



THE BLACKBURN
DIOCESEAN BOARD
OF EDUCATION

A Vision for Children and Young People in the Diocese of Blackburn

***Now you are the body of Christ
and each one of you is a part of it.***

1 Corinthians 12:27

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Introduction

The children and young people in our churches not only represent the future of the Church of England, they are a vital component in the dynamic, creative, witnessing and worshipping church of today. Children and young people are not simply vessels to fill or objects to mould, but are the teachers, disciples, inspirers and leaders of and for today. Our Vision is to see the faith of our children and young people grow, to experience the development of creative and profound new worshipping communities, and to encourage witness and outreach as they feel confident to share their faith with others. We want to support, equip and advise our parish leaders, both lay and ordained, to work with and through their churches and in partnership across their communities, to help to teach and grow children and young people of all backgrounds and in all contexts as confident disciples of Jesus.

The Board of Education defines children as those aged 0-13 years and young people being those aged 11-24, with a specific focus on under 18s.

This vision should be read alongside our vision for schools found in the appendix.

Our Children and Young People: Indigenous to a Digital Age

Growing up as a child or teenager in 21st Century Britain is challenging and whilst of course similarities remain with previous generations, so much is different and so much of children and youth culture is outside the experience of their parents. In many ways they have a complex, contradictory and paradoxical life. Today's children and young people are connected yet isolated, savvy but anxious, indulged yet stressed. This is Generation Z.

They are a generation that are connected like never before. Connectivity permeates their lives – from friendships to relationships, news, entertainment, shopping – and this has transformed how they interact. A recent survey has suggested that on average, young people in the UK spend three hours online every day. Other research has shown that 92% of children aged 5-15 regularly go online using any type of device; 19% of 3-4 year-olds have their own tablet.

Yet whilst they connect, the interactions don't always bring them satisfaction, and they are a lonely and at times an unhappy generation. A World Health Organisation survey carried out in 42 countries in 2013/4, found that young people in the UK are among the least satisfied with their lives, particularly 15-year-olds in England and Wales. The survey, which measured life satisfaction in relation to everything from relationships with family, to school, mental health and drug use, showed that the highest rate of anxiety and health worries occurred among teenage girls.

Perhaps because of this, the biggest reported concern of young people calling ChildLine was mental health issues, which accounted for 31% of calls. All across the country young people are seeking treatment for low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and self-harm, in greater proportions than any other generation on record. One of the most striking developments is the increase in depression and anxiety among young women in England, with more than a third reporting symptoms of distress and 1 in 5 admitting to self-harming. 37% of girls reported feeling unhappy, worthless or unable to concentrate.

50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24¹

¹ Kessler RC, Berglund P, Demler O, Jin R, Merikangas KR, Walters EE. (2005). Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Archives of General Psychiatry, 62 (6) pp. 593-602. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593.

The head of participation at the NSPCC is on record saying:

“What we’re seeing is a generation of children who are expressing much more clearly that they are just generally so unhappy with themselves and the situations around them. When it comes to low self-esteem, a lot of young people are putting that down to [concerns about] education, their future and the online world.”

However, there are positives. Teenagers today are wise to the challenges facing their generation, and taking action. Over the past few years the UK Youth Parliament, a youth organisation of elected members, has voted to campaign on raising awareness around mental health issues among young people; on greater health service provision and compulsory mental health education in schools; and on education, under the banner “Curriculum for Life”. They are calling for schools to put more on the syllabus about finance, sex and relationships, and politics. At the same time, the parliament has focused on tackling racism, religious discrimination and the dangers of hate speech. This reflects Generation Z’s wider political engagement which is going through a period of transformation. More are voting, and whilst many are still too young to vote, their focus has shifted away from party politics to single-topic issues such as feminism or climate change; much of the civic engagement and organising they do takes place on social media rather than through traditional political structures.

In addition, today’s teenagers might be our most self-denying yet. Smoking and alcohol use is at its lowest levels among young people in England since 1982, when records began. Drug use among under-16s was also down. The British Pregnancy Advisory Service has accredited these trends for the 55% drop in teenage pregnancies we have seen over the last decade, seeing the lowest levels recorded in the UK. However, the Gambling Commission’s report on Young people and gambling states that 14% of 11-16 year olds gambled in the last week compared to 13% who drank alcohol, 4% who smoked and 2% who have taken illegal drugs. Online gambling is steadily growing within this age range.

Young people are also reported to have a much more fluid sense of sexual identity and gender. A National Citizen Service (NCS) poll of 1,000 teenagers published in October 2017 found that only 63% of teens aged 16 and 17 define themselves as 100% straight (compared with 78% of adults). Gender identity is also less binary, with 78% of young men identifying as 100% male, and 80% of young women identifying as 100% female, according to the same NCS poll.

Where is the challenge for us?

The feelings of social isolation reported by many teenagers can be hard for older people to understand. The head of participation at the NSPCC states that:

“There’s a perception that this generation should be the happiest and the most content, because they’ve got so much connectivity across the world and so much information at their fingertips. But that connectivity is actually disconnecting people from real friendships and the opportunity to enjoy the world together. It’s creating absolutely unrealistic ideals that young people can’t get to.

People think they’ve got 1,000 friends but in actual fact, who really knows them? It’s probably nobody these days – not their parents, as they don’t eat together and are working longer hours. And not their siblings, possibly because they’re sitting in separate rooms on phones and they text each other. **Being known is a really important part of being alive.**”

And the solution offered is more real-life contact and interaction.

The Gospel Response

If we want to change the culture, we need to start from the Gospel. It is in salvation through Jesus Christ that young people can find true life in its fullness, and can find perfect relationship. Jesus himself stresses the importance of children and young people through his ministry. The gospels remind us of the importance that Jesus places on the young, as Matthew states, “Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14) and “He ... placed the child among them. And he said: ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven... And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me’” (Matthew 18:1-5). We are also reminded of how crucial our work with the young is, with clear warning to protect the young in Matthew 18:6-7 and to not lead them astray.

Jesus is the fulfilment of God’s plan in the Old Testament and his statements on the importance of the young build on centuries of teaching regarding the importance of passing on faith and learning about God to our children. The greatest Old Testament commandment to love the Lord with all your heart and soul and strength is followed

closely by the instruction to “impress them on your children”². However, Jesus uses children to teach the disciples about how they should accept the kingdom of heaven as well as to emphasise that they should be taught. Children and young people can be incredibly insightful when it comes to faith. They can make profound statements that open the mind to what God can do or what God has done in a situation. They can share words of praise that are deep rooted and full and can demonstrate faith without question. By listening to children as well as teaching and sharing with them, we can be more fulfilled as Christians and develop further in our own faith.

Not only should our children be learners and teachers but as God’s word to Joel signifies, children and young people can experience the gifts of the spirit and all the blessings that follow.

*I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions. Joel 2:28*

If our children and young people are to experience this in their lives it is our responsibility to create opportunities for the young to encounter the Holy Spirit and to be given the tools to understand and respond.

Jesus forms his disciples by commissioning them to go out and make disciples and then bringing them back to reflect on what they have learned. They are warned in Matthew 10 that there will be opposition and guided as to where they should go, but it is in this courageous opportunity to engage in apologetics that they grow in faith. We as church must give opportunities for our children and young people to talk about faith and to share it confidently with others. As Christian communities, our role is to nurture, guide and enable reflection on this work, forming them as confident disciples.

Both the beginning and the end of our work with children and young people exists within the sacrament of baptism. Baptism forms our first steps of faith, gives our first commission to be missionaries but couples this purpose with the nurture and support of the surrounding Christian community. Baptism is the Church of England’s expression that the young are disciples, missioners and leaders in the faith and empowers them to be key participants in the worshipping life of our churches.

² Deuteronomy 6v7

Baptism draws us to God and reminds us of the eternal promises of God, the promise of salvation and the dedication of our lives to Christ until our earthly journey ends.

The current position: a rationale for change

The current position with regards children and young people's participation in church and church activities is nothing short of desperate. Whilst we can point to some real areas of brightness, encouragement and optimism – and we rejoice that we can – at a strategic level the decline in church attendance amongst the young has been catastrophic, as measured over the past three decades. Our diocese merely represents and reflects the broader national picture.

And that is at the same time as recognising that childhood years are a vital indicator for faith. The Mapping Practising Christians research by ComRes, carried out for the Church of England in 2017, reveals the ages at which children and young people come to (and leave) faith³. When practising Christians were asked at what age they came to faith, the results showed:

40%	before the age of 5
16%	between 5 & 10
20%	between 11 & 18

Research shows that 76% of Christians come to faith before age 18.

Another question asked respondents who previously used to be a member of a religious group (not just Christian) 'At what age did you stop considering yourself to be a member of this religious group?' The results showed:

4%	between 5 & 10
34%	between 11 & 18
21%	between 19 & 24

Research also shows that nearly 60% of people who wander from their faith do this before age 24.

Ignoring this is not an option and whilst this Vision could simply be to try and reverse the decline in church attendance as measured for church statistics, we do

³ <http://www.comresglobal.com/polls/church-of-england-mapping-survey/>

ComRes interviewed 8,150 GB adults aged 18+ online between 17th and 31st March 2017. Data were weighted to be demographically representative of all GB adults.

not feel that is broad or comprehensive enough, or indeed matches the needs, desires and creativity of Generation Z. Instead, whilst we recognise the current situation, our Vision recognises that church attendance – especially on a Sunday - is a bi-product of an exploration of faith, a discipleship journey and a desire to be part of a praying and worshipping community. Therefore:

Our Vision is to see children and young people transforming the world through the love of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Mission is to help build worshipping, discipling and prayerful children and young people that love Jesus and want to follow Him and who live out their faith in communities, in friendships and in families.

Engagement with faith or a faith community used to be much more prevalent for children and young people than it is today. Many children and young people do not ever go to church (and neither do their parents) and many do not even know basic tenets of faith or ever hear the gospel. There is little cultural understanding anymore that church or faith is beneficial. That means naturally very, very few young people 'happen' on church or faith and therefore much more effort is required to reach out, engage, inspire and involve.

We believe that to be truly effective and transformational, our churches must re-engage with families, children and young people, drawing on links with church schools, to create an environment where children and young people are recognised as equal parts of the body of Christ in worship, service, discipleship and witness. In particular, churches need to be open to the differences in how boys and girls engage with church, seeking to create boy friendly environments that attempt to redress the prevalence of girls in churches. But for it to happen collectively we must do things differently. Despite regular publication of reports like, *Children in the Way* (1988), *All God's Children* (1991), *Youth A Part* (1996), *Going for Growth* (2010) and *Rooted in the Church* (2016), a number of questions continue to arise about the reality of the church's focus on and engagement in ministry with children, young people and families; the connection between education, mission, evangelism and discipleship at national, diocesan and parish/school level.

Our Core Values

These values underpin our work with schools and are based around reflection on the Church of England Vision for Education. This Vision is driven by and built around the core gospel values of **Grace, Love, Hope and Service**. It is rooted in the good news of Jesus Christ, and how it is in and through him that we are able to live life in all its fullness and bring the transformational power of the Gospel into our world.

Grace

We want our churches to be places where grace abounds, places where good things happen to those who do not always deserve it, places where the young are allowed to get it wrong but still be valued, places of forgiveness and reconciliation, places that do not believe in hopelessness and places that see the central importance of the young in the body of Christ on their own terms. Grace takes us to the heart of the issues of self-worth, of self-image and of belonging. We have a Vision and Mission where grace is central to the building of relationships, where grace is demonstrated with children and young people. Grace informs and guides the spirit of welcome in our churches, as they seek to meet children and young people on their terms, in their spaces, and with their questions.

Love

We want our children and young people's love of Jesus to inspire and encourage them to love and have a heart of compassion for the world.

