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CHAPTER 10

Church of England Schools

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CHAPTER SUMMARY

- This chapter provides an introduction to Anglican schools.
- It presents the position in the summer of 2001 shortly before the publication of the report on the development of the schools prepared by a committee chaired by Lord Dearing (Dearing 2001).
- The Dearing Report is likely to lead to significant development in Anglican schools, particularly at secondary level.

Introduction

It is important to state clearly that this chapter was written in the early summer of 2001. At this time the Church of England was awaiting the final report of the Dearing commission into the future of church schools. It is expected that this report will set a framework for the expansion of the number of Church of England schools within the maintained system for the first time in 100 years. This introduction to the Church of England's contribution to the maintained system must therefore be seen in the context of the changes that have happened between the date of writing and of reading.

In order to understand the significance of the above statement it is necessary to look back almost 200 years. At the beginning of the nineteenth century it began to be clear to philanthropists and to many people in the churches that there was a need to provide the children of 'the poor and manufacturing classes' with access to elementary education. A number of parishes responded to this need by creating schools for this purpose. In 1811 the Church of England found a means of coordinating and stimulating this work by the creation of the National Society. This voluntary society stimulated and supported the growth of over 15,000 schools and the colleges to train the teachers that they needed. It received grants from the government for its work, and for a while it seemed as if the National Society together with the British and Foreign Schools Society would succeed in sponsoring the provision of elementary education for all children in the country. By the middle of the century, however, it was becoming apparent that these two societies would not be able to create sufficient schools in some parts of the country, particularly the

growing suburbs of the great cities. As a result the state at last decided to intervene directly in the provision of schools in those places where the churches were not able to meet the demand. To achieve this the Education Act 1870 was passed. This act set up school boards with the power to levy local rates and to create and run schools. In 1902 local education authorities replaced the school boards. Although it was not immediately apparent, this period marked the beginning of a slow decline of church schools.

Forty years later, when the government published the Green Paper that led to the Education Act 1944, it was clear that the church would need help and support to continue to provide primary schools and to develop new schools to reflect the need to provide a distinctive secondary stage in education for all pupils. This led to the introduction in the 1944 Act of a new structure for church schools, which, despite a number of subsequent adjustments, still largely shapes the pattern of the church's provision. The subsequent introduction of comprehensive schools, the National Curriculum and local financial management affected the management of church schools in similar ways to the impact in all other schools within the maintained system.

In 1997 the advent of a new Labour government that placed education at the top of its agenda for action led to a series of events in the development of Anglican schools, which paved the way for the Dearing review and subsequent development.

The churches read and interpreted the documents on which government policy was developed in 1997 as being unfavourable towards church schools. This led to a growing concern among church leaders that the government intended to create conditions in which church schools would wither away. As a result the bishops of the Church of England released a press statement expressing these concerns and their support for church schools. This led to a clarification of the government's position which was further evidenced when the text of the Bill that subsequently became the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 was published. As finally worded, this Act provided significant clarification of the position of church schools within the education system of England and Wales and gave a framework for development in the quality of education within them, and the possible expansion of the numbers of church schools.

The church was also stimulated by the events surrounding the development and passage of this Act to the extent that, during a debate in the General Synod of the Church of England in November 1998, the Synod passed a resolution, without a single negative vote, which begins: 'believing that church schools stand at the heart of the church's mission to the nation'. This resolution also set in motion the creation of the committee chaired by Lord Dearing to review church schools and make recommendations for their future development. The bench of bishops of the Church in Wales made a similar commitment to Church in Wales schools in 1999.

Distinctiveness I: administration and governance

In September 1999 there were 186 Church of England secondary schools and 4,531 Church of England primary schools (both figures include some middle schools). This represents 5.5 per cent of the total secondary provision and 25 per cent of the primary provision. Of these schools 2,035 were voluntary aided, 2,636 were voluntary controlled

and 46 were foundation schools (Lankshear 2001). Each of these categories of schools has different arrangements for their governance and management, but all of them, having a legally defined 'religious character', must have an ethos statement that defines the way in which that character will be reflected in practice. The model ethos statement for Church of England schools is as follows.

Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England/Church in Wales and in partnership with the churches at parish and diocesan level.

The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.

The key features of the differences between these three categories of school, as far as the church is concerned, are summarised in Table 10.1.

School worship should reflect the religious character of the school. Therefore the policy and programme of worship in the school will include material drawn from the usual pattern of worship within the church, together with material developed by that church or others that is deemed to be appropriate to worship for the age group of the school. Within those Christian denominations where the Eucharist is central to the worship of the church, the school will have to include a section on the place of the Eucharist in its school policy document.

