

# Angles

The Magazine of AASSH

Anglican Academy and Secondary School Heads

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## Contributors

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# Church Schools and Academies

David Shannon, Associates link for AASSH argues that support for Christian distinctiveness is essential

**We care about our whole Education Service. As a headteacher for 16 years, I know the value I placed upon those support structures provided by the local authority, my diocese and my professional association.**

But now as an ex-headteacher, providing support for many types of school, I am also aware of how much I benefited from those informal support groups to which heads adhere. In my case, our Nottinghamshire Association of Secondary Headteachers provided a “by heads for heads” support group for those issues you wished to share only among friends. But as the only church school in our local group of seven heads, there were occasions when the “church distinctiveness” generated an issue for which only church school heads could provide solutions.

So began a twenty two year association with AASSH, which is run entirely by church school headteachers to offer practical help, spiritual nurture and a flow of information though its magazine “Angles”, through its annual

conference (this year in York) and through regional meetings of Christian heads. The delight is that AASSH does not push itself upon you, has an astronomically low annual membership subscription (currently £100) but provides a resource to which you can talk frankly and openly. Through its regional representatives AASSH can offer advice and support from another headteacher on everything from admissions to art resources and from exclusions to enterprise activities.

This is particularly apposite for the new church academies, around fifty in number, who have been ably represented on the AASSH executive committee by Ros McMullen (David Young Academy, Leeds). For many of these academies are subject to a Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) which follows on from the Ofsted inspection to report on “Christian distinctiveness” in the church school. AASSH has good contacts with many of the 150 voluntary aided or controlled schools with

a church dimension; we can therefore broker contact between schools to solve most challenges confidentially and effectively.

AASSH is currently working in partnership with the National College in producing materials for the revamped NPQH qualification. Several of our schools are Teaching Schools and more are in the pipeline; these are at the centre of federations of primary and secondary schools with both church school and non-church affiliations. Several headteachers on the executive committee are local and national leaders of education. Their resources can be deployed to assist you in your role as a church school leader. But beyond this, AASSH provides a Christian focus on leadership, through a fellowship of Christian leaders sharing successful practice across all aspects of school life. For us, the spiritual dimension is firmly at the centre of all we do. That is not to say that wrestling with the legal and financial challenges of converting to academy status are less tricky for us, or the quest for academic

rigour, or finding an appropriate curriculum for all learners, or recruiting effective teachers in shortage subjects, or tackling over or under-subscription for school places, or building staff morale at a time of unprecedented pressures on the service!

The high point of the year is the AASSH annual conference, which provides a professional and enriching experience by focussing on those aspects of leadership particularly pertinent to church schools. We hold the conference early in the Autumn Term, so that good weather as well as good fellowship are ensured. This year’s is from 18th to 20th September at The Royal York Hotel, York. Details and a booking form are available from the AASSH administrator, Mrs Anne Walsh, St Christopher’s C of E High School, Queen’s Rd West, Accrington BB5 4AY.

**David Shannon, ex headteacher, ex SSAT coordinator, now an educational trainer**

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# Headteachers as Reservoirs of Hope

by Alan Flintham



**Alan Flintham, a former secondary headteacher and now education researcher, offers this summary of his presentation to the AASSH 2012 Conference “Communicating hope in a changing world”.**

It was Pope Benedict speaking to 4000 school students in London 2 years ago who said: ‘I hope that among you are some of the future saints of the 21st century’. It was Napoleon Bonaparte two centuries earlier who said ‘A leader is a dealer in hope’. If we are to encourage and enthuse the young people in our care to be 21st century saints – not holier than thou & other-worldly, but capable of dealing with the pressures of this world from a firm foundation of moral values – then school leaders, and particularly headteachers are called not just to be dealers in hope, communicating hope in a changing and challenging

world, but are also required to be **Reservoirs of Hope**.

Headteachers must provide the calm centre at the heart of the storms that swirl around our schools. They must be the **external reservoir of hope**, because the maintenance of hope in a better future is what drives the school forward towards delivering its vision whilst remaining true to its fundamental values, and people will look to the headteacher above all to provide spiritual and moral leadership in such circumstances. But being the spiritual and moral leader of a school requires an **internal reservoir of hope**:

the calm centre at the heart of individual leaders from which their own values & vision flow, which allows them to maintain personal self-belief no matter what the challenge. And this internal reservoir of hope has to be regularly refilled by a variety of **sustainability strategies** without which there will be either burn-out or drop-out and the loss of faith in the possibility of transformative change.

