

Introduction

- 1.1** We were appointed by the Archbishops' Council, 'to review the achievements of Church of England schools and to make proposals for their future development'. In detail, our terms of reference continue:
- '1. Believing that Church schools stand at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation: to identify what currently contributes to the success and effectiveness of Church schools; and to examine the case for strengthening their distinctiveness and the means by which this might be achieved. (Effectiveness)
 2. To undertake a clear assessment of the need and opportunities to increase the number of all Church schools, but in particular at the secondary phase, and how this might be achieved. (Strategic Development)
 3. To develop strategies for increasing vocations to teach; and to review the particular and distinctive role of the Church colleges in the professional formation of Christian teachers and headteachers (both within Church schools and within the education system generally). (Vocation)
 4. To make recommendations concerning these three areas.'
- 1.2** We published an interim progress report in July 2000 and a Consultation Report in mid-December of that year in which we invited comment on our provisional recommendations and sought help in developing our thinking on several issues.
- 1.3** The scale of the response to consultation was almost overwhelming but encouraging. Not everyone, notably the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society, agreed with us. Neither of these organizations accepts education in schools which have a basis in one of the faiths. Some others challenged particular aspects of our thinking. But the weight of comment was supportive, and in general the local authorities which responded welcomed the emphasis we placed on a partnership with them. We have noted from public comment and the content of the government Green Paper of February 2001, *Schools Building on Success* (CM 5050), that central government has welcomed a relationship of partnership as much as local government. We believe Church schools have the goodwill of the other two main national political parties.
- 1.4** In offering this final report we have therefore used the Consultation Report as our text, amending and extending it to reflect the comments and contributions we have found persuasive. We have been concerned, however, not to lose the thrust of the Consultation text by introducing all the detail that came from consultations. We see our report as a 'Pathfinder' which outlines a clear way ahead for consideration by the Archbishops' Council. Where it is needed, we see practical guidance on implementation being filled out by

small expert working groups, whether at national or diocesan level. We would, however, urge that any such groups work to a tight timetable of no more than a few months so that the impetus for action, which we hope this report will provide, is not lost in a weight of detail and a burden of paper.

- 1.5** Everything we have to say has its roots in, and derives its validity from, the Resolution of the General Synod in 1998 captured in our terms of reference in the words:

Believing that Church schools stand at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation.

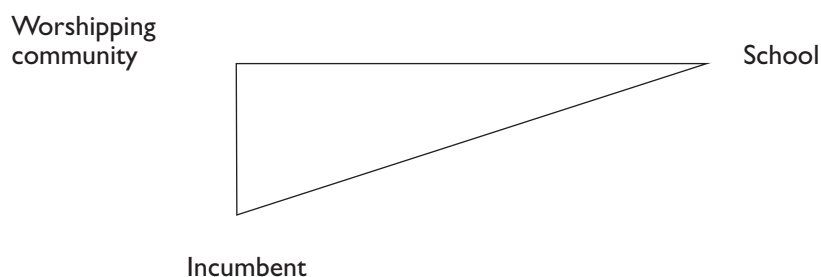
This Resolution challenges everyone in the Church to consider the implications of this statement of the importance and the place of Church schools, alongside the parish churches, at the heart of the Church's mission to the nation. We have sought in this report to spell out what this means.

- 1.6** In particular it means that:

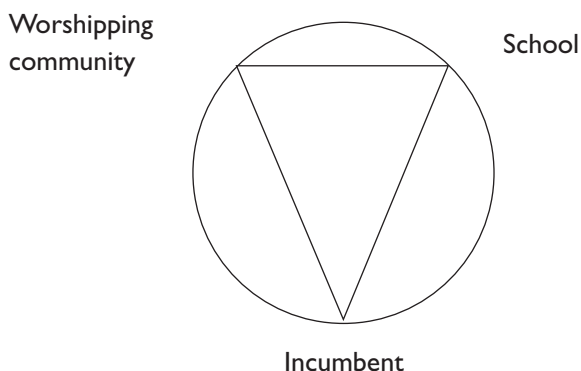
- all Church schools must be distinctively and recognizably Christian institutions;
- we must address in particular the lack of secondary provision in many areas, so that the mission can in fact be discharged throughout the nation;
- at all levels in the Church, in the schools, the parishes, the deaneries and within dioceses as well as in the Church colleges and theological colleges, courses and schemes, we need to consider afresh how, by working more closely together in true partnership, each can contribute more fully to the lives and well-being of the others, so that together we may all realize the opportunities before us.

- 1.7** Perhaps the most challenging achievement of these is the third. It requires a change to established patterns of thinking and doing. It is a challenge that can all too easily be lost in the press of daily events, not least because it may mean giving a lower priority to some activities which are valued and reflect well established practice.

