders in the school in the context of the teaching and example of Jesus. Practical Christian leadership is shown in a thousand small decisions and examples every day. It will profoundly influence the relationships between the adults in the school and also between the adults and the pupils. In time it will also impact on the relationships among the pupils. In the context of the management decisions that need to be taken, the following issues will be among the indicators of care for the Christian character of the school within the Anglican tradition:

- there is a concern to ensure that an appropriate proportion of the staff has a lively Christian commitment
- there are arrangements in place for the induction of new staff into the character and Christian traditions of the school
- there is space within the activities of the school for the spiritual development of pupils and of staff
- there is an appropriate relationship with the Christian Church beyond the school
- religious education is accorded a high status within the overall curriculum
- worship is at the heart of the school's life

To summarise, the head of an Anglican school has a special responsibility for maintaining the character and spiritual nature of the school by:

- exercising leadership in the school in a way that reflects the school's professed Christian character
- ensuring that the structure of school life gives adequate space for, and expression of, the Christian character of the school
- taking care that staff appointed to the school are supportive of the Anglican character
- ensuring that the whole curriculum nurtures the spiritual and moral development of the pupils

The role and responsibilities of the staff

Responsibility for exercising and demonstrating Christian leadership does not just lie with the head. Every member of the staff has a responsibility to contribute to the character of the school and to reflect that in their relationships with each other and with pupils. Many members of staff will have leadership responsibilities for pupils or for colleagues. All these responsibilities must be exercised in ways that demonstrate the principles of love and respect that should inform everything that happens in the school.

Questions for reflection and discussion

Christian leadership

- 1 How do the senior management of the school understand their role in
 - promoting the Christian character of the school
 - providing an example of Christian leadership in action?
- 2 When was the last time that the Christian character of the school was discussed at a meeting of the senior management team?
- 3 Who should lead or facilitate such a discussion?
- 4 When did the governing body last discuss their role in the preservation and development of the Christian character of the school?
- 5 When new members of the senior management team are being appointed, is consideration given to their ability to preserve and develop the Christian character of the school?
- 6 When any appointment is made to the staff of the school, is consideration given to the balance within the staff of active members of a Christian Church and staff of other faiths or none?

SECTION THREE

The Christian character of the school

Background

The character of an Anglican school will always be difficult to define. It will reflect the theological understanding that the governing body and the senior management team bring to their responsibilities. This theology, which in many schools will have been developed in discussion and may appear within policy statements, will include an understanding of

- God as creator and our responsibilities as stewards of creation and partners in the continuing process of creation and renewal
- the commandment to love one another as Christ loves us
- the concepts of sin, repentance, redemption and forgiveness
- worship in community
- a personal relationship with the risen Christ
- the nature and action of the Holy Spirit
- the pursuit of truth and justice

Within this theological framework the following are some of the practical aspects of school life that will contribute to the character of an Anglican school:

- the manner in which the school's mission statement and/or policies draw attention to the Anglican and/or Christian foundation of the school and are conveyed to parents
- the effectiveness and leadership of the head, senior management team
- the quality of worship in the school
- the relationships between staff, between pupils and between staff and pupils
- the standards of behaviour, the policies on discipline and the values inherent in classroom organisation and relationships
- the links the school has with the local community, particularly the religious communities near to the school and from which pupils may come
- how effective the pastoral system is and whether it is effective from the pupils' point of view
- whether the building and the grounds present a high-quality educational environment that is cared for in a way that adequately reflects an understanding of the stewardship of all creation
- the provision made for pupils with special educational needs and abilities
- whether it is clear from the ambience of the school that it is a Christian school
- whether the school resource areas are equipped to support an Anglican school education
- whether the personal, health and sex education programmes are set in the context of Christian values.

A particular concern of an Anglican school will be the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

It is therefore appropriate to ask in the context of the list above:

- 1 How do these aspects of school life contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all the pupils regardless of faith or denomination?
- 2 Does the school demonstrate a commitment to
 - religious education
 - worship
 - a staff development programme that supports spiritual development
 - the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the whole curriculum as well as in RE
 - the development of community life
 - relationships within the school
 - relationships with communities outside the school
 - creating a safe environment in which individuality can be expressed
 - valuing the cultural diversity experienced locally and/or nationally
- 3 Does the school offer pupils the opportunity to
 - reflect on the importance of a system of personal belief
 - recognise the place a Christian faith has in people's lives
 - develop a sense of wonder, awe, curiosity and mystery
 - understand the difference between right and wrong and the consequences of their actions for themselves and for others
 - be creative, questioning and imaginative within a broad Christian framework that recognises the importance of experience, personal values and respect for the beliefs of others
 - recognise, respect and celebrate cultural diversity
- 4 Does the school have a statement encapsulating its policy on spiritual and moral development?

