



Help, There's A Church School in My Parish

A guide for clergy in the Diocese of Guildford



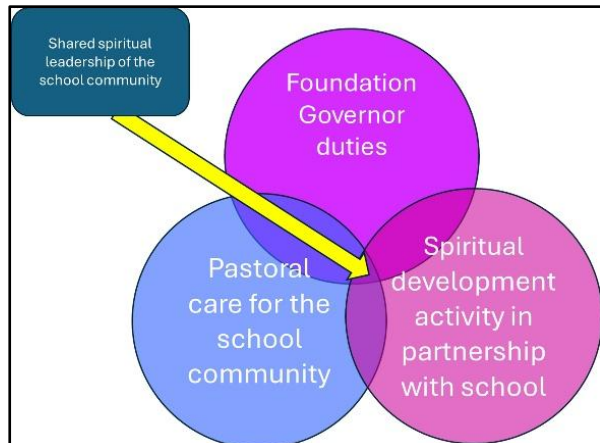
Introduction

Having a church school in the parish is both a privilege and a joy. For many clergy involvement with the church local school is a rewarding and satisfying part of their ministry. The Church of England Education Office's vision for church schools is that they are 'deeply Christian serving the common good.' The incumbent, through their involvement in the school community will meet and minister to many parishioners. The school, through the expertise and guidance of the incumbent will deepen the spiritual life of pupils, staff and families.

- Pastoral care for the school community
- Spiritual development activity in partnership with the school such as collective worship, school services
- Foundation governor duties

These three areas may not be mutually exclusive as shown by the Venn diagram. Sometimes two or three areas intersect. For example, a prayer space may provide an opportunity to encounter God and support for mental health and wellbeing.

Incumbents are encouraged to be involved in local schools in three areas of school life.



The question for clergy to consider is ***where will I be most effective?*** Every parish, and every

school are different and what is required may change over time. To make this decision, incumbents will need to take account of the context of the school, and the church, the skills and experiences of the incumbent and other members of the church team. For example, if the church employs a children and families worker they may share the spiritual development work. A pastoral assistant may provide some pastoral support to the school community. What the previous incumbent did may not be where you will be most effective.

Prayer Prayer for the school is important and valued by the school community, both for the regular day-to-day life of the school and when there are special events or crises. This will include your personal prayers for the school, prayers in services and in small groups.



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Relationship We recommend that the



Incumbent and Headteacher meet to discuss the school and church partnership and make concrete plans for the first couple of terms as soon as possible after the incumbent is licensed. Our experience is that you achieve more if you meet away from the school and church, so the diocesan education team offer facilitated workshops for these conversations. You can find details under training [here](#).

The designation of your church school



Church schools may be either **Voluntary Aided (VA)** or **Voluntary Controlled (VC)**. These differences relate to building work, admissions, employment of staff and RE. The chart on the next page sets out the main differences.

Schools will be run by one of several different governance arrangements.

Maintained schools the funding responsibility for the school is through the local authority. Maintained schools may be either Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled.

Academies are independent schools run by a multi academy trust (Trust). The Trust Board of Directors/Trustees is the legal governing body, which is overseen by the Members of the Trust. Several governance responsibilities will also be delegated to a Local Governing Body/Committee (LGB) for each school

The characteristics of a Church of England academy will depend on their former status

(VA or VC) For academies, the key Church school protections are provided for within the governance and contractual framework for the Trust, including the Articles of Association that govern the Trust company's operation, the Funding Agreements the Trust enters with the Department for Education and the ancillary agreements the Trust enters into with the Diocese.

Site Trustee Role



In many parishes the incumbent and the churchwardens act as site trustees for the Church school site and buildings irrespective of whether the school is maintained by the Local Authority or is an academy. Site trustees hold the land for specific purposes as written in their trust deed and have responsibility to ensure that activities on the site comply with the requirements of the trust deed. The permission of the site trustees is required before work is done on the building or within the boundaries of the school site. This could also mean making decisions about letting the school facilities to outside companies and groups.

