

Footprints

THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Norwich

Your newsletter from the Diocesan Board of Education

September 2026



Welcome back!

Photo: School Ambassadors Lunch 2026



Chris Allen
Diocesan Director of Education

Welcome back after what I hope has been a wonderful summer break – one filled with fun, rest, and the making of treasured memories.

Working in schools is an incredible privilege, but it is also relentlessly demanding. Time away is not only thoroughly deserved; it is essential. The opportunity to pause, recharge and reconnect enables us to return refreshed

and ready to be the very best version of ourselves for the children, young people and communities we serve. Thank you for all that you do. Through your dedication, compassion and commitment, you bring our Diocesan vision of *achieving immeasurably more than we can imagine* to life every day.

September is always a season of optimism in schools – a time to look ahead, think boldly and set out the paths we intend to follow in the months ahead. Over the summer, the Education Team has been working hard to prepare for the year to come, and in this edition of *Footprints* you will find more about the plans, priorities and opportunities that lie ahead. I also hope it provides a moment to celebrate all that we have achieved together. As Galatians 6:2 reminds us,

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.” We are at our strongest when we support one another.

The Diocese is a rich and diverse community, and from the outside it can sometimes be difficult to see how its many parts fit together. One of my key responsibilities as Diocesan Director of Education is to bring those parts together, championing them as one. Romans 12:5 reminds us that *“though many, [we] form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”* That is what it means to be part of our diocesan family: connected through faith, united in mission and committed to serving our schools together.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Footprints* and see how, together, we are turning that vision into reality.

Fiona Greening

RE & Christian Distinctiveness Manager
fiona.greening@dioceseofnorwich.org

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”
1 Thessalonians 5:11

When we come together, we are always stronger than when we work in isolation. Whatever stage you are at in your career, I would encourage you to view engagement in networks and training as an opportunity to connect with others, share experiences, and build one another up in our common purpose.

Every school is striving to enable all

to flourish within a Christian community. Whatever your role in that journey, our work is most effective when we learn, collaborate, and grow together.

I warmly encourage you to join the network that supports your area of responsibility. All diocesan networks are free to attend and offer opportunities to deepen your knowledge, receive guidance and updates, and share ideas with colleagues. Working together enables us to learn from effective practice, discover new opportunities, and enrich the provision we offer in our schools.

Alongside our well-established RE networks, this year we are delighted to introduce an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) RE network. This reflects our commitment to ensuring that children experience high-quality, engaging Religious Education from the very

beginning of their school journey. We will also be offering networks supporting collective worship, new worshipping communities, and racial justice.

Recent SIAMS inspections have highlighted spirituality across the curriculum and Christianity as a diverse, global faith as areas that many schools are seeking to develop further. If your school would benefit from support in these areas, or any aspect of its Christian distinctiveness, please explore the opportunities available in the *Supporting Schools & Academies* booklet. I would also be delighted to discuss your school's needs and help identify appropriate support.

Together, as a community of schools, we can encourage one another, share wisdom, and ensure that every child and adult has the opportunity to flourish.

Richard Cranmer

Education Adviser
richard.cranmer@dioceseofnorwich.org

One of my roles as Education Adviser for the Diocese is to ensure that our Headteachers feel a sense of pride in belonging to the Diocesan family. We want our school leaders to have the confidence and support to lead in a way that reflects the distinctive Christian nature of their schools.

This involves providing the sort of support and encouragement that considers the human side of leadership, and this was reflected in our Headteacher Conference which focused on wellbeing and managing the demands of the job. We enjoyed inputs from Sinéad McBrearty, CEO of the Education Support charity, James Heale from Flywheel Learning and a panel discussion with some of our own Headteachers on how they manage the variety and complexity



of their daily jobs.

In addition, our inaugural Headteacher Retreat at Walsingham provided time and space to reflect on the responsibilities that they carry as leaders of our Church

Schools. Colleagues have asked that this event becomes a regular feature of the calendar and we are looking to extend this opportunity for members of the wider Senior Leadership Teams.

107

Church Schools and Academies, including two Diocesan Multi Academy trusts serving 64 schools

100%

SIAMS Judgement 1 outcomes in the last 12 months, this is the third year achieving this

1,365

school staff accessed RE and Christian Distinctiveness training. Training rated overall as 4.91/5 stars

Sharon Brett

Schools Environmental Adviser
sharon.brett@dioceseofnorwich.org

Celebrating Creation: Eco Schools 2026

"He's got the whole world in his hands" has become the Eco Song of the Year as 18 schools have been commissioned, celebrated Earth Day, and gone on to achieve their Eco Schools Green Flag Awards – including one merit and five distinctions. A full year of collaboration, commitment and courageous leadership has embedded ecological stewardship into the very heart of school life.