Questions for reflection and discussion

The Christian character of the school

- 1 How does the school ensure that it maintains its integrity as a Christian community, while offering a good education for all its pupils according to their age and aptitude?
- 2 What factors show that the school reflects the gospel of Christ?
- 3 How does the mission statement/statement of aims draw together the range of policies on which the school operates?
- 4 How can visitors to the school identify that it is an Anglican school?
- 5 How do the relationships within the school and with the wider community reflect Christian teachings?
- 6 How does the school signal to the pupils, parents and the wider community the things that it believes to be important?
- 7 What steps are taken to ensure that all staff feel they are a valued part of the school community?
- 8 What steps are taken to ensure that pupils feel they are a valued part of the school community?
- 9 How is general care shown for the environment?
- 10 Do the school buildings and those grounds within the control of the governing body demonstrate a concern for the quality of the environment?
- 11 How do the school's staffing and staff development policies reflect the character of the school?
- 12 How does the school seek to create a positive attitude amongst parents towards the school?
- 13 How does the school consult parents on curriculum issues, particularly with regard to religious education, personal and social education and sex education?
- 14 How do the school's policies on multicultural education and equal opportunities, if the school has them, contribute to the character of the school?
- 15 What action has the school taken to promote the spiritual development of the pupils?
- 16 How are pupils joining the school enabled to develop an understanding of the school's character?

Main sources of evidence

For each of the main areas of the life of the school that most clearly reveal its character (listed below), there are several potential sources of evidence available. In reviewing the content for each subheading the school will need to review each of these sources of evidence for their appropriateness to each of the key stages present in the school.

Relationships

Whole school observation

Interviews with pupils, staff, chaplains and parents

Notices and general correspondence with parents

Behaviour/discipline

Documentation

Interviews

Observation in the classroom, playground and public areas of the school. (This should be done at various points of the school day.)

Church/community links

Policies, records or examples of activities with community or charitable organisations

Interviews with staff, chaplains and parents

Observation – public notice boards and correspondence with parents

Pastoral organization

Interviews with staff and pupils

Documentation

Observation

The school's mission/values/vision statement will provide an insight into the governors' intentions for the school. The school will need to reflect on the extent to which these intentions have been achieved.

Buildings and the school environment

Observation:

Displays in classrooms and public areas

Care of the buildings

Care of the environment

Vandalism/graffiti

Budget allocations

Interviews with the head, chair of governors and staff responsible for the care and maintenance of the buildings

Building development plan

Special needs/equal opportunities

Documentation

Racism/bullying policies

Interviews with the head and members of staff

Observation in class and around the school

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Documentation

Interviews with the head, staff, chaplains and pupils

Observation in class and around the school

SECTION FOUR

Worship in the school

Worship should be at the heart of every Christian school. It will provide a point where all that the school is and does can be offered to God and laid open before him. It will thus provide an opportunity for head, staff and pupils to share what is of value to them, and what is a cause of joy or sorrow. It is a time for reflection and a time to give praise to God for his goodness. For this to be truly at the heart of the school, it is difficult to see how it could be anything other than a daily experience for all pupils. This is why the Church of England Board of Education has consistently supported the daily act of worship in maintained schools. In all Christian schools, worship should reflect some of the essential features within the rich traditions of Christian prayer and worship. Anglican schools cannot be expected to encapsulate all of the richness of the Anglican tradition, but when planning worship it is useful to have an idea of the important areas to be explored at some time during a pupil's school career. This is appropriate in all phases of education as the pupil's growing maturity contributes to a broadening and deepening of their spiritual experience and understanding. Suggestions on some of the elements of the Anglican heritage that can be drawn upon, over a period of time, for use in worship are included later in this section. Schools will have established a rationale for their pattern of worship, which will include consideration of the place of the Holy Communion within the life of the school. There will be room for innovation and the opportunity to prepare carefully for change in the pattern of worship in the school in general and changes that reflect the growing maturity of pupils. In most schools this rationale will take the form of a policy statement. In a few it may still take the form of a consensus view established and maintained by the head in association with the clergy. In either case care will be needed to ensure that the basis of school worship is well understood and that it continues to meet the needs of each succeeding generation of pupils. Where there is a school policy and other documentation, this can be of great assistance in briefing visitors who have been asked to lead acts of worship or to preach. It may help to limit some of the worst effects of visitors who are out of touch with the pupils or the school's Anglican tradition.

