

The ministry, the Church and the parish

Introduction

- 7.1** The Church of England has some 4,700 Church schools, and most clergy will have one of these in their parish at some point in their ministry. Often the number of pupils in a Church school will outnumber the number currently counted as Sunday worshippers on any particular Sunday, and in national terms if recent trends continue, within a few years, the number in Church schools may well exceed the number of Sunday worshippers.
- 7.2** Where a parish does not include a Church school, clergy who are seen to be at home and effective in a school, and who are respected by teachers for their professionalism, may well find that there is a welcome for them, and the opportunity to make a valued contribution, in a goodly number of Community schools.
- 7.3** It matters therefore that clergy should be well equipped for ministry in and through schools, and this is especially so in relation to Church schools, whether they are Voluntary Aided, Voluntary Controlled, or Foundation schools. This has clear implications for the training of clergy. Although our consultation has underlined the pressures on the curriculum in theological colleges, courses and schemes, **the response to consultation has no less underlined the concern among diocesan boards of education that clergy should be equipped for their ministry in schools by a carefully thought through approach in pre- and post-ordination training.**

Relationships between school and Church

- 7.4** In the introduction (Chapter 1) we illustrated diagrammatically the way in which we saw the Church schools coming into the heart of the life of the parishes. Our diagram is saying that Church schools are not ‘an add-on’, but integral to the life and ministry of the local church. Reciprocally, Church schools, whether Voluntary Aided or Controlled, should see themselves as a living, collaborating part of the Church community, each knowing that it is supported by the prayers and ministry of the other.
- 7.5** In saying this, we put emphasis on the involvement of the whole Church community, rather than the incumbent alone. Already, and especially for clergy with several parishes, the load being carried is very heavy. And even with the involvement in education of Church members who have special gifts for work in schools, we recognize that for the clergy to minister to schools as they would wish may well require some heartsearching reordering of their priorities. It may, for example, involve some reduction in the administrative load on parishes or increased secretarial support. It may lead to the need for the further adoption of collaborative ministry teams

across parishes. It may require the transfer of some functions, at least in part, to readers and other Church members. Such rethinking will be needed, to varying degrees, in all parishes, and nowhere more so than in the rural ministry, where the clergy commonly serve several parishes.

- 7.6** The best balance of ministry to the Church school between the incumbent and the worshipping community must reflect the extent to which the clergy are gifted or qualified by training for work in schools. We have more to say on training later. All the clergy including those not well gifted for this work will want to demonstrate their loving care for their Church school (or schools), in counselling staff experiencing personal difficulties, in being seen often in and around the school, and in developing the framework of ongoing relationships between church and school. The incumbent will encourage the school to see that the children become familiar with the main liturgy, and reciprocally see that the ministry to the school is on the agenda for meetings of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) from time to time during the year. Education Sunday will be a special occasion for the church community, when, for example, the presence of a Church school in the parish will be celebrated, and its place in the life of the parish recognized and promoted.
- 7.7** For its part the Church school should continually be asking itself how it can support the life of the Church community. It will want to provide an education in which children see the Church as a familiar and friendly place. It will encourage visits from the clergy and lay people according to their gifts and help them by constructive, caring advice on how to be effective and at home in the school.
- 7.8** Church secondary schools normally have to relate to a large number of parishes. These parishes should support the link with the school, but the parish in which the school resides will be key to the development of the relationship and the comments we make above about the relationship between the parish church and primary schools apply. There will, however, need to be awareness of the diversity of practice within the parishes where pupils live, and schools should expect support from deaneries in responding to that diversity.

We make the following recommendations:

- All parishes and all Church schools should reflect on the implications of the General Synod Resolution that Church schools are at the centre of the Church's mission in terms of their own parish and their own school, taking into account the comments above (7.4–7.8) and later in this chapter.
- Deaneries should be active in fostering the kind of relationship we have outlined and offer practical guidance to PCCs in developing their relationship and sharing best practice.
- Parishes and schools should pray regularly for each other.
- The clergy appointments procedure should ensure that, where there is a Church school in the parish, prospective clergy are given a job description that makes explicit their responsibilities towards that school.

- The headteacher of the Church school should be involved in the welcome and induction of a new cleric.
- The parish church should welcome and celebrate the arrival of a new headteacher to its school.
- Whether or not the Chair of the governors of the Church school, the incumbent should always be involved in the selection of a new head and new teaching staff.
- Where it is the practice for the parish to be involved in the appointment of a new incumbent, the headteacher of the Church school in the parish should be involved.
- Deaneries and parishes should ensure that the Local Education Authority's child protection policy is in place and that appropriate training has been provided for the clergy and lay people involved in school ministry.
- Dioceses should be ready to assist clergy and school heads if the relationship between school and parish is in disrepair.

