

Schools should teach children to look beyond the culture of cosmetic surgery, fast cars and designer labels, a bishop has told leading head teachers.

In a keynote address to school leaders in London, the Bishop of Chelmsford, the Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell, described schools as places where children learn to seek “fullness of life” rather than the “illusion” that happiness can be found in possessions or outward appearances.

He issued the challenge in an address to the conference of the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership which works to develop school leaders through training rooted in the Church of England’s vision for education.

In his address Bishop Stephen said: “We Christians, we dare to believe that God holds in his heart an image of what each of us is capable of becoming - against the lies and illusions that the world peddles.

“The world is always saying to us if you just buy that designer label pair of jeans, or if you wore that expensive perfume, or if you drove a fast car, or if you got that cosmetic surgery, oh well then you would be happy, then you would be fulfilled.

“But none of it works. Or perhaps to be more accurate, it works just enough to get you addicted.

“Sometimes I think ...we have just become a nation of junkies hooked on the idea that you can find fulfilment from these things.

“Against all that, we assert that God does want to change us, but not into someone else. God wants to change us into ourselves; into the person we are capable of becoming.”

He added: “A school can therefore be the place where transformation happens.”

More than 400 delegates joined the conference which is being supported by Allchurches Trust and was also addressed by Ofsted's Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman and Dame Julia Cleverdon.

The conference represents one of the largest gatherings of Christian leaders in education for many years.

Delegates at the event included headteachers, Chief Executives of Multi-Academy Trusts and diocesan leaders.

# Notes to editors

Allchurches Trust has supported the Foundation’s wide range of leadership development opportunities with its largest ever grant to date.

There are 4,700 Church of England schools, which educate one million children, making the Church of England the largest provider of education in England.

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