In interviews with more than 150 headteachers from a wide variety of schools in both England and Australia (detailed in Alan Flintham: “Reservoirs of Hope: sustaining spirituality in school

leaders” Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2011), the metaphor of reservoirs of hope facilitated universal engagement as an aid to promoting reflection on leadership values. Headteachers were able readily to articulate their values and to describe the **value systems** that pervade and underpin their leadership actions and make them authentic leaders and not just efficient managers. Dominant amongst the responses was a belief in **equality**: that all are of equal worth and value and should be treated as such; in **social justice**: that every child is good at something and deserves the best education we can offer irrespective of social or cultural background; and in **personal integrity**: virtues such as honesty, truthfulness, simplicity and a willingness to admit mistakes & learn from them. But the 1/3rd of the sample who led schools from a Christian faith perspective strengthened these statements with particular reference to the twin imperatives of **invitation** and **inclusion**, because of a belief that all are invited by God and

included in His love. The gospel **imperative** therefore is to value and include every child, no matter how difficult, even in an accountability culture, being 'brave enough to make real the rhetoric' of **respect, redemption and reconciliation**. For it is how the rhetoric of values is played out in practice that is the true mark of an authentic leader: 'if you are accused of being a Christian, where is the evidence to convict you?'

**So as a strategy to foster hope: first identify and secure your values.**

If the first strategy to foster hope is to sustain your values, the second is to **sustain yourself**.

All Headteachers could describe a range of sustainability strategies. These could be categorised as **belief networks, support networks, and external networks**:

**belief networks** are sustained by high levels of self-belief in the rightness of one's own value system and gain support from others on the same wavelength, drawing on non-

judgemental networks of informal peer support from colleagues in similar circumstances who were certainly not coaches, more than mentors, but offered the cathartic support of a 'soul friend'. Above all, affirmative feedback is drawn from what is felt to be the core of the job, the pupils. A number of secondary heads running large schools specifically cited the value of this:

'I escape (sic) to the classroom; being with kids reaffirms my faith in the job'.

**support networks** are provided by families (particularly partners), friends and colleagues. Senior staff played a key role in this on a day to day basis, as did chairs of governors, and convivial contact with fellow heads within formal and informal networks in giving a sense of much needed perspective. But such caring support for the head is not restricted to senior colleagues. One head applauded 'the day to day support of the office staff providing tea, sympathy and laughter'. In addition the parish for some provided quiet support

and affirmation as well as spiritual sustenance.

**external networks** provide engagement with interests and experiences beyond the world of education, what (after Denis Healey) could be called '**the hinterland of headship**': Renewal came from this opportunity to 'switch off' from the immediate demands of headship, to become immersed in something else, in something completely different. This '**capacity to compartmentalise**', to switch off from immediate professional problems and thus prevent 'cross-contamination' between work and home, was felt to be an important sustaining strategy.

**So the second strategy to foster hope is to sustain yourself.**

**The third strategy to foster hope is to retreat and reflect**, to find space like Elijah to hear the still small voice, the sound of sheer silence, in the midst of the earthquake, wind and fire of headship. To renew ourselves in hope, we need opportunities for

**constructive introspection** be it space alone or at 'events with a spiritual heart' (as one Head put it): to find time to reflect, to hold internal conversations with ourselves, to engage with our peers in a non-judgemental environment and to analyse the impact and journal the outcomes in order to learn from the experience. Formal retreat opportunities can be accessed and the RC diocese of Parramatta even offers heads pro-active access to 3 **personal spiritual development days** a year available in term time with a focus on '**being instead of doing**', an idea which has now been taken up by the Diocese of Coventry. And if you feel you cannot find time for any of this, try simply a 2 minute timed reflection at [donothingfor2minutes.com](http://donothingfor2minutes.com)

**So where will you find your opportunities to reflect, to find space to listen for the still small voice in the sound of sheer silence, so you can return to leadership with reservoirs refilled?**

# Proposing academy status

by Alasdair Coates

**Voluntary Aided schools will all have considered a response to the invitation to become an academy and many have already made their decisions. We have been asked to share how one might approach this important decision.**

Opposition to proposals for academy status can be heartfelt but can also be effectively addressed to ensure the best outcome for the school. Whilst we all work in different contexts, including the appropriateness of a change of status, the following worked for my school for which academy status seemed right.

Concern might be expressed by the Local Authority, staff and their professional associations, parents, governors and perhaps students. It is helpful to realise that those with entrenched views, perhaps politically motivated, are unlikely ever to be changed. Recognising a body of pretty-implacable opposition, as well as a probable similarly-committed support group,

one can make a priority of securing those in the middle. As in other management situations, if 20% are against and 20% for, swinging the middle 60% is crucial.

**Ensure key support** before making a proposal. Try to avoid a public split with your Chairman, Chair of Finance or SLT. If you are unable to persuade them, perhaps you should re-consider.

**Get in early.** Before publicising any proposal, marshal your arguments and be ready to present them at the launch of your consultation period.

**Acknowledge points against** and show why they are not relevant or significant to your context, at the same time as you demonstrate the benefits to your establishment. By confronting these before they are raised, you can reduce their impact.