Voluntary aided schools are the schools in which the churches have the most direct influence because of the built-in majority on the governing body. Just under half of all Anglican schools are voluntary aided. In voluntary controlled and foundation schools

Table 10.1 The key features of the different types of Anglican school

	Voluntary aided	Voluntary controlled	Foundation
Membership of the governing body	Church nominees in majority	Church nominees in minority	Church nominees in minority
Admissions	Governors	LEA	Governors
Employment of staff	Governors	LEA	Governors
Ownership of the building	Trustees	Trustees	Trustees
Cost of building maintenance	Governors and LEA	LEA	LEA
Cost of building improvement	Governors	LEA	LEA
Religious education syllabus	Church syllabus	LEA agreed syllabus	LEA agreed syllabus
School worship	Anglican	Anglican	Anglican

the church must act in partnership with others in the community to provide the education for the children. Voluntary controlled schools are often seen as a model for the type of cooperation that should exist in areas served by only one school when that is a church school. Just over half of all Anglican schools are voluntary controlled.

The different arrangements for governance of schools in these three statuses represent a considerable challenge to the Church of England in the development of coherent policies and identities for its schools. Voluntary aided schools are more likely to pursue policies clearly in line with the church's understandings of the nature of church schools, given that the majority of the governors are church nominees. On the other hand, where a church school is the only school serving an area, it has been argued (Ramsey 1970) that the voluntary controlled school, and by implication the foundation school, represent a balance between the church and other parts of the local community. In the past ten years the advent of inspections under section 23 of the Schools Inspection Act 1996 has tended to bring voluntary controlled schools and foundation schools closer to the church structures for the support of its schools. However, there is still considerable variation in the extent to which voluntary controlled schools take account of Church of England policies for the church's schools.

The key relationship between the school and the church is focused in two distinct ways. The parish, or in the case of a few secondary schools the deanery, nominates a number of the foundation governors and the parish priest is automatically a governor. The diocese probably also nominates a number of the foundation governors and also provides support for the school through the Diocesan Director of Education and other professional members of the team employed by the Diocesan Board of Education.

Distinctiveness II: curriculum, assessment and inspection

The previous section sets out some of the principal differences between the various types of church school. This section discusses the way in which the key curriculum issues for which the church has direct responsibility are dealt with in Anglican schools.

Religious education

Throughout the 1990s the church has had a clear focus on the importance of the delivery of the curriculum in all church schools (Lankshear 1992a, b). Within this there has been a particular emphasis on the quality of religious education and school worship (Barton *et al.* 1996). There are two approaches at diocesan level to the development of the syllabus for teaching religious education in voluntary aided schools within the diocese. Some dioceses take the view that the interests of pupils are best served by all schools using the agreed syllabus for religious education, with the voluntary aided schools being provided with a diocesan supplement, in order to ensure that the elements of the agreed syllabus that focus on Christianity are well resourced. Other dioceses provide a full syllabus for use in voluntary aided schools in their area. The reasons for these differences are complex and often reflect the relationships that exist between the dioceses and the local education authorities in a particular region.

In Wales, the Church in Wales has usually provided advice on syllabus issues at provincial level.

Worship

The worship in Anglican schools should always reflect both the spiritual needs of the pupils and staff and the traditions of the Anglican church. This does not mean that Anglican schools should be using the formal services of the church, but it does imply that within every school worship policy there will be a clear statement about how the worship of the school relates to the worship of the church locally and as a whole. This will make clear how pupils will, in the course of the school worship, learn sufficient of the worship of the church to be in a position to join that worship should they choose to do so as adults.

Inspection: sections 10 and 23

In all church schools the inspections conducted by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), or ESTYN in Wales, are complemented by inspections of those aspects of the religious character of the school that are distinctive. Provision for these inspections was originally included in section 13 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992. Subsequently the provisions, as amended in 1993, were incorporated in section 23 of the Schools Inspections Act 1996. In order to distinguish between the two inspections the convention has developed of referring to the inspections conducted by Ofsted or ESTYN as 'section 10 inspections' and the inspections of the religious character provisions as 'section 23 inspections'.

In response to these acts the Anglican church, working through the National Society, set up a national scheme of inspection, whose framework and training have developed significantly since it was first introduced. It will be apparent from reading the sections that precede this one that the way in which section 23 inspections impact on church schools will vary with their status. Table 10.2 is taken from the National Society's Inspection Handbook (Brown *et al.* 2000) and shows the normal situation for inspection.

