

Last week, the Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, told the Church of England's National Education Conference that the C of E was 'one of the biggest names in Education,' writes the Church of England's Chief Education Officer, Nigel Genders.



Rose Hudson-Wilkin: addressed the National Education Conference

With 4,700 schools nationally, this is a description we are happy to own, and our commitment to education remains as strong as it has always been.

Mr Hinds continued that The Church of England 'knows a thing or two about character,' citing this as a reason that 88 per cent of our schools are rated good or outstanding – higher than the wider national figure.

Character and Virtue, for Church of England schools, are not new aspirations – rather they are topics we have been talking about for nearly 200 years.

Our recent Vision for Education, *Deeply Christian – Serving the Common Good*, sets this out, saying that individual development, both inside and outside of the curriculum, should sit alongside a deep understanding of what it means to live well as community.

This means our students are shaped for success, but not at the expense of those with whom they share their world, both locally and globally. They learn how to achieve for the whole community, as well as personal success.

This outward view is one of the reasons Church of England Schools are so popular, and many are oversubscribed. The majority have no faith selection and are open to families of all faiths and none.

We frequently hear from Muslim parents who tell us that they choose our schools precisely because we take faith seriously and offer an approach to education that gives attention to spiritual as well as academic development.

Another speaker at last week's conference was the Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to the Speaker of the Commons. Following a keynote speech which urged a curbing of adversarial politics, Rose revealed that she had recently suffered an episode of racial abuse while travelling on public transport – being told to 'go back to Africa'. It had been the first time she had experienced this in three decades.

Such accounts, amid an alarming rise in reports of racial abuse over recent years, are indicative of a rise in nationalistic tendencies both in this country and further afield. In this context, we are proud that our Church of England schools continue to model an education where selection is not by cheque-book or postcode, and where schools reflect the full diversity of the communities they serve.

Taking faith seriously does not equate to religious privilege, but instead makes for a society where diversity and working for the common good can benefit every community – and we are committed to delivering this.

# Notes for editors

The Church of England's vision for education is deeply Christian, with Jesus' promise of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart. In line with the Church of England's role as the established Church, our vision is for the common good of the whole community.

## Types of Church of England School

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.
- around 2,000 Voluntary Controlled schools, of which all but 20 are primary schools.
- around 1,700 Voluntary Aided schools, mainly primary schools, with 53 secondary schools and four All-Through schools.
- 250 'sponsored' Church of England academies, 42 of which are secondary academies.
- 656 'converter' Church of England academies, 88 of which are secondary academies.
- 14 open free schools, which are newly opened academies.

## Some facts about Church Schools

- 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 656 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.

