

Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education Report to Diocesan Synod, March 2025

The dedicated work of the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education team continues to enable the flourishing of children and young people in our family of schools. Our Church of England schools continue to help pupils to learn and grow together in an environment rooted in Christian values. The work of Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education is to provide the conditions for flourishing – from providing resources, to leading training, to working with trusts, government and local authorities. There is a lot which happens in the background to enable the environment needed for our schools' Christian character to shine. Our small team supports our network of 192 schools, serving approximately 42000 children and young people, aged from 2 to 18, in educational provisions ranging from a tiny rural primary to a large urban secondary school. It is a rich and varied patchwork, and we offer all we can in support of what each school does.

Our work is rooted in our vision, "Being present, we will show compassion, speak truth and offer hope". This guides all our work and underpins our strategy which you can link to [here](#).

As a team, we continue to see inspirational work in RE and in collective worship, leading training and offering an online RE conference to support teachers across the diocese and beyond. Our team has worked to support schools in enabling pupils to explore their spirituality through innovative ideas in classroom practice and the creation of reflective spaces.

Last year saw over 65 inspections of our schools by Ofsted or SIAMS and many highlighted examples of courageous Christian leadership.

'A strong culture of prayer is evident. Prayers are said throughout the school day and enhance opportunities for spiritual reflection. The pupils' collective worship committee talk confidently about how its ideas have developed and provided reflective spiritual opportunities for others. It takes pride in how they have established spiritual reflection areas around the school.'

Marlborough St Mary's Church of England Primary School

'Leaders carefully consider how the curriculum can be used to assist the spiritual flourishing of pupils and as a result have developed a shared understanding and use of language to support this. The spiritual development of pupils is further enhanced through a daily period of reflection led by class teachers, in addition to the use of the reflection garden and chapel. Staff also appreciate being able to use these designated areas for moments of stillness and reflection. The school enjoys a strong partnership with St Aldhelm's Church. The clergy provide a visible presence within the school, supporting the spiritual flourishing of both pupils and staff through a weekly led act of worship.'

Bishop Aldhelm's Primary School

'The school's Christian vision is deeply embedded and rooted in biblical teaching. It empowers leaders, staff and volunteers to be united in meeting the needs of the school community.'

Weymouth St John's Primary School

Indeed, in her annual report Dr Margaret James, National Director of SIAMS, celebrated Parrett and Axe Primary School:

‘In the Diocese of Salisbury, staff at Parrett and Axe Primary School appreciate the priority that is placed on their own wellbeing as well as on that of others. The culture of wellbeing is described as “pervasive” and is said to nurture everyone’s mental health. As a direct consequence, “staff feel valued, live out the vision, and flourish.”’

There are many examples of wonderful work in our schools, but if you would like to find out more then here are a couple more examples you can click on:

Salway Ash Primary School were nationally recognised for their ‘Borrow Me Beach Box’ one of three schools recognised nationally for the entry into the ‘Design for Change UK’ awards.

https://stories.dfcworld.org/STORY/previewstory?entry_code=UKI-ENG-584309427-2024

Holy Trinity Great Cheverell were recognised on the local BBC news for the release of their song ‘Change the World’. This was released on streaming services following their work with chart topping music producers. <https://www.holy-trinity.co.uk/News/Change-the-World/>

They truly inspire us with their commitment and innovation, bringing learning to life and lighting the fires of curiosity and imagination in young learners. Our work is to support them in this, realising the God-given potential of each child and young person they serve.

Last June, we again welcomed over 4000 year 6 children to Salisbury Cathedral for their leavers’ service, an event full of joy and celebration. For the first time in recent years, ordained clergy from the diocese led on prayer-writing workshops for four schools in preparation for the service and attended the cathedral days - being available to schools during the reflection trail. This work enabled the forging of further links between the Growing Faith team, the Cathedral and Schools and local clergy. It also secured pupil voice into this spiritual aspect of the service.



Feedback from pupils... “The drama was great!”

“We felt really welcome.”

“We loved to hear the organ being played - not just a recording.”

Feedback from school staff...

“We all liked the banners and candles. Our school loved the spiritual feel.”

“The children liked the play... because it was meaningful.”

“The beautiful music inspires me to do a school choir”

“We did this (Reflection trail) in the afternoon, and it was fab! The helpers scattered around were lovely.”

Our schools and trusts are supported by 565 volunteers in governance, both locally and at trust board level, making a difference for children and young people. These include many local incumbents and congregation members. We are so grateful and always looking for more! The SDBE team lead on recruitment and training, as well as offering support along the way. We do a significant amount of work supporting our trust boards and working closely with the Department for Education, as well as our local authority partners. It is a changing and complex landscape, and the diocese proves itself an invaluable part of it, championing the needs of children and young people and seeking to model Christian leadership.

The innovative work of the SDBE team has been recognised regionally and nationally with our “Programme for Church School Flourishing” now being embedded across all five of our partner south west dioceses, as well as our new “Five Advantages” work on academy trusts being applauded by the Confederation of Schools Trusts. SDBE’s work on bringing stakeholders together around key issues has been acknowledged by the DfE and academy trust partners, seeing the SDBE role as trusted partner further enhanced. We take the needs of our schools and trusts forward, leading with our Christian values and seeking to model them in our approach.

Schools need incredible leaders, committed to upholding the Christian foundation of our schools, and we welcomed 24 new heads to the diocese at our commissioning services with Bishop Stephen last year, as well as five trust CEOs in February this year. These events are inspirational and encouraging, supporting our new heads and CEOs to affirm their place as leaders with a Christian heart.



In addition, we work with schools on estates issues, for example to deliver projects in support of net zero targets. There is an ongoing and complex workstream around land and buildings issues and we are grateful for the specialist knowledge of our team to enable the smooth running of these.

The world of education is a fast-paced one, seeing change and challenge regularly. We await the new Ofsted framework, due in the summer for roll out next academic year, which will require schools to rethink how they present their work in an inspection process. We are also about to hear more on the curriculum

review, a piece of work which will directly impact what is taught, and therefore prepared and resourced, in schools. Both are significant pieces of work, asking much of our leaders' and teachers' time and effort.

Lastly, to place education in its wider context, the latest Joseph Rowntree report tells us that: "In October 2023, around 2.8 million of the poorest fifth of households (47%) were in arrears with their household bills or behind on scheduled lending repayments, 4.2 million households (72%) were going without essentials and 3.4 million households (58%) reported not having enough money for food."

Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK Poverty 2024

This means that children, that families, are struggling to the point of crisis. It is shared that a million children live in conditions described as destitution – without secure housing or food. Some of these children are in in our diocese and our schools work with them doing incredible work to love them, removing the barriers to aspiration. Our work to support them ensures that all we do together is rooted in Christ's example and our Christian values.

In this diverse work supporting education across the diocese, it is a joy to work with and encourage our wonderful family of schools. We thank you for your support, prayers and encouragement, it means a lot to us, but through its impact it means so much more to our schools.

Our Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education Prayer

Give us courage to own and speak Your truth, Lord;

Give us humility to act kindly to all around us;

Give us love to journey alongside others.

Bless us with Your Spirit to guide our thoughts and actions

as we seek to be Your hands and feet;

Bless us with hope to shine Your light in all areas of our work;

Bless us with compassion so we can share Your love.

May we be present with all who we encounter,

to bring Your Kingdom to the here and now;

May we be confident to share Your story so all can flourish;

May we be Christ centred and Jesus shaped

as we carry out Your will to make Jesus known.

Loving God, show us how we can make Jesus known to the people around us today

So that they may see and experience your love and peace

In your Holy Name, Lord

Amen