



# Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education

## **Creating a Theologically Rooted Christian Vision For Our Schools**

### **Introduction:**

Many schools in the Birmingham Diocese have spent time reviewing and recreating their school vision and many others may be considering how to move forward in the future.

The vision of any school is essential, regardless of its designation. A unique Church school will be rich in its history and heritage and it is prudent to look back at the original vision where possible, to appreciate its purpose. Wider guidance from the Church of England around flourishing schools as well as its own vision for education 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good' provides essential wisdom. The SIAMS (church school inspections) framework 2023 focuses on the vision of the school and the impact it has on everyone in its community. All aspects of the inspection day connect to the impact the vision has. It is therefore important to have a vision that encompasses all aspects of the SIAMS framework.

The aim of this document is to support all Church schools in the Diocese to establish a distinctively Christian vision that meets the needs of its own community. Hopefully, leaders will feel empowered to create a genuine, theologically rooted vision that will be at the heart of the school's effectiveness.

### **Theologically Rooted:**

There are many ways to approach the meaning of this term. The word Theology is the study of God. In this context, the God of the Bible and Christian history. There is extensive teaching on this aspect that can be explored. In a nutshell... a theologically rooted vision is one that includes an appreciation of the nature of God, the teachings of Jesus and the creation of the kingdom of God on earth.

### **The vision of the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Education as an example:**

The Birmingham Diocese vision contains key statements that have theological roots:

*'Educating for fullness of life for all'* is based on the Bible verse John 10:10. This is theologically rooted as it refers to Jesus' teachings that encourage a life lived to the full to develop the kingdom of God on earth.

*'Church schools living out the good news of Jesus: transforming the world by transforming lives'* This is not linked to a particular Bible verse, but again shares a vision of the kingdom of God on earth based on the good news shared by Jesus.

The vision also contains key values, especially love: *'Within our schools, children and young people should receive and be enabled to give love.'* Such values are at the heart of the messages shared by Jesus and provide a great platform for moral, ethical and spiritual growth for children and adults.

### **Birmingham Schools as examples:**

Many schools have a vision that is taken directly from a Bible verse. For example,

*'Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.'* 1 Peter 4:10

*'For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'* Jeremiah 29:11

*'In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.'* Matthew 5:16

Other schools have a vision statement that is supported by a Bible verse. Many focus on key biblical values:

*Learning, loving and sharing, guided by Jesus. 'Start children off on the way they should go and even when they are old they will not turn from it.'* Proverbs 22:6

*Becoming the person God made me to be: living, learning, loving. "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made"* Psalm 139:14

### **Values:**

In making vision decisions, looking at a set of important values that sit alongside, should be considered. The Church of England names 4 basic elements that permeate its vision: *Wisdom, Hope, Community and Dignity*. To deepen the theological roots, some schools choose values that are clearly explored in the Bible such as the *'fruits of the spirit'* listed in Galatians 5. Others have a small number that encompass a wide spectrum such as *Faith, Hope and Love*. In deciding on the values that matter most to your school, it is good to explore the Biblical significance of them. Having a verse that children can explore for each value supports a deeper knowledge of the guidance within the Bible. An important caveat though... adding a Bible quote to a vision that could run in any school is not addressing the importance of theological rooting.

**Where to start:**

Any vision needs to begin with the community it serves. Meet with pupils, parents, staff, governors, academy leaders, members of the local church community. A local Church may have a vision that you might want to link up with. Ensure that it is a shared vision, not one imposed by one or two people. Consider the current vision of the academy trust where relevant, as you would want the school vision to dovetail well with it.

Look back at the historical context of the school and the purpose of its creation. This will ensure that the school today is still fulfilling its origins. Refer to guidance from the Church of England to ensure your vision has genuine Christian distinctiveness. Ask the team at the Diocese to look through your plans before you make final decisions.

Focus on the impact your vision will have on the pupils and adults. An effective vision will enable them all to flourish, to grow spiritually, to learn together, building strong relationships and appreciate the positive effects of God's kingdom on earth.

Under the current framework, SIAMS asks you to provide a vision that is no more than 100 words in length when they are inspecting. You could have a more detailed account, but ensure you can have a summary in place that fits this restriction.

Finally, try to establish a long-term vision that will serve the school community beyond the present, that will inspire and motivate generations to come.



**Birmingham Diocesan  
Board of Education**