Key elements of school planning and practice

The centrality of worship in a Church school must be made clear to parents who apply to enter their children in the school. Church schools generally want their worship to be inclusive, and parents and children should understand that worship is an occasion where each individual's integrity is respected. Parents and staff need to be satisfied that sensitive issues around school worship have been well thought through and that the time given to worship is reflected in the care and commitment with which it is planned and presented.

Planning

Worship needs to be planned in the same way that every other curriculum area needs to be planned. Those who have the major responsibility for leading acts of worship (clergy, youth workers, heads, deputies and other teachers) need to meet regularly to organise dates and themes and to co-ordinate their planning. Some schools will formalise this meeting into a worship planning committee, which could involve senior pupils.

The school policy should take into account the importance for there to be

- an effective and evolving pattern of themes for worship
- a conceptual coherence and material appropriate to the pupils' ages and stages of development
- the flexibility to respond to changing situations, both within the school and outside

Range and style

The planning will demonstrate a range of types of acts of worship, including

- those led by staff
- those led by visitors
- pupil involvement and leadership
- times of celebration
- opportunities for reflection and quiet
- story telling
- the creative and expressive arts
- the sharing of knowledge and information
- the exploration of sacred text and symbols

Worship should be set in a context that appeals to the imagination. The atmosphere of the hall, classroom, church or chapel and the use of the creative arts, music, dance, pictures and religious symbols allow for a range of response that adds to the richness and variety of the experience. It is important to reach beyond the purely verbal content, for example the talk or the story, and to explore the possibilities of song, silence, movement and gesture. Pupils have an important part to play in this creativity. The challenge to the teacher and the leader of the act of worship is to ensure that pupils are supported whenever their personal responses and ideas are exposed to the views of others.

Consultation

There should be evidence of consultation among those concerned with the worship in the school. This should include governors, perhaps through an appropriate committee, and staff and, where appropriate, pupils. The teaching staff can frequently offer a range of talents, experiences and insights that may be used within acts of worship.

Diversity

In most schools there are pupils who come from a variety of different religious backgrounds. The programming and conduct of worship will need to take account of this diversity. A balance that is unique to the circumstances of the school will need to be struck between the importance of giving pupils an experience of the range and variety of Anglican worship and respect for the traditions or faith in which they are being brought up or to which they belong. Particular sensitivity is needed for pupils whose faith is not Christian. Those who lead should do so in ways that allow everyone present

to take part with integrity. When planning worship, account should be taken of the ages of the pupils, and their aptitudes and family backgrounds. Whilst it is obviously important for the whole school to meet together to worship regularly, the developmental needs of the pupils must be recognised in the school. Pupils in the early years need to take part in worship in which language and concepts appropriate to their age are used. Older pupils need material that challenges their developing perceptions of the world.

Curricular links

The school should be able to demonstrate that the acts of worship are educational in approach, in that they take account of age, aptitude, progression and continuity. There should be a wide range of curricular links, and acts of worship should be complementary to rather than identical with classroom experience.

Timing and grouping

The planning should make it clear which groups of pupils are involved in acts of worship and the times of day when these will take place. The school should be able to justify the time taken to gather the whole school together by the value of the occasion. Schools will have reflected on the value of worship taking place at a variety of different times of day during the school week and in a variety of different groupings.

Resources and in-service training

A regular review of the resources available for those leading acts of worship will be important. Although worship will not make particularly large demands on the school budget, provision should be made for music, song books, artefacts and other resources. Christian schools will wish to be particularly sensitive to matters of copyright and respect for the creativity of authors and composers. This implies that they will ensure that they either hold an appropriate copyright licence or that they obtain specific permission on every occasion when they wish to copy material for use in worship. There should also be regular opportunities for all those leading worship to take part in training that is appropriate to their role, and care should be taken to ensure that their own spiritual support and development is considered. This provision needs to have two main areas of focus. First, there needs to be a general agreement and understanding about the aims and purposes of worship, so that all members of staff and the governing body work within a consistent policy. Secondly, in those schools where there is a regular place for class or tutor group acts of worship, teachers need support in carrying out this requirement.