On Thursday 10 September, we will celebrate the schools and children whose passion for creation has shaped real change. They have completed Environmental Reviews, chosen three actions to carry forward across the year, lifted their voices, and achieved remarkable results. Staff have been supported to embed these actions into their Climate Action Plans, ensuring that creation care is not an add on but a lived expression of school identity and Christian vision.

As we honour Cohort 1, we also welcome Cohort 2 – inviting them to learn, network and build upon the flourishing witnessed this year. This is how creation care grows: one community inspiring another, one school lighting the way for the next.

This work has been strengthened by a network of generous, knowledgeable partners. With gratitude we thank:

- Nigel Stanett, Let's Go Zero / Climate Ambassador
- Isabelle Mudge & Norfolk Wildlife Trust
- Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group
- Ben Rothery, Author and Illustrator
- Richard and the Anglian Water Education Team
- Sam and the RWE Team



- Scrapbox Reepham
- Green Schools Project, with whom we continue to collaborate into Year Two.

Their expertise has helped children see creation not only as something to admire, but something to understand, protect and restore – echoing the call of Genesis 2:15, where humanity is placed in the garden "to till it and keep it."

Awe and wonder are essential parts

of a child's curriculum. Teaching climate change and sustainability opens doors to critical thinking, technical skill, citizenship, and hope-filled action – all vital for the world our children are growing into.

Thank you to every school that has embraced this work so wholeheartedly. I look forward to continuing this journey with you throughout the new academic year, as together we help children discover their role within creation care.

3

cross-Diocese education
projects completed with Ely
and St Eds & Ips

24

Church school leaders
completed an RE leadership
programme

1,100

children undertook
an Easter Experiences in our
Church schools

Sam Witton

School Estates and Finance Officer
samuel.witton@dioceseofnorwich.org

Supporting Church Schools Through Effective Estate Management

As Schools Estates and Finance Officer, my role is to support our church schools in maintaining, improving and planning for their buildings and facilities, ensuring they remain safe, compliant and fit for purpose for future generations.

Like any building, school premises require a carefully managed programme of maintenance to maximise their lifespan and reduce long-term expenditure. Regular preventative maintenance, such as clearing drains and gutters of moss and debris, can help avoid more costly repairs in the future. Just as importantly, schools must keep on top of their statutory compliance obligations, ensuring that inspections and testing are undertaken as required. This includes areas such as fire safety, asbestos management, water hygiene, electrical testing, gas safety and playground equipment inspections. Voluntary Aided (VA) schools are in the unique position of having direct responsibility for their buildings, making it essential to develop a robust premises development plan and budget appropriately for capital investment. Schools should also undertake regular condition surveys, ideally on a five-year cycle, to help identify emerging maintenance needs, prioritise investment and support longer-term estate planning.

Even with the best maintenance programmes in place, building elements will eventually require repair or replacement. To support schools with this, the Diocese runs an annual Capital Programme for VA schools, funded through the School Condition Allocation

(SCA). Each autumn, schools are invited to submit project proposals online for the following financial year. Applications are considered by the Schools Estates and Capital Funding Committee, which allocates available funding to priority projects across the diocesan estate. Following approval, the Diocese works closely with schools to develop projects to a fully costed stage, helping to procure specialist professional advice where required, including architects, surveyors, structural engineers and other consultants, ensuring projects are properly scoped and planned before works commence. The Diocese also supports VA schools through its Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) pooling scheme. By pooling funds, we can invest balances collectively to generate the highest possible level of interest, helping schools make the most of their capital resources. New projects can be established throughout the year, with schools simply providing their preferred quotations and the Diocese managing the funding, and payments to contractors.

For these services, the Diocese applies a project management fee to help cover the administration, oversight and support provided. This is typically 2% for DFC-funded projects, 3% for School Condition Allocation (SCA) projects, or 5% for SCA projects where no external consultant is appointed and a greater level of diocesan involvement is required.

In recent years, we have helped schools secure significant external funding. Last year, we supported a successful School-Based Nursery Capital Grant bid, enabling a school to convert unused accommodation into a new nursery provision alongside dedicated SEN teaching space. More recently we have also assisted another school in securing Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) funding to improve flood resilience and mitigate the impact of increasingly severe rainfall events.



