

CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS IN NOTTINGHAM CITY AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

The Church has always been interested in education. In particular, the Church of England was keen to pioneer education for the poor and working classes. Although many Church schools date back much further than this, most of them were established after the formation of the National Society in 1811. The state did not actively participate in public education until after the 1870 Education Act. Local Authorities (LA's) were not established until 1902. The present system of Church and state partnership in education was created by the 1944 Education Act. Today, a quarter of all primary schools are Church of England schools, and nearly a third are run by Churches in general (including the Roman Catholic Church).

In Southwell and Nottingham Diocese, the Church of England has 70 church schools, 6 of which are secondary comprehensive schools, and an academy. In addition, there are also 5 affiliated schools (schools which do not have a faith designation, but wish to be formally linked to the Church of England).

Aided and Controlled schools

All Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled Church of England schools are maintained by the Local Authority. Church schools also follow the National Curriculum, and are required to follow all government legislation and regulations for the English system of state education. However, some Church schools retain control over admissions, religious education, and the school buildings. These are known as Voluntary Aided, since they are aided by central government in the financing of any buildings work. Voluntary Controlled schools are so called because they have relinquished these powers and are controlled by the Local Authority. Whereas in an Aided school the foundation governors always retain a majority on the governing body, in a Controlled school the foundation governors will be in a minority. In Southwell and Nottingham Diocese we have 34 Controlled schools, 35 Aided schools and 1 academy.

How Church of England Voluntary Aided Schools Work

The governing body of a Church of England Voluntary Aided school holds responsibility for the total life of the school, as well as being an employer and admissions authority in its own right. The governing body is made up of a majority of foundation governors appointed by the local Church and diocese, along with representatives from teachers, staff, parents and the Local Authority.

The governors are also responsible for the upkeep and development of the school building for which they receive an annual maintenance grant. Further grants of 90% of the total cost may be obtained from the DfE for larger building developments or extension work.

CE VA schools are required to teach religious education in accordance with their Trust Deed, which usually states that this must be in accordance with the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. Although the head teacher and teaching staff will be responsible for the management and teaching of religious education, governors are responsible for ensuring that this meets the above requirements.

In CE VA schools governors are responsible for the admissions policy. Pupils are usually admitted either because they live in the local parish, or because they live further away but prefer a Church of England school education. In many Nottinghamshire villages, the Church school provides school places for all children within the community. In areas where there is more demand than places available at the Church school, governors must determine the criteria by which children will be admitted. This is usually on the basis of parental church membership. The governors are required to publish their admissions criteria, and parents may appeal against the governors decision in the event that their application is rejected.

How Church of England Voluntary Controlled Schools Work

Although CE VC schools are controlled by the Local Authority, the buildings continue to be owned by the Trustees of the foundation which first established the school, and it remains a Church of England school.

This will be clear in the schools mission statement and other school documentation, in the close association between the school and its local Church, and in the acts of collective worship which the school provides.

Admissions to CE VC schools are controlled by the Local Authority, although, where places are in high demand, admission may be granted on the basis of parental preference for a Church school education.

The Distinctiveness of Church of England Schools

Like all schools Church of England schools are there to provide the best possible education for the pupils who attend them. This is done in partnership with the Local Authority and under the guidance and support of the Southwell and Nottingham Diocesan Board of Education. This is also done in partnership with the local parish Church, the vicar of which is usually an ex-officio governor. The Church will also be responsible for providing other Foundation Governors for the governing body.

The Christian faith will be at the heart of the Church school community. Relationships and structures will be based on Christian values, and the school will be confident in presenting the life and teaching of Jesus Christ as the model for everyday living in our contemporary society. The ongoing challenge for the Church school is to express this in a way which is appropriate to each child in its care and in the local community context. The school is judged on its success in so presenting its Christian distinctiveness through the Section 48 (Denominational) Inspection, which usually occurs shortly after the school undergoes its periodic Ofsted inspection.

For further details about Church schools, please contact your local school, or the Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham Education Office.

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