

INTRODUCTION TO THE VISION

The vision is deeply Christian, with Jesus' promise of '*life in all its fullness*' right at the core. There are four basic elements that interplay and run through the whole approach, an 'ecology' of the fullness of life. They offer a vision of educating for:

Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

Hope and Aspiration

Community and Living Well Together

Dignity and Respect

Under each element, this vision document offers three things. First, the summary paragraph written by Professor David Ford and his group, taken from the 'Church of England Vision for Education' (August 2016). Second, a paragraph focussing that into the county of Cumbria. Third, some bullet-pointed examples of the aspirations towards which this vision calls each school, parish, mission community and indeed community.

Before turning to these specifics, it is important to remember the Cumbrian context. This includes:

- Rolls falling, particularly in rural areas.
- An ongoing reduction in school funding.
- The complexities of national movements towards new structures for school organisation, including multi academy trusts (MATs) as well as strong cluster working locally.
- The different impacts of changes in church structures, resources and deployment; fewer full time paid ministers brings an emphasis on self-supporting ministers and lay ministry, and affects the number of governors, whilst also providing a significant stimulus for greater lay involvement, and opportunities to do things in new ways.
- Our Diocese- and County-wide vision of God for All, with its emphasis on mission and outreach, which encourages, expects and equips churches and church people to look outwards, including to their local schools.

Whilst some of these realities will change, our intention is that this vision will not. In as much as wisdom, hope, community and dignity as articulated here are desirable – and serve as a faithful summary of the Church of England's desire in education – then the vision shall be held up over the coming years.

What will change, however, are the schools, communities, churches and groups engaging with the vision. Thus the strength of this vision is that each of us who engage with it will need different insights and challenges at various times in the life-cycle of our communities and churches. It offers a powerful tool to strengthen and motivate all that we as a Diocese desire within the schools of our County.

1. Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

Prov 8:11

Wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

Good schools foster confidence, delight and discipline in seeking wisdom, knowledge, truth, understanding, know-how, and the skills needed to shape life well. They nurture academic habits and skills, emotional intelligence and creativity across the whole range of school subjects, including areas such as music, drama and the arts, information and other technologies, sustainable development, sport, and what one needs to understand and practise in order to be a good person, citizen, parent, employee, team or group member, or leader.

Here in Cumbria, this Diocese is committed to encouraging and supporting all schools to educate for the common good. We recognise the vital importance of gaining knowledge and skills, but are also convinced that education can and should be about developing wisdom. This desire for education to include a wisdom focus explains why 'it takes a village to raise a child' and we resolve to play our part fully in all localities as part of that 'village' equipping the young.

This vision of educating for wisdom, knowledge and skills motivates us to:

- *Support the development of wide curricula and rich experiences by sharing good practice and promoting innovation*
- *Desire deep community involvement in all schools*
- *Promote and support the vocation of teaching, governance and working with schools*
- *Recognise that healthy aspirations will include more than academic performance, and that not all aspirations are healthy*
- *Encourage each individual to grow in their self-knowledge through wide interaction with others, so that we all know who we are and aspire to be the best self we can be as unique individuals created in the image of God*
- *Engage with the challenge of growing and deepening creative, wise and healthy local communities*
- *Resolve to work with all schools to achieve good and outstanding inspection results*
- *Desire constructive learning partnerships between schools, churches, families and others*

Within our Church and Partner Schools, this also commits us to:

- *Promoting high standards in schools by working with local partners and offering focussed visits to schools by the DBE Team and Consultants, as well as supporting local networks*
- *Focusing on development pathways to ensure good leadership within distinctively Christian schools (including the Christian leadership course and the Church of England Professional Qualification for Headship)*
- *Encouraging service through good governance and offering high quality governor training*
- *Working to simplify governance structures*
- *Creating sustainable church majority Multi Academy Trust(s) delivering excellent outcomes underpinned by distinctive Christian values, with schools working together as Learning Communities*

2. Educating for Hope and Aspiration

Jeremiah 29:11

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

In the drama of ongoing life, how we learn to approach the future is crucial. Good schools open up horizons of hope and aspiration, and guide pupils into ways of fulfilling them. They also cope wisely with things and people going wrong. Bad experiences and behaviour, wrongdoing and evil need not have the last word. There are resources for healing, repair and renewal; repentance, forgiveness, truth and reconciliation are possible; and meaning, trust, generosity, compassion and hope are more fundamental than meaninglessness, suspicion, selfishness, hardheartedness and despair.

