

Diocesan Board of Education

# Strategic Plan 2024-2030





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# Introduction from the Rt Revd Graham Usher Bishop of Norwich



Our commitment to education, children and young people is long standing and interwoven into the Diocesan Vision ([www.DofN.org/vision](http://www.DofN.org/vision)), Transformed by Christ; **Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic**. This mirrors the aspiration of the national Church of England to implicitly put young people at the heart of all it does. We have a way to go but the work of our Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and our schools is central to this.

The DBE's contextual vision and approach draws on the Church of England's national **Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good** as we seek to build together a schools' system where all truly flourish and have life to the full. We see this as part of the mission of the church and an outworking of God's love for the world as demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the 'cornerstone' holding all things together.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. Ephesians 2:19-21 NIV

Since ancient times, builders have used cornerstones in their construction projects. A cornerstone was the principal stone, usually placed at the corner of a building, to guide the workers in their course. The cornerstone was usually one of the largest, the most solid, and the most carefully constructed of any in the building. The Bible describes Jesus as the cornerstone that His church would be built upon. He is foundational. Once the cornerstone was set, it became the basis for determining every measurement in the remaining construction; everything was aligned to it. As the cornerstone of the building of the church, Jesus is our standard of measure and alignment.

The DBE has considered the four pillars of the national Vision for Education and used the concept of 'building together' to develop their outworking in our context going beyond 'educating' alone. Hence:

- **Building together for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills**

By wisdom a house is built; and by understanding it is established: By knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. Proverbs 24:3-4 ESV

- **Building together for Hope and Aspiration**

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV

- **Building together for Dignity and Respect**

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" Matthew 22:36-39 NIV

- **Building together for Community and Living Well Together**

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. Romans 12:4-6a NIV

As we seek to follow the teachings of Jesus, serve Him and love one another the high ambition for our pupils, schools, families and communities will be manifest and enable us all to live life in all its fullness.

**+Graham Norvic:**

January 2024

## Executive Summary

The Diocese of Norwich is committed to children, young people and their education being at the heart of its life and activity as it lives out its vision to be Transformed by Christ; **Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic**. The Diocesan Board of Education draws on the 2016 Church of England's *Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good* and uses its four pillars of education to 'build together' an education system where all flourish and the teachings of Jesus Christ are the 'cornerstone' holding everything together. The DBE embraces the national SIAMS inspection framework as a key component in validating the Christian distinctiveness of our church schools as they serve their communities welcoming those of all faiths and none.



This new six-year strategic plan builds on what has been achieved in the period 2018-2023. During that five-year period which included the COVID-19 pandemic, Diocese of Norwich schools have continued their improvement journey. The percentage of Ofsted good or better schools has increased with the gap to national reducing from nine to three percentage points. The one remaining performance measure that remains stubbornly below the national average is Key Stage 2 combined attainment in reading, writing and maths. This is a Norfolk-wide challenge.

Our strategy to encourage schools to join our two school trusts led to a second trust, St Benet's being established in 2018 and a further 31 schools have now joined either DNEAT or St Benet's.

This Strategic Plan for 2024-2030 operates within a national education policy which encourages and promotes but does not mandate schools joining 'strong' school trusts. Our contention is that our two Diocesan trusts can demonstrate their strength against the '*Trust Quality Descriptors*' published by the DfE in 2023. This places the DBE and its trusts in a good position whatever the outcome of a general election.

The National Church of England Education Office continues to play a valuable role working with the Department for Education and Dioceses to help shape the education landscape. In 2023 this led to new Articles of Association for church school trusts being published alongside a refreshed Memorandum of Understanding. These are vital documents in securing the Christian foundation of our church school estate. They speak of the pre-eminence of the 'Diocesan Strategy' and the Secretary of State's acknowledgement that it is for the DBE to exercise this strategic responsibility and publish such a strategy which includes its approach to academisation. **This DBE Strategic Plan 2024-2030 is our Diocesan Strategy** and is supported by Appendix 2 which sets out additional technical detail.

A new document was also published in July 2023, 'Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System: Deeply Christian, serving the common good' which builds on the 2016 vision and cites 28 recommendations for school leaders, school trust leaders, Diocesan leaders, and government (see Appendix 1). The DBE's Strategic Plan explicitly references these recommendations throughout as the DBE seeks to play its part in realising the ambition set out to ensure the flourishing of all, children and adults in a system that also delivers educational excellence.

It is important to note the regional and local context in which we operate. Both Norfolk and Suffolk are designated by the DfE as Education Investment Areas (EIAs) whereby they seek to support improvements in schools predominantly through developing high quality school trusts. We believe DNEAT and St Benet's are supporting this aspiration and continue to work closely with the Regional Director and his team.

Maintaining our good working relationship with the Local Authority is important as they seek to play their part in supporting schools and their communities to flourish. The key element of Norfolk County Council's work that is essential to the success of all schools is their Local First Inclusion plan to better support those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

At a Diocesan level our school estate of 108 schools comprises a high percentage of small schools by DfE standards (84%). Interestingly, 40% of the 16,000 pupils are in the 17 larger schools which make up the other 16%. At the end of 2023 there were 59 church and 2 former community schools in our two school trusts and a further nine where governors had voted to join.

A key issue that will impact the Diocesan school family over the period of this strategic plan is the sustainability of small schools. Section 9 considers this in detail and provides suggested metrics that can help inform our strategic and operational approach to evaluating the success and sustainability of small schools at a time of demographic decline in many areas of the Diocese.

With more schools joining our school trusts and the DBE's encouragement for this to continue the DBE considered its own role in a fully academised system. The DBE Measure 2021 sets the legal framework for this, and how the Diocese of Norwich Board of Education will operate in future is articulated in Section 10. Ten specific areas of responsibility are detailed.

The DBE has embraced the school trust model and the rationale for this set out in Section 11 'Why School Trusts?' drawing on views from others in the sector. Two case studies demonstrating the success of DNEAT and St Benet's are included in Section 12.

With its focus on growing the school trust system the DfE asked all Dioceses to suggest a timeline whereby all schools might be in a trust. A high-level potential plan is included in Section 13. This section also explains why the DBE is sticking with two trusts (predominantly because total pupil numbers are low compared to the number of schools) but offers an option of establishing a third trust if non-church schools or schools from other Dioceses enabled growth to around 7,500 pupils per trust

**The plan then considers several areas that are important for success and reflects on the role the DBE can play.**



## These include:

- **The importance of good governance** and the role the DBE will play in attracting, recruiting, training and retaining governors / trustees.
- **The importance of staff and their wellbeing** and how the DBE commits to maintaining its Diocesan School Support Officer (DSSO) role and further developing school chaplaincy.
- **Supporting the vulnerable and marginalised** and the role the DBE will play in ensuring its schools are inclusive and welcoming to all, recognising the unique worth of every individual.
- **Provision for children not yet of school age** and how the DBE will seek to lobby and work with partners in this area of activity.
- **Diversity, inclusion and promoting racial justice** with the DBE maintaining its focus on racial justice as an explicit priority supporting the work of its Racial Justice network.
- **Supporting the journey to Net Zero Carbon by 2030** through the DBE's own Environmental Sustainability Strategy recognising that 50% of the Church of England's carbon emissions emanate from the school estate.
- **Contributing to the mission of the church through strong links with parishes and communities** and the role the DBE will play in engaging with the national Growing Faith Foundation and leading the delivery of a Diocesan-wide project (Project 7) to further develop mission and ministry opportunities in church and non-church schools.

Any good strategic plan should set out its aspirations for success and Section 21 lists eleven suggested success measures which the DBE will review annually.

To conclude the question is asked 'What should schools and trusts do in response to this strategy?' In essence the answer is to actively engage in dialogue as governing boards and with the DBE so that all might collaborate to ensure no church school or federation operates in isolation.

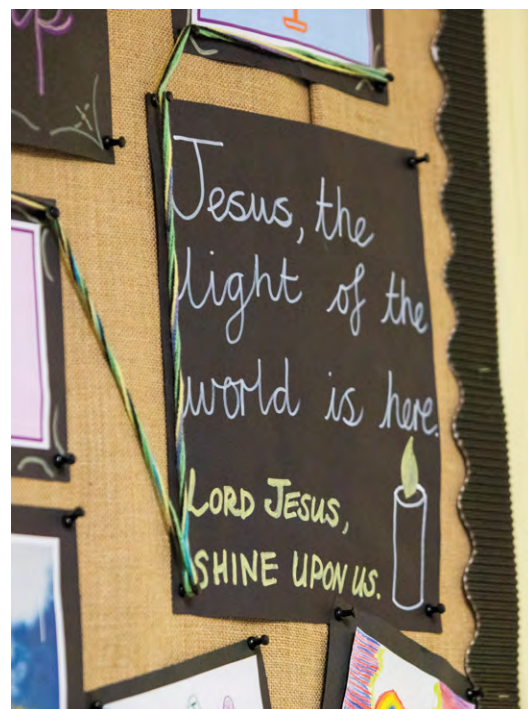
## Our ambition and Christian vision for schools in the Diocese of Norwich

In the Bible Jesus says that 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10). As set out in the Church of England's Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good, 2016 ([www.DofN.org/CofE-Vision-for-Education](http://www.DofN.org/CofE-Vision-for-Education)) this means educating the whole person, what the 1988 Education Act sees as physical and intellectual development united with spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

As set out in the introduction our expansive vision of what education is for means that our schools enable ALL pupils to flourish as unique individuals made in the image of God alongside being places of measurable academic excellence. Children are at the heart of all we do. There is focus on character development, developing ethical thinking, enacting social justice (courageous advocacy) and enabling spiritual formation, all lived out in community relationships that 'live well together'. This passion and ambition draws on Ephesians 3:20 which says God is able to do 'immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine', a central text from our 2018-2023 Education Strategy.

The 2023 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework sets a high bar for each school to live up to its foundation as a church school through its theologically rooted Christian vision. It asks, '*How then shall we live and learn together*' and enable pupils and adults to flourish? This framework is a key component in enabling church schools to be distinctive and make a difference for all in their community. We expect invitational Collective Worship to be a distinctive and valued feature of all Church of England schools, schools which actively welcome those of all faiths and none.

A key element of achieving our ambition is being deliberate in listening to the voice of children and young people.



## Progress in relation to the Diocese of Norwich's 2018-2023 Education Strategy



The 2018 strategy has served us well as a framework to set a direction of travel during some turbulent and unpredictable times. Its key message of aiming for academic excellence driven by an underpinning Christian vision is clearly understood and embraced by schools. The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of Ofsted and SIAMS outcomes are close to or in line with our aspiration:

- Ofsted grades at or above national average percentage for 'good' or better – the gap between national and the Diocese of Norwich has closed from nine percentage points to three. November 2023: Diocese 86%, National 89% (2018: Diocese 82% and National 91%)
- SIAMS outcomes all 'good' or better – From Sept 2018 to July 2023 the Diocese of Norwich had 39 schools inspected. Of these 37 were good or better (95%) compared to the national figure of 96% good or better for the same period.

Attainment as a KPI for our primary schools has seen a more varied picture. Data for summer 2023 shows combined Reading, Writing and Maths at 53% (national 60%, Norfolk 52%). Phonics is in line with national at 78.5% (national 79%). Early Years Good Level of Development is 66.1% (national 67.3%) but the gap to national was closed by 2% compared to 2022.

Our two secondary schools have seen significant development in the last five years. Archbishop Sancroft High School now operates as an all through school with Harleston Primary and has been renamed Harleston Sancroft Academy. The current snapshot for Key Stage 4 data (2023) shows that students make good progress at the school based on Progress 8 measures (-0.01).

At Open Academy the overall progress made by students in 2022 was the 'best ever' (-0.28) at the end of Key Stage 4. Although not as strong (-0.55) in 2023, the school was judged 'good' by Ofsted in March of the same year. It is an effective and highly inclusive school operating in an area of high disadvantage in Norwich proudly serving its local community.

The other key component of the 2018 strategy was to strongly encourage schools to join larger groups, and particularly our two multi academy trusts, DNEAT and St Benet's. We have seen significant growth with DNEAT growing from 28 to 42 schools (including those with Academy Orders) and St Benet's being established and now numbering 17 schools (including those with Academy Orders). A separate section below reflects on the performance of our two school trusts and the rationale for their continued growth.

Sadly, we have not realised our ambition to open new primary schools. Unsuccessful applications were made into the Free School programme and in response to a Local Authority tendering process.

Five years on not only has the country endured a pandemic but the political changes we have seen have impacted National Education Policy meaning some of the detailed elements of the 2018 strategy have been superseded by other government initiatives. However, as we reflect on this five-year period the Diocesan Board of Education, its schools and school trusts can be pleased with the progress made and the strong relationships maintained and further developed with the Department for Education's Regional Director, the Local Authority and their officers. This positive partnership approach is vital for ongoing success.

# National education situation

In preparing to write this section the Department for Education website was explored. It says:

**The Department for Education is responsible for children’s services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England.**

This is a wide and important brief, but it was harder to find an overall strategy setting out how this responsibility was being enacted. There was an Education White Paper in March 2022 but, in the main, related legislation did not follow. Some components of the White Paper have been delivered or are in process. However, the headline element around all schools being forced to become academies was dropped, although still strongly promoted. In July 2023 two documents were published to support the aspirations of this element of the White Paper: Commissioning High Quality Trusts ([www.DofN.org/Commissioning-High-Quality-Trusts](http://www.DofN.org/Commissioning-High-Quality-Trusts)) and Trust Quality Descriptors ([www.DofN.org/Trust-Quality-Descriptors](http://www.DofN.org/Trust-Quality-Descriptors)).

In March 2022 the government also published a SEND Green Paper – SEND Review, right support, right place, right time ([www.DofN.org/SEND-Review](http://www.DofN.org/SEND-Review)). In March 2023 a SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan ([www.DofN.org/SEND-AP](http://www.DofN.org/SEND-AP)) was published. It sets out the DfE’s vision in Annex B and the benefits of this approach in Annex C. However, there is still a long way to go before this is enacted and pupils, families and schools see significant change.

The next general election must take place by the end of 2024 as the current five-year term will end. The Labour party and other parties are beginning to set out their education policy position. Education is cited as important, and ambition is clear in public statements, but little detail is available yet. At this stage there appears no appetite to make structural changes (i.e. abandon the school trust / MAT model) with the focus being more on high quality outcomes for pupils.

Many educational organisations are speaking helpfully into the debate to shape and develop a coherent government education strategy which is supported by adequate funding. These include the trade unions, the Confederation of Schools Trusts (CST), local authorities and the Church of England. The current situation gives an opportunity for those working in the education sector to be bold and help shape what is best for their local context.

# National Church of England education landscape

## The Church of England is a significant partner and leader in the schools system.

The Church of England is a significant partner and leader in the schools system. There are 4630 CofE schools in England. Of these 228 are secondary schools and its primary schools account for 25% of England's primary schools. In rural areas this is more like 60% of primary schools. Approximately one million pupils attend CofE schools. Currently 280 school trusts / MATs have been established using Church of England Articles of Association making the CofE the biggest provider of academies in the country.

The well researched and received 2016 Vision for Education, referenced in section 3 above, has provided the bedrock to promote, develop and secure the Christian distinctiveness of church schools and school trusts. It is the foundation for the SIAMS inspection framework which under Section 48 of the Education Act is a requirement for all church schools to experience at least every five years (post-COVID this has been extended to seven years).