The Legal Differences Between Voluntary Aided Schools (VA) Voluntary Controlled Schools (VC)

	VA Schools	VC Schools
School Buildings	There will be a Trust Deed setting out the principles and legal conditions under which the school was established and should be run. The site and buildings are owned by the Church of England. The Site Trustees could be the vicar and churchwardens or the Diocesan Board of Finance. The governors are required to provide 10% of the cost of building work.	There will be a Trust Deed setting out the principles and legal conditions under which the school was established and should be run. The site and buildings are owned by the Church of England. The Site Trustees could be the vicar and churchwardens or the Diocesan Board of Finance. The governors are not required to contribute towards building work.
Admissions	The governing body is the admissions authority. There may be a supplementary application form that requires clergy to conform regular church attendance.	The local authority is the admissions authority therefore the school places are allocated according to the local authority criteria. Parents apply on the LA admission form; there is no supplementary application form.
Employment of staff	The governors employ the staff.	The local authority employs the staff.
Governance	Foundation governors* are in the majority	25% of the governors must be foundation governors
Religious Education (RE)	Use the Surrey Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2023-2028	Must use the locally agreed syllabus either Use the Surrey Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2023-2028 Hampshire Living Difference IV

**Foundation governors are appointed by the Church of England via the PCC. They have a responsibility for maintaining and developing the Christian Character of the school and that it is run according to the trust deed.*

There is a detailed chart setting out the differences on page 13 of [this document](#) for foundation governors from the Diocese of York.

Clergy Governors



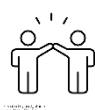
Incumbents are automatically an ex-officio governor in the maintained church school in the parish. There are a few situations where this may vary, for example where the school is deanery school, or for historic reasons. The school's instrument of governance will identify the clergy person who is the ex-officio clergy governor of the school.

The role of governor in a school that is an academy is different to being a governor in a maintained school. The local governor role varies between the different Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) in the diocese due to the different delegations that are put in place between the Trust Board and the local governance tier. Therefore, the diocese cannot give generalised guidance about the clergy governor role in MATs.

If a church school in your parish is part of a multi academy trust you should ensure that you understand what the incumbent governance role looks like in your context.

The diocese recognize that the role of school governors is demanding and time consuming. The help incumbents to navigate the clergy governor role the diocese have written guidance which you can read [here](#).

The Partnership between the Church and the School

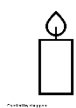


When the partnership is effective the church school and the parish can work together for the spiritual flourishing of both the children and the adults associated with the school community. The activities that this partnership involves will be different in each context, however there are a few common themes for effective partnership.

- A good relationship between the Headteacher and the Incumbent is vital. Even if much of the day-to-day interaction is done by others there does need to be regular conversation. Both serve a shared community and will bring different knowledge of the parish to the conversation.
- When either the headteacher or incumbent is new to the parish there will need to be an investment of time to establish the relationship and maximise the opportunities from the incumbent's time in school.
- If people are in their first headship or first incumbency, they need to be sensitive to one another's very steep learning curve as they begin their roles.
- The new person in either role may not have previous experience of school and church partnership, including foundation governor roles. This may be the situation for experienced headteachers and clergy if their previous posts did not include a church school. It is helpful to access the diocesan induction training.
- Where either the headteacher or incumbent is new they should take care not to make assumptions that the new person will operate in the same way that their predecessor did. This offers an opportunity to do things in a different way, making use of the strengths of the new partnership.
- This partnership works best when the choice of activities is planned jointly by the church and school for the academic year, with a focus spiritual flourishing, underpinning decisions about what the church will offer. The Diocesan [School and Church Partnership Audit Tool](#) may be helpful with this.
- The incumbent does not have to be the person who does everything in the school. Consider the use of laity.

Collective Worship

If there is a church school in your parish the children and staff are not automatically part of your congregation. Collective worship and school services need to be created to be



Inclusive, Invitational and Inspiring therefore meeting the Church of England Guidance for Collective Worship in Church

schools. Parental permission is required for children to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday or be prepared for communion.

Religious Education

Church schools are required to teach Religious Education (RE) that meets the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for Religious Education in which Christianity must



make up 50% of the subject content. In the Diocese all VA schools and the VC schools located in Surrey use the Surrey

Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education which you find [here](#).

The four VC schools located in Hampshire use the Hampshire Syllabus Living Difference IV which you can find [here](#).