Alongside project delivery, we work closely with the Department for Education (DfE) on a range of estate and capital responsibilities, including year-end funding monitoring for DFC, compliance with the typical three-year expenditure requirement, SCA reporting and statutory compliance monitoring. In the coming months, this work is expected to expand further with the introduction of School Estate Management Standards (SEMS) audits, which are designed to assess estate management and compliance arrangements at both school and diocesan level.

As the Church is the landlord for most church school sites, we also provide advice and support relating to external lettings, including arrangements with nursery providers, sports clubs, community groups and other organisations that help schools maximise the value of their facilities while serving their local communities.

If your school is considering a building project, seeking funding or would simply like advice on estate matters, we would be pleased to hear from you.

100

pupils from 20 Church schools attended a pupil leadership conference for Eco Schools

33

building projects completed in church schools

30

school and academy staff completed The Bible Course for Schools

Diocesan Board of Education Priorities for 2026-27



To ensure that the Education Team and its work is central to the mission of the Diocese of Norwich and to ensure the new Diocese Strategy is at the heart of its work. By enabling our schools to have hope filled lay leaders, strong missional links to the church, thriving schools working with thriving churches and younger and more diverse Christian worshippers.



Embedding the engaging and enrichment of learning in our church schools and academies through projects including the Big Sing, St Philip's Centre RE Roadshow and SEND Provision in Mainstream Schools.



Launching 12 New Worshipping Communities in Schools, supported to grow and nurture worship that meets the needs of young people in a diverse range of settings and ways.



Embedding our Creation Care and Eco Schools Project by taking the 17 schools from 2025/26 into a second year of funded work with Green Spaces in Schools. Also launching 26 more schools (Cohort 2) into the project to achieve Green Flag Eco Schools status by August 2027.



Continuing to work with key partners to ensure the future viability of our church schools in the context of declining birthrates. Looking at innovative approaches to educating children in their local communities.



Continuing to support our Voluntary Aided Schools to have safe, dry and warm learning spaces through the DfE Schools Capital Allocation funding we receive.



To grow future leaders of our church schools and support the recruitment and development of maintained school governors.

30

pupils regularly attend and contribute to Diocese Board of Education Meetings

900

children undertook a Christmas Experience in our Church schools.

1,200

pupils experienced the St Philips Centre Religions and Worldviews Roadshow in the Swaffham and Great Yarmouth areas

Diocese Board of Education – New Ways of Working

New Worshipping Communities in Schools (NWCS)

As part of the Diocese of Norwich Mission Strategy, we are committed to growing younger and more diverse communities of worshippers across our diocese. Church schools are uniquely placed to play a vital role in this vision by nurturing and establishing New Worshipping Communities in Schools (NWCS).

From September 2026, we will launch an ambitious five-year project aiming to establish at least **35 New Worshipping Communities in Schools**, with the first **12 communities beginning in 2026–27**. Each participating school community will receive **£3,750 of funding over three years**, alongside access to a supportive network that will enable collaboration, shared learning and encouragement.

The project will be led during 2026–27 by **Belinda Allen**, a recently retired Executive Headteacher within our diocese,



who brings a wealth of experience and passion for church school ministry. If you would like to explore how

your school could become involved, please contact **belinda.allen@dioceseofnorwich.org**

School Standards and Performance

While the Diocese Education Team has not previously been involved in school improvement conversations, we recognise the value of providing encouragement, support and opportunities for collaboration to help schools flourish.

Although we will not be offering direct school improvement services – since this is not our role – we are keen to work alongside schools through positive and supportive conversations focused on the flourishing of both pupils and staff. Schools identified for this work will be

contacted directly by the Education Team.

We are also committed to strengthening collaboration across our family of schools and continuing to work closely with key partners, including Norfolk Local Authority through the **Norfolk Learning Collaborative**.

From September, this work will be supported by **Helen McCarney**, a recently retired Executive Headteacher from our diocese, whose experience and insight will be invaluable.

If your school would like to be considered for this **free support** in the future, please contact **helen.mccarney@dioceseofnorwich.org**



30

pupils from Harleston Sancroft Academy hosted and led the National Society for Education Conference in London

300

children attended the Diocese Schools Day at Norwich Cathedral

5

schools worked with the HIDDEN Project at St Peter Mancroft

SEND in Mainstream Education

Supporting pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is a significant priority within the **Schools White Paper 2026**. The increased focus on ensuring that mainstream schools can provide high-quality provision for all learners presents both opportunities and challenges for school leaders.