**Be robust with professional associations.** All three main teaching unions are committed to opposing academies on principle. They lied to my staff (“You will lose

your pensions”), used exaggerated language and cited extreme examples (“You will be made to work during holidays”). In my context, it was helpful to commit to current Terms and Conditions as a minimum, the Diocese insisting on this. As a VA school with a Foundation majority, we could then show that this could never be changed in future.

**Stress benefit to Teaching and Learning.** If it’s just about money, the argument is unappealing. By using extra resources for teaching and learning, you can increase the appeal of the proposal to parents, staff and students.

**Give teachers the benefit of any extra funding.** In the end, people are swayed by what affects them individually. In every case stressing the benefits to teaching and learning, we offered, and have delivered:

- An extra non-contact period for every teacher

- The employment of additional teachers and teaching assistants
- Doubled department capitation
- Consideration of UPS4 and a mid-year half increment to all those showing progress towards Performance Management targets, thus including all teachers.

**Show academy financial premium is not at the expense of other schools.** LAs have been top-sliced already. The money is in a pot. The only question is whether or not your school chooses to access that pot. No school will receive any different amount whether or not you become an academy.

**Show how much less your school currently receives than other schools.** The Audit Commission (RIP) inevitably has VA schools at the bottom of their per-pupil comparative funding tables. This will enable you to show how academy status will bring fairness of funding, not an unfair share.



**Continue to use Local Authority Services** that are right for you. You will already have decided for or against these anyway. Much opposition derives from the premise that the LA will be weakened by losing a school. It makes no difference if you continue to use the same services as an academy. Ask yourself what the LA still actually

runs centrally, whatever one might think of this.

**Stress existing Governor powers.** Many staff simply do not realise that, in a VA school, already

- Governors are the employer, can change their terms and conditions, set salary scales

- Governors own the buildings and land
- Governors set holiday dates and control admissions.

**Establish Church School identity for future.** The whole community will want to protect this. This cannot be guaranteed if the school were

parents, perhaps School Council, in which you can present these points as well as address concerns raised. You may be able to secure attendance from advisors who are independent. For example, Browne Jacobson, one of the more experienced legal teams who assist in transfer to academy status, may attend your meetings to give



to be put in an OfSTED category. As an academy already, its Church School status is secure. The Archbishop of York is passionate about this and uses it as the basis of urging Anglican schools to become academies.

**Hold consultation meetings** separately for governors, staff,

advice. This carries weight against union representatives who may make questionable or unexpected assertions.

Having been through this already, I would be happy to share my experiences ([a.coates@st-christophers.lancs.sch.uk](mailto:a.coates@st-christophers.lancs.sch.uk)).

# REBOOting Assemblies

by Elysia Willis, Creator of Reboo

**My memory of school assemblies are accompanied by the sensation of cold floors, pins and needles and the fear of having to do the 'dead leg walk' in front of the very people I was trying to impress...my peers!**

Now years later, as a teacher, I sympathise with the chorus of groans as awkward teenagers struggle to sit cross-legged in assembly. Equally, however, I sympathise with my poor colleagues who have to stand in front of this barely conscious audience and somehow engage and inspire...as a job lot!

As a tutor I found that it was during tutor time that my tutees woke up, opened up and well...didn't shut up! Whilst witnessing their ever readiness to express an opinion, it occurred to me that maybe this was the place for real engagement and reflection.

At St Andrew's in Croydon, we knew starting the day off on the right foot and providing food for thought was clearly valuable and

still relevant but maybe it needed a reboot! After talks with the headmaster I took on the challenge and REBOO was created – a new kind of assembly.

REBOO is an online assembly site which provides assemblies in the friendly, familiar format of a weekly blog. It is designed to be projected on a whiteboard in a classroom where staff and students can easily navigate the site. The content is easily accessible and flexible but also relevant and attractive to teenagers. The aim was to create a platform from which our young people could be inspired, engaged and most importantly respond to challenging topics. We believe we do this through combining scripture, music, videos, activities, images, prayers and discussion material. The site is underpinned by

Christian values and the Scriptures are used as a springboard for each week's theme.

At St Andrew's we run REBOO during tutor time and find it really enriches our school community. Rated 'outstanding' by SIAS and endorsed by the Bishop of Oxford, we believe this material could well benefit other schools. And here is the plug...for only £299 your school could access weekly assemblies for a whole year!