Here in Cumbria, this Diocese recognises that low aspirations are a significant issue for some, and remains committed to full involvement in all communities so that each and every child and young person can have their vision widened to see this world's potential, and their own. There are many inspiring stories from people educated across our County, and we wish to see them told in our schools, to raise aspiration and confidence.

This vision of educating for hope and aspiration motivates us to:

- *Desire that each child and young person grow in confidence and aspiration, aiming to fulfil their potential and experience 'life in all its fullness'*
- *Recognise that celebrating success is infectious and promotes aspiration*
- *Commit to enabling all in our schools to build real relationships of mutual respect, and learn to manage differences with maturity and confidence*
- *Promote close and supportive relationships between local schools*
- *Encourage all community groups, small and large, to have the confidence that they can make a significant difference within our schools*
- *Resolve to offer refreshment for Heads and others in keeping our aims high*
- *Desire that all churches, driven by the shared vision of God for All, seek to offer and promote hope and aspiration within all their local primary and secondary schools*

Within our Church and Partner Schools, this also commits us to:

- *Support churches to offer all an encounter with God, whether through high quality collective worship, school assemblies, classes, after-school clubs, special services, prayer spaces or other opportunities.*
- *Ensure that church members and leaders can be inspired, trained and equipped for this ministry*
- *Promote a rich experience of Religious Education including through delivery of the 'Understanding Christianity' course*
- *Support the distinctive ethos of church schools through our broad engagement*
- *Support schools and churches in developing strong partnership links with homes and families*
- *Ensuring that churches' and Mission Communities' mission action plans take seriously all the young people within our areas, and the opportunities which schools provide*

3. Educating for Community and Living Well Together

Matthew 22:39

Jesus said 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.

We are only persons with each other: our humanity is 'cohumanity', inextricably involved with others, utterly relational, both in our humanity and our shared life on a finite planet. If those others are of ultimate worth then we are each called to responsibility towards them and to contribute responsibly to our communities. The good life is 'with and for others in just institutions' (Paul Ricoeur). So education needs to have a core focus on relationships and commitments, participation in communities and institutions, and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together.

Here in Cumbria, this Diocese sees God's love expressed in Jesus, the one who died for his enemies and teaches us to live lives of love for others. Community is vital, and yet not every community in this world is healthy. We are committed to seeking to grow communities of wisdom and aspiration, built on love. Some communities have changed significantly, whether through geography, infrastructure or people-movement. Likewise, communities are formed and sustained in more varied ways than ever: to book groups are added internet forums, and to coffee shops and pubs have been added WhatsApp and Skype. At the heart of Christianity is a powerful message of love and forgiveness, of hospitality and love for the stranger, a rich resource on offer to each and every person and community.

This vision of educating for community and living well together motivates us to:

- *Work with all schools and communities so that they develop and thrive in healthy ways, working to inspire each and every person in Cumbria to understand the value of community, and our need for each other*
- *Acknowledge that in many areas and ways, schools are growing the communities of the future, which places a premium on their human relationships*
- *Promote the development of character education, which celebrates 'life in all its fullness' through cultivating and celebrating Christian virtues*
- *Understand ourselves as members of communities who influence those communities*
- *Recognise our place within the world community, seeking to promote this understanding and the breadth of vision it requires*
- *Desire that all school communities celebrate opportunities for forgiveness and reconciliation*
- *Encourage schools to be places where all are spurred on to volunteer and serve*
- *Engage with the challenge of modelling and teaching commitment to hospitality and welcome*
- *Encouraging all churches to play a key role in their local schools and communities*