To support our schools in navigating this important area, we are delighted to have secured the expertise of **Fyfe Johnson**, former Headteacher of a complex needs school in Norfolk and former HMI Inspector. Fyfe will be joined by a team of experienced SEND specialists, including **Maria Grimmer**, Headteacher of St Nicholas Priory VA Church of England Primary School.

Together they will lead a **free two-day conference for church schools on 16-17 November 2026**, exploring practical approaches to strengthening SEND provision in mainstream settings and helping schools meet the needs of all pupils.



The conference will mark the beginning of a year-long programme of support, including:

- Two additional conference days in Spring and Summer 2027
- Access to an informal mentoring network
- Ongoing opportunities for collaboration and professional dialogue

- Practical support for schools as they respond to SEND reforms

We look forward to supporting schools as they continue to develop inclusive environments where every child can thrive. Look out for the flyer and how to book your places!

Diocese BIG SINGS

One of the great joys of being part of the Diocese of Norwich family is belonging to a community of **107 schools and more than 16,000 pupils**. During 2026–27, we are excited to invite every church school to take part in one of our **Diocese BIG SING** celebrations.

We are planning three regional events, hosted at:

- **Great Yarmouth Minster, 27 Nov 2026**
- **Peter Mancroft, Norwich, 25 June 2027**
- **King's Lynn Minster, 2 July 2027**

To help schools prepare, musician and music educator **David Ballard** will provide a series of **nine pre-recorded**

rehearsal videos, enabling pupils to learn the songs and arrive ready to sing, worship and celebrate together.

These events will be **free to participate in**, with schools only needing to cover transport costs. We also hope that one of our bishops will join us at each venue as we gather in worship and celebration. We look forward to bringing thousands of pupils together in song and strengthening the sense of belonging that makes our diocesan family so special. For any questions related to the musical aspects, please contact David via **david.ballard@dioceseofnorwich.org**

For any logistical and practical concerns, please contact Jodie Ballard via **jodie.ballard@dioceseofnorwich.org**



6

schools have worked with national artists on the Norwich cathedral Benedictine Project, in association with the Norwich University of the Arts, English Plus and St Martins Housing Charity

23

Headteachers representing 35 Church schools attended our first Headteacher Retreat Day at Walsingham



Jodie Ballard

PA to the Director of Education

jodie.ballard@dioceseofnorwich.org

I am delighted to be taking on the role of main point of contact for governance administration support for our Voluntary Aided (VA) and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools across the Diocese.

Governance plays a vital role in

supporting school leaders, ensuring accountability, and helping schools fulfil their vision and values. Effective administration is an important part of this, assisting governing boards to operate smoothly and enabling governors to focus on strategic leadership and making a positive difference for pupils and their communities.

I am passionate about serving our schools well, helping governors and leaders access the support they need so that they can focus on delivering the best possible outcomes for the children and communities they serve. Building positive relationships with schools and governors will be a key part of my role, and I look forward to working

alongside you all. Governance support for DNEAT and St Benet's academies will continue to be provided by the DoNESC Governance Team.

I hope to meet many of our governors and school leaders in the coming months and play a part in supporting the excellent work taking place across our church school family. Together, we can ensure that governance continues to be a strong foundation that enables our schools and communities to flourish.

As we continue to support our church schools, we are reminded of the importance of wise and collaborative governance: "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers" (Proverbs 11:14).

Welcome (Headteachers)

Paula Jones – Acorn Partnership

Sarah Claflin – All Angels Federation

Mark Carlyle – Beacon Federation

Esme Richardson – Corton Church of England VA Primary School

Georgina Mace – Eden Federation

Neil Campbell – Hope Federation

Julie Phillips – Wrenningham VC Primary School

Welcome (Diocesan School Support Officers)

Belinda Allen

Becky Newman

Farewell & Thanks (Diocesan School Support Officers)

Laura Sproston

Helen Watson

Farewell and Thanks (Headteachers)

Helen McCarney – All Angels Federation

Moir Croskell – Beacon Federation

Nicola Rowland – Corton Church of England VA Primary School

Becky Newman – Eden Federation

Belinda Allen – Hope Federation

SIAMS congratulations

Congratulations to the following school that had their SIAMS inspection since the previous Footprints:

Morley Church of England Primary Academy

St Nicholas Priory Church of England VA Primary School

Thomas Bullock Church of England Primary Academy

Get in touch

Phone: 01603 882357 Email: education@dioceseofnorwich.org

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/schools