The contribution of the clergy

7.9 A new incumbent should discuss with a headteacher the ways in which his/her experience would best fit with the current needs of the school. The list of possibilities includes:

- pastor to staff, pupils and families
- ex-officio governor (and, if elected, Chair of governors)
- leader of collective worship
- consultant over collective worship and RE
- chaplain and (voluntary) teacher.

7.10 We put the role of pastor first on our list, and while we see the incumbent being a member of the governing body we would counsel careful reflection and a reading of the advice of the National Society on the advantages and disadvantages of being Chair of a governing body in the particular parish/school context. Today especially, this role is an onerous and time-consuming responsibility, and one that requires specific strategic and administrative skills. On the other hand, as one diocese commented on the Consultation Report, if the incumbent is not the Chair 'there is a fear and some evidence in this diocese that an incumbent will allow other pressures to direct him/her from the mission of the Church through the medium of the school'. This suggests that if the incumbent does not take the chair at a Voluntary Aided school, a member of the PCC should accept responsibility to be a member, if not the Chair, of the governing body, and is charged to ensure that matters relating to the school feature on the agenda of the PCC from time to time during the year.

Chaplains

- 7.11** A significant number of Church secondary schools have a chaplain and we have seen how valuable this is, even though financial considerations may mean that it is likely to be for a limited number of hours a week or combined with a teaching appointment. Our attention has been drawn to the helpful practice in some Church secondary schools of having a voluntary year group chaplain (clerical or lay) who moves up the school with the particular year group and works closely with the head of year. The National Society has, in association with chaplains, developed a model job and person specification for chaplaincy (available on its website, www.natsoc.org.uk). We commend this to schools, especially to those who have not had a chaplain and are considering the possibility of having one.

Worship and spiritual growth

- 7.12** Church schools, through their understanding of the importance and centrality of worship, create imaginative approaches which can contribute powerfully to the spiritual development of their pupils. Many schools and churches provide human and other resources to engage pupils' interest and encourage them to think and reflect. Churches, in their own worship, should be sensitive to the various styles of worship provided by the schools and provide opportunities for the worshipping life of the school to be shared within the body of the Church congregation. One diocese, in its comments, said:

‘One of the most essential aspects of the link between Church and school is to establish transferable patterns of worship. We are very concerned that collective worship in schools . . . does [not] have any common features or transferability to the worship in churches on Sunday.’

This is perhaps as much a comment on practice in churches as practice in schools, and it suggests a needs for reflection on both sides. However that may be, it helps immensely if a Church school in a parish is caught up in the whole life of the parish and the worshipping community engages actively with the school. Church and school should work together to bring life, colour, vigour and rigour to the gospel.

- 7.13** Church schools have the capacity to create an atmosphere in which God can be discussed naturally and without apology. This will include worship in which young people are given opportunity to be aware of the transcendent and respond in a personal way that is in keeping with their culture and is relevant to their experience. In a mixed faith setting, the Church school can develop inclusive ways of expressing the Anglican tradition in collective worship.
- 7.14** Practice in relation to the Eucharist varies widely in Church schools, as does the practice of parishes in admitting young people to receive the sacrament. The celebration of the Eucharist is more common in Aided than in Controlled schools, but overall the Eucharist is celebrated in about half of the Church schools. Its increasing practice means that a growing number of headteachers and clergy are advocating that pupils should not only be

taught about the Eucharist in RE, but should experience what it is like to take part and share in the atmosphere of this central Christian rite. They are reflecting the view expressed in one of the National Society's former publications (*Clergy and Church Schools* by Janina Ainsworth) that 'children in Church schools, like anyone else linked to the household of faith, should have access to the special way of relating to God and Jesus provided by the Eucharist'.

- 7.15** While we counsel that the celebration of the Eucharist should be encouraged in Church schools, the diversity of our schools, local Church tradition and the careful way in which parishes and dioceses are implementing the House of Bishops' Guidelines on the Admission of Baptized Persons to Holy Communion before Confirmation, makes it inappropriate to propose a policy that would be right for all. As a preliminary to decisions made in this significant area we would emphasize the importance of extensive and sensitive consultation with all relevant parties. Help and advice should be sought from diocesan schools and children's advisers.