But don't take my word for it (I am a little biased); here is some of our feedback:

*"Reboo is a great way to start the week. The assemblies always give good life lessons and they always relate to everyday life. I don't think there is anyone who doesn't enjoy the assemblies. They are a great part of the week"*

**Year 9 student**

*"Here at Reboo they have devised a way of bringing assemblies*



*alive in tutor groups by providing simple, creative and mind-teasingly stimulating resources for group reflection and conversation”*

**Bishop Nick Baines**

*“As a tutor Reboo has completely changed the beginning of the day for me. Students are eager to do the assemblies. They enjoy being proactive and leading from the front. They are always interested in the content; it is a wonderful balance of music, art, social awareness and the Christian ethos. It is also pitched at just the right level for years seven to eleven. No preparation for the tutor and a wonderful start to the day!”*

**Maria, Teacher**

*“Reboo is a colourful and dynamic website that I can confidently pick up and instantly project on the IWB if I am covering a tutor group at short notice. With minimal planning needed the resource is unbeatable for delivering small-\_\_ group assemblies to a tutor group where the materials need to engage students aged 11 to 16.”*

**Jacqui, Assistant Head**

**For more information please visit [www.reboo.co.uk](http://www.reboo.co.uk) or contact the team at [info@reboo.co.uk](mailto:info@reboo.co.uk)**



# REBOO

## ASSEMBLY BLOGS

An Interactive online assembly site encouraging young people to rethink issues of morality and spiritually REBOOT in this 21st Century Wonderful world.

*“Reboo is a great way to start the week. The assemblies always give good life lessons and they always relate to my everyday life. I don’t think there is anyone who doesn’t enjoy the assemblies. They are a great part of the week.”*

Year 9 Student

# Fired Up

How do you react when your school finds itself in the centre of the London riots?  
David Matthews, Headteacher of St Andrew's Croydon, explains.

**For decades, Croydon has been the butt of every comedian's regional jokes. That reputation was eclipsed last summer as the civil disturbances ('riots' to everyone other than those in government) raged and the burning of Reeves furniture store became the iconic image of those days of turmoil. The fear that social dysfunction and moral disintegration are alarmingly possible, if not imminent, is now draped like a hoodie over Croydon.**

The worry is that investors and industry, looking to relocate to the periphery of the capital, will turn aside, choosing not to engage with this – London's largest borough – in the same way that a nervous pensioner might cross the road when there are youths on the pavement ahead.

St Andrew's Church of England school is situated only half a mile from Reeves corner. Most of the children at the school who catch a bus home walk each day past the hoardings which mask the demolition site that was once the

historic store. The only killing which happened in Croydon during the riots took place 20 yards from the school's main entrance and those who mourn the young man, who died in some gangland vendetta, still tie bunches of flowers onto the railings: a sad, makeshift shrine to a lost life.

For those of us who work with the school-children of Croydon, there is little to be gained from repeating the fact that all those caught and prosecuted for the looting and marauding in our town are over nineteen. They are not of school-age. Phrases like 'feral', 'out of control', and even 'lost', now seem permanently attached to youth in the popular mind. Perhaps worse is the lurking suspicion that it is the young people who have blighted Croydon's chances of regeneration, a belief compounded by the recent news that Nestlé are moving out of Croydon, further into Surrey.

At St Andrew's, we do not wring our hands. Even when our £20 million BSF re-build was withdrawn at the eleventh hour, and we were left

with the over-crowded, inadequate buildings we thought we were finally going to vacate, we did not succumb (for long) to wailing and gnashing of teeth. There was no point. Instead, we focussed with renewed vigour on our answer to an uncertain future: building up our students' capacity to be effective citizens, the movers and shakers of the next generation.

Our vertical House system and the other complementary structures which shape the student body have allowed us, for many years, to grow an excellent programme of student leadership, making a real difference both within the school community and beyond. In that, of course, we are not at all unusual. In addition, however, St Andrew's has pioneered a unique strategy to engage and inspire students in worship and reflection. REBOO is an interactive, online assembly site which encourages our young people to think afresh about issues of morality, and spiritually 'reboot' in this wonderful 21st Century. The site taps into aspects of youth culture through

music, art, film, social media and networking, showing how they can be used for the good. The assemblies can stand alone or be led by tutor or student. Its flexibility gives it universal appeal. It follows the liturgical year and is in complete harmony with mainstream Anglicanism. Rated 'outstanding' by SIAS (June 2011), we think this material could well benefit other Church schools. We certainly believe it plays an important role in engaging all our students in the thorny questions of life and the thornier question of living in Croydon. Schools interested in this resource might care to look at some sample material on the website [www.reboo.co.uk](http://www.reboo.co.uk).

And, if you get the chance, put in a good word for Croydon to whomever might listen. Out of the crucible of last summer's fires will emerge a powerful force for the future! It is in the Church schools of South London that young people across the ethnic and socio-economic spectrums are truly integrated, fired-up to make a difference.

# Citizens of the World

by David Ainsworth

**Trinity CE High School in Manchester has the aim "To provide a Christian environment in which young people are safe, secure, cared for and happy, and are able to develop into articulate, confident and well qualified citizens of the world."**

**Tim Kelso explains how Trinity promotes global citizenship through its partnership with St Mary's Odibo High School, Namibia.**

Trinity and St Mary's have a long standing partnership established through the link between the Dioceses of Manchester and Namibia. The Christian foundation of both schools has contributed to their developing a great affinity and to sustaining a close and mutually beneficial relationship. Past partnership initiatives at Trinity have included £4000 raising towards a science laboratory at St Mary's and the donation of laptops, P.E kit and library books.

