

Ethos Committees in Diocesan Church Schools

(VC schools, VA schools, Standalone Academies, and Church schools in MATs, including BWMAT Academies)

The Diocese of Bath and Wells Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) encourages all school governing bodies and local governing boards to set up an Ethos Committee, whose primary function is to support the school in maintaining and developing its Christian ethos, in accordance with its historic foundation and/or MAT scheme of delegation. In applying the principles below, schools are encouraged to take into consideration their individual communities, as well as the context of their MAT, where applicable.

The school's vision statement and accompanying values should be set in the framework of the Church of England vision for education (2016), 'Deeply Christian, serving the common good'. The four strands of this vision are:

- Educating for wisdom, knowledge and skills
- Educating for hope and aspiration
- Educating for community and living well together
- Educating for dignity and respect

In essence the vision is one of human flourishing, underpinned by the Bible verse John 10:10 where Jesus says: 'I have come in order that you might have life – life in all its fullness.' (Good News Version)

Further details can be found in the vision document:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/vision-education>

The Ethos Committee will play a significant role in helping the school to set its own distinctively Christian vision, with a biblical/theological underpinning, in line with three key questions:

- Who are we?
- Why are we here?
- How then do we live?

They will also monitor the impact of the vision on the life of the school and ensure it is clearly displayed and accessible. The following key features of Church school distinctiveness might be explored:

- School leaders, including governors, MAT directors and CEOs, committed to the Christian character of the school
- Collective Worship with distinctive Christian elements every day, in line with the CW Statement of Entitlement and Expectation (April 2021), 'Inclusive, Inspirational and Invitational'

- Strength in Religious Education, particularly the teaching of Christianity, in line with the RE Statement of Entitlement (Feb 2019) from the Church of England
- Observation of Christian festivals
- Active and affirming relationships with local churches
- Proclamation of the school as a Church school
- Embedding and expressing distinctively Christian values

The Ethos Committee will seek to promote church/school partnerships in order that each can enrich the life of the other. This may include consideration of the role of clergy and lay people as ex-officio governors and models of chaplaincy. It may also include consideration of the role of supporting clergy where the role of ex-officio foundation governor does not exist.

The Ethos Committee will promote links with the local and world-wide community and encourage the school to be inclusive of all, regardless of faith, race, disability and socio-economic background. It will also encourage a commitment to the poor and disadvantaged, and assist governors in fulfilling their responsibilities for safeguarding.

Guidance for Church schools on challenging all forms of bullying can be found in 'Valuing All God's Children'. The Ethos Committee will also assist in monitoring the school's approach to the mental health and well-being of staff and pupils. Advice can be found in: 'Mental Health and Well-Being: Towards a Whole School Approach'. All relevant documents, including policy guidance, can be found at www.churchofengland.org/education

The Ethos Committee will encourage teachers, support staff, governors and MAT directors to attend CPD offered by the Diocese to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.

The Ethos Committee will take a leading part in monitoring the impact of the school's Christian vision, in preparation for and in response to, the Section 48 SIAMS inspection. This asks one overarching question: 'How effective is the school's distinctive Christian vision, established and promoted by leadership at all levels, in enabling pupils and adults to flourish?', and explores the question through seven strands. Inspectors may wish to engage members of the Ethos Committee in round table conversations as they gather evidence during the inspection. The committee will also support the school in their ongoing self-evaluation and in preparation for inspection.

Membership of the Ethos Committee may include:

- At least one senior member of staff
- At least one member of the governing body/LGB
- A MAT director/member
- A teacher with responsibility for Religious Education
- A teacher with responsibility for Collective Worship
- At least one member of clergy or lay person from local churches
- The school chaplain
- Parents and/or pupils

Diocesan advisers are available for support and guidance at all times.

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