The unit plans suggest where schools should invite in a visitor from the local church or visit the local church. The RE Subject Leader is usually pleased to have an offer of help with these visits. It is helpful if the children meet lay people as well as clergy in their RE lessons.

The Diocese offer training for churches on how to support their local schools with RE.

Admissions

The admissions criteria for some VA schools may include a faith criteria. This can result in families attending church for long enough for you to sign a form confirming regular attendance and then disappear.



There are different approaches to how clergy manage this situation.

Some incumbents set out their expectations of parents in the church and in the school. E.g that once your child is in the school you will be involved in the PTA, to do an Alpha Course before the incumbent would sign the admission form. Think about how to maintain contact with those families who disappear once a place has been offered.

School Inspections

SIAMS - The Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools



All Church of England Schools are inspected under the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS). The denominational inspection is in addition to the Ofsted inspection that schools will receive.

The purpose of the inspection is to:

- Make a significant contribution to the improvement of church schools.
- Meet the requirements of section 48 of the Education Act 2005 for schools which have a religious character: *Church schools must have an inspection of collective worship, RE, and social, moral, spiritual and cultural education (SMSC). It is a statutory part of the work of the Church in education and is funded by the Department for Education.*

Inspections under this Framework will enable judgements to be made on religious education (RE), collective worship and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education. It will also enable evaluation of how schools, through their theologically rooted Christian vision, are living up to their Church school foundation, enabling people to flourish.

There is no formal set of expectations about the involvement of the local incumbent within the SIAMS framework. The inspector will be interested in the impact of the incumbent's involvement in the school on the flourishing of the school community. Each school context is different.

The inspection framework and associated documents are [here](#)

Ofsted Inspections



All maintained (state funded) schools are inspected by Ofsted. These inspections and the preparation for them are usually highly stressful for the school staff, especially the school leaders. Clergy are likely to have two roles when the school is undergoing an Ofsted Inspection.

In all schools there is a pastoral role. This is usually practical, such as organising food for staff who find themselves staying unexpectedly late in school preparing for the inspection. After the inspection the senior staff may welcome some pastoral support, as they process the outcome.

Clergy may be a school governor in which case they may be interviewed by the inspector, usually alongside other governors. Governors are usually invited to attend the feedback at the end of the inspection.

Diocesan Support for Your Work with Schools

The diocese provides resources and training to

- Support the school and church partnership on [this page on the Diocese of Guildford website](#).
- Support collective worship [this page on the Diocese of Guildford website](#).
- The Surrey Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education used by VA schools and VC schools in Surrey is on [this page on the website](#).

The Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) Alex Tear

The Deputy Director of Education (DDDE) Alice Early

The Education Team [You can find contact details of the team members here](#).

Our Top Ten Resources to Support Your School and Church Partnerships

[Collective Worship materials and archive](#) from the diocese

[Flame Creative Kids BlogSpot](#) - Ideas for crafts, prayer stations and talks to go with a wide variety of Bible stories. Lots here for the youngest children

[Free Bible Images](#) – Pictures to use in Collective worship and services

[Growing Faith Foundation](#) - Growing Faith is the movement that exists to put children, young people and families instinctively at the heart of all the mission and ministry of the Church by changing the culture of the Church of England. This website has lots of useful podcasts videos and papers.

[Jumping Fish Publications](#) – The Experience Journey Packs give you all you need for schools trails around the church at various festivals.

[Learn to Listen](#) – Lots of ideas and techniques to use to gather the views of children and young people about church, school or wider issues.

[Muddy Church](#) Ideas for activities linked to Bible stories to be done outside. These could work well if the school already has a forest school area.

[Pray for Schools](#) – Materials to help local Christians to set up and run a group that prays for their local school.

[Prayer Spaces in Schools](#) – over 200 reflective prayer activities for inside and outside

[Unlocking RE Videos](#) – These videos explain the theological concepts underpinning the Surrey Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

And a bonus resource.....

[Our Growing Faith Research project](#) – What makes for an effective church/school partnership in the role of supporting the spiritual development of children? [Summary document here](#)

Church Schools – Help There's a School in My Parish Guide for Clergy 2026

Diocese of Guildford, Church House, Stag Hill Guildford, Surrey GU2 7UP

T: 01483 484905 **E:** Jane.whittington@cofeguildford.org.uk www.cofeguildford.org.uk