In July 2023, building on the existing CofE Vision for Education, a new document was published to influence and shape the schools system and ensure the flourishing of all. Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System: Deeply Christian, serving the common good ([www.DofN.org/fss](http://www.DofN.org/fss)) recognises the need to re-affirm our education vision for the next season of the education sector's journey with its 'mixed economy' of school types and partnerships, a system that is inherently fragmented. It states that 'a flourishing education system places children instinctively at the heart of decision making and leadership thinking at all levels' and describes what flourishing looks like across the system for children, adults, schools, school trusts and Dioceses. It concludes with a total of 28 recommendations (see **Appendix 1**) structured to speak to school leaders, school trust leaders, Diocesan leaders and government leaders. The relevant recommendations are considered within this iteration of the DBE's Strategic Plan and referenced using the acronym HFSS plus the relevant recommendation number and colour coded blue e.g. HFSS 2.3.

During 2022 and 2023 the Church of England Education Office (CEEO) engaged with the DfE to review and refresh the legal documentation supporting school trusts. This has also involved consulting with the national group of Diocesan Directors of Education and DBE Chairs. **New Church of England Model Articles of Association** ([www.DofN.org/MAofA](http://www.DofN.org/MAofA)) and a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) ([www.DofN.org/MoU](http://www.DofN.org/MoU)) have been approved and were published in September 2023.

In its Key Principles the MoU sets out the DfE's commitment to church schools and the pre-eminence of the 'Diocesan Strategy' as follows:

- The Secretary of State recognises the responsibility of DBEs to all the Church Schools within their diocese and the children in those schools whether these are local authority maintained schools or academies;
- The Secretary of State also acknowledges and accepts that it is for DBEs to plan strategically for the exercise of this responsibility, adhering to the Diocesan Strategy of the diocese and working closely with the Regional Directors (RDs) including in relation to school improvement.



The 'Diocesan Strategy' is defined in the Articles of Association as 'the academisation strategy of the Diocesan Board(s) of Education; the Diocesan Board(s) of Education must publish the academisation strategy in a readily accessible form on its/their website(s). The Diocesan Strategy may be amended or updated from time to time at the discretion of the Diocesan Board of Education.'

**This DBE Strategic Plan 2024-2030 is our Diocesan Strategy** and sets out the DBEs aspirations and expectations. It is supported by **Appendix 2** which sets out the legal aspects schools and school trusts need to be aware of as they relate specifically to Church of England schools within the Diocese of Norwich. Appendix 2 is structured as follows:

1. The technical elements of the DBEs Strategic Plan 2024-30 as they relate to academy specific matters and,
2. Information for VA and VC schools to be aware of whereby consent or advice is required from the DBE.

The headlines are that the Diocese of Norwich will continue to operate with 'church majority' Articles of Association and that our policy expects that our church schools join one of our two Diocesan school trusts, DNEAT or St Benet's.

## Regional / local education situation

In March 2023 the DfE published regional trust development statements for each of its Education Investment Areas (EIAs), and Norfolk and Suffolk are both EIAs.

For each Local Authority they set out:

- the educational context for the area – the shape of the school landscape including the number of local-authority-maintained schools and academies, the number of MATs and single-academy trusts (SATs) present and the number of diocesan schools
- the regional directors' priorities for developing a high-quality trust led system

The East of England statement can be found at [www.DofN.org/DS](http://www.DofN.org/DS). Our strategy aligns with the Norfolk statement in particular (only three of our schools are in Suffolk and one is already in DNEAT). The key areas for improvement relevant to the Diocese relate to Key Stage 2 outcomes and attendance / exclusion. There is a recognition of the need for school trusts who are successful at running small rural and coastal schools as well as primary schools in deprived urban areas. Both our school trusts can demonstrate success in these areas. We encourage the DfE and its Regional Director to continue to support our trusts in these endeavours including through use of the funding mechanisms that exist to secure such outcomes, recognising the particular challenges of small schools.

The DBE and its school trust leaders meet regularly with the Regional Director to ensure good two-way communication informs strategic and operational developments. That is also true with the Local Authority (Norfolk) who have a vital role in supporting schools and the vulnerable pupils in their communities. Where the LA have identified church schools needing support or intervention the Diocese works alongside them to monitor progress and offer support.

Interestingly, Norfolk LA use the FLOURISH ([www.Dofn.org/flourish](http://www.Dofn.org/flourish)) acronym to set out their ambition to help young people flourish in their lives. As Norfolk LA delivers their statutory functions a strategic conversation has taken place with education system leaders under the heading 'Transforming the Norfolk Landscape' ([www.DofN.org/TNL](http://www.DofN.org/TNL)). It seeks to encourage collaboration for impact and action to help address some of the inherent weak spots in Norfolk's education system. The DBE and our school trusts are actively involved.

The LA is sharply focused on **Local First Inclusion** which is vital if schools are going to be able to support the increasing number of pupils with high needs and challenge. Local First Inclusion is a six-year (2023-29) Norfolk County Council Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) improvement programme focused on improving educational support for





children, young people and their families and providing earlier help. It builds on the county council's £120 million five-year SEND transformation programme which ran from 2018 to 2022.

The DBE and its schools benefit from partnership working with other local organisations such as Norwich Cathedral and its schools' team, the Horstead outdoor activity centre and Walsingham shrine and its education department. Such interaction supports pupils in the wider elements of their education adding significant value to their time at school.

## Context of the Diocese of Norwich

**Our school estate remains similar to 2018 although in that time two small primary schools have closed.**

There are 108 schools which includes one secondary (the Open Academy) and one all-through school (Harleston Sancroft Academy). Of these, 84% are classed as small (210 or fewer pupils, one form entry), 51% very small (105 or fewer pupils, half form entry) and 14% are below 50 pupils. The total number of pupils as of May 2023 was 15966.

Number on roll	No. schools	% schools	No. pupils	% pupils
1 – 50	15	14%	578	4%
51 - 105	40	37%	3157	20%
106 - 210	36	33%	5755	36%
210+	17	16%	6476	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>		<b>15966</b>	

Most of these small schools are in federations led by an Executive Headteacher but there are 5 very small and 21 small schools still operating as standalone schools.

The Local Authority has identified geographic areas where there is a demographic decline in pupil numbers coming forward for reception places. This is particularly prevalent in rural areas closer to the North Norfolk coast but does impact across the whole Diocese.

At the end of 2023 there were 59 church and 2 former community schools in our two school trusts and a further 9 where governors have voted to join.



## Sustainability of small schools

Village communities value their local school and, even where they are small, an excellent education outcome and experience is often the result for its pupils. Small schools are an essential part of our structure, and the DBE is supportive of enabling small schools to take their place as an educational asset at the centre of their community. However, it is recognised that at times very small schools can struggle and alternative solutions need to be found.

For schools not already in a federation, joining or forming a federation would most likely be the first step. However individual schools in federations can also struggle and therefore be vulnerable to underperforming and potential closure. That is true whether in a school trust or not. So what metrics and information might help inform our strategic and operational approach to evaluating the success and sustainability of small schools?

**Data** from the LA and our school trusts consistently shows that schools with under 60 pupils are more likely to have lower Key Stage 2 attainment data. It does not necessarily mean they are not judged 'good' by Ofsted.

**Pupil number** forecasts are falling in many areas causing an oversupply of school places. Understanding the impact of that and developing mitigating approaches will be important.

**Number of classes** is also a factor. Working in a federation, a school with 105 pupils can operate successfully with four classes (Reception, Year 1 & 2, Year 3 & 4, Year 5 & 6). With three classes this becomes much harder and usually works best if Key Stage 2 is split. Whilst there are examples of schools operating successfully with two classes the long-term sustainability of this needs very careful consideration and management given current funding pressures and predicted changes in Ofsted with a likely greater emphasis on attainment data.

Providing a progressive, sequential **curriculum** is a challenge in small schools. This is not just the case in a class containing three year groups. In schools where 'atypical' class arrangements are in place, for example where pupils in a year group may be in two different classes (classes arranged as year 3 & 4, 4 & 5, and 5 & 6) this is extremely challenging.

Recruiting **staff** in rural areas and small schools seems to be becoming increasingly difficult. Teaching mixed aged classes is highly skilled and not attractive to all. Having capacity to mentor students or Early Career Teachers is also difficult in a small school. Executive Headship is also a highly skilled role and often seen as a positive career next step. However, not all leaders are attracted to this career route.

**Budgets** can be hard to balance – we do not want to see Headteachers, for example, carrying a significant teaching load to make the finances work. Having a clear view of the cumulative three-year budget position is essential.

The condition of **school buildings** may need significant investment. Accessing capital funding is not straightforward and demonstrating value for money could be difficult.

Recruiting enough **governors** with the appropriate skills and experience is a national issue. In rural areas the population base is smaller potentially exacerbating this. In some areas smaller church congregations make it harder to recruitment the required number of Foundation Governors.

Further work needs to be done on how these metrics and considerations can be used to help assess the long-term sustainability of small schools. It is NOT simply a matter of the number of pupils on roll. Each case is unique and must be looked at in its context. The Diocese, school leaders and its school trusts are already experts at successfully running small schools and this must continue. [HFSS 4.2](#) *To work closely with school trusts and other dioceses, to co-construct a coherent vision and strategy for the sustainable flourishing of small schools (and [HFSS 5.3](#) – for government leaders).*

# Role of the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE)

National legislation covers the role of the DBE and its responsibilities as a statutory body. The DBE consists of members nominated by the Bishop, elected members of the Diocesan Synod, and people with experience of church schools in the diocese. It includes ordained clergy, lay people, Headteachers and education professionals from across the diocese.

The DBE Measure 2021 provides the legal framework within which DBEs operate and sets out the 'general functions' of the DBE as follows:

- a) promote or assist in the promotion of education in the diocese that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England;
- b) promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese;
- c) promote or assist in the promotion of church schools in the diocese;
- d) promote co-operation between itself and other persons concerned with education in the diocese

How will this best be carried out in the period covered by this strategy? As more schools become academies, how does this impact on the role of the DBE? During the academic year 2022-23 the DBE considered these questions and came to some conclusions:

- Promoting the Christian ethos of our schools and school trusts is the fundamental and most important element of the DBE's role (function a, above). As SIAMS is the formal way of securing this (although not the only way), providing advice and support to schools regarding SIAMS will remain a core element of the DBE's role. The importance of meaningful, invitational, daily Collective Worship will feature within this. [HFSS 2.4](#)
- High quality teaching of Religious Education (RE) is vital for all schools to prepare pupils well for life in a multi-cultural society (function b, above). The DBE will continue to provide training and support to church and non-church schools working in partnership with the LA and others as appropriate. [HFSS 2.4](#)
- As a system leader and partner in the education sector the DBE will proactively play its part to ensure pupils and adults flourish within its schools and school trusts (function c, above). This will be achieved through a collaborative approach (function d, above) working with school and trust leaders, the LA, the DfE and other education providers, particularly those in the locality. [HFSS 5.4](#)



- There are several other responsibilities covered in the DBE Measure. These include 'advice', 'consents', and 'directions'. These cover matters such as admissions arrangements, becoming an academy, building alterations, school closure, Christian ethos and concerns about the quality or content of collective worship. Further detail as to how elements of this operates are provided in Appendix 2.
- Supporting school and trust leaders will remain central to the work of the DBE. There is a commitment to maintain our annual headteachers' conference and the Diocesan School Support Officer Scheme (DSSOs) but no doubt other opportunities and priorities will emerge during the life of this strategy. [HFSS 2.3](#)
- Recruiting and appointing Foundation Governors, School Trust Members and Directors for DoNESC (the Diocese of Norwich Education Services Company) remains a key function. Providing relevant training and support to them will continue.
- The DBE has a pivotal role to play in contributing to the mission of the church by enabling strong links between the local Church of England church and schools. This is enabled through engagement with wider Diocesan structures (e.g. the Director of Education serving on Bishop's Staff and the DBE Chair being a member of the Bishop's Council of Trustees) and through active involvement in the Diocesan Vision – Transformed by Christ: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic. [HFSS 5.1](#)
- There are also specific areas requiring action that emerge where the DBE may choose, or be asked, to take a leadership role. A current example, which will continue, is leadership and coordination of the Racial Justice Network for our schools.
- The DBE will maintain oversight and control of the trust funds within its responsibility, namely the Consolidated Education Endowment (CEE) Fund and the Bishop's Fund for Education.
- The DBE will continue to plan strategically in the exercise of its responsibilities which includes being the sponsor of its two school trusts.

The outworking of all these considerations is this DBE Strategic Plan 2024-2030 (which includes what the DfE refer to as the 'published academisation strategy for the relevant diocese').

# Why School Trusts?

## The document 'Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System' states that:

Our hope for a flourishing schools system will be released by a vibrant ecology of school trusts, federations and other structural collaborations, deeply rooted in and defined by the vision, strategy and governance of their dioceses, in which each school can find its home. While school to school partnerships will be envisioned and implemented in different ways in each part of the country, the long-term flourishing of individual schools can be enhanced and sustained through the further growth, development and consolidation of outward facing, community-serving, standards-raising school trusts.

## It goes on to say that:

Flourishing school trusts will be known for high quality and inclusive education, transformational school improvement, committed leadership, effective governance and secure financial and operational capacity. Moreover, they will be driven by a relentless pursuit of 'life in all its fullness' for every child and adult, with deep concern for social justice and spiritual leadership at the heart of the Church of England's mission to the nation, through a deeply Christian vision for education that serves the common good.

The Confederation of School Trusts (CST) in its pamphlet 'Starting with Why; Why join a trust – and why a trust-based system?' ([www.DofN.org/tbs](http://www.DofN.org/tbs)) draws out the key benefits of being in a trust, encouraging schools to make this as a positive choice. Some of their language may be different to the CofE vision language but their conclusion is similar:

We believe that the best bet for a school system that keeps getting better is groups of schools working in deep and purposeful collaboration in a single governance structure... the trust hardwires things that we think will ultimately help us to be the best system at getting better:

- Deep and purposeful collaboration
- A strong and resilient structure
- Every child a powerful learner
- Professional growth and development
- Solidarity and interconnectedness
- Civic duty and public benefit

Our experience within DNEAT and St Benet's is that the vision and rationale set out briefly above can be realised for the benefit of pupils, staff, and communities. The DBE continues to strongly encourage its schools to join one of our school trusts. The next section gives some practical examples from DNEAT and St Benet's.



# School improvement within DNEAT and St Benet's

## St Benet's case study

Diss Junior Academy joined St Benet's MAT as one of the founder schools in 2018. Prior to that point, the school had been through a period of considerable challenge and was judged Inadequate by OFSTED in the previous year.

St Benet's introduced a Transition Board to provide strong governance and the Central Team supported the new Headteacher in building a senior leadership team, curriculum development and an effective approach to assessment. As a result, the school stabilised and became much valued by the whole community, this being particularly visible during the pandemic.

Our team's approach to school improvement is to work alongside Headteachers to provide support, challenge and expertise, and with Diss this was no different. A key area of this collaborative work was in curriculum design and delivery. The Trust brokered the school's involvement in the pilot of the ARK humanities curriculum and helped to implement and quality assure that curriculum work. A high-quality literature spine was developed which linked with foundation subjects. This encouraged a love of reading whilst also developing children's cultural capital. The school also worked with our Trust Improvement Leads for English, Maths and SEND to develop their practice.

The school also benefited from the Instructional Coaching approach the Trust began to develop in 2022. Our School Improvement Officer worked with staff in the school, coaching teachers on classroom practice and subject leaders on their approaches to drive improvement in their subject. Further CPD has been provided centrally to develop pedagogy using the 'Walk Thru' programme.

The development of strong leaders was supported through NPQ programmes, our Leaders Forum and our Senior Leaders Network. These provided structured development and vital networking opportunities from Headteacher through to Deputies and Assistant Heads. The school had previously not been judged 'Good' by OFSTED since the grading system began with judgements of Satisfactory, Requires Improvement and Inadequate. When the school had its inspection in September 2022 it was judged to be 'Good' in all areas with the report noting:

'Leaders and teachers have equipped themselves with a strong knowledge of what a good curriculum and effective teaching look like. This knowledge is rooted in valuable research about high-quality education. Leaders have used this understanding to choose subject curriculums that set out the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn in order to succeed. Leaders, supported by the Trust, have provided staff with training and resources to help them teach the curriculum. Teachers choose activities that help pupils to understand and remember knowledge taught in lessons. This combination of an ambitious curriculum, taught well, is reaping rewards.'

## DNEAT case study

Sarah Disney became Headteacher of the Dove Federation in September 2019. The leadership of the Federation had been unstable for two years with several different interim headteachers. One of the two schools, Parker's, had received an Ofsted grade 4 for safeguarding in July 2018.

Despite the grade 4 judgement it took two years for Parker's to receive a letter from the Regional Schools Commissioner saying that it could join DNEAT. Sarah's view was that the federation should be maintained and so asked that both schools come into the Trust together. However, in her own words Sarah was 'really reluctant to academise as experience of schools that I knew that had academised was poor. I was concerned that the individual nature of the schools would be affected.'

Sarah now looks back on the period of 'pre-joining' fondly. 'The best thing was the support from day one from the New Schools Lead from DNEAT, who started working with us June/ July time and into the new school term (The federation finally converted 1st November 2020). We were linked to individuals who could really support us. They got to know the schools and their context well. The Trust also brokered in additional support from Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) and the work was enjoyable and collaborative. This made joining feel less daunting. I could share my worries and I was not judged. This was positive in relation to my wellbeing. The Trust having a role to support new schools made a real difference.'

Sarah was also positive around the impact of services the Trust offered beyond school improvement. 'Having named support from HR to help you manage issues in your school was really helpful. The support in relation to safeguarding was valued too; they would give strong support, discuss issues with you and help you get the right answer.'

There were several areas across the Federation that Sarah wanted to address once she had started as Executive Headteacher. These included monitoring of staff to develop improvement capacity, changing the staffing structure and implementing a more coherent curriculum. Once within DNEAT such development work was supported by her Academies Group Executive Principal (AGEP) taking over from the New Schools Lead. Sarah says 'The AGEP is a key role within DNEAT and is the school improvement professional assigned to each Headteacher to give them ongoing support and challenge. Reflecting now nobody worries, it is seen as supportive as this is how we and the Trust work. This is a real change. All leaders, at all levels, are developed within this culture.'

Sarah reflects further on DNEAT ways of working that she has found helpful: 'The termly Academy Improvement Review offers safe challenge to look at what is happening in your school collectively with the Trust. You can be open and honest, to unlock further support and you won't be judged. Also, for a Headteacher one of the biggest advantages of being in a Trust is that it removes the loneliness of the role and gives you a support network – your region. Our region of headteachers is a great source of support and I value this peer group highly.'

In 2023 both of Sarah's schools were visited by Ofsted. 'When Ofsted calls the DNEAT team appears and you are supported, building on the preparation work the Trust is routinely doing with you. It feels like a team effort. Both of our schools are now graded as 'Good' by Ofsted, and we are very proud of that.'



# Diocese of Norwich Trust development and growth

As recorded above currently 59 church and 2 former community schools are within our two trusts.

This 2024-30 strategic plan continues to encourage all our remaining LA maintained schools to join DNEAT or St Benet's for the reasons set out above HFSS 4.3. The DfE have also asked all Dioceses to think about what it might look like for all schools to be in a schools trust and suggest a potential plan to that end. We have not detailed individual schools but have shared a high-level view as to what this might look like as follows:

Year	No. schools St Benet's	No. schools DNEAT
Current no. schools	17	42
2023-24	7	5
2024-25	8	3
2025-26	3	4
2026-27	3	4
2027-28	3	3
2028-29	3	3
Schools joined subtotal	27	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Total pupils</b>	<b>6120</b>	<b>9850</b>

Growth will always need to be managed carefully to ensure schools are well supported and standards are secure. Such planning will continue to be handled collaboratively between the Diocese, the DfE, the LA, the school trusts, and individual schools.



As set out in the Diocesan context section above we have a high number of small and very small schools. This means that although DNEAT and St Benet's will be considered large trusts from the perspective of the number of schools they contain, this is not true in relation to the number of pupils. With around 9,500 and 6,500 pupils respectively these are no more than medium sized at best: for example, a trust with five large secondary schools could easily have the same number of pupils as St Benet's. This has been a key consideration in the decision to stick with only two Diocesan trusts. It is necessary to have enough pupils in a trust to ensure the operational model of a trust delivers the collaborative benefits expected as income is derived on a per pupil basis and economies of scale are needed.

However, we have set out how we have become experts in successfully running small schools and the DfE have said there is a need for such trusts in Norfolk and Suffolk. The DBE would consider establishing a third trust if some non-church schools or schools from other Dioceses enabled growth to around 7,500 pupils per trust, the number mentioned in the DfE's 2022 White Paper.

## The importance of good governance

All organisations need effective governance. The DBE is extremely grateful to all those volunteers who serve their local school or our school trusts. The importance of upholding the school / trust's Christian ethos is built into Foundation Governor, Member and Trustee roles and will remain a key component in delivering the vision for a flourishing schools system.

Both our school trusts have commissioned external reviews of governance which have been very positive as well as helpful in clarifying areas for future development.

Recruiting sufficient governors and trustees is a national and local challenge. The DBE remains committed to *attracting, recruiting, training and retaining governance leaders at local and board level to ensure the long-term sustenance of a Deeply Christian vision for education* HFSS 4.4. Any reader of this document is asked to consider volunteering in this way or recommending those they know who would be suitable!



# The importance of staff and their well being

**No strategy would be complete without recognising the value of the skilled and dedicated staff who work in our schools and trusts day by day. Ensuring they are supported, nurtured and well-trained is essential.**

The pressure of high stakes accountability is a reality in schools and the DBE supports the recommendation (HFSS 2.5) which seeks to *reduce anxiety in the system by empowering school leaders through creating structures and processes which release genuine professional autonomy, trust, agency and support.*

Whilst the role of the DBE is not to get directly involved in most aspects of in-school staff professional development, we observe that the CPD programmes offered and the potential career development available within our school trusts are well structured and well established.

In 2022 the Diocese became an NPQ (National Professional Qualifications) delivery partner with the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership, demonstrating its commitment to play a role in supporting staff when the opportunity arises. Other demand led training has been provided, for example, supervision support for DSLs (Designated Safeguarding Leads) working with the LA, and training on supporting pupils with autism working with the Wherry School. Such opportunities will always be explored as they present themselves HFSS 2.1.

Our long-established Diocesan School Support Officer (DSSO) scheme exists primarily to support headteacher wellbeing and is often extended to include senior staff. Our DSSOs also offer guidance on matters related to the Christian ethos of our schools and frequently observe whole school collective worship, a time of the school day that is important and valuable to all staff and pupils.

Increasingly we are developing models of school chaplaincy that play their part in supporting staff (and pupil) wellbeing in primary schools, not just our two secondary phase schools. The work in our St Benet's school trust, in partnership with Integrate Youth for Christ, has been successful in obtaining funding as a Growing Faith Learning Hub so that it can share the good practice it is developing across the region.

## Supporting the vulnerable and marginalised

The ministry of Jesus in the Gospels and many passages in the Old Testament are peppered with examples and reminders of how God has a special concern for the vulnerable and marginalised.