Record-keeping

The school will have developed a system of record-keeping in order to ensure that there is variety and progression in the pattern of worship in the school. Some schools may choose to use the common lectionary as a basis for their worship, but even when such an external resource is used, records of music and the themes for talks will need to be kept.

Evaluation

Finally, as in every other part of school life, there will be an organised programme of evaluation. One of the focuses of this will be the contribution that worship makes to the spiritual development of pupils. Worship will also need to be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that, within the school's Christian foundation, it meets the needs of pupils and staff.

The tradition of worship

This list of issues is designed to help schools reflect on the extent to which they are making use of and reflecting the Anglican tradition of worship. The extent to which the statements are then true of any particular school will depend on the age of the pupils and how the school has resolved some of the issues of integrity and diversity highlighted in previous sections.

The school is

- using the Bible as a source book for inspiration and learning
- reflecting upon Christian symbols and their use in worship (for example, bread, wine, chalice, the cross and the crucifix are symbols which lead to an understanding of the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection)
- observing the cycle of the Anglican year – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost
- participating in the regularity and set order of Anglican worship
- using collects as a focus for short acts of worship in small groups
- identifying a collection of prayers, hymns and psalms that creates a framework for worship within the school
- learning traditional responses and prayers that express the essential beliefs of Christians throughout the ages
- providing opportunities to discover the value of meditation and silence within the context of Christian worship
- recognising that the Anglican Communion has a strong commitment to ecumenism that may be expressed when members of other churches are invited to lead worship
- experiencing the bond of community, which encompasses gender, age and ethnicity and respects religious diversity. This could be expressed through the range of visitors who are invited to lead or attend worship
- sharing in a commitment to dialogue with other faiths, shown in the welcome we offer to all pupils and the celebration of shared values and beliefs

For some pupils the experience of worship will be tentative and exploratory. For those who have already developed a growing Christian commitment, worship will be the natural outcome of belief, and a place where their deepest thoughts and emotions can be expressed in communion with God.

Questions for reflection and discussion

Worship

- 1 Is there a school policy on worship? If so, how does it relate to the school's mission statement/statement of aims?
- 2 Is the school policy on worship being followed?
- 3 How is worship organised? Who organises it? What is the setting? What opportunities/constraints are there?
- 4 Is there a staff support group for worship? Are pupils consulted (if appropriate)?
- 5 How much money is available for worship resources in the school?
- 6 What human resources are deployed? Are pupils, governors and clergy or other visitors regularly involved? Does any guidance exist for such visitors?
- 7 What additional resources could the school make use of? Are you, other staff, and members of churches or other faiths used as expert resources?
- 8 How does the school use the published resources?
- 9 Do you use school-produced material?
- 10 Does the school use other resources, for example, information and communications technology (ICT), audio-visual aids, artefacts?
- 11 Which festivals and special days are commemorated and how are they celebrated?
- 12 Is Holy Communion celebrated in school? How are the pupils able to participate?
- 13 Are there strong links with local churches and local Christian groups?
- 14 If the school has pupils who are members of non-Christian faiths, is any provision made for them?
- 15 Has any person recently attended any in-service training courses on school worship?
- 16 Is worship regarded by the school as having any specific contribution to make to the pupils' spiritual and moral development?
- 17 In what ways does the act of worship form part of the whole school policy on character and values?

Preparing an assessment of the worship in the school

Main sources of evidence

For each of the subheadings there is a list of potential sources of evidence.

Some of these will be more or less important depending on the key stages present in the school.

Organisation

Interviews with head, clergy and/or worship coordinator

Worship policy

School records of withdrawals

Planning

Interviews with head, clergy and/or worship co-ordinator

Timing and grouping

Records of past acts of worship

Plans for future acts of worship

Physical environment

Observation

Quality of experience

(a) Immediate

- Observation of acts of worship

(b) Overall

- Interviews with head, clergy and/or worship coordinator
- Records and planning
- Interviews with pupils
- Other evidence of the range and style of worship in the school

School Eucharist

Documentation

Interviews with head, clergy and/or worship coordinator

Observation

Resources and in-service training

Interviews with head, clergy and/or worship coordinator

Observation of library/resource areas

School budget

Records of training provision and support for worship leaders

Guidance for observation

Theme

Purpose and development

- Was the purpose of the act of worship clear to all present?
- Was the theme developed effectively?
- Were artefacts, visual aids or different elements used in presentation?
- Were they of good quality?
- Was worship integral to the school day?
- Was the act of worship conducted at an appropriate pace?

