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There are **4,644** Church of England schools and **200** church schools in Wales. Church schools are supported by their local [Diocesan Board of Education](#).



Diocese of Guildford

Church schools in numbers

- Approximately **1 million** children attend Church of England schools.
- About **15 million** people alive today went to a Church of England school.
- A **quarter** of primary schools and over **200** secondary schools are Church of England.
- With **250** sponsored and over **650** converter academies, the Church is the biggest sponsor of academies in England.
- Over **500** independent schools declare themselves to be Church of England in ethos.
- Across the country, Church of England clergy dedicate a million hours every year to working with children and young people in schools, often providing holiday and after-school activities.

- There are **22,500** Foundation Governors in Church schools recruited, trained and supported by dioceses.
- Each diocese runs a Diocesan Board of Education supporting Church schools, which represents an annual investment of over £15 million.

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Types of church school

Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools

There are around 2,000 VC schools, of which all but 20 are primary schools. VC schools are 'managed' by the local authority (LA) whilst maintaining their distinctive characteristics.

The key characteristics of a VC school are:

- The LA employs the staff, but they are appointed by the governors
- The LA is responsible for admissions arrangements.
- The LA can advise the governing body; the diocesan director of education (DDE) may be given the same opportunity to advise.
- RE taught is the LA agreed syllabus and worship reflects the Anglican tradition
- No one group of governors is in a majority. Church or Foundation governors are in a minority.

Voluntary Aided (VA) schools

There are around 1,700 VA schools, mainly primary schools, with 53 secondary schools and four All-Through schools. VA schools are required to contribute to capital funding in return for more autonomy for the Church.

The key characteristics of a VA school are:

- The Church or Foundation governors are an absolute majority.
- Governors appoint and employ all staff.
- Governors are responsible for admissions arrangements, approved by the 'religious authority' as defined in the Admissions Code.
- The LA and the DDE have similar rights to attend governors meetings and to advise
- Governors determine the RE syllabus which should reflect the Anglican tradition and worship reflects the Anglican tradition.

Foundation schools

28 Church schools became grant maintained and are now Foundation Schools. In these schools:

- No one group of governors is in a majority. Church or Foundation governors are in a minority.
- Governors appoint and employ all staff.
- Governors are responsible for admissions arrangements, approved by the 'religious authority' as defined in the Admissions Code.
- The LA can advise the governing body: the DDE may be given the same opportunity to advise.
- RE taught is the LA agreed syllabus and worship reflects the Anglican tradition.

Sponsored academies

Sponsored academies are state funded independent schools with considerable powers of self-determination. They are usually set up to replace under-performing schools with the aim of improving educational standards. The CofE, through the dioceses, is either sponsor, co-sponsor or a key partner in academies located in areas of considerable deprivation. The academies are a key part of the Church's mission to those communities in need of regeneration and they provide beacons of hope and success. There are 250 'sponsored' Church of England academies, 42 of which are secondary academies.

Converter academies

Outstanding schools and schools ranked good with outstanding features by Ofsted can now become academies. All other schools will also be eligible, providing they work in partnership with a high-performing school that will help drive improvement. These do not require a sponsor but enjoy the same freedoms as other academies. The religious designation and other key characteristics (such as the admissions policy) remain. Church schools wishing to convert must have the approval of the trustees - usually the Diocesan Board of Education. There are 656 'converter' Church of England academies, 88 of which are secondary academies.

There are also 14 open free schools, which are newly opened academies.

Independent schools

There are over 200 independent schools designated as having a Church of England or Anglican character.

Affiliated schools

Many dioceses run schemes whereby schools can affiliate to and enjoy the benefits of being part of the Church school family.

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Governors

Governors are volunteers who offer strategic guidance and support to their school communities. Anybody over-18 can be a governor and it is a great way to give your skills back to the community. The Education Office, working with diocesan education teams, supports the training, resourcing and development of governors in Church of England schools.

If you have any questions concerning governance issues, becoming a governor, or are looking for training as a governor in a Church of England school please contact your [diocesan education office](#).

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Admissions

Schools' admissions policies are not decided at a national level. They are set at a local level so that they can take into account the specific needs of their communities.

In Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools the Governing body is the admissions authority. For academies the Academy Trust or Multi-Academy Trust itself acting through its board of directors is the admissions authority. As such, it is the governing body or board of directors that draws up the admissions policy in consultation with the diocese, the LA and all other admissions authorities in the area.

In Voluntary Controlled schools it is the Local Authority that is the admissions authority.

Admissions policies must conform to the Government's Admissions Code and have regard to the school's Trust deed.

If you have any queries about a school's specific admissions policy please begin by contacting your [diocesan education office](#).

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History of church schools

The Church of England has always been concerned with education in many forms and the history of Church schools began when the National Society for the Promotion of Education was founded in 1811.

[Learn more](#)

Our involvement in education throughout our history flows out of the Church of England's vision to provide education and learning to all. Our work with children and young people, Church of England schools, our involvement in further education and higher education, and our founding and development of the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership all share this common history.

The Church of England has always been concerned with education in many forms. Our first large scale involvement in the education and nurture of children in the Christian faith came through the Sunday School Movement of the late 18th Century. Sunday schools had existed before, but the beginning of the movement is credited to Robert Raikes, a publisher and Anglican layman, who in the 1780s promoted the idea of providing education to working children. With children working in factories six days a week, the best available time was on Sundays, and within decades attending Sunday school had become a common aspect of childhood. This movement was cross-denominational, with the aim to teach literacy, as well as a knowledge of the Bible and the Christian faith.

The Church of England became involved in week day schooling with the building of 'National Schools' that educated children during the week as well as on Sundays. It was in 1811 that The National Society for Promoting Religious Education was established under the leadership of Joshua Watson. The National Society was founded when there was no state system of education in place, and the Society's hugely ambitious vision was to open a church school in every parish. A major fundraising campaign was launched, encouraging parishes and clergy to apply for grants to build schools, and although the aim of every parish was not reached, the Society's achievement was extraordinary. By 1813, in just two years, they had built 30 schools and it was largely due to this initiative that Parliament established a universal right to education for all children. Then by 1861 there were 12,000 schools 'in union' with the National Society across England and Wales, all funded by donations. Schools were to offer education based on the teachings of the Church of England, with the belief that moral and spiritual education was as important to children as learning skills or a trade.

As well as funding and building schools, the Society had to address the problem of teacher supply. Teacher training colleges were established, first by the National Society itself and then by the Dioceses. The Church of England established the first higher education institutions open to women, and this network of teacher training colleges persisted well into the 1980s. Some of those colleges have closed or have become part of another HE institution. Their heirs are the 11 universities with a Church of England foundation, which still all provide teacher education. Our involvement in further and higher education does not stop with teacher training. The Church of England Education Office also engages in the sector by supporting HE chaplaincy and we also support FE chaplaincy and the development of FE strategy and policy.

Our story with schools continues through our support of 4,600 Church of England schools, and this legacy is set to strengthen and grow. With our Vision for Education at its core, we are seeking to develop our provision through the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership. The Foundation for Educational Leadership aims to build a national movement of inspirational leaders equipped to transform education. Just as we began, educating children to help them flourish regardless of their background or starting point, so we mean to continue as we move forward with this deeply Christian vision to provide an education that enables 'life in all its fullness'.

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School anniversaries

If your Church of England school is celebrating a significant anniversary you can order a certificate to commemorate the occasion.

The certificate is signed by the Archbishop of Canterbury (President of The National Society), the Bishop of Ely (Chair of the National Society Council) and Revd Nigel Genders (Chief Education Officer).

Please use the form below to order a certificate. Orders should be submitted at least 2 months before the certificate is required.

- 1 Current Start
- 2 Preview
- 3 Complete

1 of 3 (0%)

Indicates required field

Contact name

Email

Full address of school

The school is celebrating its:

?Centenary

?150th anniversary

?200th anniversary

?Other

If other please state:

The date of the anniversary

The school's full name to appear on the scroll

Date the certificate required

Preview

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Diocese

Main administrative and pastoral area in the Church of England – often roughly coincides with local county boundaries. There are 42 dioceses.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies>