

# Footprints

THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND  
Diocese of Norwich

Your newsletter from the Diocesan Board of Education

June 2025

## Chaplaincy



**Paul Dunning**  
Diocesan Director of Education

**Chaplaincy is not a new concept; our two Church of England secondary phase schools have benefited from chaplaincy input for many years, and schools in the independent sector have a long history of employing chaplains.** However, in

primary schools the situation is much different so being able to enable a team chaplaincy project in primary schools in our St Benet's academy trust was an opportunity not to be missed. You can read about this on the following pages.

There are many ways of articulating a vision for chaplaincy in education and each school situation will be different. As I have learned more about chaplaincy one consistent theme I hear is around those involved simply being a 'presence' in the school. They have time to listen and care with no agenda. This relational aspect reminds me of how we see Jesus dealing with people in the New Testament. For

example, he took time to go to the house of Zacchaeus, a disliked tax collector, he showed compassion on a woman caught in adultery, and he regularly met people just where they were demonstrating how much he loved them.

Chaplains share in the life of the school community and become a member of the team rather than a visitor. It is a missional ministry, joining in the presence of God in our schools and being there with people, welcoming those of all faiths and none, just as our schools do.

I long to see this work grow across our school family and thank everyone currently involved in this special ministry.

## Revd Jonathan Richardson

Children, Youth and Families  
Development Officer, Diocese of Norwich

**One of the issues schools and churches face when working together is a loss of contact when key people change – be that a Headteacher or member of clergy.** Developing a team chaplaincy can ensure that members of the local community are the custodians of the relationship. It is also unlikely that any one person can provide all the support that is necessary, having a team of people can enable richer support.

Historically individuals from the community and church have sought to support schools in a variety of ways such as Open the Book, Godly Play or arranging trips or events in the church. Research from NICER<sup>1</sup>, commissioned by the Growing Faith Foundation<sup>2</sup>, shows that when there is a close working relationship between the school and church it enables young people to flourish both academically and spiritually. Chaplaincy is a way of supporting this intersection. Rather than attending the

school to run specific activities, chaplains are encouraged to 'be present' in the school for pupils, teachers and families.

In response to the research, a local organisation in South Norfolk, Integrate Youth for Christ<sup>3</sup>, were commissioned to develop a Team Chaplaincy Learning Hub<sup>4</sup>, with support from the Diocesan Board of Education and St Benet's Multi Academy Trust. Integrate work with local churches and schools to appoint Lead Chaplains. This might be a member of clergy or someone with close connections to the school. Alongside the Lead Chaplain Assistant chaplains are recruited. The team are provided with resources and chaplaincy training, and, in partnership with the school, are checked and trained for safeguarding. Teams work under the guidance of the "Core Standards of Christian Chaplaincy with Children & Young People."<sup>5</sup>

To date the learning hub has recruited eight Lead Chaplains, working with a team of more than 30 Assistant Chaplains to support 11 schools, with more in the pipeline.