Atmosphere

- Was there a sense of order on entering/leaving?
- Were candles, flowers, a cross or other visual focus used?
- Was there a relaxed, secure atmosphere?
- Did the leader contribute to the atmosphere with language, attitude and tone?
- Is there a distinction between the assembly and an act of worship?

Pupil involvement

- How wide was the age range?
- Was the delivery appropriate for the interests, background, ability and age range of pupils?
- Were the pupils engaged and well motivated?

Staff

- Were teachers present (how many?) or was this seen as non-contact time?
- Were they involved or spectators?

Spiritual dimension

- Could this act of worship have contributed to the spiritual development of individuals?
- Were there opportunities for prayer/reflection/quiet? How were they used?

Integrity

- Was there a sense of respect for individuals?
- Was there openness, or compulsion, in invitations to pray or sing?
- Did the occasion engender ease or discomfort among the participants?

Sound, silence, visual art

- Was there a balance of music, speech and silence?
- How great a part did non-verbal communication play?
- Was visual art used or pupils' creative work shown and celebrated?
- Were the words of songs or hymns appropriate for the pupils and the theme?
- Was the use of live or recorded music appropriate?

Parents, governors, visitors, clergy

- Were any governors or visitors present?
- If so, what role did they play?
- If a visitor led the worship, was he/she briefed well and was the content appropriate?

Close

Was the worship within the given times?

Did the occasion clarify and affirm the values for which the school stands?

Did it offer pupils/adults something to think about and take into the life of the school?

SECTION FIVE

Religious Education in the school

Anglican schools are expected to give a high priority to religious education and religious studies. This should be apparent at the level of school policy and management decision-making and at the level of teaching in the classroom. Where pupils take public examinations in the subject, this high priority given to the subject should be reflected in the results of the examinations. Therefore a school self-evaluation of the subject teaching needs to look at the management framework of the subject, the results that are achieved, the quality of the teaching and learning and the contribution that the subject makes to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils. Where schools are using external syllabuses to support their teaching, many of them will have sections on assessment and attainment targets, which will provide another useful measure of the achievements in the subject. These principles apply regardless of the key stages that are present in the school, although the assessment tools to measure pupils' learning will be different.

Areas for review

These are the main questions that a review should ask:

- What is the management context?
- What are the standards in RE, and are they high enough?
- What is the contribution of the subject to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils?
- Is the progress of the pupils adequate?
- Is the quality of teaching adequate?

The management context

In the review of the national curriculum undertaken by Lord Dearing it was recommended that 5% of curriculum time should be allocated to religious education. If a Christian school was failing to do this it could hardly be said to be taking RE seriously. It is also noteworthy that the provision of the short-course GCSE in religious education (designed to occupy 5% of curriculum time), which continues to grow, is likely to provide a good opportunity to realise most of the objectives of the current HMC guidelines, as well as fulfil those of QCA. An Anglican school that is making the kind of adequate provision for RE naturally to be expected of a school with denominational affiliation will demonstrate this by

- ensuring that all pupils study the subject
- allotting at least 5% of teaching time to it

- ensuring that most/all secondary pupils are offered GCSE RE (either as a full or short course)
- ensuring that provision continues into the sixth form
- ensuring that it is available as an option at A level

In order to sustain such a commitment the school will need to ensure that there is adequate resourcing for the subject. This will be shown not only in the staff resources, but also in the budget and facilities allocated to the subject. Therefore any review should investigate carefully the qualification, experience and training of RE teachers. How many teachers have a specialist qualification in the subject? How many non-specialist teachers teach the subject? Are the same non-specialists used every year or do they change regularly?