Table 10.2 The impact of inspection

	Voluntary aided	Voluntary controlled	Foundation
Religious education	Section 23	Section 10	Section 10
School worship	Section 23	Section 23	Section 23
Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Sections 23 and 10	Sections 23 and 10	Sections 23 and 10

Note: Section 23 applies where parents have requested religious education in accordance with the religious character of the school. Section 10 inspectors will report on whether the school is complying with the law on school worship in terms of pupil attendance.

Although there is no legal compulsion to use inspectors trained by the National Society for section 23 inspections, in excess of 90 per cent of Church of England schools do so (Lankshar, J. F. 1997). This makes the National Society Inspection Handbook a very significant document for those who wish to know what standards are expected of Church of England schools.

Distinctiveness III: ethos

The ethos of an Anglican school should be reflected in every aspect of the school's life. It consists of several threads which, interwoven, make up the whole. Crucial to the development of the ethos of the school is the role of the headteacher. Even in voluntary controlled and foundation schools, where there is no provision for the governors to discriminate in favour of teachers drawn from the Christian community, there is specific legal provision for the governors to satisfy themselves that every candidate for the headship of the school has the ability to sustain and develop the religious character of the school (School Standards and Framework Act 1998). The leadership provided by the headteacher will set a standard for all those involved in the school to emulate. It is essential that every headteacher of a church school has a clear understanding of how the key concepts within Christianity should be reflected in the life of a church school. Some of these are briefly introduced in the following paragraphs.

Values

One of the key areas in which the ethos of the school will be reflected is the values that the school uses and reflects. A good introduction to the issues associated with the values that a church school should adopt is provided by the National Society publications *Values for Church Schools* (Shepherd 1998) and *A Christian Voice in Education* (Carey et al. 1998), the latter of which contains articles by three authors, including both current English Archbishops. In an Anglican school all the values reflected in the life of the school should be based on a clear understanding of Christian theology, particularly as it relates to childhood and to education. This represents a challenge to those responsible for the leadership of such schools, in that the time and opportunities to discuss these issues are limited within the context of the pressures on professionals to deliver the highest possible standards of general education and to administer a well organised school.

Relationships

The quality of the relationships that exist within a school is one of the key indicators of the extent to which the values that the school espouses are carried through in practice. In an Anglican school these should be based on the example and teaching of Christ. Nothing less than this could possibly reflect a Christian theology of education. The principal demonstration of these relationships will be among the adults who work in or lead the school. Unless they strive to conform their own relationships to these principles it is unlikely that the demands made on the pupils to treat each other and the

adults in the school in accordance with the principles will be understood or accepted by them. No school is isolated from its local community and the wider community that it also serves. Therefore, the relationships that it maintains with members of these communities must also reflect the same principles of love, respect and service.

Stewardship

Another key concept in the teaching of Christianity is the twin threads of our involvement in creation. We are called to be both stewards of God's creation and partners with God in the continuing act of creation. This gives a particular responsibility to church schools to demonstrate a full commitment to these ideas in their teaching, their care for the environment within and outside schools, their respect for the creativity of artists, writers and musicians and the care with which they seek to develop the creativity of all those involved in the school, pupils and adults.

An Anglican school's commitment to good stewardship of its resources will also be shown in the measures that it takes to give an account of its work to the parents, the local community and the other stakeholders in the school. Openness and honesty will be the hallmark of all its dealings.

Justice

It will be clear immediately that the concept of justice must be reflected in the policies on rewards and discipline that the school develops, both for staff working in the school and for the pupils. In practice, under the pressure of running a complex institution, problems sometimes arise in ensuring that this principle is applied, particularly when it must be combined with the need to ensure the quality of relationships discussed above. In theory, of course, there is no conflict. Relationships based on love, respect and service should also incorporate justice; in practice, towards the end of a long term during a wet dinner break, the theory is easily lost in the pressures of the moment.

Justice, however, goes beyond the discipline and rewards policies in the school. If a school is to operate justly in the world then it must seek to apply the principles of justice in all its dealings with the world beyond its gates. This might present challenges to the way in which the school works with other schools in the area, to the way in which it obtains goods and services and to the way in which it accepts its accountability to the local and wider communities. The advent of the citizenship curriculum should present new opportunities for church schools to think through these issues and to explore how far the school's practices support the principles that are being taught to the pupils.

