

The Church colleges

Introduction

- 9.1** The Church colleges of higher education have a central place in our thinking as natural places in a changing world to which the Church should look for developing Christian teachers and for providing their continuing professional development for leadership roles. They also have a central role to play in ensuring a strong Christian presence in education at all levels and in all sectors. This leads us to be concerned that the Church colleges should be secure in their distinctively Christian character; and that their continued existence into the long term can be ensured.

The colleges

- 9.2** There are eleven higher education colleges in England and one in Wales with an Anglican foundation. Of these, nine are free standing Anglican institutions; three involve partnerships. All are part of a wider grouping of colleges in England and Wales known as the Council of Church Colleges (CCC). Further details of the colleges are given in Appendix 4.
- 9.3** Ten of the colleges were founded in the nineteenth century as part of a move to raise standards in Church elementary schools for the children of the poor through effective arrangements for training teachers. Teacher training was also the major founding purpose of the two colleges created in the 1960s.
- 9.4** The fortunes of the colleges have been closely affected by changes in national policy for teacher training. For example, the major national reduction in teacher training in the 1970s and early 1980s was the main reason for the reduction in the number of Anglican colleges from 27 in 1970 to 12 in 1982. Changes to the arrangements for the inspection and funding of teacher training since 1997 have led to a further round of closures and mergers of higher education colleges but the Anglican colleges which have performed very well in inspection have not so far been affected.
- 9.5** Although the number of Anglican higher education colleges has decreased since 1970, the overall size of Anglican higher education has increased greatly over the same period. Thus when there were 27 colleges the peak number of students was about 19,000; now there are nearly 64,000. On the other hand, with cut backs in national programmes for the training of teachers the number of full-time students in Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in Church colleges has fallen from a peak of 19,000 to the 12,000 today (see Appendix 4). But the share of the national total of ITT places enjoyed by the Church colleges has risen from about a sixth to a quarter. It will be immediately apparent that there is a large number of other higher education

institutions providing ITT, and many Christians choose to attend these institutions outside the Church colleges sector. The provision for these lies outside our terms of reference, but we are aware of the welcome presence of chaplains to support them and that many teachers in Church schools look back with gratitude to their experience in those colleges and universities.

- 9.6** To return to the Church colleges as a group, teacher education makes up more than a quarter of their total activity. All 12 colleges are involved in teacher training and in two colleges (St Mark and St John, and Bishop Grosseteste) teacher training accounts for more than 50 per cent of the activity. Nearly one third of all students in England training to be primary teachers and about 15 per cent of those training to be secondary teachers are in the Anglican colleges, and the colleges currently produce about 33 per cent of primary and about 17 per cent of secondary teachers in England. The colleges are also major providers of continuing professional development courses for teachers, with St Mark and St John the second and St Martin's the third largest providers in England.
- 9.7** The Church colleges have, however, become much more broadly based and much larger than the teacher training institutions created in the past. They are major providers of healthcare education and other important areas of provision include the social sciences, art and design, business and administration, and the humanities.
- 9.8** The comparative quality of the Church colleges is high. Inspection grades for teacher training courses are well above the national averages, as are course completion rates, especially when account is taken of the percentages of mature students in the colleges.
- 9.9** In many ways, the colleges are diverse. They vary considerably in size (from 1,000 to more than 10,000 students) and in the scope of their work. They also vary with regard to degree awarding powers and institutional title. Two institutions have degree awarding powers for both research and taught degrees and another two have degree awarding powers for taught programmes, which increases their operational flexibility and enables them to use the title University College. The remaining eight colleges prepare students for the degrees of local universities, under accreditation and/or validation arrangements.
- 9.10** In spite of this diversity, the colleges share characteristics that relate in various ways to their common foundation as Anglican colleges of higher education.
- 9.11** The Anglican foundation of the colleges is reflected in the arrangements for governance which involve a church body as trustee. At least one quarter and usually more than one half of the governors are appointed by a church body or bodies. The Articles of Government usually require the principal of the college to be a practising communicant member and the chaplain to be a priest in holy orders of the Anglican Church. The holders of other designated posts such as deputy principal may also be required to be practising communicant members of the Anglican Church.