The answers to these questions will raise a series of management issues about the training, development, commitment and enthusiasm of staff who are teaching the subject. One of the ways in which inexperienced and non-specialist staff are sustained in their enthusiasm and commitment is the extent to which there is a good framework for teaching the subject. Part of this will be provided by the documentation within the department. Is there a clear overall policy document, a syllabus, and guidance on assessment or on links with other subjects? In an Anglican school one of the issues for the policy documents will be whether sufficient attention is being given to Anglicanism's distinctive beliefs. The 1988 Education Reform Act (and the DfEE Circular, 1/94 (10/94 in Wales)) expected syllabuses in maintained schools to be 'in the main Christian'. Despite other changes of the law and the consolidation of education law in the Education Act 1996, this basic assumption remains unchanged. An Anglican school, like any other school, would be expected to fulfil this requirement. In addition, however, it would be appropriate to be able to find evidence that in its RE syllabus a school included a full study of the distinctive Anglican beliefs and practices, which should include teaching about

- its existence as a living worldwide faith given expression in a multicultural context and responsive to the needs of the wider community
- its sources and breadth of doctrine
- the Anglican Communion (there are five provinces in the UK, each of which incorporates great diversity)
- its inclusiveness as a denomination (necessary to accommodate diversity)
- teaching about ecumenism and interfaith relations

The Anglican character of the school will support these areas of teaching. However good the school documentation and however well qualified the staff, the quality of teaching and learning will still be at risk if the budgetary provision for the subject is not reasonable and the facilities in which teachers and pupils work are not adequate. A school that gives RE the lowest budget share of any subject and places the teaching in the worst buildings on the school campus is not giving the subject the level of support achieved in many schools that have a secular foundation.

The standards in RE, and are they high enough?

Secondary schools

For schools that have pupils at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5, there are a number of straightforward ways of answering this question. There are internal and external comparisons that can be made; given an initial analysis of the results over a number of years, the results can be compared with

- the results achieved in schools nationally
- the results for schools of similar type
- the results achieved in other subjects in the school

The comparisons with other subjects are indications whether standards are as high as they should be. Consider the size and nature of the entry: does the school enter a self-selecting group or the whole year group, for example. Explore whether 'options groups' have attracted the full range of ability and also comment on gender issues in the choice of RE and in examination results where appropriate. In addition, note evidence of boys' preference for specific options within RE syllabuses such as 'philosophy of religion'. For pupils of 14 and above, there is a trend for girls to perform much better than boys. Is this the case in your school, and are there any steps that the school should be taking to address the issue?

Primary and Secondary

Making judgments on the standard of pupils' work in non-accredited courses is more complex. When assessing 'non-examination' RE from 4 to 7, 7 to 11, 11 to 14 and 14 to 19, judgments should be against the relevant assessment objectives and level or grade descriptions contained in the relevant Agreed Syllabus. Judgments can be made of the progress that pupils make in each year, referring to any significant differences between particular groups, such as able pupils, those with special educational needs, and boys and girls. The principle of comparing the school's standards in religious education against national or regional standards, standards in other equivalent schools and against standards in other subjects within the same school should be applied in 'non-examination' RE as far as possible in order to ensure that the department is challenged to ensure the highest possible standards are maintained.

A different approach to the review of standards can be undertaken by talking with pupils, looking at their written work and observing lessons to explore how much pupils learn and at what rate. In undertaking this more subjective approach to a review of standards, those undertaking the review could have regard to the following. When looking at pupils' work and talking with them, concentrate on the extent to which they meet the expectation of the syllabus or the examination course requirements. Typically, these would include pupils' ability to

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religions and of what is distinctive to each
- give clear explanations of religious beliefs and explain in some depth what it means to be, for example, a Christian, a Muslim or a Hindu
- show an understanding of Christianity as it is expressed within the Anglican tradition
- show an understanding of what religions have in common and how and why they differ
- show an understanding of the diversity of belief and practice within individual religions
- show an understanding of faith communities and their teaching and evaluate their contribution to personal, local, national and international issues

- interpret religious concepts and symbolism, and the meaning of external appearances of faith
- use the correct terminology to describe matters of belief and the practice of faith
- demonstrate an ability to form their own views of religious issues through an exploration of questions about life's meaning and purpose
- reflect on what they have learnt in developing their own beliefs and values
- express and argue a position on moral issues, recognising strengths and weaknesses in the argument and sharing an understanding of religious perspectives upon these issues
- recognise the experiences which they share with people of different faiths (for example, suffering and death), and use this information to further their understanding of how other people try to make sense of these experiences

The aims, objectives and expectations of the school syllabus, and the examination course requirements, will help shape the analysis of strengths and weaknesses in RE as well as the overall judgments about attainment and progress. This approach to assessment and review will not provide direct comparators with other schools, but may be very constructive in indicating areas for work and development within the school.