He instructs us to 'love your neighbour as yourself' where 'neighbour' is understood as all those we meet. The Diocese of Norwich's vision, *Transformed by Christ: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic* speaks of a desire to have a 'presence in our lowest economic communities as we seek to address the growing inequalities in our society.' Schools share this passion and do amazing work in difficult circumstances supporting those in their communities. Our approach to education will always be inclusive and welcoming to all, recognising the unique worth of every individual. [HFSS 1.4](#)





Across the education sector we are seeing increasing numbers of children and young people struggling to access the support they need in a timely manner. The rise in mental health and behaviour issues, often linked with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, are a reality in society and mental health services are struggling to meet demand. HFSS 1.6. Similarly, the provision for those with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is not sufficient meaning schools are attempting to support children and families who historically would have received support from other professionals. This has seen a rise in the appointment of pastoral and family workers in schools who are doing a tremendous job in meeting local need, but this comes at a cost to school budgets and is harder to enact in more rural areas and small schools. Whilst this response is commendable and to be encouraged it is vital that the Local Authority's 'Local First Inclusion' work makes a significant impact in this area to ensure all children always get the best and most appropriate education and support. HFSS 1.5

The impact of rural poverty and isolation is often not recognised and certainly underestimated by many. The Church of England, through its parishes and schools, ministers in all contexts, rural, urban, and coastal and has a good understanding of the challenges in society. There is also an opportunity to develop mutually beneficial connections with the wider voluntary sector so that school communities can access support, programmes and projects that enable children and families to flourish.

As set out in 'Our hope for a flourishing schools system' there is much for government leaders to address here to support schools and Local Authorities so that sufficient resources, systems, and support are in place to offer early support to those with SEND, mental health concerns and any barrier to accessing education. HFSS 1.5 and 1.6. Without this schools will struggle to deliver the educational outcomes that all aspire to.

The DBE will continue to work with the LA and other system leaders as a member of the Norfolk Learning Collaborative and do all it can to support the aims and objectives of 'Transforming the Norfolk Landscape' 2023.



## Provision for children not yet of school age



The DBE is aware that research shows that the first 1,000 days of a child's life are a strong predictor of life outcomes. This underscores the importance of good family support and high-quality nursery / preschool provision. It is encouraging to see many churches running parent and toddler groups.

Whilst the DBE is not resourced to lead on funding such areas it is fully supportive of policies and plans that focus on supporting children and families before they reach school age and would be a willing partner in initiatives that would address the shortfall in nursery / preschool places. It recognises the vital role government has in effectively funding such provision and longs to see this sector thriving thereby addressing the recent decline in number of places. [HFSS 1.6](#)

# Diversity, inclusion and promoting racial justice

## Celebrating diversity should be at the heart of our communities, and schools play a vital role.

The Diocesan vision states that ‘We will seek to become a safe Church for all and one that embraces diversity and radical Christian inclusion’. This chimes with the aspiration in HFSS 1.4 which ‘seeks to celebrate equity, diversity, belonging, inclusion and justice at every opportunity’.

In a Diocese where 89% of its population identify as White British it is vital that we educate pupils about racial justice as they prepare for life in 21st century Britain and we make no apology for keeping our support for racial justice as an explicit priority in this strategy.

The DBE and its schools responded proactively following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 and formed its Racial Justice working group, made up of passionate school leaders seeking to make a difference in their communities. Initial support was received from BAMEed as we established the vision, aims and terms of reference for the group. The group has continued to meet termly under the oversight of the Diocesan Director of Education and in April 2022 a School’s Adviser for Racial Justice was seconded for one day per week. To ensure the efficacy of this work, additional high-quality professional development is being accessed through the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership, in collaboration with the Institute for Educational and Social Equity.

The Bishop of Norwich has recently established an annual £5,000 grant to support a UKME primary phase PGCE student studying at the University of East Anglia. The second beneficiary has just been awarded this grant.

Nationally, the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce produced a report in April 2021 setting out recommendations for implementation including for DBEs and Church of England schools. The ‘From Lament to Action’ report ([www.DofN.org/LTA](http://www.DofN.org/LTA)) has informed our work and been explicitly referenced in the DBEs action planning. In 2023 we were successful in bidding to the CofE’s Racial Justice Unit for funding to support the delivery of a ‘Game Changers for Diversity and Social Justice’ programme for our pupils delivered in partnership with Norwich City Football Club Community Sports Foundation.



# Supporting the journey to Net Zero Carbon by 2030

**All parts of the Church of England recognise the climate emergency and the necessity of a strong, visible Christian response to what is happening to our world.**

A Routemap to Net Zero Carbon by 2030 has been produced by the national CofE and the work of the DBE supports this ambition. In the Diocese of Norwich a Net Zero Carbon Working Group has been established to lead all matters related to the target of achieving Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2030 and the work of the DBE reports into this group.

Schools contribute around 50% of the CofE's emissions so the DBE has produced its own Environmental Sustainability Strategy to support and guide its schools and academies. It recognises that reducing carbon emissions is only 20% about building matters and 80% about behaviours.

**The Environmental Sustainability Strategy covers:**

1. School buildings and estates
2. Climate education for children and young people
3. Work related travel including school trips

**From a school buildings and estates perspective the 'Responsible Body' is as follows:**

- Voluntary Aided schools – the DBE
- Voluntary Controlled schools – the Local Authority
- Academies – the Academy Trust

There is regular dialogue and sharing of good practice between the three Responsible Bodies. The DBE's School Estate and Capital Funding (SECF) subcommittee leads this work on behalf of the DBE, reporting regularly on progress. The committee agreed to allocate at least 15% of the annual School Condition Allocation (SCA) budget for VA schools to environmental / carbon reduction projects. For the two academic years since this started the total allocated is £400,000.

The next steps and actions outlined in the DBE's Environmental Sustainability Strategy will continue to be incorporated into the annual work plan of the DBE through to 2030. Copies of the strategy are available on request.

## Contributing to the mission of the church through strong links with parishes and communities

Schools and churches sit at the heart of their communities and working together can bring many additional benefits to those they serve. One such example was our 'Filling the Gap' project during the COVID-19 pandemic which saw schools and churches providing food to hundreds of families in need across the Diocese. This work continues in many places led by the church.

The SIAMS framework welcomes church involvement with schools and vice versa, and there are many great examples across the Diocese of inspiring Collective Worship, passionate Courageous Advocacy, and great RE discussions. It is recognised that with clergy often covering more than one church their time to actively engage with every school is pressured. The involvement of lay people and the development of school chaplaincies have enabled strong school and church links to be maintained alongside clergy input. School chaplaincy is a great way of serving a school and simply 'being' a presence. As mentioned in the wellbeing section above, we are piloting a model for primary schools in our St Benet's trust and are committed to help develop chaplaincy further across the Diocese.

To better support clergy as they train, we have developed a curate's school placement scheme whereby each curate spends a week in a school to immerse themselves in school life to better understand how schools tick. Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive both in terms of the value of this learning opportunity but also the awe and wonder of the amazing work school staff do day in day out.

The DBE is keen to further explore the opportunities offered through the national Growing Faith Foundation ([www.DofN.org/GFF](http://www.DofN.org/GFF)) to help the local church to provide opportunities for children and young people to explore and grow in faith. 'Growing Faith' is the movement that exists to put children, young people and families instinctively at the heart of all the mission and ministry of the Church by changing the culture of the Church of England. It comes from the vision set by the House of Bishops and endorsed by General Synod in 2019. It involves churches, schools and households working together to help children, young people and families have life in all its fullness. The Growing Faith Foundation seeks to benefit children and young people, helping them create the world they want to live in, specifically through the lens of the Christian faith.



The Diocesan vision, Transformed by Christ: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic is being supported through the development of eight projects. As part of the DBE's contribution to living out the mission of the church and enabling strong school and church links the Director of Education is leading one of these projects (number 7) which has many synergies with the work of the Growing Faith Foundation:

*To strengthen our work with children, youth and families we will develop more fruitful connections between school and church.*

- *Develop the range of ministries called to serve in this mission field through the further development of Authorised School Chaplaincy, Sports Ministry and Youth Ministry*
- *Develop mission and ministry opportunities in church schools*
- *Engage missionally and relationally in non-church schools.*

The themes in this section will feature explicitly in the DBEs work through to 2030 and be delivered in active collaboration with schools and churches and their communities.

## Where do we want to be in 2030?

As set out at the start of this strategy our expansive vision of what education is for means that our schools must be places of measurable academic excellence alongside enabling ALL pupils to flourish as individuals made in the image of God, collectively achieving ‘immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine’.