In recent years, the emphasis has developed to focus on joint learning. In 2010-2011, through the Global School Partnerships programme, collaborative learning projects took place across



the curriculum. In citizenship, students researched social justice and equality issues at local and national levels and communicated these issues with students at their partner school. Students at Trinity learnt about the social and political legacy of the apartheid system in Namibia. In geography, the water cycles of the UK and Namibia were compared, including the intermittent watercourses of northern Namibia. In science, the infectious diseases of both

countries were investigated. Reciprocal visits, partly funded by Global School Partnerships, enriched learning in these and other curriculum areas. Trinity was visited by Mr Robson Hainana, Deputy Principal at St Mary's, who immersed himself wholeheartedly into Trinity life, participating in lessons, acts of worship and extra curricular activities.

Last academic year saw the launch of the new Connecting Classrooms programme and a

successful joint grant application. This will fund reciprocal visits and facilitate further collaborative work. In 2012-2013, the Citizenship project will be extended to include joint advocacy on the social justice and equality issues researched. The history and development of democratic processes in both countries will also be investigated. The choirs at both schools will participate in a music exchange and work together to produce a worship CD. Joint work will continue in geography, science and other curriculum areas.

Communicating with their peers has enriched Trinity and St Mary's students' understanding of God's world and his people. The cultures of Britain and Namibia have been celebrated; attitudes and perceptions have been challenged and the students' awareness of their responsibilities within the global community have been enhanced. Future joint advocacy will heighten their sense of interdependence as they realise the action they take has an impact on the lives of others.

# Deep and Wide 3: crystal stream and drainage ditch

by Rosemary Lain-Priestley

**In her first two articles on the title 'Deep and Wide', Rosemary has explored the 'deep' experience that Church schools offer young people, and – more controversially – the 'wide' issue of the people our schools cater for. In this final article, she explores the meaning of the Eucharist in a church school context.**

A few months ago Joseph, our two year old, had been clattering noisily up and down the hallway with his trains and cars when he suddenly went ominously quiet for a little too long. I found him in the bathroom with the Johnson's baby shampoo bottle upturned, pouring the beautiful yellow liquid all over the floor and glorying in what he'd released.

I know it's a slightly odd connection to make but he reminded me a little of the woman in Mark's Gospel with her jar of pure nard, who for a moment escaped the usual

constraints of orderly and seemingly behaviour and like a child did what it was obvious to her had to be done. Smashing the bottle and pouring out its aromatic contents over the head of the one person in the room who knew what it was about, who knew the meaning at the heart of her reckless and passionate gesture?

What we're encouraging young people to do as we nurture their spirituality is to open things up and see what's inside. What makes things tick. What connections they might

make between different aspects of the world and themselves.

I'm always struck by Luke's story of those companions on the road to Emmaus, making a journey and mulling over the momentous things that had been happening to them, shortly after Jesus's death. Meeting him on the road they recognised Jesus not when he questioned them about where they were going, not when he explained the scriptures to them, not when he accepted their invitation to come and eat and stay the night with them, but when he tore open the bread and offered it to them, in all its brokenness. Then and only then were their minds broken open to see and understand and know him. Only then did their 'Why' questions begin to be answered and their lives begin to have meaning once again.

And the breaking of bread continues to open our eyes to things we would not otherwise see. The Eucharist speaks to us of a deliberate breaking open in order to discover the essence of things. We

break open the bread and say 'Here God is'. Our own Emmaus moment. And as we share that broken bread amongst ourselves and see each other as equal before God, we know the truth of God's presence in one another in all of our essential fragility and with all of the questions that we bring.

In a book of essays called 'Praying for England' Stephen Cherry who is the Director of Ministry in the Durham diocese writes 'The Eucharist is the most profound way of facing the realities of evil and death ... Yes, bodies do break; they are broken. And when they are, it seems as if the world is falling apart. And yet this moment is at the heart of our redemption. It is the turning point, where death and evil are not victorious but vanquished'<sup>1</sup>.

The Eucharist should touch people – old and middle aged and young alike – at the deepest possible level because it's concerned with the heart of the Gospel where

<sup>1</sup> Ed Samuel Wells and Sarah Coakley, *Praying for England: Priestly Presence in Contemporary Culture*, p28

we are reassured that yes we are fragile, frail, psychologically and physically vulnerable, but we are also okay. We're surviving. We're more than surviving. We're nurtured and held and encouraged and loved by a God of infinite patience and compassion. We are creative and surprising and tenacious and bold and in our state of being broken open we are learning what it is to be gloriously vulnerable to one another.

I think that's one of the most significant and life-giving lessons that our distinctive Anglican and Christian offer makes to young people. They know, many of them, about life's harshness, its pain, its compromises and its essential fragility. What they need to know is that they are held in all of this by the God who is around and through and above and within all things.