The contribution of the subject to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils

Religious education should make a distinctive and significant contribution in this area. It should enable pupils to

- reflect on the relevance of religious teaching in their own lives
- learn about and evaluate the teachings of religions on right and wrong
- learn about beliefs, values and the concept of spirituality
- use the teachings of various religions to contribute to a consideration of a range of moral and religious issues
- understand the inter-relationship between religion, culture and society
- develop respect for the right of others to hold beliefs different from their own

The progress of the pupils

A review of the subject as part of a school's self-evaluation process will need to look at the quality of pupils' learning. In part this has been covered in the consideration of standards, but there are other aspects of the issue. Pupils' attitudes to learning in RE can be assessed by focusing their willingness to

- be open to the possibility of a spiritual dimension to life, and search for meaning and purpose in life
- consider the importance of commitment to a set of values by which to live one's life
- listen to the views of others without pre-judging one's response, and respect the right of others to have different beliefs and customs from one's own
- consider the personal relevance of religious questions and reflect on their own beliefs and values in the light of their learning in RE
- value insight and imagination as ways of perceiving reality

Another indicator of the attitude of the pupils to this curriculum area is the extent to which they take up voluntary and extra-curricula activities that relate to RE. Where there is a choice of taking

examination or non-examination courses in RE, the choices made can be an indication of the pupils' attitudes, but caution needs to be operated here because both the school and the pupils' parents can affect the curriculum choices that are made. Running religious studies against mathematics or English in the A level options, for example, will probably limit the numbers choosing religious studies.

The quality of learning

Effective learning takes place when pupils

- are on task and focused during lessons even when the work is demanding
- can talk confidently about their learning
- have high expectations of their work in RE
- develop independence and interdependence
- are able to respond to the learning symbols and images in their environment
- can respond to the religious dimensions of their lesson with feeling and insight
- make excellent progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding
- apply their learning to new situations
- understand what they are doing and how well they are progressing
- recall material that they have studied and describe what they have learned
- are aware of the assessment procedure used by the school
- are given opportunities to reflect on, review their work and discuss what they have learnt
- listen attentively to their teachers and others
- complete their homework tasks consistently

The quality of teaching

Effective teaching in RE is founded on a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teaching cannot be satisfactory where pupils, or a significant minority of them, do not learn as well as they should, considering what they already know. The same is true where they do not firmly consolidate their learning.

Effective teachers

- have a genuine interest in religion, ethics and philosophy and the ability to enthuse the pupils (subject knowledge)
- recognise the pupils' potential and give them work to do which challenges them intellectually and personally (that is, the work is matched to students' needs and reflects high expectations of them)
- have a good understanding of all the concepts, religions and aspects of religions specified in the school syllabus and examination syllabuses being taught (subject knowledge)
- promote a coherent understanding of religions by organising a range of activities which enable pupils to make associations between aspects of the same religions (subject knowledge, planning, method)
- encourage pupils to seek meanings and interpretations of texts, artefacts and symbols (expectations)
- balance the study of religions and pupils' spiritual and moral development, successfully relating the teaching of religions to the questions and interests which pupils have in the moral and spiritual issues in their own lives (planning, subject knowledge)

- establish a working environment in which teacher and pupils feel confident to draw upon their own faiths to support the learning of the class (methods, management of pupils)
- are aware of the sensitive nature of the subject and of how to deal with controversial and delicate issues when they arise (subject knowledge, methods)
- are skilled in the use of class teaching, group activity and individual work to serve different purposes. For example, class teaching might be used to explain aspects of a religion or raise important questions, while group work might be the best way of preparing presentations to the class or producing display work (subject knowledge, planning, methods)

Less effective teaching is demonstrated by

- dependence on the use of a single textbook
- setting tasks for pupils which do nothing to develop a conceptual framework or to promote an understanding of religion and an interest in it (for example, excessive use of closed comprehension exercises, tasks involving drawing objects, word searches or ‘filling in spaces’ with one or two answers)
- placing an emphasis on learning about the phenomena of religion rather than the beliefs and values behind the phenomena
- giving few opportunities for pupils to learn from religion by asking fundamental religious and philosophical questions
- failing to build upon pupils’ previous knowledge, understanding and skills in RE, offering little that is new or challenging to pupils and generally providing activities more suited to pupils of a lower age or ability level. Few teachers are supremely effective all the time and few are totally ineffective; most normal human beings are a mixture of the two. The challenge to any school is how teachers can be encouraged and supported to be at their most effective most of the time.

