

Church of England Vision for Education

Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good

This document is a fresh articulation of the Church's vision for education to meet the challenges and opportunities of the present situation. It is not simply for Church schools but promotes educational excellence for everyone and in all educational settings. The vision is deeply Christian and has a desire for "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10) at its heart.

It is worked out theologically around four core elements described as wisdom, hope, community and dignity.

1. Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

Summary: Enabling discipline, confidence, and delight in seeking wisdom and knowledge and developing talents in all areas of life.

'Good schools foster confidence, delight and discipline in seeking wisdom, knowledge, truth, understanding, know-how, and the skills needed to shape life well. They nurture academic habits and skills, emotional intelligence and creativity across the whole range of school subjects, including areas such as music, drama and the arts, information and other technologies, sustainable development, sport, and what one needs to understand and practise in order to be a good person, citizen, parent, employee, team or group member, or leader.' (p.7.)

Bible Links: Wisdom seeking is one of the great themes of the Bible and several books are described as "Wisdom Literature" (e.g. Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes). Even the child Jesus himself, like all children, is described as "growing in wisdom" (Luke 2:52).

2. Educating for Hope and Aspiration

Summary: Enabling healing, repair, and renewal coping wisely when things go wrong, opening horizons, and guiding people into ways of fulfilling them.

'In the drama of ongoing life, how we learn to approach the future is crucial. Good schools open up horizons of hope and aspiration, and guide pupils into ways of fulfilling them. They also cope wisely with things and people going wrong. Bad experiences and behaviour, wrongdoing and evil need not have the last word. There are resources for healing, repair and renewal; repentance, forgiveness, truth and reconciliation are possible; and meaning, trust, generosity, compassion and hope are more fundamental than meaninglessness, suspicion, selfishness, hardheartedness and despair.' (p.7).

The document challenges our belief in the worth of each student and impels us to work with them to fulfil their God-given potential, whatever the religious or other tradition with which they or their family identify. It also gives special consideration to those who are disadvantaged. Each student is encouraged to stretch

themselves spiritually, morally, intellectually, imaginatively and actively, and to aspire to be well-educated. This is done in the context of families, groups, communities, institutions, and nations.

Bible Links: God's ongoing love and compassion for all people, and for the whole of creation, and in God's promise of life in all its fullness are at the root of our dedication to educating for hope and aspiration. The story of Jesus' life, teaching, death and resurrection, and the understanding of God's involvement with creation and history, helps us to see ourselves realistically as awed and fallible beings, but also gives us the confidence that transformation for the better is possible. In turn, this means that even while immersed in difficulty, disappointment, failure, suffering, and even tragedy, our trust and hope in Jesus inspires perseverance, patience, gratitude, openness to surprises, and celebration.

3. Educating for Community & Living Well Together

Summary: A core focus on relationships, participation in communities and the qualities, of character that enable people to flourish together.

'We are only persons with each other: our humanity is 'co- humanity', inextricably involved with others, utterly relational, both in our humanity and our shared life on a finite planet. If those others are of ultimate worth then we are each called to responsibility towards them and to contribute responsibly to our communities. The good life is 'with and for others in just institutions' (See Paul Ricoeur). So education needs to have a core focus on relationships and commitments, participation in communities and institutions, and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together.' (p.7)

Bible Links: The conviction that we are created and sustained by God for living together in families and communities is at the root of our dedication to educating for life together. Jesus embodied the importance of relationships in love, compassion, generosity, truth-telling, forgiveness, and gathering together as a community. The community he created was bound together with a commitment to love God and our neighbour (interpreted in the widest sense). The central role good relationships play within education is inspired by the example of Jesus, thus every school should be a hospitable community where all, staff and students alike, can flourish.

4. Educating for Dignity & Respect

Summary: The basic principle of respect for the value of preciousness of each person treating each person as a unique individual of inherent worth.

'Human dignity, the ultimate worth of each person, is central to good education. The basic principle of respect for the value of each person involves continual discernment, deliberation and action, and schools are one of the main places where this happens, and where the understanding and practices it requires are learned. This includes vigilant safeguarding. It is especially important that the equal worth of those with and without special educational needs and disabilities is recognized in practice. For the first time in history, there is now something approaching global agreement on the worth of each person through the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and its successor declarations, covenants and conventions, including that in 2006 on the rights of persons with disabilities. How that is worked out in each nation and each school is a massive task that calls on the inspiration and resources offered by each tradition of faith and belief. (p.7.)

Bible Links: Our commitment to the dignity and ultimate worth of each person, is rooted in each being created in the image of God and loved by God, and is further shaped by the person, teaching and example of Jesus. Jesus embodies the love and compassion of God for each person, and Christians are called to follow him in this, and to join with others in demonstrating it. He paid special attention to the disadvantaged, excluded, despised and feared. The ultimate worth of each person is shown in the Gospels through his teaching, healing, feeding, sharing hospitality, befriending, and forgiving. It is a relationship which crosses barriers of differences of religion, race, nationality, gender, and economic or social status. Issues which are especially relevant to dignity in education include safeguarding, prevention of bullying, special educational needs and disabilities.