



Two Church of England schools are in the running to become Primary School of the year, as the 10th national School Awards take place in London on Friday night (22 June).

Christ Church Primary School in Sparkbrook, Birmingham and Countess Anne School in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, have been shortlisted for the main prize, while a further seven Church of England schools have been nominated in other specialist categories.

Of the main finalists, Christ Church School made the news earlier in the year when rated Birmingham's top primary school by a local study. Its Sparkbrook ward is among the five per cent most deprived in England, with high rates of unemployment and illiteracy. The parish ranks in the top one per cent of deprivation nationally according to data held by Church Urban Fund, as well as being one of the most ethnically diverse in the Church of England. Around 90 per cent of the school's pupils are from Muslim families.

Christ Church School's performance figures for pupils aged between seven and 11 (key stage two) are in the top two per cent nationally, and in November 2017, the school achieved an 'outstanding' grading from Ofsted in all areas, following the same result in a \*SIAMS Church School inspection a year previously. In the latter, the school was credited for 'astute spiritual leadership' which was 'instrumental in the creation of a distinctively Christian school that is inclusive, welcoming and harmonious.

Debbie Westwood, Headteacher of Christ Church, said "It feels amazing to be shortlisted and we are thrilled that our lovely little school is being recognised for all the hard work and commitment shown by all members of its family.

"Working in a Church school in a multi-faith area is a real privilege, and our Christian distinctiveness is key to our success. Following Jesus's ministry in meeting the needs of the poor and the undervalued is really applicable to the role Christ Church Primary School plays in the local community.

"Everyone who visits our school tells us that they feel welcomed, valued, cared for and loved. We are able to make a difference to our children, raising their aspirations to become the adults who will make a difference to our area of Sparkbrook."

The other Church of England finalist for primary school of the year, Countess Anne School in Hatfield, achieved 'good' Ofsted and 'outstanding' SIAMS results in 2015. The school's 'Achievement For All' curriculum seeks to provide pupils with a caring and inspirational environment, with opportunities to interact with things that are 'bigger' than the school. This came to fruition in 2017 as a gardening club run by parents and staff was awarded a gold medal by the Chelsea Flower Show in 2017 for its contribution to a sensory garden project.

David Lodge, Headteacher of Countess Anne School, said that the nomination had caused "huge excitement."

"We aim to provide pupils with a rich experience in school, addressing all their needs, not just academic or scholastic ones," he said.

“The strength of our school community and our Christian ethos are among the stand-out qualities of Countess Anne’s, as helping children to understand that they can achieve their full potential as human beings starts with helping them understand that they have the same value as any other child and can do anything in life.”

Elsewhere, Seal Primary school in Kent is among those shortlisted for the creative school of the year. The school introduced vlogging to the curriculum last year, with the results visible on the school's [YouTube channel](#).

Another school shortlisted in the creative category, Staindrop Primary School in County Durham, captured local media attention by holding a ‘[Great eBay Sell Off](#).’ A whole school creative project, each class was challenged to sell an object on eBay, with whoever made the most money crowned the winners. Objects sold included a bucket, an old water bottle and a welly.

Steve Whelerton, Headteacher of Staindrop Church of England School explained: “Creativity isn’t an add-on or something that we do occasionally; it happens every day throughout the school. Our teachers are constantly trying to come up with new ways of making lessons exciting and fun, taking time get to know the children and crafting learning around their interests.”

Meanwhile Beswick & Watton School, in Yorkshire has been shortlisted for the sustainable schools award, after using a Heritage Lottery grant to fund a biodiversity project transforming its grounds into a pollinator-friendly habitat. Staff, pupils, parents and volunteers all pitched-in to install a fruit cage, wildlife pond, vegetable beds, polytunnel, a sensory garden and an exercise trail.

There are around 4,700 Church of England schools across the country, with more than one million current pupils. Roughly 15 million people alive today attended a Church of England school, which operate for the good of the whole community, irrespective of families’ faith backgrounds.

Speaking ahead of the awards, The Church of England’s Chief Education Officer, Nigel Genders, said “It’s a wonderful testimony to the staff and pupils of these Church schools that they have been nominated for tonight’s awards and we congratulate them for having made it to this stage.

“Like thousands of Church of England schools across the country, these schools play a vital role at the heart of their communities, offering excellent education and enabling children to truly flourish. It is so good to see this recognised and I am delighted to be able to offer my congratulations and an enormous ‘well done’ to all nine schools involved.”

Friday’s award ceremony will see category winners announced, as well as the presentation of a lifetime achievement award, and overall school of the year, selected from the winners of the early years, primary, secondary and alternative provision categories. The awards, organised by *Tes*, will be held at London’s Grosvenor Hotel, hosted by Comedian Al Murray. The awards aim to celebrate commitment, quality and innovation of teachers and support staff from across the UK.

The full list of Church of England Schools shortlisted is as follows:

**Primary school of the year**

- Christ Church, Church of England Primary School, Sparkbrook (Diocese of Birmingham)
- Countess Anne Church of England School, Hatfield (Diocese of St Albans)

**Employer of the year**

- St Peter’s Church of England Primary School, Farnworth (Diocese of Manchester)

**Sustainable schools award**

- Beswick & Watton Church of England VC Primary, Driffield (Diocese of York)
- Accrington St Christopher’s Church of England High School, Accrington (Diocese of Blackburn)

**Creative school of the year**

- Dagenham Park Church of England School, Dagenham (Diocese of Chelmsford)
- Seal Church of England Primary School, Sevenoaks (Diocese of Rochester)
- Staindrop Church of England Primary, Darlington (Diocese of Durham)
- St Marylebone Church of England School, Marylebone (Diocese of London)

[Full list of nominees](#)

# Notes for Editors

- \*SIAMS: Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools. [More...](#)
- [Church Urban Fund data: Sparkbrook](#)

The Church of England vision for education is Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good - with Jesus' promise of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart. The key values of Church of England education are wisdom, hope, community and dignity. Approximately 1 million children attend Church of England schools today. A quarter of primary schools are Church of England, which operate for the good of the whole community, irrespective of faith background, meaning children from all backgrounds may attend.

- Approximately one 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.

## [More information on Church of England Schools](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/church-england-schools-line-awards>