

Policy on the Christian Vision and Ethos of Church Schools in Cambrian Learning Trust

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This document applies to all academies and operations of Cambrian Learning Trust.

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Introduction

The Cambrian Learning Trust (the Trust) family of schools includes seven Church of England Voluntary Controlled schools – Buckland CE Primary, Longcot and Fernham CE Primary, St Nicholas CE Primary (Challow), Shrivenham CE Primary, St James CE Primary (Hanney), St John's Academy all through (Grove), and Wantage CE Primary (Wantage) and one Church of England Voluntary Aided school: Ashbury with Compton Beauchamp Primary.

This policy specifies how the Trust ensures that the distinctive Christian vision and ethos are protected and promoted in all its Church schools. It reaffirms the Trust's commitment to enhancing the Christian foundation of these schools and sets out a framework for delivering this objective within the Trust.

This policy reflects the Trust's Object in respect of Church schools, as defined in its Articles of Association, which includes a requirement that Church of England academies shall be conducted in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Church of England both generally and in relation to arranging for religious education and daily acts of worship. The Articles also reference the role of the Trust in enhancing the effective maintenance of a Church of England ethos in these schools.

Our Vision

To be a Beacon of Excellence.

Our Values

The Trust's values are Integrity, Kindness, Ambition and Unity.

Our Mission

'Nurturing growth and inspiring minds', we serve to build firm foundations for excellence, empowering all to shine, whilst instilling the values of integrity and kindness. United in our ambitious vision, we are committed to inspiring learners who achieve highly and are equipped to contribute positively to society. By nurturing strong relationships, we create an inclusive community in which every individual is valued, supported, and encouraged to grow in mind, body, soul and spirit.

Significance of the name ‘Cambrian’

The Cambrian rock layer is one of the oldest bedrocks found throughout the world, providing a solid and resilient foundation. The Cambrian era saw the greatest and most diverse explosion of life in the history of the Earth.

The Cambrian era reflects our Trust’s ethos and approach:

- Building strong and solid foundations for lifelong learning and success
- Encouraging and promoting an explosion of innovation and creativity
- Embracing and celebrating diversity

Our Biblical Frame of Reference

“The wise man built his house on rock” (Matthew 7.24)

Regardless of whether or not we have a religious faith, Jesus’ story about the wise person building their house on rock, whilst the foolish person built theirs on sand invites us to think about laying the right foundations upon which to build happy and fulfilled lives. We believe that educational experiences should provide a secure foundation for the rest of our lives.

The Church of England Vision for Education is a vision which is for the common good of the whole community:

- Educating for wisdom, knowledge and skills: enabling discipline, confidence and delight in seeking wisdom and knowledge, and developing talents in all areas of life.
- Educating for hope and aspiration: enabling healing, repair and renewal, coping wisely when things go wrong, opening horizons and guiding people into ways of fulfilling them.
- Educating for community and living well together: a core focus on relationships, participation in communities and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together.
- Educating for dignity and respect: the basic principle of respect for the value and preciousness of each person, treating each person as a unique individual of inherent worth.

The Trust affirms that its vision and values align with the Church of England's vision for education, with a shared focus on inclusivity and respect, personal development, service to the community, and enabling pupils and adults to flourish.

The Trust endorses and embraces the principles laid out in *Valuing All God's Children* (2019).

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

The Trust and its Church schools comply with obligations under the Academies Act 2010 which provides the legal basis for the conversion of Church schools into Academies and the formation of Multi-Academy Trusts. This policy aligns with the Academy Trust Handbook which provides guidance on the governance and operation of academies, including Church schools.

This policy complies with the obligations of the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010. The Trust's Church schools are not faith schools and religious belief is not a genuine occupational requirement at any school for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. All staff and Governors at Church schools are expected to comply with this policy, and to make a positive contribution to the Christian vision of the school notwithstanding their personal beliefs. This expectation will be explicit when joining the school in any capacity.

The SIAMS Framework

This policy follows the 2024 SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) Framework which focuses on the theology and context of the Church school, along with the impact of the school's Christian vision on pupils and adults. The Framework provides a structure for inspectors and school and trust leaders to gather evidence collaboratively of how this vision enables people to flourish.

Trust policy

In line with the Articles of Association, Church of England Academies shall be conducted in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Church of England both generally and in particular in relation to arranging for religious education and daily acts of worship, and in having regard to any advice and following any reasonable directives issued by the Diocesan Board of Education.

1. Each Church school, in collaboration with its Governors, should develop and sustain a *contextually appropriate theologically rooted Christian vision* for education that reflects its foundation as a Church school, meeting the needs of the school community, and enabling pupils and adults to flourish.
2. The *school's curriculum*, including the extra-curricular offer, is shaped by the school's theologically rooted Christian vision. This means spiritual development being intrinsic, shaping the learning experience for pupils including those who are deemed to be vulnerable and/or disadvantaged, and having the intended impact.
3. *Collective worship* takes place that reflects the school's Church foundation and enables the spiritual flourishing of pupils and adults. Collective worship shall be

inclusive, invitational and inspirational. Each school shall foster partnerships with Churches and local organisations to enhance and enrich collective worship and individual spiritual development.