In all that we do that makes us distinctive as Anglican academies and schools we have to help young people to make the connection between the man who was God

who broke bread on the road to Emmaus and the meaning at the centre of their broken-open lives. In other words we have to help them to ask the 'Why' questions all the time: Why am I here and what does it all mean? What am I for?

Barbara Brown Taylor, who is an Episcopalian priest and a professor of Christian spirituality in the United States, has written about the profound sense of connection with the created world which began in her as a child when visiting what she thought of as a 'crystal stream' in a field near her home. Day after day she dangled her hand in that stream, watching its depths for salamanders and other fascinating creatures that lived their secret lives there. But she goes on to say: 'Years later, I will discover that this was no crystal stream but a drainage ditch. The difference between these two descriptions of the same place will screw with my sense of reality for a long time. Is the Divine Presence in the world, or in my eye?'

Surely it's in both. It is in the world but it takes a particular sort of looking, a particular approach and expectancy to see it. And it's that sort of looking and approach and expectancy that we can encourage in our school communities, if we ourselves are confident that religious faith can be a window onto the world and an opportunity to see deeper into all that we encounter.

At a very beautiful and moving memorial service 18 months ago I heard for the first time a poem by the American writer Mary Oliver, called *The Summer's Day*. The poet explores the idea that although she cannot precisely define what prayer might be, she does know what it means to pay attention to the miracle of creation. Reminding us that in the end death comes to everything, she asks what we want to do with our lives, which she reminds us are 'wild' and also 'precious'<sup>2</sup>.

Well you know exactly what you've chosen to do with yours. To dedicate it to the education of

a generation of young people. And to do that, at least at this point in time, in the context of an Anglican school. A place where it is still okay to encourage people to pay attention to God. To ask, where in all of this ordinary blessedness is the One whom I am called to worship? Where in my own everyday stuff? Where in other people's? Where in the world's brokenness and where in my own fragility and strength?

Our role as head teachers and as governors and as Directors of Boards of Education is to try to ensure that we create the sort of school communities that feed that hunger, that make God findable and that nourish our children's excitement for God.

I guess there are worse things we could do with our one deep and wide, 'wild and precious life'.

**These articles are taken from a talk Rosemary gave to the AASSH Conference 2010.**

# Ethos and Outcomes: Difficult questions of Church Secondary Schools and Academies

Canon Stephen Green is Principal of Christ's College Guildford, an 11-18 Church of England Secondary School with 30% of the pupils having special needs. He is also a PhD student at Canterbury Christ Church University.

Is there a link between Christian ethos and educational outcomes in our schools? If so, what is the nature of that link? Before we start, these questions face a number of challenges. Can ethos actually be defined, let alone measured? Moreover, what do we mean by a 'Christian' ethos? And, lastly, what do we mean by educational outcomes? Despite the complexities in definition and measurement, these questions are important for leaders of (Church) schools and academies: we should not be deterred from grappling with the issues and trying to understand better this fundamental area within our Church education system.

In 2010, I was fortunate to be sponsored by my governing body, for one day a week, to start carrying out research into Church Schools. I am currently studying for a PhD at Canterbury Christ Church University, with Professor Trevor Cooling as my supervisor. My 'integral enquiry' approach combines quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The first stage was a 'number crunching' exercise which served as an entrée into stage 2, which was an ethnographic case study.



Stage 1 involved the creation of a database of all the 11-18 C of Anglican VA schools in England. For each school, an internet search

obtained grades for the latest Ofsted and diocesan Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) reports. Ofsted and SIAS grades are

awarded on a four point scale where 1=Outstanding; 2=Good; 3=Satisfactory (latterly 'required

to improve') and 4=Inadequate. Educational outcomes were measured by attendance, behaviour and pupil achievement. To measure Christian ethos, the categories of Distinctive Christian Character, Worship and Christian Leadership were used. An average was taken for both sets of variables and a correlation drawn for each school. So, a school with outstanding scores for attendance, behaviour and pupil achievement was awarded 10 points. Outstanding scores for Christian distinctiveness, worship and Christian leadership also attracted 10 points. School 1 in the table below has a perfect correlation between outcomes and ethos. Note that School 2 in the table also has a perfect correlation. School 3 has the lowest correlation of the five schools in the table.

All 100+ schools were then plotted on a set of axes and, using regression analysis, a 'line of best fit' was drawn through the data. The correlation coefficient for this line was calculated to be 0.92. This

| Name of School | Ofsted grades |           |                   |                      | Points | SIAS grades               |         |                      |                    | Points |
|----------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------|----------------------|--------|---------------------------|---------|----------------------|--------------------|--------|
|                | Attendance    | Behaviour | Pupil Achievement | Average Ofsted grade |        | Christian distinctiveness | Worship | Christian leadership | Average SIAS grade |        |
| School 1       | 1             | 1         | 1                 | 1.00                 | 10.00  | 1                         | 1       | 1                    | 1.00               | 10.00  |
| School 2       | 2             | 2         | 2                 | 2.00                 | 8.00   | 2                         | 2       | 2                    | 2.00               | 8.00   |
| School 3       | 3             | 3         | 3                 | 3.00                 | 6.00   | 1                         | 1       | 1                    | 1.00               | 10.00  |
| School 4       | 1             | 2         | 1                 | 1.33                 | 9.33   | 3                         | 2       | 3                    | 2.67               | 6.67   |
| School 5       | 3             | 2         | 3                 | 2.67                 | 6.67   | 1                         | 2       | 3                    | 2.00               | 8.00   |



shows a very strong (but not perfect) correlation between ethos and educational outcomes of the schools.