We long for children and young people to know the love of God so tangibly and personally that, not only does it flow from them into the world so that others meet Jesus through their lives, but that they unashamedly seek to introduce others to the God whose unconditional love they cannot do without. We want all, but particularly more boys, to see God's love as powerful and transformative through Christ on the cross, where courage is needed to put love into action, not a paler version of secular love.

Hope

Our churches need to speak the message of hope to our children and young people in a way that enables them to have assurance in a volatile and ever-

changing world; to have certainty in a world where pressures on the young lead to self-doubt, low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. All need to live with the confidence that Christ instils, where nothing is impossible for those who have faith in Jesus, (Mark 9:23). Our children and young people are agents of transformational change who have a desire and an ability to bring justice, mercy, peace, thankfulness and righteousness into this world. Our value of hope speaks directly to the missional and campaigning zeal of Generation Z and looks to harness this to build God's Kingdom on earth.

Service

Each church should seek to foster and develop an integral sense of service for and towards our children and young people, not only building them into the leaders and teachers of today, but also encouraging and shaping their life-long journey as a disciple. As one of the fundamental beliefs of the Christian faith is to know, love and serve God, one way of doing that is by loving and serving others. That is why we were created. That is what we are supposed to do. That is how we find lasting peace and purpose. And because of that we would look for our churches to develop a sense of service in our children and young people, encouraging them to be creative, to be partners in hope, to be risk-takers and to serve God in bringing His Kingdom to earth.

Vision 2026: Healthy Churches Transforming Communities.

The Diocesan vision - Vision 2026 - is to make churches healthy, because healthy churches grow. First, we need to continue to do many of the things we currently do, but in a healthier way; being more inclusive, more accessible, more compassionate, more willing to listen and learn, more Christ-focused and Christ-centered. Second, we may be required do new things. Starting new things may be painful, hard and perhaps demoralising, but this vision requires churches – with the help, support and guidance of the Board of Education – to take risks, to do new things and to persevere in their ministry.

Growing leaders

We believe children and young people should be leaders in today's church. However, we recognise that this is a topic which generates debate and dispute as they are also learners of the faith. In framing our contribution, we take the same

approach to leadership as set out in the 'Setting God's People Free' document that recognises that

'leadership' is a complex topic, and that the Church struggles with finding a shared understanding of the origins, legitimacy and proper conduct of leadership. **Our contention is that the motivation for Christian leadership must arise from...a compelling and positive vision of the redeeming work of Christ for all people. It is when people become aware of the great things that Christ has done for them and wake up to the gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed on them that a joyful and willing leadership emerges, for it is out of communities of disciples that cadres of leaders will appear.** For these reasons, the Task Group understands Christian leadership to be a sub-set of the broader theme of discipleship.⁴

We... have found it helpful to think in terms of 'functional' (or positional) leadership and 'influencing' leadership. Functional leadership is bestowed in the context of leading organisations, teams and tasks. Influencing leadership derives not from formal structures but from earned recognition in the eyes of others. This second mode of leadership is by far the most prevalent and widespread.

We believe that some children and young people have authentic, influencing, voices as they become aware and begin to articulate 'the great things that Christ has done for them and wake up to the gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed'. ***We therefore want to see children from an early age given opportunities and encouragement to communicate the gospel with boldness, to be 'leaders' in the church – in music, prayer and teaching, and to be active partners in creatively driving forward the mission of each worshipping community.*** We will therefore work with churches to empower the young and allow them to be leaders across a range of church structures and parish roles. We will encourage them to actively listen to the voice of children and young people, valuing their opinions and responding well. And we will encourage churches prepared to change customs and practices to ensure that young people can be leaders and have opportunities to lead.

⁴ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/GS%20Misc%202056%20Setting%20God%27s%20People%20Free.pdf> pp7-8

Making disciples.

Vision 2026 identifies the need to help people become disciples, creating a deeper faith, warming up the spiritual temperature, knowing the scriptures better, praying with greater urgency for the Kingdom of God to come, and offering a more generous stewardship to further the cause of Christ.

