

# “Chadwick” and Church Schools – a perspective from a Chair of Governors

## Spirituality as bridge and engine

### 1. Background:

- a. **Key emphases** of Chadwick are on ‘distinctiveness’ and ‘putting faith and spiritual development’ at the heart of the school.

#### What does this mean?

- b. **Primary emphasis** is on **excellence** and **effectiveness** because the children matter. ‘The enabling of every child to flourish in their potential as a child of God is a sign and expression of the Kingdom and is at the heart of the Church’s distinctive mission.’ (p.3)
- c. **Deep confidence in the ethos and value of church schools.**
- d. Convinced of the **benefits of making the Christian identity of our schools more explicit.**
  - i. In a **ruthless** educational world and we need to be **distinctive.**
  - ii. In an increasingly self-consciously **pluralist** world we can be **confident - diversity means mutual respect rather than uniformity.**
  - iii. In an era when the **Church is urgently renewing itself**, we need our **church schools to be part of the overall mission of the Church.**
- e. **CofE schools are Christian schools for the community – ‘service’.**
- f. 2010 report *Going for Growth*, also referred to ‘every child and young person having a life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ’. [1.8.] ‘Witness’ and ‘transformation’.

#### How do we spread a Christian ethos through the whole school experience and what might this mean ?

### 2. Issues:

- a. The **teaching staff** in our schools have a **variety** of backgrounds.
- b. **Consensus** about **values** but more **complex** when we approach matters of **faith**?
- c. **Particular issue** in terms of the **relationship** between **clergy** and **educational professionals**: teaching staff have their own integrity both as people and as professional educators and that is a relationship to be **respected.**

#### Given this diversity and these proper boundaries, how do we spread a Christian ethos through school life?

### 3. A suggestion: Spirituality as bridge and engine

- a. **Spirituality** is ‘a fundamental component of our human beingness, rooted in the natural desires, longings and hungers of the human heart. It is concerned with the deepest desires of the human heart for meaning, purpose, and connection with the deep life lived intentionally in reference to something larger than oneself.’<sup>1</sup>
- b. ‘...when that quest involves an explicit reference to **God** or the Divine that **spirituality is religious.**’<sup>2</sup>
- c. **Church schools** are offering **Christian spirituality** as a fundamental part of the core of their ethos but this is **always connected with wider human spirituality.**
- d. **Spirituality is about lived experience, not simply information communication.**

**How do we make an open, inclusive and humane Christian spirituality part of our school’s life? How do we enable the children to experience awe and acceptance, forgiveness, wonder, joy, comfort in sadness, the struggles of the life of faith?**

<sup>1</sup> M McCarthy “Spirituality in a Postmodern Era” in James Woodward, Stephen Pattison *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Oxford; Blackwell Publishing, 2000 ) 196

<sup>2</sup> Downey cited McCarthy in Woodward (196)

**How do I work respectfully with my professional educational colleagues so that the school has a genuine ethos of Christian spirituality and not one that feels strained or imposed?**

**4. Some observations:**

- a. good working relationship and shared vision and objectives;
- b. good but not neurotic appointments;
- c. vibrant jointly-owned regular worship;
- d. spreading of the practice of spirituality throughout school life;
- e. good linkage to the RE curriculum;
- f. linkage to the rest of the curriculum and the whole of school life through a spirituality of joy and appreciation, wonder and exploration;
- g. prayer the fundamental.