I shall highlight two issues arising from this research. Firstly, does ethos influence outcomes or do the outcomes have an effect on the ethos? This particular problem concerns the 'direction of causality'. The second is a more fundamental issue: can we assume there is a causal link at all? Isn't the whole notion of Christian ethos a soft phenomenon as opposed to something that can be quantified and measured?

The strength of the integral enquiry approach is that it allows a fusion of different research paradigms. For this reason, stage 2 of my research was an ethnographic case study of



one of the schools that exhibited an unusually high correlation. My Governors released me for 12 days, and the school I visited was extremely accommodating and helpful in facilitating the research.

During my time, I observed lessons, assemblies and break times. I also chatted informally to a range of people including teaching staff, support staff, pupils, governors and parents. With the permission of the headteacher and the individuals, all interviews were taped. My PA then faithfully typed up everything that was said – word for word, including pauses.

The next stage was to analyse this 'data': a whole lever-arch file filled with field notes, interview transcripts and other reports about the school.

The analysis consisted of reading all responses and ‘coding’ the key words and key concepts. This was a laborious process but entirely necessary to enable the data to speak for itself. While no research like this can be ‘value free’, I was keen to avoid imposing my own pre-conceived notions.

The coding exercise revealed three qualities which were held in particularly high regard by the stakeholders. These were diligence (hard work), resilience (a sense of hope) and compliance (a reluctance to break the rules). The first two qualities are well-documented in the literature on this topic. See, for example, William Jaynes’s research<sup>1</sup> covering the attribute of diligence, and Ruth Deakin-Crick’s work<sup>2</sup> on resilience. What was more surprising, and contentious, was the notion that compliance may be a contributory factor for success in secondary schools. The extent to which this, or indeed any of the three attributes, are ‘distinctively Christian’ is another question altogether.

In summary, there is some evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, that Christian ethos may

have an impact on the educational outcomes of a secondary school. The precise reasons for this are more difficult to ascertain. There may be scope to dig deeper into the three areas of diligence, resilience and compliance. Of these, perhaps the most interesting is the notion of compliance. This will be the focus for the next stage of my research journey.

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# Christian Distinctiveness: our USP?

Adrian Richard, Principal of St Peter's Collegiate School in Wolverhampton writes about one step in the process of ensuring our schools are distinctively Christian.

## A very important initiative that all VA Schools should consider is raising awareness amongst colleagues of our Christian distinctiveness, and how this can be strengthened and enhanced.

Here at S. Peter's Collegiate we have embraced this by having a specific INSET focusing on the spirituality of the school. Spirituality across the curriculum is fundamental to a successful VA school. As Dr George Carey said,

*'Church Schools are distinctive in being explicit communities that unashamedly offer Christian vision to guide our young.'*

It is this Christian distinctiveness that sets VA schools apart from other state schools. All schools can provide an outstanding curriculum and pastoral care, but how many offer their students opportunities

to develop their spiritual selves? For us here at S. Peter's we believe it is this that makes us distinctive; a very special place to learn and work. It is this Christian distinctiveness that makes us who we are; a community; a family; one that is concerned for ourselves, others and the world around us.

As a VA school we have embraced the need to further strengthen and enhance our Christian distinctiveness by raising the profile of Religious Education; including the appointment of the Head of R.E. to the Leadership Team; ensuring Worship is a central focus of school daily life; resulting in the

appointment of a full time chaplain and having an INSET dedicated to the spirituality of the school.

The spirituality day focussed on what it means to be part of a Church School. This consisted of an overall presentation to colleagues and then breaking into a series of workshops. Within the presentation the views of students were ascertained. This is vital. The workshops themselves consisted of:

- Revisiting the School's Mission Statement
- Discussing the meaning of Christian Ethos
- Effective Form Worship
- Web development
- Visual Impact across the school
- Music, liturgy, dance & drama

It was essential that these workshops were led by

enthusiastic colleagues and that all colleagues (teaching and non-teaching) felt that they had their say. They needed to have ownership over the day and to be allowed to set the direction for the school's continuing spiritual development. This would ensure future commitment to its success and implementation. Each workshop was required to have an outcome. This would provide the Senior Management Team with the basis of a strategic plan that could be discussed. Some of the findings could be implemented in the short term, but others would require a longer period of time before they could be fully embedded across the school.