Given the statistics in the Mapping Practicing Christians research that 76% of Christians state that they came to faith before the age of 18, with a massive 40% of these before the age of 5, the discipleship of children and young people must be of paramount importance if we are to see a growing and flourishing church.⁵ The participative experience that children and young people have of worship based on their time in a Church of England school, is not matched by their experience of church on a Sunday. Additionally, many parents lack the confidence or desire to prioritise passing on of faith in the home. Care for the Family research shows that although 90% of Anglican families thought it was important to teach their children about faith, only 29% thought it was their responsibility.

We want to see children and young people commit to follow Christ as Lord and Saviour and understand what it means to live as a follower.

We long to see churches and families equipped to teach and disciple their children and young people and for them to feel valuable, loved and alive in their relationship with God, with a hunger to learn more.

But no matter how much time we invest in children's and youth ministry, the amount of time that we spend with children and young people is limited (maybe 50-100 hours per year). Parents on the other hand, spend on average 2000 – 3000 hour per year with their children, so if we really want to see our children and young people connected to God and disciplined well, we need to recognise that parents are on the front line and support them so that they feel equipped to help their children navigate their journey of faith.

⁵ <https://www.careforthefamily.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Research-supplement-comparisons.pdf>
983 parents, 175 church leaders + 479 children's workers

Confident Christianity is the only way that the church will grow into the future and this work should be planned to give at least equal priority to the work with the young and arguably disproportionately more priority.

Biblical discipleship was not confined to a time or a building, it was lived out through interactions with other people. It is sometimes easy to forget, as we focus on making disciples of the children we come into contact with, that children can also play a part in discipling others.

We aspire to see churches instilling the same confidence in children as they do in adults, so they too can honour God by sharing and living out their faith, enabling others to grow in relationship with Jesus.

We long to see churches that deliver a 1:1 correlation between the work with adults and the work with those under 18 so that for every adult learning and discipleship activity that takes place in a worshipping community there is a corresponding activity for the young.

Being witnesses

Shockingly, only half of the churches surveyed in the Losing Heart research regularly discussed the basic beliefs of the Christian faith with their young people.⁶

The church has a glorious message to pass on but has been, at times, reluctant and slow to share the story of Jesus. It has retreated into ghettos and so the church needs to increase its confidence in sharing the gospel of salvation. A daily witness for Christ must be demonstrated, not only in word, but also in deed, in caring for our neighbours and showing compassion. This is what gives a level of credibility to witness, builds bridges and creates opportunities to show the love of Jesus in practical ways. This current generation of young people has access to many of the answers that life poses at their fingertips, and as a result they are seeking authentic life-giving experience, such as an encounter with the living and life changing love of Jesus. Children are also repeatedly told that science has disproved the Bible, and that religion is a myth. Children and young people need to be equipped to give a reason for the hope that is within them.

⁶ <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/research/publications/losing-heart>
Losing Heart Research – 2054 churches across England, Scotland and Wales

We want to see churches that equip children and young people to engage in apologetics with others, able to articulate the reason for the faith they hold and infectiously influence others to explore that same faith.

We long to see churches that enable the young to engage passionately in community life, offer a Christian witness, provide a Christian service to our communities, and demonstrate the love of Jesus through how they behave and operate; where each worshipping community seeks to provide an equality in witness so that for every activity that engages in witness with adults or for adults there is an activity engaging with or for those under 18.

We want to see churches build on the Toddler Group Project (2016), using toddler groups to introduce children and parents to the stories of the Christian faith, the practices of prayer and worship, and introducing families to the church community.⁷

⁷ http://www.going4growth.com/index.php/growth_in_faith_and_worship/early_years

Toddler Group Research – 5 conversations with diocesan advisers, 115 online surveys, 23 visits to groups + 16 surveys with diocesan advisers

Summary

Our Vision is to see children and young people transforming the world through the love of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our Mission is to help build worshipping, discipling and prayerful children and young people who love Jesus and want to follow Him, and who live out their faith in communities, in friendships and in families.

Objectives

In the light of our vision and mission as a Board of Education and as a Diocese we wish to see:

Children from an early age given opportunities and encouragement to communicate the gospel with boldness, to be 'leaders' in the church – in music, prayer and teaching, and to be active partners in creatively driving forward the mission of each worshipping community.

