



The Diocese of Leicester Admissions Guidance for Schools and Academies

The Church of England's Vision for Education is...

Educating for Life in All its Fullness

The Church's commitment to education is at least as important today as in the past with the opportunity to offer a model of education that is both thoroughly Christian in its foundation and highly attractive to others in education because of the quality of its outcomes for children and young people.

There is no neutrality in education. Every school has a particular ethos, with commitments, beliefs and value-laden practices. Amidst the variety of approaches, we are confident that our vision of education for 'fullness of life' is one that fully deserves its place in twenty-first century Britain. It is a special strength that it achieves educational excellence in a broad framework within which pupils and teachers can pursue the big questions of meaning such as 'Who am I?', 'Why am I here?', 'What do I desire?' and 'How then shall I live?'

This vision of education is at once deeply Christian in its inspiration and healthily plural in its operation.

Wisdom, Hope, Community and Dignity

There are four basic elements that run through the whole approach. Together they form an 'ecology' of the fullness of life, each in interplay with all the others.

- Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills
- Educating for Hope and Aspiration
- Educating for Community and Living Well Together
- Educating for Dignity and Respect

Jesus said: 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'

John 10.10

The School Admissions Code 2014

The Code states that:

1.37 Admission authorities must ensure that parents can easily understand how any faith based criteria will be reasonably satisfied

1.38 Admission authorities for Church of England schools must, as required by the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 1991, consult with their diocese about proposed admission arrangements before any public consultation.

Admissions arrangements:

The Local Authorities Co-ordinate all Admissions arrangements and the full detail of dates and procedures can be found at:

<http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-admissions/applying-for-a-school-place>

<https://www.leicester.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/school-and-colleges/school-admissions/>

Determining Admission Policies and setting over-subscription criteria:

The Diocesan Board of Education must be consulted in accordance with the School Admissions Code 2014. We encourage Governing Boards and Academy Boards to discuss fully how the school's admissions policy accords with its vision and the Church's vision for education and to look beyond the administration of places to how best to serve the local community in God's name.

We look forward to receiving your draft policies for consultation accompanied by the minutes of your discussion which will help inform future policy.

Determining the policy: Whom do you serve?

When determining your admissions policy, the DBE advises Governing Boards to think about this question in relation to their school's vision and mission statement and service to children in the local community. The DBE considers that our schools have an obligation to recognise and make visible those who often remain invisible through ethnic or cultural disadvantage, or through disability or poverty and that this should underpin every admissions policy. All children in a Church school should have opportunities to engage at a profound level with faith in general, and the Christian experience and way of life in particular.

The DBE encourages Admissions Authorities to reflect on the principles upon which the majority of Church schools were established; i.e. for the community in which they are placed.

Does your school offer a warm welcome to all? Or in striving to meet the requirements of the code and your trust deed could it appear that some children are more welcome than others?

Setting 'Church' criteria

At The Diocesan Directors of Education Conference 2016 the matter of using 'Church' criteria was debated. The debate concluded that a *'child's experience of being part of a faith 'full' school community is much more important than their parents' attendance at church. If we believe in justice and equality we must not set exclusive criteria but build communities in the love of Christ.'*

Furthermore, the vision of Leicester DBE states:

Inclusive: Like Jesus himself, our schools are '**scandalously inclusive**'. Children and families from **all faiths and none** are **welcomed, respected and cherished**. **Serving the community** in which they are placed, our schools exemplify, '**love your neighbour**'.

It is therefore the DBE's advice that Church of England Schools in the Diocese should not set faith-based or Church attendance as a Criteria. Admitting authorities should have regard to this advice when setting their policies.

In **exceptional** circumstances and only with the prior consent of the DBE, a Governing Body may use faith-based criteria. In which case, the DBE makes the following recommendations:

1. Faith-based criteria must be easy to understand.
2. The only definition used should be attendance at church.
3. Governing Bodies may define churches and ecclesial communities as those that are in membership of any local Churches Together Group. However, there are many new Christian worshipping communities that each Church school may know and have a relationship with in its area and so Governing Boards may wish to broaden this definition or name specific local Christian communities.
4. Admission Authorities should define 'regular attendance' in consultation with the local Church/es. In most cases, regular attendance can be defined as attending on a fortnightly basis.
5. Schools may wish to provide a simple form for Church Leader to sign (a supplementary information form).

Many Schools will want to reflect upon the Diocesan Purpose when establishing their Admissions policies:

Shaped by God in our lives and communities we seek the *growth of His kingdom in:*

- ◇ the depth of discipleship,
- ◇ the number of disciples of Jesus,
- ◇ loving service of the world.

The DBE understands Schools' desire to support local churches in the Diocesan purpose to be 'Shaped by God' as they develop and maintain their Christian Ethos.

The DBE encourages schools to focus any Home-School Agreement, Prospectus and other relevant documentation on making the Christian ethos explicit and highlighting how families can support the ethos of the school. Furthermore, working with local Christian Churches to support current services and also develop fresh expressions of Church is a powerful and effective way of serving the Church and developing the school's ethos. We look forward to working with schools to do this and to sharing good examples.

The DBE does not provide a model policy but advises each Admissions Authority to formulate its own policy having regard to this advice and adhering to the Admissions Code.

Warm Fires and Open Doors

'By Warm Fires I mean a vibrant and attractive sense of our Christian Identity and by Open Doors I mean a real welcome to anyone and everyone to gather around the fire.'
The Bishop of Huntingdon

'True hospitality....makes welcome and relationship possible across boundaries of faith or race or background....that welcome is the authentically Christian way of life and we see it in our schools every single day...It means engaging meaningfully and explicitly with difference....it needs to stem from a belief that God is at work in all people and a willingness to be surprised by the forms that work might take.'

Archbishop Justin Welby

Extracts from 'The Fruit of the Spirit' A Church of England Discussion Paper on Character Education