- 9.12** The mission statements all refer to the Christian foundation and purposes of the colleges, including the provision of opportunities for service, worship and the serious study of Christianity.
- 9.13** The curriculum provided by the colleges includes many common elements which are derived from or relate directly to their Christian foundation and mission. The colleges provide 25 per cent of the places in England for secondary religious education and are substantial providers of specialist religious studies within primary initial teacher training. A number of colleges have resource centres for religious education. Nine out of the twelve colleges offer degree courses in theology and all contribute to Church education through the Church Colleges' Certificate and other programmes. The colleges have also all shared in an 'Engaging the Curriculum' project which has aimed to make available insights from Christian faith and thought to subjects offered in the colleges.
- 9.14** The colleges share an aim to be supportive and welcoming communities based on Christian principles and exemplifying Christian values. Their chaplaincies and chapels ensure that worshipping Christian communities lie at the heart of the colleges. Although the colleges are inclusive communities, welcoming members of all faiths and of none, they are Christian institutions which offer a Christian influence to all staff and students.
- 9.15** The colleges respond in a number of ways to the needs of the Church. They provide opportunities for Christian students, make available their resources to Church groups, provide education for members of the Church and educate teachers for Church schools. They contribute to lay and reader training and in some cases also to training for the ordained ministry. The colleges have significant links with different dioceses of the Church of England. In some cases, these links have been recently reviewed and strengthened but we find that the strength of the relationships is variable even between a diocese and a college within its see. Most dioceses do not have a college and the relationships are not well developed. **We therefore recommend action now to identify best practice as a basis for developing the relationships between colleges and all dioceses, whether they have a college or not. This is a task that might quickly be discharged by a small working group.**
- 9.16** The colleges work together in partnerships in a number of important mission-related areas. They share in the Church colleges' academic programmes which coordinate work at certificate and at masters level in religious studies and in Church school education. Five of the colleges are partners in the Urban Learning Foundation, which is based in Tower Hamlets in East London and which provides opportunities, especially in teacher training, for students of the colleges, and responds in various ways to the educational needs of the people of East London.

The two major issues

- 9.17** The Church colleges have thus come a long way from their origins as institutions established as Church foundations to provide teachers in times when the Church was establishing thousands of schools. They are characteristically much larger, and most offer higher education across a broad range of subjects as well as teacher training. Their student intake is

correspondingly broadly based, with practising Christians probably in a minority.

- 9.18** Thus while the colleges have remained Church foundations, and have taken various measures to remain true to their foundation, the great challenge is to sustain and develop their Christian distinctiveness. From the point of view of their contribution to the Church's mission to the nation, through the Church schools, that need applies particularly to the teacher training departments. That is the first challenge to the colleges.
- 9.19** The second major challenge is to continue in being for the long-term as Christian institutions. At this time, the colleges are in good financial health and have a good record for quality. However, as history shows, the colleges can be vulnerable to changing circumstances. Areas of risk include the competition with other providers to recruit students, and history points to a vulnerability reflecting the risk of major changes in the number of places which the state decides to fund in teacher training. Also in teacher training, the identification of poor performance through inspection can have serious adverse effects, including rapid reductions in student numbers and related funding. Although the Anglican colleges have done well in inspections of their work in teacher training, the risk relating to quality cannot ever be eliminated.
- 9.20** Another factor which potentially increases the risk to the long-term stability of individual colleges lies in not having degree-awarding powers, a situation which restricts operational flexibility and which by precluding the use of university college title may also have an adverse effect on recruitment. **We recommend to the eight colleges which do not currently have degree awarding powers that they should seek such powers (either individually or through academic association) and support one another in the relevant applications.**

The distinctiveness of Anglican colleges

- 9.21** An Anglican college of higher education will have characteristics which are additional to or accorded greater importance than those found in secular institutions. Such characteristics and activities will arise from the Christian foundation and motivation of the colleges and will involve some combination of education in a Christian manner, education about Christianity and education into Christianity.
- 9.22** Individual autonomous institutions are likely to act in ways which will produce differences in their detailed characteristics and activities but the response of all the institutions might be expected to be within a common framework. Such a framework might reasonably embrace all matters relating to the provision, context, purposes and stakeholders of the colleges. **A suggested framework is set out as an annex to this chapter.**
- 9.23** The ways in which teachers are educated are important. The Church colleges provide a setting in which all student teachers can be informed about Church schools and given the opportunity, partly through relevant teaching practice, to prepare for careers in Church schools. The Church colleges might also be expected to meet at the highest possible quality the

statutory requirements relating to religious education, spiritual and moral development and collective worship. On this basis, all Church college Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) whether professing Christians or not would be able to contribute effectively to relevant areas in schools. The current policy framework for teacher education, however, makes the full achievement of these objectives difficult. For example, the current circular (DfEE 4/98) setting out the requirements for teacher training courses pays relatively little attention to the relevant matters and is now seriously out of line with the new National Curriculum for schools with its emphasis on values, virtues and purposes. The continuing shift towards postgraduate provision in Initial Teacher Training (ITT), now accelerated by the introduction of training salaries for postgraduate but not for undergraduate ITT courses, reduces the opportunity to deal effectively with the matters of particular importance in Christian education mentioned above. It also reduces greatly the overall influence of the Church college experience on those training to be teachers. There may also be other losses, as research from the USA suggests that those preparing to be teachers through undergraduate programmes tend to be more committed to teaching and to stay longer in the profession.