- a) The DBE values the SIAMS inspection process and expects to see all its schools judged as ‘living up to its foundation as a Church school and enabling pupils and adults to flourish’.
- b) Measuring academic excellence will be through Ofsted inspection findings and headline Key Stage data published by the DfE. These measures may well evolve during the years of this strategy, but our schools should be at national averages or above.
- c) We have set out the potential growth of our two schools trusts. Growth will only be one measure of success. Being defined as a ‘high quality trust’ by the DfE and delivering on the ambition of all elements of this strategy are equally as important.
- d) It would be wrong to set a numerical target around the number of small schools in the Diocese. Given the high number of small schools our success measure is that all small schools are using the metrics in this strategy to assess their sustainability and thus providing a good educational experience to their pupils. We thereby continue to demonstrate our collective expertise in running small schools.
- e) In section ten above there are ten functions or responsibilities set out for the DBE itself. We will take feedback every year on how these are being enacted expecting that evidence will indicate the value of the DBE and its officer team in supporting schools and the wider education system.
- f) Strong governance should be a feature of all inspection reports and external reviews in our school trusts and schools.  
No trustee vacancies on our school trust boards.  
Whilst we have an ambition for all our school governing groups to be fully ‘staffed’ we would be realistic and seek to see reduce vacancy rates from the current 30% to 15%.
- g) Our schools will only be successful if staff are flourishing. An indicator of this could be that Diocesan schools have low staff vacancy rates.
- h) Diocesan schools are inclusive and support the vulnerable, disadvantaged and those with SEND to make good progress. We will monitor % SEND in our schools as compared to Norfolk average.
- i) Our ambition is to see all schools involved in the work of our Racial Justice Network, with leaders, school staff and pupils taking proactive steps to end discrimination and inequity in all its forms.

- j) Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2030 is a stretching target. We would expect evidence to indicate that our schools are making a significant, meaningful contribution to achieving this and we have case studies of excellent practice to showcase.
- k) All church schools, parishes and communities should have strong and effective links. Additionally, working with the wider Diocese, we will have used the principles of Growing Faith to equip local churches to provide opportunities for children and young people to explore and grow in faith.

The DBE will review progress against these eleven success measures each year at its October meeting.





## What should schools and trusts do in response to this strategy?

**We ask that maintained school governors and school trust trustees circulate this strategy to all their members and include it on their agenda once a year for discussion and review.**

If there are questions or comments on any element of the strategy, please get in touch with the Director of Education.

If you would like to share in writing how you are contributing to the strategy, we would be delighted to hear from you.

For LA maintained schools we ask that you actively engage with the DBE and the relevant school trust to discuss how we might collaborate to ensure no church school or federation is in isolation.



# Appendix 1

## Recommendations from 'Our Hope for a Flourishing Schools System: Deeply Christian Serving the Common Good' July 2023

Our six recommendations for **School Leaders** as part of a flourishing schools system:

<p><b>1.1</b> To embed transformational programmes for <b>developing young leaders</b> at all Key Stages which instinctively place the voice of children and young people at the centre of school leadership</p>	<p><b>2.1</b> To embed professional learning programmes and networks which effectively <b>combine instructional and transformational approaches</b> to teacher/leadership governance development.</p>	<p><b>3.1</b> To significantly <b>increase the proportion of all under-represented groups</b> (having regard for all protected characteristics) taking up school leadership positions at all levels.</p>
<p><b>1.2</b> To implement <b>curriculum models which blend the academic, technical and vocational</b>, ensuring children have the opportunity to flourish in a wide range of learning contexts (not simply those that are externally measured), enabling them to have a transformational impact on the world as adults.</p>	<p><b>2.2</b> To seek every opportunity through effective governance to simplify workflow, reduce bureaucracy and <b>alleviate negative pressures on work-life balance for all staff.</b></p>	<p><b>3.2</b> For Church of England schools not academies to <b>engage proactively with their diocesan vision for collaboration</b> and sustainability (including, but not limited to, academisation).</p>

Our six recommendations for **School Trust Leaders** as part of a flourishing schools system:

<p><b>1.3</b> To embed a vision for the trust that prioritises <b>formation of character and spiritual/moral/social/cultural development</b>, all of which enhances its focused pursuit of the best academic outcomes for every child.</p>	<p><b>3.3</b> To develop and sustain a unique vision for each individual school in the trust to <b>meet the very specific contextual needs of the particular community</b> it serves.</p>	<p><b>4.1</b> To embed school trust leadership teams in vibrant professional networks, peer review activities and <b>systemic and deep collaboration between school trusts</b>, that bring benefit to the region and the system beyond.</p>
<p><b>1.4</b> To lead and resource learning experiences for all children which relentlessly and intentionally <b>celebrate equity, diversity, belonging, inclusion and justice</b> at every opportunity.</p>	<p><b>3.4</b> To proactively address the greatest challenges of school improvement by embracing <b>schools in need of the greatest support.</b></p>	<p><b>4.2</b> To work closely with other school trusts and dioceses, to co-construct a <b>coherent vision and strategy for the sustainable flourishing of small schools.</b></p>

Our ten recommendations for **Government Leaders** as part of a flourishing schools system:

<p><b>1.5</b> To prioritise the individual needs of the most vulnerable through a <b>once-in-a-generation re-imagination of SEND</b> funding, provision, training and development.</p>	<p><b>1.6</b> To enable local, regional and national services for <b>mental health support for children</b> in education to flourish through secure long-term funding, incisive research, and effective service co-ordination and collaboration.</p>
<p><b>2.5</b> To <b>reduce anxiety in the system by empowering school leaders</b> through creating structures and processes which release genuine professional autonomy, trust, agency and support.</p>	<p><b>2.6</b> To make the courageous systemic changes required to workload, pay, conditions and accountability to ensure that teaching is again regarded as a <b>vocation in which adults can truly flourish and to which they choose to commit for the long-term.</b></p>
<p><b>3.5</b> To work collaboratively with school leaders to develop intelligent and <b>compassionate accountability</b> through the wise re-imagination of inspection processes and comparative school performance measures.</p>	<p><b>3.6</b> To develop broader curriculum models that balance <b>academic, technical and vocational pathways</b> to enable children to develop as global citizens, who understand the vital role that religious literacy plays in the world.</p>
<p><b>4.5</b> To extend the golden thread of professional development from ITT/ECF/NPQ to include <b>evidence informed funded pathways for support staff.</b></p>	<p><b>4.6</b> To invest proactively in the development of system leaders for the next generation of school trusts through <b>effective MAT CEO (and senior trust team) development programmes and professional networks.</b></p>
<p><b>5.3</b> To co-develop wise, pragmatic and well-funded partnership solutions with DBEs which enable the <b>long-term flourishing of small (or geographically isolated) schools within appropriate structural collaborations.</b></p>	<p><b>5.4</b> To ensure the educational <b>partnership between church and state</b>, at national, regional and local level, enables the ongoing flourishing of church schools for coming generations.</p>

Our six recommendations for **Diocesan Leaders** as part of a flourishing schools system:

<p><b>2.3</b> To offer transformative <b>pastoral and wellbeing support, coaching, mentoring</b> to leaders across the diocesan school family.</p>	<p><b>4.3</b> To design and implement an ambitious and pragmatic approach to <b>sustainability of Church of England schools through structural collaboration arrangements</b> (including, but not limited to, academisation).</p>	<p><b>5.1</b> To ensure that <b>education is central to the mission of the wider diocese</b> through strategic leadership decision-making, resourcing and strategies for growing younger and more diverse.</p>
<p><b>2.4</b> To sustain a culture of continuous and sustainable improvement across school leadership development with particular regard to <b>RE, collective worship and support for SIAMS inspections.</b></p>	<p><b>4.4</b> To <b>attract, recruit, train and retain governance leaders</b> at local and board level to ensure the long-term sustenance of a Deeply Christian vision for education.</p>	<p><b>5.2</b> To place <b>children and young people instinctively at the heart</b> of the diocesan vision and strategy, providing real influence through leadership development programmes and structural engagement with the Growing Faith Foundation' programmes, networks and research.</p>

# Appendix 2

## Technical appendix for the Diocesan Strategic Plan 2024-30

This appendix sets out:

1. The technical elements of the DBEs Strategic Plan 2024-30 as they relate to academy specific matters and,
2. Information for VA and VC schools to be aware of whereby consent or advice is required from the DBE

### 1. Academy specific matters

#### Policy and Principles

The DBE operates within the Memorandum of Agreement (MoU) ([www.DofN.org/MoU](http://www.DofN.org/MoU)) between the Church of England and the DfE.