There was also time given to departments to re-focus on the SMSC (Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural) within their Programmes of Study.

# Committee Members



**Dr Irene Bishop**

St Saviour's and  
St Olave's School

Dr Irene Bishop has been a teacher in inner London comprehensive schools for 38 years, the last fifteen as the head of St Saviour's and St Olave's Church of England Girls, a comprehensive school in Southwark. Our most recent Ofsted report and SIAS 2009 declared the school to be "outstanding".



**Terry Boatwright**

Bishop Bell CE  
Mathematics & Computing  
Specialist School

Executive Headteacher of Bishop Bell CE Mathematics & Computing Specialist School in Eastbourne and two others, one being a junior school. Close involvement with a charity in Andhra Pradesh, India, has resulted in visits there helping to start, and maintain, a number of projects. Hobbies include squash, sea kayaking and weekly attempts, with my wife, to complete the Saturday crossword over afternoon tea!



**Alasdair Coates**  
Treasurer

St Christopher's C.E.  
High School

Having taught English for 15 years, Alasdair was appointed Head of St Christopher's C.E. High School 19 years ago. His Scottish roots led to the hills, rebuilding a 300 year old cottage, off-roading and walking, hence the vibrant DoE Award programme. He believes high achievement flows from happiness, high self-esteem and a sense of spiritual purpose.



**Fr Richard Peers**

Trinity C.E. School

Father Richard Peers is an Anglican priest and headmaster of Trinity C.E. School, Lewisham. Originally trained as a Primary teacher Richard served full time in two parishes has been a school chaplain twice; deputy head of a Primary school and later of a VA school in Richmond. Richard led section 48 inspections of Primary and Secondary schools before becoming head at Trinity.



**Julie Roberts**

Blue Coat Church of  
England School & Music  
College

Dr Julie Roberts is Head of Blue Coat Church of England School, Coventry, a mixed 11 – 18 comprehensive of over 1,400 students. Having achieved an 'Outstanding' Ofsted report in February 2010, the school converted to Academy status in July, 2011. Julie is willing to share her experiences of the conversion process as a Church of England school.



**David Shannon**  
Associate  
Members'  
Representative

David has been working since 2008 as an Independent Educational Consultant. His experience in education includes teaching in schools in Essex, Deputy Head of the Blackheath Bluecoat School in London and Head of the National Technology College, Hucknall, Nottinghamshire. David now works as a SIAS inspector, is a member of the Southwell Minster Cathedral Council and is a magistrate for Nottinghamshire. He still works part-time supporting PGCE students from Nottingham Trent University in a variety of teaching subjects.



## Andrew Day

Executive Director:  
Northumberland Church  
of England Academy

Leads the NCEA, an all-through, 2 - 19 academy, currently educating 2500 children on five campuses on the Northumberland coast. The academy is jointly sponsored by the Diocese of Newcastle and the Duke of Northumberland. Previously a teacher of English and History in both the independent and state sectors; Principal of an academy in London prior to taking up current post. His wife, Yvette, is the Headmistress of The Chorister School at Durham Cathedral.



## Elisabeth Gilpin Vice-Chairman

St Mary Redcliffe and  
Temple School at the  
Heart of Bristol

Elisabeth Gilpin is Headteacher at St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School at the Heart of Bristol. She was Headteacher of St Augustine of Canterbury Joint Roman Catholic and Church of England school in Oxford. She has taught Science in six other schools in Oxford, Bath and West Sussex. She worked for Oxfordshire Local Authority between Headships as leader of the 'Unlocking Potential' project jointly supported by a Farmington Fellowship at Harris Manchester College, Oxford. She loves salsa dancing.



## Ros McMullen

David Young Community  
Academy

Ros McMullen is Principal of David Young Community Academy in Leeds which is highly successful, adding significant value to the achievement of its students. DYCA opened in 2006 replacing 2 of the lowest performing schools in Leeds and it has the highest deprivation indices in Leeds. The Academy is sponsored by the Diocese of Ripon and Leeds. Ros is a catholic and is married with 3 young children. She can't remember what spare time is, but loves family holidays.



## Nick Taunt Editor of Angles

Bishop Luffa C.E. School

Nick's first 20 years of teaching, from 1980, were in large community comprehensives. In 2000 he became Head of Bishop Luffa C.E. School in Chichester and National Leader of Education in 2010. Three grown-up children now in primary teaching, health and post-grad biochemistry. He has no idea where the science came from: he enjoys music, walking and the allotment.



## Andrew Wilcock Chairman

Bishop Ramsey C.E.  
High School

Andrew's career in teaching has taken him round the M25, starting in Croydon, then Crawley, Leatherhead, Guildford and now Ruislip, North West London where He has been Headteacher of Bishop Ramsey School in Ruislip, since 2002.

He has a wife who writes about food and nutrition, two teenage children and two dogs.

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