Within our Church and Partner Schools, this also commits us to:

- *Being church schools for all, as opposed to 'faith schools'*
- *Demonstrating the ways in which the Christian message creates, grows and sustains healthy community via forgiveness, love and generosity*
- *Encouraging and supporting all churches to play a strategic role in forming sustainable local partnerships with schools to share facilities and community resources, having a shared ambition for those communities*
- *Developing long-term sustainable educational structures, such as our MAT, where this is in the best interests of the young people and our communities*
- *Loving our communities, seeking to serve and promote the common good*
- *Offering a wide and generous welcome to all*

4. Educating for Dignity and Respect

Genesis 1:27

In the image of God he created them.

Human dignity, the ultimate worth of each person, is central to good education and allowing each person to reach their full potential. The basic principle of respect for the value of each person involves continual discernment, deliberation and action, and schools are one of the main places where this happens, and where the understanding and practices it requires are learned. This includes vigilant safeguarding. It is especially important that the equal worth of those with and without special educational needs and disabilities is recognized in practice. For the first time in history, there is now something approaching global agreement on the worth of each person through the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and its successor declarations, covenants and conventions, including that in 2006 on the rights of persons with disabilities. How that is worked out in each nation and each school is a massive task that calls on the inspiration and resources offered by each tradition of faith and belief.

Here in Cumbria, as a Diocese we are committed to valuing each and every individual as created and precious to God and each of us. We lament the impact of the many forms of bullying, and recognise the significant pain experienced by those struggling with mental as well as physical health and capacity. We take seriously Jesus' offer of "life in all its fullness" as something he desires for each and every human being, and commit ourselves to working across all schools in this County towards minimising, and aiming to eradicate, the various ways in which some people are treated as having less dignity, value or worth than others.

This vision of educating for dignity and respect motivates us to:

- *Promote the development of inclusive provision for the needs of all children*
- *Help some local schools become, whilst diverse and thriving, better representations of the communities in which they operate*
- *Work to educate for and offer a vision that underpins promoting positive behaviour, thus reducing all forms of bullying and abuse*
- *Pursue the fair, right, positive and indeed hopeful treatment of all offenders, since one test of our community and the importance we place on human dignity is the way we treat (for example) bullies*
- *Encourage all schools to work on promoting mental health and wellbeing, for both staff and pupils, pursuing the development of EQ as well as use of IQ*
- *Recognise the educational and social issues caused by poverty and disadvantage, and address both those affected, and the root causes*

Within our Church and Partner Schools, this also commits us to:

- *Promoting inclusive vision and values and as part of our training – Church of England schools are not faith schools but church schools for all*
- *Reviewing Admissions policies so they reflect the inclusive nature of church schools and encourage sustainable local communities*
- *Modelling loving Christian community life by promoting forgiveness, acceptance, generosity, reconciliation, hospitality and other positive virtues that minimise both disadvantage and harmful relationships*

CONCLUSION

This document offers a clear and compelling vision for what our schools and all education in Cumbria could become. As a Diocese we have statutory responsibility in various ways for Church Schools, but we have a vision for all schools, and indeed for all children and young people in our County.

Confucius said:

If your plan is for one year, plant rice.
If your plan is for 10 years, plant trees.
If your plan is for 100 years, educate children.

This piece of work sets out our aspirations for the Cumbria and Cumbrians of the future to be:

Equipped with knowledge, skills and wisdom
Hopeful, with appropriate aspirations
Aware of the importance of community and living well together, and
Committed to the dignity of each and every human being

Each of us reading this Vision Document is a member of the Cumbrian community, and can be involved in working towards and developing the aims here outlined. As a Diocese, we commit ourselves to such efforts, and also commend them to others.