Theology

Each of the above sections has picked a single idea from Christian theology and briefly developed its implications for a church school. There are many other areas that could have been included and each of the chosen areas could have been developed more fully. The purpose in selecting these issues was not to attempt a comprehensive review of the

ways in which an understanding of Christian theology interacts with the policies and management of an Anglican school, but to demonstrate that such an interaction should exist, and that all those who work in and particularly who seek to lead an Anglican school need to understand that at its heart must be the Christian faith. Christianity is not an extra to be bolted on to the school where it can be made to fit. It must stand at the centre. The difference between a church school and a community school does not lie in what the school does, but in why it does it.

Those in leadership positions in Anglican schools need to engage with Christian theology as well as with educational practice, so that within the school these ways of understanding the world are brought together and reflected in practice.

Regional variations

The previous paragraph argued strongly for the interaction of theology and educational practice in the development of a church school. A further issue for all Anglican schools is the interaction between the school and the type of community it serves. For the purpose of exploring some of the issues that this raises, three distinct types of community are considered for the issues that they raise for Anglican schools. It should be clear from this analysis that every Anglican school has to address the question: 'what does it mean to us to be the Anglican school in this place?' The need to be clear about the variety and variation among Church of England schools has been an important theme in the development of the section 23 inspection regime by the church (Brown *et al.* 2000).

Village schools

Many Anglican schools are in villages where they offer the only available primary education for the children of the village. In such circumstances the theology of service will be very important to the church school. Effectively the church school is offering the best possible education to the children who come, regardless of the faith stance of the children's parents. This offering of a service, in the name of Christ, is a long tradition in the church. It requires an open engagement with the local community and places great importance on the way in which the governors and staff of the school can sustain a Christian vision for their work, while respecting and honouring the different life stances of the parents of the pupils in the school. Church schools in villages share with all other village schools the challenges of providing a rounded education for all the possible futures of their pupils while working in a small community, which might be quite isolated from the rest of the world.

Suburban schools

Earlier in this chapter it was noted that a comparatively small number of Anglican schools were established in suburban areas. As a result of the lack of provision in these areas there is often considerable pressure from Christian parents to obtain access for the children to the school. This pressure can have two distinct results. At the level of

the individual school it may result in the school adopting a policy for admissions that places an emphasis on the church attendance of the child's parents. This creates a different type of church school from the village school model. In these church schools many of the parents will share the commitment of the staff and governors to the Christian ethos of the school. This can be a strength for the school, but can also create pressures if the particular commitment to the faith among some parents does not reflect the spirit of openness and the pursuit of truth that is a longstanding tradition of Anglican schools and colleges at their best.

The second result of the pressure on the school for admission is the recurrent stories of people attending a local church for the sole purpose of obtaining a place for their child. It is important that such issues and the problems that they cause are discussed, but it must be remembered that the schools that face such problems are a very small proportion of the total number of Anglican schools. Schools have had to make their admissions policies public since the Education Act 1980. It is inevitable that, where the policy is public, a proportion of parents will comply with the steps necessary to obtain a place for their child. This would be true whatever the policy said. One of the ways of tackling the issue is to ensure that there are sufficient church school places available in the suburban areas to meet the demand of parents for them and thus to make complying with rigorous conditions to obtain entry unnecessary.

Inner-city schools

Anglican schools that serve inner-city areas are less likely than those in suburban areas to have to use their admissions policies, as the local church congregations are likely to be smaller. These schools have much in common with the village schools, in that they are offering education to children of the area, regardless of the faith stance of their parents. The difference is that in most inner-city areas parents have a real choice of schools if they wish to exercise it. In such areas a church school will attract parents either because it is the nearest school or because parents value the education that is being offered in the school, which will include taking religion and faith seriously. For this reason, in some areas it is possible to find Anglican school with a high proportion of children from Muslim homes. In such schools the need to respect the faith of the parents and pupils is particularly clear. It is also important that the staff and governors are clear about the way in which the school expresses its Christian foundation. These two imperatives are not exclusive to inner-city church schools, they apply to all church schools, but many of the Church of England inner-city schools provide examples from which others might learn in this context.

