

## Some history

- 2.1** The Church's commitment to the provision of education extends over many centuries. It was most powerfully evident in its drive for the mass provision of Christian education for the poor in the early and middle years of the nineteenth century. Its principal instrument was the National Society, created in 1811. By the time of the national census of 1851, forty years later, the Church had established 17,000 schools.
- 2.2** State provision for public education did not come until the Education Act of 1870, and it operated by supplementing rather than replacing voluntary provision. This Act was a significant moment in the development of the practice of partnership between the state and the churches in education, and one from which we believe society has greatly benefited.
- 2.3** This report is not the occasion for tracing the history of the provision for education since the 1870 Act. A snapshot of provision shortly after the turn of that century would show that the voluntary sector then numbered over 14,000 schools of which rather more than 1,000 were Roman Catholic, with a further similar number provided by the Wesleyans and others. At the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, after seventy years of state provision, the voluntary sector, i.e. the churches, were together still providing schooling for nearly a third of the children of school age.
- 2.4** However, the Church had lacked the capital to match the quality of premises and equipment of State schools, and the quality of education was suffering. The Education Act of 1944 provided a new deal in which Church schools were offered the option of increased State funding and control as 'Voluntary Controlled schools' or lesser State support and greater independence as 'Voluntary Aided schools'. At the same time, the 1944 Act required all schools to have a daily act of collective worship and religious instruction. The 1944 Act extended the school leaving age to fifteen and provided for secondary education in separate schools between the ages of eleven and fifteen.
- 2.5** The 1944 Act was thus a significant turning point in the history of Church schools. In the light of the provisions of that Act, it is thought that the Government expected most Church schools to choose to become 'Voluntary Controlled'. In fact, the Methodist Church continued a pre-existing policy of reducing the number of its schools, and the number of maintained Methodist schools has declined from its nineteenth-century maximum of 900 to some 57 today, half of them in partnership with the Church of England. Neither the Anglican nor the Roman Catholic Churches adopted that policy: indeed in the 1950s and 1960s the Roman Catholic Church expanded its school provision vigorously, especially at the secondary level. By comparison, the expansion in Anglican secondary schools was modest and the number of its primary schools declined.

**2.6** The number of pupils in Anglican and Roman Catholic schools has developed as follows since 1950:

	PRIMARY		SECONDARY	
	Anglican	RC	Anglican	RC
1950	844	329	64	50
2000	774	411	150	309

(thousands)

Source: DfEE

**2.7** Within the overall number, in 2000 rather more than half of the Church of England schools were in the Voluntary Controlled category. By contrast the Roman Catholic Church pursued a policy of Voluntary Aided status.

**2.8** Over the post-war years there have been progressive developments in legislative provision, and the implications of a school being in the Voluntary Aided and Controlled categories have changed. (We summarize what each category means at the present time in Appendix 1.) There is a third category of Foundation schools, which often were Grant Maintained schools, but the number of Foundation Church of England schools today is small.

**2.9** Perhaps the most significant of these Acts, in terms of the recommendations in this report, was the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which amongst other things provides for the following:

- The creation of School Organization Committees comprising representatives of the local education authority, the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, governing bodies and the Learning and Skills Council to decide on proposals to establish, close, alter or change the category of a school. (Powers previously exercised by the Secretary of State were delegated to these local committees; in the absence of agreement a decision is taken by a statutory adjudicator appointed by the Secretary of State.)
- The creation of widely based Admission Forums to consider admissions to schools.
- A governing body, in considering candidates for appointment to the post of headteacher in Voluntary Controlled or Foundation Schools, to 'have regard to the candidate's ability and fitness to preserve and develop the religious character of the school'. In Voluntary Aided schools the governing body may decide in appointing headteachers and other teachers to give explicit preference to committed members of the Church of England or other Christian churches.
- A governing body can choose to change from the Voluntary Controlled to the Voluntary Aided category without initial financial penalty.

**2.10** The effect of these changes is to bring the churches more substantially into the decision-taking mechanism at local level and to make these decisions a matter for collective agreement rather than for any one party. At both national and local levels the Church works in a partnership with government. It is a partnership that the Church very much welcomes, and wishes to develop as fundamental to its whole approach to education.

**2.11** The Green Paper proposals (CM 5050) of February 2001 are material to the recommendations in this report for increasing the Church's secondary provision. They reduce the Governors' capital contribution to Voluntary Aided schools from 15 to 10 per cent and outline an approach in which faith sponsors and others may take responsibility for some schools on fixed term renewable contracts. We refer to these proposals in later chapters.