9.24 Faced with these changes, the colleges need to consider not only introducing new patterns of ITT but also strengthening their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes in relevant areas. The objective of strengthening the Church's role in education has, in any case, major implications for professional development. Development programmes are needed not only for teachers, headteachers and those preparing to apply for headships but also for governors and for lay and ordained members of faith communities who wish to affirm and support the work of Church schools. We deal with issues relating to leadership, management and governance in Chapter 8. It is important to say here that the colleges already have substantial provision in relevant areas of CPD and that the material produced in connection with the Church Colleges' Certificate and especially for the MA programmes in Church School Studies (including the three volumes in the Religion in Education series) provides information relevant to the needs of any of the groups interested in contributing to the work of Church schools. In some cases, however, this material would need to be supplemented by provision relating specifically to the leadership and management of Church schools. The present national arrangements for training in these important areas are the responsibility of the DfEE and the TTA and are not always well matched to the particular and distinctive needs of Church schools.

9.25 Our consultation indicated support from the Church colleges for the objective of securing and enhancing their distinctiveness and the idea of a common framework relating to distinctiveness was also generally supported. We have considered fully the comments from individual colleges and from the Council of Anglican Principals and we recognize that there will be differences in the detailed responses that individual autonomous institutions will make to our recommendations which are as follows:

- the colleges, individually and collectively, should take steps to secure and enhance their distinctiveness;

- the responsibility for this within individual colleges should be made clear through a formally established structure, perhaps through the creation of a Foundation Committee composed of members of the governing body and staff of the college;
- the work on distinctiveness should take account of the suggested common framework set out in the annex to this chapter.

In order to encourage and share best practice in supporting the Christian foundation of the colleges and to promote effective relationships between the colleges and the Church, we also recommend that:

- a system of regular visitations to the colleges be established; these visitations would take place at intervals of, say, four or five years and would involve senior people drawn from the Church and from Church colleges other than the one being visited.

9.26 In seeking to secure and to enhance their distinctiveness, it is clearly helpful for the colleges to have a significant core of academic staff who are practising Christians and given the colleges' role in developing Christian teachers, this is particularly the case for their teacher training departments. We consider it essential that all those appointed to senior positions in the colleges should be in sympathy with and willing and able to support the mission of the colleges as Christian institutions. With regard to the head of teacher training, we agree with the views of the colleges that she or he should be not only of excellent academic quality but also sensitive to the Christian tradition in education and supportive of Church schools and mindful of their needs. Indeed, we would go further and so we recommend to the colleges that as a long-term policy, the head of teacher training should be a practising Christian.

9.27 As described elsewhere, the Church colleges already make substantial contributions to meeting the needs of Church schools. The needs identified in this report are, however, substantial and extend not just to student teachers but also to qualified teachers (6.29– 6.31), headteachers and potential headteachers, professionally qualified diocesan staff, governors (8.8), clergy and classroom assistants. Although the Church Colleges' Certificate and masters programmes provide a good basis for meeting most of those needs, substantial further development is needed if the needs are to be met more fully. Such development should be within a framework, the elements of which would include a modular structure, a credit accumulation and transfer system, funding within standard HEFCE and TTA arrangements and qualifications at levels within the new national framework appropriate to the relevant student groups. In addition, the courses for qualified teachers, heads and potential heads should be compatible with the national arrangements for continuing professional development and for school leadership and management. We recommend to the Church colleges that the Church college programmes are developed along the lines indicated; given the urgency of the needs and the patchy uptake of the present Church college programmes, this development might best be undertaken by a lead institution or institutions, rather than through a partnership of all the Church colleges.