Impact

Children and young people who are learners and disciples of Jesus, captivated by his personal life giving and transformational love. Through this we see young Christians turning their schools, colleges, local communities, and churches upside down as God's love flows from them into a world that longs for something unique and really satisfying.

We want to see children and young people commit to follow Christ as Lord and Saviour and understand what it means to live as a follower.

We long to see churches and families equipped to teach and disciple their children and young people so that they feel valuable, loved and alive in their relationship with God, with a hunger to learn more.

Impact

Outward focussed churches that meet children, young people and families where they are culturally, spiritually and geographically.

A shared responsibility for mission and growth across the whole worshipping community, prioritising how children and young people come to faith and are nurtured in their relationship with Jesus Christ so that their faith is firmly rooted in the Christian community.

Parishes working collaboratively and ecumenically to better meet the needs of children, young people and families.

Intergenerational churches who also minister to young people outside of a Sunday service.

We aspire to see churches instilling the same confidence in children as they do in adults, so they too can honour God by sharing and living out their faith, enabling others to grow in relationship with Jesus.

We long to see churches that deliver a 1:1 correlation between the work with adults and the work with those under 18 so that for every adult learning and discipleship activity that takes place in a worshipping community there is a corresponding activity for the young.

We long to see churches that enable the young to engage passionately in community life, offer a Christian witness, provide a Christian service to our communities, and demonstrate the love of Jesus through how they behave and operate; where each worshipping community seeks to provide an equality in witness so that for every activity that engages in witness with adults or for adults there is an activity engaging with or for those under 18.

We want to see churches that equip children and young people to engage in apologetics with others, able to articulate the reason for the faith they hold and infectiously influence others to explore that same faith.

Impact

Equal priority given to work with children and young people so that the same focus, energy and financing is given to reaching, discipling and developing them as disciples, learners and leaders, as there is for older generations.

Churches where there is no discrimination of the young, even if inadvertent, in making disciples, growing leaders and being witnesses.

Churches where the young are given the opportunities to share their faith and bring others to a faith in Christ.

We want to see churches build on the Toddler Group Project (2016), using toddler groups to introduce children and parents to the stories of the Christian faith, the

practices of prayer and worship, and introducing families to the church community.⁸

Impact

Family ministry and worship as an integral part of church life.

Churches with a missional approach to toddler groups, seeing them as ways to form faith in the young and their parents.

Churches that recognise, value and emphasise the role of parents in passing on their faith at home by offering support, guidance and teaching on how to do this effectively, while encouraging the faith journeys of parents themselves.

Key Actions

We, as the Board of Education, want to see children and young people come to a personal faith in Jesus Christ, develop further in their faith and be confident sharers of that faith and to that end we are committed to:

- Championing children and young people so that they are regularly consulted and included in the strategic processes of both Diocese and Parish.
- Working with parishes to develop their engagement with young people, children and families through different services, development of children and young people's groups and through baptism and confirmation.
- Creating resources for churches to equip them in meeting the needs of all children and young people (including those with additional needs) to understand the story of salvation revealed in the Bible and fulfilled in Jesus Christ
- Supporting churches to understand 'boy friendly' services and activities that nurture boys in their faith development in order to equalise the numbers of girls and boys in worship.
- Creating a range of ways to digitally engage with children, young people and equip those who work with them.
- Equipping churches by offering engaging and relevant training.

⁸ http://www.going4growth.com/index.php/growth_in_faith_and_worship/early_years

Toddler Group Research – 5 conversations with diocesan advisers, 115 online surveys, 23 visits to groups + 16 surveys with diocesan advisers

- Enabling churches through providing the support they need to actively include children and young people in being disciples, participating in worship, in service and leadership.
- Helping churches make the most of opportunities to engage with families, children and young people within all contexts of the diocese from deprived to wealthy, urban to rural.
- Helping churches positively engage with schools and develop effective partnerships with schools.
- Equipping parents to share their faith with their children.