The training of the clergy

- 7.16** The responses to our thoughts on the training of clergy in the Consultation Report showed a division of view between some commenting from the standpoint of the theological colleges, course and schemes and those commenting on behalf of diocesan boards of education.
- 7.17** The relevant section of our Consultation Report read as follows:

We begin with a quotation from the evidence put to the Committee by the Church of England Board of Education and the National Society:

'It would be quite wrong for the Board and the Society not to reflect in its submission of evidence the frustration that is felt in both diocesan and national Board of Education teams about the lack of priority given to training ordinands and inexperienced clergy in relation to Church schools and work with children and young people in general.'

This is a concern expressed to us many times during the course of our work. If our Church schools are at the heart of the Church's mission to the nation, then ministerial training must equip clergy for ministry in schools. Links with schools cannot be regarded as an 'extra', but as integral to the life and ministry of the Church. In reflecting a view widely put to us in our consultations we have in mind, as noted in the opening paragraph of this chapter, that the number of pupils in Church schools is often comparable with the number of worshippers currently counted on any given Sunday.

We readily acknowledge the difficulties and the already crowded curriculum of the theological colleges, course and schemes. We note that practice among these varies and that the practice of some suggests that there is scope for change. We ask the Church to accept that this training is a major need, and we invite comments on how that need can

best be met. It is one of a small number of issues that we would put at the heart of the action that we recommend should follow the completion of our work. Among the issues on which we would welcome comment under this heading are:

- what role the Church colleges might best play in contributing to pre- and post-ordination training.
- whether there is need to strengthen the practical as opposed to the theoretical side of this preparation and if so how.
- to what extent web-based programmes of distance learning would be an aid to post ordination development and if so how could that be integrated with practical experience.

7.18 The principal of one of the courses commented:

‘Your report nods toward the problem of the crowded curriculum – it is impossibly crowded precisely because of a plethora of recommendations over the years on all manner of topics. I believe that for a working party to come up with recommendations of such specificity misunderstands the nature of ordination training and the nature of the pastoral problem about ministry in Church schools.’

whilst the principal of a scheme (for ordained local ministers) wrote:

‘the amount of time available for highlighting specific ministries, such as ministry in schools, pastoring the family of suicides, leading Bible-study groups, preaching on Remembrance Sunday, and the host of other ministries is limited.’

7.19 The alternative view is reflected in the following two quotations from diocesan boards of education:

‘How can Church schools be at the centre of the Church’s mission to the nation if this is not recognized in initial ministerial training?’

and

‘All newly ordained clergy should leave college with the theology of education at the heart of the parish mission and some skills to overcome their fear of school worship.’

7.20 We do wish to recognize that the curriculum of the colleges, courses and schemes is indeed crowded, that they have been subjected to pressure to include various special aspects of ministry, and that there is a limit to what they can cover. We no less accept that the fundamentals that apply to the understanding of ministry must govern the curriculum. It is not for us to judge what is important and what is not quite so important, and what therefore must be left to post-ordination training. But recognizing the limits

we invite consideration that initial ministerial education should offer ordi-
nands:

- a basic understanding of the ecclesiology and missiology of Church schools and their legal basis;
- wherever possible, brief placements – arranged during the school term – during pre-ordination training in a parish with a Church school or failing that in a parish with a Community school where the incumbent is engaged;
- where the pre-ordination programme covers two or more academic years a module on Church schools, where this can reasonably be offered as an option to supplement the basic curriculum.

7.21 The main focus of training will, however, have to be after ordination. Accordingly, the focus of post-ordination training in relation to schools must be strongly developed. It needs to be structured by the dioceses and should sensibly involve the Church colleges of higher education, which have the necessary expertise in teaching and schools. We would also suggest that where possible a curate's first appointment should be to a parish with a Church school or a Community school where the incumbent is active.

7.22 We are also conscious that the educational world is continually developing and that the post-ordination training will need updating from time to time. We are no less conscious that some clergy might wish to benefit from an enhancement of their skills in ministering to schools. The dioceses will need to consider how this can best be offered, especially when an incumbent moves into a parish with a Church school. We would add that the Web offers an increasingly valuable source of support for clergy, who can access it from the parish office, or local school or library. For example, the National Society (www.natsoc.org.uk) and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (www.assemblies.org.uk) both seek to offer, to quote one of them, 'high quality, lively primary assemblies at the touch of a button'.

7.23 We conclude this section therefore with a recommendation that a small expert group should be established to provide advice to dioceses on a structured approach to the post-ordination training of clergy in developing their effectiveness in schools, and in helping established clergy to enhance their skills in schools, as needed, throughout their careers. The group should include a Church college of higher education in its membership. Such help should encompass access to high quality web-based material.