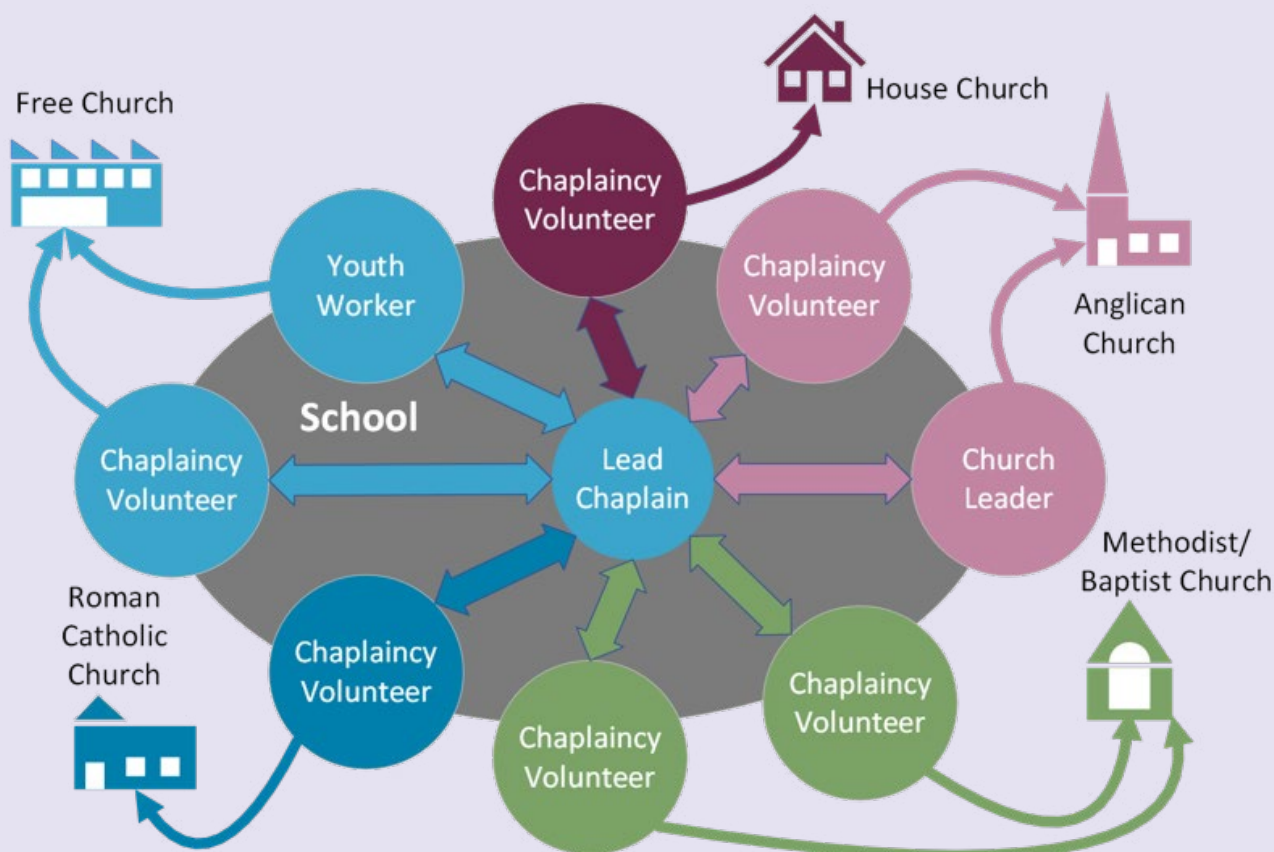
<sup>1</sup>Casson, Dr Ann, Dr Sabina Hulbert, Dr Mary Woolley, and Professor Robert Bowie. 'Faith in the Nexus'. *National Institute for Christian Education Research*, n.d.

<sup>2</sup>Core Standards in Christian Chaplaincy <https://cym.ac.uk/assets/files/Chaplaincy-Standards-Booklet-Final-v1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Integrate Youth for Christ <https://integrateyfc.org.uk>

<sup>4</sup>The Church of England. 'Learning Hubs' [www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/growing-faith-foundation/learning-hubs](http://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/growing-faith-foundation/learning-hubs)

<sup>5</sup>The Church of England. 'The Growing Faith Foundation'. [www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/growing-faith-foundation](http://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/growing-faith-foundation)





## Chaplaincy at The Beacon Federation

### **Moira Croskell**

Executive Headteacher  
The Beacon Federation

Our pupils across the Beacon Federation are innately curious about life so we try to offer them the opportunity to explore life's big questions, explore prayer in an open and inclusive environment and develop their skills of personal reflection and spirituality.

We are lucky to be supported in this by our wonderful chaplaincy team, who promote our Christian values and ethos in a way that engages the pupils creatively and gives them a sense of belonging in the community. The team have led

Collective Worship sessions, mostly aimed at our Year 6 pupils, supporting their transition to secondary school and any anxieties they may have around that. Following on from these sessions the Youth for Christ Team have supported individual children who are particularly anxious about change and the big step to leaving their primary school; their listening ear and pastoral support has helped develop pupil confidence and wellbeing and has been particularly effective at our Garboldisham site.

Our weekly More2Life lunchtime club at Dickleburgh is open to all ages and is extremely popular. We wanted to introduce our pupils to different ways to explore our Christian values other than

in our Collective Worship sessions or with their own teachers. It is really wonderful to have adults in our community come in and play games with the children and share stories from the Bible in an accessible and enjoyable way. This is enhanced through our monthly Open the Book session, run by community and church volunteers.

Over the last few years we have also had the drama and dance teams visit the schools to bring faith to our pupils in the most engaging and fun way.

The various teams have played a crucial role in building bridges between the school and the church, fostering a close sense of community and helping us live out our values and ethos.