- 1.8** To illustrate our wish for close integration, instead of a relationship at the level of the parish which might be diagrammatically expressed thus



it should be like this, with the school at the heart of parish life:



The school and Church are close together in partnership: the school and parish church see themselves as in active association – as an extended community – together at the heart of the Church’s mission to the community.

- 1.9** The closer coming together in active partnership of all parts of the extended Church community is a continuing theme of this report. We invite all members of the Church family of institutions to recognize the added strength that can be given and gained from strengthening the bonds between them and from breaking through any compartmental thinking.
- 1.10** There will be those who, having read what we see as the implications of putting the Church school at the centre of the Church’s mission, will question the validity of the Resolution of the General Synod. We recognize that some parts of our report may be considered radical. As we said in the first paragraph of the Introduction to our Consultation Report, we believe the General Synod judged well in passing its Resolution because the Church schools reach out to the young in far greater numbers than regularly attend church, and because through the young the Church is reaching out to parents and communities who would not otherwise engage with it. We develop our reasons for this conclusion in Chapter 3.
- 1.11** However, no Church school can be considered as part of the Church’s mission unless it is distinctively Christian.
- 1.12** To put that assertion in a historical context, the Church created schools in huge numbers in the nineteenth century to offer basic education to the poor at a time when the state did not. It did so to enable human beings made in the image of God to realize their potential and to escape from poverty and degradation. Today, the state is a willing provider, and the purpose of the Church in education is not simply to provide the basic education needed for human dignity. That purpose is to offer a spiritual dimension to the lives of young people, within the traditions of the Church of England, in an increasingly secular world.
- 1.13** The Church today still wishes to offer education for its own sake as a reflection of God’s love for humanity. But the justification for retaining and aspiring to extend its provision, as recommended in this report, cannot be simply this, when the state is willing to provide as never before and when there are so many calls on the Church’s limited resources. It is, and must be, because that engagement with children and young people in schools will, in

the words of the late Lord Runcie when he was Archbishop of Canterbury, enable the Church to:

Nourish those of the faith;
Encourage those of other faiths;
Challenge those who have no faith.

1.14 That nourishment, that encouragement and that challenge can only be offered to the extent that the Church has schools that are sufficient in number, sufficiently distinctive in their spiritual life, and staffed by sufficient numbers of Christian teachers, to enable the Church to discharge its mission through schools. Each represents a challenge to the Church. Consideration of these three central issues leads us into many other areas relevant to providing those sufficiencies, most notably amongst them, the integration of Church schools into the life of parish churches and the future and character of the Church colleges of higher education, upon both of which the realization of the aspirations for the Church, which we offer in this report, depend in large measure. These three issues are at the heart of everything else that we have to say.

1.15 On each of our chosen three issues there is much to be done. The opportunity for the Church is correspondingly great. The present provision of schools is the product of the great achievements of an earlier age. The challenge now is to build on those achievements so that the Church schools reach out to communities created in the last 50 years, and much more extensively to the secondary phase of education, which was not part of the work of the Church missionaries for education in the nineteenth century. The Church must reaffirm and develop its mission to the education of those who have least in life, whether in the towns or in rural communities. This was the inspiration behind the Church's massive expansion in education 200 years ago. And, most fundamental of all, the Church must foster the vocation to teach among Christians. To that end, it must show its commitment to Christian teachers in Community as well as Church schools. It must support them in their task at the level of the parish and the diocese. It must continue to be active at national level in influencing the development of Government policy in a way that recognizes the personal and professional needs of teachers. It must be immediately concerned to develop Christian teachers who have the potential and the desire to become head teachers and deputy heads in its schools. In all this, the Church must work in partnership and agreement with others, and especially through local education authorities.

1.16 We recognize that action on some of our proposals cannot be achieved by the Church alone. This is especially so of our proposals for creating the equivalent of 100 more Church secondary schools, the achievement of which, even if the necessary funding can be secured, is dependent on the support of others. The response to our consultation has underlined that even where there may be goodwill in principle to establishing additional Church schools, circumstances will be powerful in determining the timetable, and also that the achievement of 100 schools in say five years is well beyond what dioceses thought could be achieved. We respect such counsel and respond to it in Chapter 5. But we think it right that the whole Church, in responding to the Resolution of the General Synod, should

accept the challenge to ensure that our primary and secondary schools can in fact be at the heart of the Church's mission to all parts of the nation.

- 1.17** The present is a time when parents and policy makers are showing their regard for what the Church schools have to offer to children of all faiths and none. Perhaps as never before in 50 years, the Church has a great opportunity to pursue and develop its mission to the nation through its schools. We therefore encourage the Church to see this report as offering a response to this opportunity: as outlining a desired 'Way Ahead'.