Currently its two school trusts use the 'church majority' articles of association previously agreed nationally by the Church of England and DfE. This 'church majority' principle remains. The DBE would therefore be content for its two school trusts to adopt the 2023 Church of England Model Articles of Association ([www.DofN.org/MAofA](http://www.DofN.org/MAofA)) should change be required as these articles preserve this principle.

The DBE expects church schools in the Diocese of Norwich to join one of its two school trusts, DNEAT or St Benet's. The DBE has a plan, based on geography, as to which trust is likely to be the best option for each school.

The Academies Act 2010 requires church schools to obtain consent from those who appoint foundation governors before they may apply to the DfE to become academies ([www.DofN.org/AA2010](http://www.DofN.org/AA2010)) This means the Bishop, the DBE and the PCC. They must also obtain consent from the site trustees of the school land (see guidance below).

The DBE will review its strategy in the light of any changes in DfE policy or other circumstances.

#### Seeking consent to become an academy within DNEAT or St Benet's

Before formally starting the process, schools should seek advice from the Diocesan Director

of Education (DDE) to ensure that their plans align with this diocesan strategy. As part of the process schools should ensure they have:

- Considered thoroughly the pros and cons of becoming an academy, familiarised themselves with the process involved and researched all the information available. Useful links include the DfE website ([www.DofN.org/convert-info](http://www.DofN.org/convert-info)). The DDE and school trust leaders are available to support this process.
- Consulted staff and parents as fully as possible.
- Sought and obtained the informed consent of the PCC and site trustees (template letters available from DDE)
- Sought and obtained the informed consent of the DBE and Bishop of Norwich (the DDE will help facilitate this process).
- Notify the Local Authority of intention to become an academy.
- Passed a governing body resolution to apply for academy status.
- Completed the DfE online application form (support available from DDE and school trusts)

As well as schools following a thorough due diligence process the Diocesan school trusts will also carry out their own due diligence. Some of this will begin before an Academy Order has been issued and other elements will be completed after. This is always done in a collaborative manner. The final decision regarding academy conversion rests with the DfE's Regional Director.

### Other consents or areas on which to seek advice from the DBE

#### a) New Schools

As part of its commitment to education, the DBE is keen to promote more opportunities for children and young people in the Diocese to have access to a Church of England education. Where there is a need for a new school in Norfolk or Suffolk, the DBE is committed to considering whether it will be possible to establish a new CofE school. Our school trusts must comply with the requirement to obtain the DBE's consent to establish a new school with a religious (CofE) designation.

#### b) Admissions

School trusts are their own admissions authority. However, in accordance with the DBE Measure 2021 they must seek advice from the DBE before 'beginning consultation under section 88C(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 about admission arrangements proposed for the school'. They must then have 'due regard to that advice'.

In practice that means following the advice of the DBE any time a consultation on admissions is planned (a maximum of every seven years). The DBE has published a model admissions policy including oversubscription criteria that our school trusts have used. This approach should continue.

#### c) Site alterations

Written consent is required in advance where alterations, capital works, expansion or repairs are proposed to buildings and academy sites, where the estimated cost is above £10,000. Such consent will not reasonably be withheld.

## 2. Information for VA and VC schools to be aware of whereby consent or advice is required from the DBE

### a) Admissions

Voluntary Aided schools are their own admissions authority. However, in accordance with the DBE Measure 2021 they must seek advice from the DBE before *'beginning consultation under section 88C(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 about admission arrangements proposed for the school'*. They must then have *'due regard to that advice'*.

In practice that means following the advice of the DBE any time a consultation on admissions is planned (a maximum of every seven years). The DBE has published a model admissions policy including oversubscription criteria that our VA schools should follow.

### b) Site alterations

Written consent is required in advance where alterations, capital works, expansion or repairs are proposed to buildings and academy sites, where the estimated cost is above £10,000. Such consent will not reasonably be withheld.

### c) Change of status

Consent to change status to an academy is covered in the first section of this appendix. Additionally, any VC school seeking to change to VA needs to obtain DBE consent.

## References

**Diocese of Norwich vision – Transformed by Christ: Prayerful, Pastoral, Prophetic**  
[www.dioceseofnorwich.org/about/about-vision](http://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/about/about-vision)

**Church of England's Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good**  
[https://cofefoundation.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Church\\_of\\_England\\_Vision\\_for\\_Education\\_-\\_2016\\_jdYA7EO.pdf](https://cofefoundation.contentfiles.net/media/assets/file/Church_of_England_Vision_for_Education_-_2016_jdYA7EO.pdf)

**DfE Commissioning High Quality Trusts**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1168113/Commissioning\\_High-Quality-Trusts\\_July\\_2023.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168113/Commissioning_High-Quality-Trusts_July_2023.pdf)

**DfE Trust Quality Descriptors**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1168190/Annex\\_A\\_-\\_Trust\\_Quality\\_Descriptors\\_July\\_2023\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1168190/Annex_A_-_Trust_Quality_Descriptors_July_2023_.pdf)

**DfE SEND review**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1064655/SEND\\_Review\\_Right\\_support\\_right\\_place\\_right\\_time\\_summary.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1064655/SEND_Review_Right_support_right_place_right_time_summary.pdf)

**DfE SEND and AP Improvement Plan**  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1139561/SEND\\_and\\_alternative\\_provision\\_improvement\\_plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1139561/SEND_and_alternative_provision_improvement_plan.pdf)

**Church of England - Our hope for a flourishing schools system**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/our-hope-for-a-flourishing-schools-system-report.pdf>

**Church of England / DfE – Model Articles of Association**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/church-academies-model-documents>

**Church of England / DfE – Memorandum of Understanding**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1185164/Memorandum\\_of\\_understanding\\_between\\_the\\_National\\_Society\\_and\\_DfE\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1185164/Memorandum_of_understanding_between_the_National_Society_and_DfE_.pdf)

**DfE East of England trust development statements**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/646f3db7243157000c6f426f/East\\_of\\_England\\_Trust\\_Development\\_Statements\\_v2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/646f3db7243157000c6f426f/East_of_England_Trust_Development_Statements_v2.pdf)

**Norfolk County Council FLOURISH**

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/what-we-do-and-how-we-work/policy-performance-and-partnerships/partnerships/children-and-young-people-partnerships/children-and-young-people-strategic-alliance/flourish>

**Norfolk County Council Transforming the Norfolk Landscape**

<https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/-/media/schools/files/early-years-education/link/training-docs/transforming-norfolk-landscape.pdf>

**Confederation of School Trusts Starting with the why – why join a school trust**

<https://cstuk.org.uk/knowledge/discussion-and-policy-papers/starting-with-why-why-join-a-trust-and-why-a-trust-based-system/>

**St Benet's Multi Academy Trust**

<https://stbenets.org/>

**DNEAT Multi academy Trust**

<https://www.dneat.org/>

**BAMEed**

<https://www.bameednetwork.com/about-us/>

**Church of England From Lament to Action**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/FromLamentToAction-report.pdf>

**Church of England A routemap to Net Zero Carbon**

[https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/nzc\\_2030\\_routemap\\_june22.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/nzc_2030_routemap_june22.pdf)

**Church of England Growing Faith Foundation**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/growing-faith-foundation>



 THE CHURCH  
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