DfES regions

The three types of areas discussed above can be found in most parts of England and Wales. It is important to complete this section with a brief consideration of the national distribution of Church of England schools. Table 10.3 shows the proportion of Church of England schools, expressed as a percentage of all schools in each of the

Table 10.3 The percentage of Church of England schools by region

Region	Secondary schools	Primary schools	Total
North-east	0.61	10.14	8.31
North-west	5.38	28.32	24.97
Merseyside	2.91	13.66	11.74
Yorkshire and Humberside	3.12	21.76	18.72
East Midlands	4.08	27.58	23.73
West Midlands	6.64	25.97	22.55
Eastern	5.32	25.13	21.78
Inner London	10.61	17.85	16.74
Outer London	5.55	9.25	8.56
South-east	6.75	29.61	25.99
South-west	8.96	36.96	32.95
Total	5.51	25.04	21.85

regions used by the Department for Education and Skills. This table is taken from a paper presented to the biennial conference of the Ethos and Education Network in 2001 (Lankshear 2001), and reflects the position in September 1999. The most obvious fact from this table is the disproportionately low number of Church of England secondary schools compared to Church of England primary schools. This disproportion is one of the reasons why the church is now seeking opportunities to develop its provision of secondary schools.

Table 10.3 also shows some remarkable differences between regions. It is immediately clear that the predominantly urban areas of London and Merseyside are amongst the areas where the Church of England's provision is weakest. Perhaps most striking is the very low proportion of Church of England primary schools in Outer London, which of all the DfES regions is the most suburban. It is salutary to see that the current provision still reflects, to some extent, the problems that the church experienced over 150 years ago in making provision for the education of the children growing up in the expanding suburbs of the great cities.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter reference was made to the changes that are likely to take place within Anglican schools in the next few years. It is important to return to that theme in closing. In June 2001 the Church of England published the final report of the committee chaired by Lord Dearing, which enquired into the future provision of church schools and their development (Dearing 2001). The report focused on three major themes:

- *The expansion of provision.* This chapter has indicated some of the reasons why the church should be pursuing some expansion of its provision of schools. The discussion of Table 10.3 highlighted this, as did the discussion of the problems created by

pressures on admission to Church of England schools in the suburbs. The report sets a target of 100 new secondary schools within the next seven to eight years and also some increase in the provision of Church of England primary schools, particularly in suburban areas. The extent to which this is achievable will depend on a variety of factors, including the attitude of central and local government to such aspirations.

- *The continued improvement in the quality of the education being offered.* It would be quite wrong for the Church of England, or any other body, to seek or sustain an involvement in schools if it were not committed to providing the best possible education for all the pupils in its schools. To achieve this there must be a constant concern with the standards being offered and an active pursuit of excellence. For this reason if for no other the report addresses how this can be achieved, and places considerable emphasis on the professional education and development of teachers as a key factor.
- *The vocation to teach.* The report lays great stress on the contribution of teachers and challenges the church to do more to develop and support the vocation to teach among all those who have the talent to undertake the work. This will require a positive response from every local church, as well as from the bodies responsible for education at national and regional level. The report emphasises the important contribution that the church colleges have to play in developing the ways in which the nurture of the Christian vocation to teach can be sustained and enhanced during initial professional education and in continuing professional development.

One final factor that contributes to the feeling of growth and development within the Anglican church's contribution to the maintained system of education in England and Wales is the number of voluntary controlled schools that are seeking to use the provisions of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to change from voluntary controlled status to voluntary aided. This movement towards voluntary aided status within the existing schools seems to be a demonstration of the belief that the governors and staff of the schools have in the importance of their church identity.

This chapter has described a dynamic sector of the maintained system of education in England and Wales. It has been assumed that the next few years will see further development in the provision of Anglican schools. If this does not happen it will be important for those studying the sector to identify the reasons that have contributed to a change of mind within the church or within government. At the time of writing this chapter, however, such a change of intention seems remote and all the signs point to a period of expansion and development within the Anglican church's provision.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1 What are the main reasons for the growing commitment of the Anglican church to its church schools and the expansion of their numbers?
- 2 What are the defining features of a Church of England school?
- 3 Are there any tensions between Church of England schools and 'secular' schools within the diverse social and cultural setting of the contemporary UK?

- 4 How far can a Church of England school maintain a Christian identity or ethos in a society that is culturally diverse and in a school setting that might be representative of many faiths or none?
- 5 Why are there relatively few Church of England schools in suburban settings?
- 6 What are the main conclusions of Lord Dearing's review of Church of England school provision (see Internet site below)?

INTERNET SITES

Church of England books and reports: www.chbookshop.co.uk

Church of England schools: www.churchschools.co.uk

The Dearing Report on Church Schools, *The Way Ahead*: www.natsoc.org.uk/LateNews/wayahead/html

The National Society: www.natsoc.org.uk

New religious education texts: www.encounterchristianity.co.uk

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