The importance of chaplaincy

- 9.28** Chaplaincy is about a concern for the whole corporate life of the institution. It includes a pastoral concern for all members of the institution and for the intellectual and spiritual growth of Christian and other students and staff. More widely, it rightly has a concern for the health of the institution itself: its vision, structures and activities.
- 9.29** In essence, chaplaincy has at its centre the question of how people and their organizational structures reflect God's purpose for humanity – the realizing in human beings of the image of God through the gift of Christ's Spirit, in the conviction that the gospel shows us an understanding of that fullness of life revealed in the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus.
- 9.30** Chaplaincy has an important place in a Church college at every level: in respect of College governance, in reviewing the health of the whole institution and its structures; and in dialogue with scholars, as they grapple with academic and ethical questions to which there may not be an immediately obvious Christian dimension.
- 9.31** We have been impressed by the way colleges, with whom we have discussed the role of the chaplaincy, seek to integrate the Chaplain(cy) into the decision-making processes of the institution, and we commend this practice.

The long-term viability of the colleges

- 9.32** Reference has been made (9.5) to past losses of Church colleges and to their vulnerability to sharp changes in funded student places for teacher training.
- 9.33** Where, as a result of serious difficulties, a Church college has merged into a secular institution past history suggests that over time distinctiveness tends gradually to be lost. This implies that the best way of maintaining the distinctiveness of any college is through its continuation as an independent institution, and failing that, a merger with another Church college offers the best chance of preserving Christian distinctiveness.
- 9.34** We therefore recommend that where the viability of a Church college becomes in doubt, the college gives early and serious consideration to a merger or other form of partnership with another Church college. We would further recommend that in view of the distinctive contribution of the Church colleges to the provision of education in schools that the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) and the Higher Education Funding Council provide appropriate transitional support to facilitate such a merger. We invite the Church at national level to pursue this matter with Government.
- 9.35** Increasing and developing sensible partnerships between the Church colleges makes sense and will be most effective where the partnerships add value which is greater than the effort involved. Some writers have argued for a federation of Anglican or all Church colleges to create a federal Anglican or Christian University but these proposals have received relatively little support from the colleges, and the creation of a federal institution is not at this stage considered to be a practical proposition. Leaving aside the difficulties inherent in the stringent current framework for the approval of university title, the individual colleges are diverse and at different states of development in relation to widely different long-term aspirations. In

addition, the trust deeds of most of the colleges define objects to do with the continuation of the particular institution.

- 9.36** Our Consultation Report drew attention to a number of possible forms of association between institutions which would fall well short of the loss of autonomy involved in a merger. We have been encouraged by the readiness shown subsequently by members of the Council of Church Colleges to develop a more coherent expression of collective identity and a greater degree of collaboration. We note that the CCC will consider strategies for collaboration at a meeting in September 2001 and we look forward to the outcome of those deliberations.
- 9.37** The long-term viability of the colleges will be enhanced if their relationships with the Church at national, diocesan and schools level are the subject of a process initiated by all partners to strengthen those relationships.
- 9.38** We have recommended elsewhere (9.15) the development of a model relationship between the colleges and the dioceses and that parishes and dioceses should draw the Church colleges to the attention of Christians considering teaching as their vocation. We have also suggested (9.25) a system of regular visitations to the colleges; an important aspect of the purpose of these would be to assess the support the colleges are receiving from dioceses and parishes.
- 9.39** The Church of England centrally has shown and continues to show interest in the colleges and has from time to time given general affirmation of their work (e.g. in the General Synod discussions of *An Excellent Enterprise* in 1994 and of the Church's role in education in 1998). An Advisory Group for the Church colleges has been set up recently to deal mainly with the Church's legal and financial interests in the trusteeship and governance of the colleges. It would be helpful if, in addition to these useful initiatives, the Church were to reach, in partnership with the colleges, a strategic view of the long-term purposes of the colleges in the life and work of the Church. Among other things, this strategic view might cover the role of the Church colleges in relation not only to Church schools but also to religious education and theological training including training for the ordained ministry. The Church colleges offer a tremendous potential resource to the Church. If that resource is to be fully used, the colleges need to be seen by the Church as essential and to be used as the first source of advice and support on relevant matters. Having a strategy for the colleges, backed up by appropriate supportive action would also help the Church of England to make a positive contribution to ensuring the long-term viability of its colleges.
- 9.40** We recommend that the Church should develop a strategic view of its relationships with the colleges and that the Church should affirm the essential role of the colleges through using the colleges as the first source of advice on relevant matters. We also invite the Church to consider what long-term role the Church colleges might have in the pre- and post-ordination training of the clergy. The colleges offer the opportunity for clergy to mix and learn with those preparing for teaching and the caring professions, and to prepare to be effective in schools. At the same time, the ordinands would add significantly to the worship and Christian life of the colleges.