

Executive summary

- 1.** The General Synod and the Archbishops' Council have identified Church schools as standing at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation. Our work over the last eighteen months has confirmed the crucial importance of Church schools to the whole mission of the Church to children and young people, and indeed to the long-term well-being of the Church of England.
- 2.** The Church's mission can only be discharged through Church schools if there is a sufficiency of these schools across the land. We found very large variations in provision between one diocese and another, and in particular – in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church – small provision of secondary schools in relation to primary places. This leads to a growing imbalance between the ability of many Church secondary schools to offer places and the parental demand for them. A recent survey of some eighty Church of England secondary schools showed that for every 100 places there were 160 applications. We therefore recommend that over the next seven to eight years the Church seeks, in partnership with local authorities, to provide – whether through additional Church secondary schools or the expansion of existing schools – the equivalent of an extra 100 Church secondary schools (see Chapter 5).
- 3.** We note that primary school provision is also varied, and recommend that dioceses should strengthen their provision where it is particularly sparse (Chapter 5).
- 4.** To facilitate the proposed expansion, we recommend national fundraising to assist dioceses, and that the objective should be to raise £25 million over seven years (Chapter 5).
- 5.** Expansion of provision is not enough. To be at the heart of the Church's mission, Church schools must be distinctively Christian and we make recommendations to secure best practice (Chapter 4).
- 6.** Nor can Church schools be fully engaged in the Church's mission at parish level unless they are in close partnership with the worshipping community, and we make a range of practical recommendations to develop this partnership (Chapter 7).
- 7.** We welcome action by recent Governments to bring the Church into partnership in the provision of schools and thereby widen parental choice. Central to our thinking is the growing partnership between diocesan and local education authorities, and we make recommendations on the way this partnership can develop (Chapter 4).
- 8.** No factor will be more important in determining the future of Church schools than the Church's ability to recruit Christian teachers and develop heads and deputy heads to provide the excellent leadership that will be

needed in the additional secondary schools we propose. This will be crucial if, as we recommend, the Church should be especially concerned to serve areas of great economic and social need. We make recommendations accordingly, and on encouraging the vocation to teach (Chapter 6).

- 9.** We support an ecumenical approach to new schools, and make recommendations for strengthening the links between maintained Church schools and independent schools that have an Anglican foundation, which we see as an important part of the family of Church schools (Chapter 5).
- 10.** We make recommendations for the training of clergy, primarily at the post-ordination stage, to equip them to be both effective and welcome in schools (Chapter 7).
- 11.** In our final chapter, we turn to the Church colleges of higher education where we make recommendations to secure and enhance their Christian distinctiveness, and to secure their long-term future (Chapter 9).
- 12.** As a general theme throughout our report, we urge all elements in the Church community to look afresh at the way they work together, for in a community of purpose the work of the Church will be enhanced. We have in mind in particular the relationship between the parish and the Church school; the working relationships between the Church colleges, one with another, and their relationships with dioceses and schools.
- 13.** In conclusion, we have a clear view that this is a time of opportunity for the Church, when there is much goodwill towards Church schools both at the national level from main political parties and at the local level, from many parents, and encouragement to increase the provision of Church schools. Our report is offered as a contribution to developing a way ahead. We make a full statement of our recommendations at the end of our report (Chapter 10).