## School Chaplaincy



### **Revd Coryn Stanforth**

Rector, Coastal Group benefice

Before ordination, my career was as a primary school teacher. Hence, I quickly became excited when I heard of the launch of the St Benet's Chaplaincy Project. This was a project where local churches, working together with Integrate Youth for Christ, were asked to develop chaplaincy

teams and to increase the connections between churches and schools.

At this time, I was serving my curacy in the Tas Valley benefice and was based in Newton Flotman. In the past there had been strong connections between the church and Newton Flotman Church of England Primary Academy. However, staffing had changed in both school and church, and I arrived in curacy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My initial task was to build up relationships with staff and pupils. As the local Curate, I was already leading collective worship in school. Key to chaplaincy ministry is the idea of intentional hanging around. With the permission of the Headteacher, I found out when the school staff tended to congregate in the staff room. I spent time every other week being a visible presence there. As people got to know me, conversations began and trust was built. As Chaplain, I regularly took cake and treats in for the staff particularly during

challenging times such as visits from Ofsted and SATs week.

Alternate weeks, I spent a lunchtime on the playground with the children armed with stickers to give out. I had with me an either/or question of the week which I had previously introduced to the children during collective worship. For example: Would you rather live in a treehouse or underground? Would you rather it was first thing in the morning or in the evening? Such questions are a good icebreaker for starting conversations with children and young people. Again, relationships started to be built.

Alongside this, I began to build a chaplaincy team by getting other local Christians involved in this ministry such as recruiting volunteers to hear children read in school.

I am now ministering on the North Norfolk coast and am in the early days of becoming Chaplain to Happisburgh Church of England Primary Academy.

## Governance Update



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### The Role of Chaplaincy and Pastoral Support in Church School Governance

In the 2023 SIAMS Framework, Inspection Question 4 ("How does the theologically rooted Christian vision create a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well?") invites a deep reflection on fostering a culture where pupils and adults alike are treated with dignity and compassion. This includes how schools support mental health, wellbeing, and the cultivation of healthy relationships. At the heart of this is the wider pastoral care network – including chaplaincy, school leaders, church partnerships, and governors – that shapes the lived experience of care within our schools.

### The Governor's role in monitoring wellbeing

Whether in a Trust or a VA or VC school, governors are stewards of a school's ethos. Ensuring staff wellbeing is not an add-on, but integral to their responsibilities. Schools across our diocese have developed diverse methods to support this, from regular wellbeing surveys and informal staff check-ins, to detailed Headteacher reports that highlight both challenges and successes.

One of the most meaningful practices is the development of strong, trust-based relationships – particularly between the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors. In many schools, this partnership becomes a lifeline, providing the Headteacher with a confidential space for reflection, encouragement, and even spiritual support. Where this relationship thrives, the impact often cascades throughout the wider staff team and governance community.

### Strategic discussions that support flourishing

Beyond monitoring, those responsible for governance play a key role in making decisions that prioritise mental health and wellbeing. Whether allocating funding for a pastoral lead, investing in counselling services, or supporting professional development around trauma-informed practices, these decisions reflect a commitment to ensuring both children and adults can flourish.

These actions, when rooted in a school's Christian vision, are more than strategic or supportive — they are theological. They speak to the belief that every person is created in the image of God and worthy of care, love, and respect.

### Pastoral support through church links

Another powerful expression of a school's Christian vision is the ongoing relationship with the local or wider church. In many of our schools, clergy

are not distant figures but active participants in school life — leading collective worship, attending break times, or making themselves available for confidential conversations with members of the school community. We also encourage clergy members to become governors threading an element of chaplaincy into governance. This presence models incarnational ministry: being present and engaged with others, mirroring God's own "being with" the world and accompanying people through the full spectrum of life. Whether it's a quiet word in the corridor or a moment of shared prayer, these interactions can have a profound impact on the wellbeing of staff and pupils alike.

### Governance centred around chaplaincy and care

Chaplaincy and wider pastoral care are not peripheral to school life – they are central to how we embody the Christian vision in education. Through committed governance, thoughtful decision-making, and a deep partnership with the local church, schools can become places where everyone is treated well, and where spiritual and emotional flourishing is truly possible.

As governors and leaders, continuing to ask and record, "*How does our Christian vision shape the way we care for people?*" ensures that our schools remain rooted in love, guided by faith, and committed to every individual's wellbeing.

## SIAMS congratulations

Congratulations to the following schools that have had their SIAMS inspections this term:

**Great Witchingham Church of England Primary Academy**

## REQM congratulations

**Silver**

**Horsford Church of England VA Primary School**

## Contact us

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