

# What are Church of England Schools and how do they contribute to the education system within our country?

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The Church of England started founding schools more than 200 years ago. Parish churches did this, usually through the personal generosity of parishioners, to enable a free education for any and all children who lived locally. This move was radical and prophetic, at least 50 years before there was any universal provision from the state.

Church of England schools are now publicly funded. They are run by local authorities and academy trusts, following the same regulations from the Department of Education as all other schools in the state sector. In addition they are voluntarily aided (VA) or voluntarily controlled by the Church of England, a system to enable continuing collaboration at the local level between church and state.

Just as they always have been, Church schools are for everyone. They exist to serve their local communities. This might include Christian families who live close to the school but it also includes children from families of other faiths and no faith. All are welcome in Church schools. The vision has always been for diversity – not just religious but also economic diversity – as part of the Church of England's contribution to wider society.

There are many different types of schools. This enables parents, through the admissions system, to indicate their preference for the type of school they wish their child to attend. The majority of Church schools do not exercise any faith-based criteria in their admissions and offer education to children in line with the local authority's criteria (such as looked-after children) or who already have siblings who attend the school.

Church schools often find themselves oversubscribed. For some this might be to do with high quality academic standards; for some it might be about a holistic approach to well-being and learning; and for others it is to do with the core values of Hope, Wisdom, Community and Dignity, which Church Schools live by every day.

Whilst these values are founded on a vision of life in all its fullness that Christians see in Jesus, they are well-established and widely-embraced by schools far beyond the faith sector. The vision is to enable all children and school staff to live life to the full, with the freedom to shape these values according to their own context.

The Church of England through its 42 dioceses and their respective churches, support the local governance of its Church schools. Over 22,500 Foundation Governors in Church schools volunteer their time and skills, with training and support from our dioceses across the UK. Across the country, Church of England clergy dedicate a million hours every year to working with

children and young people in schools, often gathering further volunteers to offer extra help with special initiatives such as holiday and after-school activities.

Diocesan Boards of Education provide local support to the headteachers and staff of their respective schools, working in partnership with Local Authorities and Academy Trust Boards.

The Diocese of Guildford supports 83 Church of England schools across three local authorities in Surrey, Hampshire and Kingston. In total it takes responsibility and care for educating over 22,000 children across the south-east.

### **Notes for editors**

The Church is the biggest provider of education in the country, operating as a partner with government in state education. Over 1 million children attend Church of England schools across the country.

One quarter of all primary schools and over 200 secondary schools are Church of England. 53 % of rural schools are Church of England – without the framework and investment we make, education in rural areas would be in crisis. In addition the Church is the biggest operator of academies in England and runs many multi-academy trusts.