4. The school's vision and values enable pupils and adults *to live well together* in an inclusive, dignifying and equitable culture. This means ensuring that the mental health and wellbeing of pupils and adults are central to the school's work; that effective strategies are in place to help people at difficult times, including those deemed to be vulnerable and/or disadvantaged; and that inclusion and fair treatment are guiding principles as defined by relevant Trust policies.
5. The school's vision creates and sustains *an active culture of justice and responsibility* through partnerships and by impacting positively and reciprocally on the lives of others. This means enabling pupils to make ethical choices and to be agents of change by identifying and fostering partnerships that balance individual freedom and rights with responsibility towards others.
6. Each school will adopt and deliver a scheme of work that follows the locally agreed syllabus providing a religious education curriculum, ensuring it is challenging, accurate, well-sequenced, balanced, relevant and diverse.

School-level Procedure(s)

Each Church school should develop appropriate local procedure(s) for implementing this policy, including objectives to develop and promote the Christian ethos of the school which is included in each school's School Development Plan.

Self-evaluation

Each school maintains a SIAMS self-evaluation as an evergreen document.

Development and training

The Trust and each Church school work closely with the Oxford Diocese and local Anglican and Methodist churches and religious organisations to promote this policy. This includes identifying opportunities for development and training in matters relevant to Church schools for school leaders, governors and staff.

Local chaplaincy

The Trust and Church schools collaborate with the Oxford Diocese to further develop the potential and provision for local chaplaincy.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Trust

The Trust board has overall responsibility for approving this policy and reviewing its effectiveness across all Church schools in the Trust on an annual basis. The board includes members appointed by the Diocese to support the Board's understanding of the religious character and ethos of the Trust's Church schools.

Church Schools' Forum

Led by Trustees, this group includes a Foundation governor from each school and meets annually.

The Forum monitors the implementation of this policy and relevant procedures and ensures that SIAMS requirements are met.

The Forum receives an annual report from the Local Governing Committees (LGCs) of each Church school. They may also commission monitoring visits to schools and/or LGC meetings.

The Forum will then provide an annual report to the board.

The Local Governing Committee (LGC)

The LGC is accountable for ensuring that the school's Christian character is protected and promoted in accordance with this policy, and its Terms of Reference, and that SIAMS requirements are met by the school. This includes incorporating the Christian character and ethos into the school's strategies and plans so that it remains intrinsic.

The governors of a Church school work collectively to ensure the effectiveness of the school as a place of learning, where the Christian vision enables the whole community to flourish

The LGC is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and relevant local procedures within the Church school.

The LGC provides a brief report annually to the Church Schools' forum confirming that this policy has been followed.

LGCs include Foundation Governors, appointed by the Diocese, with expertise in the religious character and ethos of the school. Foundation governors have a special responsibility to ensure that the guiding principles of the founding church are incorporated into all aspects of the governance of the school. LGCs designate a Foundation governor to

take the lead in monitoring the implementation and impact of this policy and to represent the LGC on the Church School's Forum.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy at the school.
- Developing and maintaining local procedure(s), including school-specific objectives, to implement this policy for approval by the LGC.
- Ensuring that staff implement this policy through the school's local procedure(s).
- Monitoring how staff implement this policy and the relevant local procedure(s).
- Providing new staff with a clear induction into this policy and the relevant local procedure(s).
- Maintaining professional knowledge and expertise, as necessary, to implement this policy.
- Determining the need for and arranging appropriate training.
- Reporting on the implementation and impact of this policy within their termly report to the LGC.

Teachers and staff

Teachers and staff are expected to comply with this policy and the relevant local procedure(s), and to make a positive contribution to the vision and ethos of the school.¹

¹ Reserved Teachers

There are two types of church schools. Voluntary Aided (VA) church schools are church schools who have a majority of governors who are foundation governors and they may teach RE following a curriculum in line with their church school denomination. 'Voluntary Aided' means that they choose to be helped (aided) by the local authority but not fully controlled by the local authority.

Voluntary Controlled (VC) church schools are church schools who have a minority of governors who are foundation governors and they teach RE following the locally agreed RE syllabus (which is taught in both VC and non-church schools). 'Voluntary Controlled' means that they choose to be controlled by the local authority instead of their denomination.

Reserved teachers are found in VC schools. Their role exists in law to provide RE teaching in line with the church school's denomination as an alternative to the agreed syllabus, if this was required.

In Trust schools, schools which were formally VC schools before joining the Trust, have at least one member of staff identified as a reserved teacher. Unless otherwise stated, reserved teachers in Trust schools are the headteacher and the RE coordinator.

Sharing excellent practice

A Church School network group, comprising of Headteachers, meets three times a year. The purpose of this group is to review developments, share best practice and identify lessons learned from the experience of SIAMS inspections. It is also attended by the Director of Education who offers Trust level support and guidance to all schools. The Church School network group may make recommendations to the Trust's Church School Forum.

Our Church schools recognise that they also have a commitment to work in partnership with non-church schools in the Trust and a responsibility to live out their Christian vision through supporting others. This includes a commitment to sharing the vision and ethos of a Church school, along with its benefits with non-church school colleagues.

Footnote

There are two types of church schools. Voluntary Aided (VA) church schools are church schools who have a majority of governors who are foundation governors and they may teach RE following a curriculum in line with their church school denomination. 'Voluntary Aided' means that they choose to be helped (aided) by the local authority but not fully controlled by the local authority.

Voluntary Controlled (VC) church schools are church schools who have a minority of governors who are foundation governors and they teach RE following the locally agreed RE syllabus (which is taught in both VC and non-church schools). 'Voluntary Controlled' means that they choose to be controlled by the local authority instead of their denomination.