Questions for reflection and discussion

Religious education

- 1 With which other academic subject in the school can the provision for religious studies/religious education be compared?
- 2 Do those who teach this subject have professional qualifications in the subject?
- 3 Do they have opportunities for further professional development?
- 4 When was the last occasion on which these opportunities were taken up?
- 5 Is there a clear policy document for religious education? Does this relate to any externally published syllabus?
- 6 Is the subject well resourced? Are the resources up to date and do they reflect the current syllabus?
- 7 Where is the subject taught? Does this area of the school provide flexible facilities to enable teachers to use appropriate teaching approaches for the subject?
- 8 What timetable constraints are applied to the subject?
- 9 What links are there with other subjects on the school timetable?
- 10 What contribution does the subject make to the literacy and ICT skills of pupils?
- 11 What contribution does ICT make to religious education and religious studies?
- 12 When did the governing body last consider the teaching of the subject in the school?
- 13 What external examinations in this subject do pupils take? Is pupils' performance in these examinations comparable with other subjects in the school?
- 14 Does the head of department/subject coordinator have sufficient time allocation to meet the challenges of this responsibility?
- 15 Are there regular meetings of the staff who teach religious education/ religious studies?
- 16 When was the budget for this subject last reviewed?

Adequacy of resources

Staffing

Budget

Books and teaching materials (including departmental library/section within the school library)

Audio-visual (both machine and tapes, CD-ROMs, etc)

Adequacy of time allocated for teaching

Whether 5% of time is allocated for non-examination years; matching requirements of GCSE

Pupils' standards

Knowledge of the richness and diversity of religion and the range of issues it raises

Grasp of

- (a) the fact that the religious traditions of the United Kingdom are in the main Christian, although other principal religions are represented in our country
- (b) the particular place of Anglicanism within these traditions

Preparing an assessment of the religious education in the school

Main sources of evidence

For each of the sub-headings there is a list of potential sources of evidence. Some of these will be more or less important depending on the key stages present in the school.

Recognition of the distinctive features of religious traditions

Understanding of religious concepts and symbolism

Skill in the correct use of technical terms to describe matters of belief and the practice of faith

Quality of learning

Good learning in religious education occurs when pupils gain an understanding that religion has a practical application to everyday life. At best, pupils are helped to recognise that the scope of religious education is wider than knowledge of Christianity and that it relates those traditions to a broad experience of life. Those who have no background of religious faith should come to recognise that religious beliefs can give guidance and motivation in ethical considerations, and that, to their holders, beliefs have an explanatory power that gives coherence and significance to aspects of life that might otherwise appear fragmentary and disconnected. Pupils should gain an increasing understanding of ways in which religion involves believers in corporate celebrations and in individual affirmations of their faith. They should be able to form their own views of religious issues, explore them openly, orally and in writing, and develop the maturity of their thinking and the skill with which they can analyse their own and others' beliefs

Quality of teaching

Teachers of religious education should plan a range of structured activities, including direct teaching about faiths and traditions. They should provide a range of resources that make reference to a variety of faiths, and create ample opportunity for pupils to discuss religious issues in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Appropriate curricular links should be forged with subjects such as science, history, literature and art. The best starting point for the teaching of religious education is often the questions raised by pupils by moral issues in their own lives. Far from reducing religious education to the discussion of personal and social problems, the teaching should make clear the relationship between religious belief and personal and social behaviour. The Ten Commandments, for example, can be

shown to be particular instances of a concern to uphold moral standards that is found within all religions, and public concerns such as attitudes to war and the use of the world's resources can be derived, and receive support, from religious traditions. Review should lead to a judgment of how effectively teachers have presented the range of complex concepts and material to their classes and how well they have succeeded in establishing regular occasions for reflection and the kinds of reading and discussion that engage and motivate all their pupils and enable them to develop a sense of morality as well as gaining factual knowledge.