

The Church of England Vision for Education – “Deeply Christian serving the Common Good”

Introduction

In July 2016 the Church of England launched a document on its vision for education. The Church of England has been an education provider for many years (even longer than the State) and works with many different ages of young people in many different contexts; it is particularly active in founding and supporting Church schools, such as the school your child or children attend. You will find a copy of the full document online at

https://www.churchofengland.org/media/2532839/gs_2039_our_vision_for_education.pdf

Below we outline the key Christian beliefs which have informed the writing of the Vision Statement and indicate what this means for your local Church school.

Christian Beliefs

These key Christian ideas have helped form the Church of England’s Vision Statement:

- People are made in the image of God which means that every human being is a person of great worth and should be valued and treated with respect
- Every person deserves to live a “life in all its fullness” and fulfil their potential
- Nobody is outside of God’s love and care and this means that the Church should have a particular concern for those who may be described as disadvantaged or excluded in any way
- God is a God of relationships and for us our network of relationships with our communities, our world and nature is of high importance, as we live a shared life on a finite planet. These relationships cross barriers of differences such as race, nationality, religion, gender and status.

The Vision Statement and Church Schools

The Vision Statement has been worked out around four key ideas: wisdom; hope; community; dignity. The Vision is Christian in its foundation because it is based firmly on Christian beliefs and practice as well as a desire for high quality educational outcomes for children and young people. In your Church school you will see it most explicitly in RE, assemblies and the ethos of the school as a whole; these come together to help promote “life in all its fullness”.

Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills: “Wisdom” is one of the great themes of the Bible where it is not simply religious wisdom which is talked about, but all aspects of life and culture including economic, political, relational and environmental. In the educational world it tells us of the importance of being radical and daring in the exploration of “big questions” and of the need to be open to new experiences, new knowledge and new people. Jesus’ teaching was vivid, imaginative and challenging, and so should ours be. The wisdom tradition also sees the natural world as a place of wonder, exploration, reflection and self-discovery which is important in a time of ecological challenges. Thus educating for wisdom in a school is about ethics, values and purposes, as well as for knowledge and facts.

Educating for Hope and Aspiration: Educating for “Hope” is about how we approach the future and, in Christian teaching, is bound up with hope in God’s future for the world. Every pupil should be encouraged to stretch themselves spiritually, morally, intellectually, imaginatively and actively as well as being well-educated. Hope also helps us cope wisely with things and people going wrong. It shows us

that bad experiences, bad behaviour and wrongdoing need not have the last word, there is always room for healing situations, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Educating for Community and Living Well Together: The Church of England, with its network of parishes, is present in every community as well as being committed to educational institutions at all levels. It also supports many institutions such as schools, colleges, hospitals, workplaces, prisons, the armed forces and airport authorities through its chaplaincy work. This shows how the Church is committed to the quality of life in this country and to working with a broad spectrum of providers. In education this is shown in a core focus on relationships within the school itself and with the role the school plays in the local community and how it relates to other institutions. Every school should be a hospitable community where all can flourish.

Educating for Dignity and Respect: A belief in the ultimate worth of every person and in human dignity is at the heart of a good education. Ensuring our children are kept safely from harm and educated in an environment where all God's children are valued is of the highest priority and may be encountered especially in the areas relating to safeguarding, bullying, special educational needs and disabilities.

Life in all its Fullness: The Christian concept of the human person is not limited to wisdom, hope, dignity and community, as to live life in all its fullness includes other elements such as:

- Being blessed and being a blessing. Education should be one of the greatest blessings in anyone's life
- Creativity in areas such as art, design, music, drama, dance, poetry, fiction and film are all important, as is discovery and innovation in the sciences and technology, critical thinking in the humanities, entrepreneurship in business and inspiration and imagination in ethics and religion. Human beings are creative, in the image of the Creator God.
- Joyfulness – any education that does not communicate joy, wonder, amazement, fascination and delight has failed
- Reconciling – it is not difficult to respect those who seem to be like us, the challenge in schools is how to deal with those who are perceived as different
- Glory – by responding to God's glory with thanks and praise we become aware of the need to honour and respect all those who are created in His image.

Conclusion

This educational vision is both deeply Christian and in the service of the common good, but is also one which can be related to other traditions. A school formed around this vision will provide an education of excellence and academic rigour, within a wider framework of spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development, that enables children to flourish. We are also committed to offering an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way which enhances their lives.

The Church of England also plans to enhance its contribution to the education of our nation's children through the expansion of Free Schools and through a new Foundation for Educational Leadership which will equip school leaders for the new educational landscape.

The Church of England Vision for Education is summed up in the heading of our report as "Deeply Christian serving the Common Good". *We invite you to share this vision with us.*