Underpinned by Prayer

We are committed to:

- Encouraging a 'pray first' culture at diocesan and parish level to uphold children and young people and the specific ministries working with them.
- Advocating children and young people writing prayers to be used in intercessions, services and events.
- Encourage dedicated time and energy to develop personal spirituality through listening to God.
- Encouraging prayer sponsors in parishes where congregation members pray directly for individual children, young people and families.
- Equipping young people with the tools and the confidence to pray.

Appendix:

Vision for Schools

Executive Summary

This document sets out the Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education Vision for Schools. It outlines how this vision is rooted in the Bible and how it builds around Philippians 1:27:

live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that...I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit.

It explores how these words not only help guide our teaching, our school life and how we prepare our children and young people to be responsible, engaging and generous citizens, they also resonate closely with us as leaders, as governors and as Christians.

This leads to a discussion about the attributes and confidences of our alumni as they leave our schools and make their way in the world. In addition to receiving an outstanding education with academic rigour and high outcomes, we are committed to developing an alumni that:

- know how to pray
- know the Christian belief that they are loved by God
- understand the story of salvation revealed in the Bible and fulfilled in Jesus Christ
- have explored, and know how to explore the Christian faith
- are guided by a spiritual compass based on gospel values and the person of Jesus
- love their neighbour and seek to serve them, to bring justice and to embrace both sacrifice and service
- understand the life-long transformational effect of God for individuals, communities and nations

This vision then examines the principles and values which develop alumni as described. From this we believe that the communities formed within and around our schools, and the education provided in our schools should be built around the key values and qualities of love, hope, grace and service.

This vision recognises that schools are part of wider communities and, in particular, are part of the Diocesan family. We recognise the importance of *Vision 2026* and outline how it informs this *Vision for Schools*. We believe that schools - in partnership with their local churches - can and should play an active role in making disciples, being witnesses and growing leaders and encourages churches and deaneries to look at how their implementation of *Vision 2026* may be strengthened through working with our schools.

Finally, we set out how the future may look. We want our church schools to be known as places which raise expectations, nurturing and developing ambitions. To be places where individuals and communities aspire to achieve those things which are fulfilling, life-affirming, constructive and fruitful. We also want them to be an integral part of the fabric of the spiritual and communal life of the communities in which they serve. This document sets out that vision and gives a few steps and signposts as to how that can happen.

School Vision on a Page

Our schools should:

- Be built around the key values and qualities of love, hope, grace and service
- Embody a vision shaped by the personal faith and commitment of their leaders
- Embody a vision rooted in the Bible
- Enable and encourage a praying and worshipping community where distinctly Christian celebrations are integral to the learning experiences of all within the school community
- Ensure Religious Education is at the heart of the curriculum and is a core subject
- Recognise the presence of God in the uniqueness of each individual and in each person's specific talents and gifts
- Develop a broad community open to the world in which we live, which seeks to change it for the better
- Celebrate success and treat failure with compassion
- Support their alumni in finding ways to continue their faith journey, and to provide a pathway or signpost for those alumni looking to re-engage with faith
- Seek to work in collaboration with churches in delivering *Vision 2026*

Our schools should offer all their pupils the opportunity to:

- Reflect on the importance of a system of personal belief
- Recognise the place a Christian faith has in the lives of people
- Develop a sense of wonder, awe, curiosity and mystery
- Be creative, questioning and imaginative within a broad Christian framework that recognises the importance of experience, personal values and respect for the beliefs of others
- Recognise, respect and celebrate cultural diversity
- Equip their alumni with the attributes and confidences listed above

In order to fulfil this vision, we will need:

- Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers to be practising Christians
- Outward looking schools sharing a gospel for life and connected to:
 - o churches

- o charities
- o businesses
- o multi-agencies
- o other schools, both primary and secondary
- To develop and nurture new Christian leadership at every level of our schools
- Healthy and growing churches that understand how to develop and support schools and are engaged and interested in the spiritual life of all the school community
- Churches that know how to best use the skills and opportunities of the schools to form an active and serving Christian community.