

# CHURCH SCHOOL ETHOS

## A TOOL FOR SELF-EVALUATION

Schools are increasingly reflective organisations and becoming more adept at evaluating curriculum, effectiveness of teaching and learning and their ability to provide “best value”.

Church schools place much emphasis on the fundamental nature of ethos to all that they provide and achieve. This is increasingly recognised by many not directly involved in Church schools. For example, former education secretary, David Blunkett, expressed the wish that Church school ethos could be bottled and spread more broadly.

This document attempts to define some major elements of Church school ethos, including many which they have in common with other schools. It then sets out where evidence may be found in order to evaluate strengths and points for development and provides pro-formas for evaluation and action planning. There are also sample questionnaires in order to gather evidence from pupils, parents, staff, governors and others.

Schools may choose to use this document in its entirety or to adapt it to their own needs, perhaps focusing on one or a few elements at a time. The overview will help schools in their selection.

It could be used in:

- governing body meetings in their roles of monitoring and strategic management
- staff meetings
- in-service training
- school development planning
- performance management contexts
- working party meetings collecting portfolios of evidence

As with all forms of self-assessment there will be times when schools will need to involve some form of external moderation to check their procedures and findings. Section 23 inspection will provide one such opportunity and the Diocesan Board of Education will be pleased to advise schools of other possibilities.

Thanks to the following for their expertise, advice and time given to drawing up this guidance:

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- Sheila Frain, RE co-ordinator, St Michael's CE Primary School, Alkrington
- Phil Grady, headteacher of Bury CE High School
- John Gregory, headteacher of St James CE Primary School, Daisy Hill
- Pauline Hearn, assistant headteacher of St James CE High School, Farnworth
- Beverley Holmes, headteacher of St John with St Michael CE Primary School, Shawforth
- Jan Howard, former headteacher of St Mary's CE Primary School, Balderstone
- Christine Hustwick, governor of The Blue Coat CE School, Oldham
- Pat Jolley, headteacher of St Peter CE Junior School, Leigh
- Lesley Jolly, governor of Hesketh Fletcher CE High School, Atherton
- Annette Patterson, deputy headteacher of St James CE High School, Farnworth
- Janette Veale, head of Religious Education, Crompton House High School, Oldham
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## Overview

These two pages enable schools to see readily the eleven areas and their various aspects which we consider to be at the core of Church school ethos. The list should make it easier for schools to select the area(s) on which they wish to concentrate.

## **1. Pupils**

*The degree to which:*

- pupils feel valued, unique and precious as children of God
- pupils' growth and learning are the reasons for the school's existence
- pupils are engaged in something enjoyable and worthwhile and meaningful
- pupils have a sense of pride in themselves and their school

## **2. Staff**

*The degree to which:*

- all staff feel that they are valued and affirmed
- staff are accorded professional and personal respect
- staff are supported and challenged by the church and by all involved in the life of the school
- all staff see the importance of, and derive a sense of fulfillment from, their work in school
- staff are committed to the Christian ethos of the school

## **3. School leadership**

*The degree to which:*

- the headteacher and foundation governors promote the Christian vision for the school
- the headteacher, governors and senior management maintain and enhance the Christian ethos of the school
- the headteacher, governors and senior management provide direction, support and encouragement to the school community

## **4. Relationships**

*The degree to which:*

- fruitful and caring relationships exist between members of the school community, characterised by Christian love, kindness, respect and trust and a mutual concern for each other's well-being

## **5. Parent – school relationship**

*The degree to which:*

- parents and carers are aware of and support the Christian character of the school
- they feel that they are treated as partners in their children's education
- they are kept informed and up-to-date
- they are recognised as having a vital contribution to make, and assisted in their efforts to do so

## **6. Community and church**

*The degree to which:*

- the school feels valued and supported by the local churches and community
- the school actively supports the local churches and community
- the school supports the worldwide church
- the school shares its understanding of its role with the church and community

## **7. Worship**

*The degree to which:*

- worship is seen as a focus for the life of the school
- pupils and staff derive inspiration, affirmation of self and strength from worship
- there is an explicit link between the Christian foundation, worship policy and general practice
- pupils and staff have opportunities to experience spiritual growth from worship

## **8. Teaching and learning**

*The degree to which:*

- the learning experience is stimulating and demonstrates the core value of care for each other
- organisation of, and access to, resources encourage independence and inter-dependence
- the school provides a calm and purposeful environment in which the work and life of the community is able to flourish without interruption or intimidation
- the school challenges pupils to achieve their full potential

## **9. Extra-curricular activities**

*The degree to which:*

- opportunities are provided for personal development, including spiritual development
- good relationships are fostered outside the taught curriculum

## **10. The physical environment**

*The degree to which:*

- the school witnesses to its Christian foundation through visual symbols
- the school witnesses to its Christian foundation by being a secure, welcoming and inspiring environment
- the school provides an environment where individuals may grow spiritually
- all feel a shared responsibility for the environment

## **11. Equality and justice**

*The degree to which:*

- there is a commitment to promote the Christian values of justice, equality and respect for the individual, which is understood and shared by all and reflected in the everyday life of the school
- good order is achieved and maintained with justice and compassion, protecting the needs of all

# I. Pupils

*The degree to which:*

**pupils feel valued, unique and precious as children of God;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- pupils
- parents, particularly parents of children new to the school
- governors
- inspectors
- supply staff
- circle time
- assemblies
- other curriculum time
- extra-curricular activities

**pupils' growth and learning are the reasons for the school's existence;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- pupil portfolios
- reports to parents
- mission statement and school aims
- progress shown in SAT results
- policies - e.g. inclusion

**pupils are engaged in something enjoyable and worthwhile and meaningful;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- pupils
- pupils' behaviour
- working atmosphere

**pupils have a sense of pride in themselves and their school.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- care for buildings and environment
- displays
- pupils' appearance
- pupils' attendance and punctuality
- extra-curricular participation
- pupils' behaviour
- school council

# EVALUATION SHEET

When evidence for different aspects of ethos has been collected, judgements need to be made as to what the school has achieved.

These sheets can be used to record judgements and opportunities and challenges for further development.

## I. Pupils

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
pupils feel valued, unique and precious as children of God;			
pupils' growth and learning are the reasons for the school's existence;			
pupils are engaged in something enjoyable, worthwhile and meaningful;			
pupils have a sense of pride in themselves and their school.			

## Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	success criteria

## 2. Staff

*The degree to which:*

**all staff feel that they are valued and affirmed;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- staff
- staff involvement
- staff attendance and punctuality
- turnover of staff
- staff interaction with others involved in school life

**staff are accorded professional and personal respect;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- professional development records
- performance management procedures
- staff contributions to school development
- open door policy
- clear communication structure
- minutes and notes of meetings

**staff are supported and challenged by the church and by all involved in the life of the school;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- staff
- clergy and/or church members
- school support for church events
- worship records
- governing body minutes

**all staff see the importance of, and derive a sense of fulfilment from, their work in school;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- staff comments, interviews or questionnaire
- pupils' progress
- staff care for the environment

**staff are committed to the Christian ethos of the school.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- staff attendance at acts of worship
- staff leadership of acts of worship
- staff involvement in church events and worship

## 2. Staff

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
all staff feel that they are valued and affirmed;			
staff are accorded professional and personal respect;			
staff are supported and challenged by the church and by all involved in the life of the school;			
all staff see the importance of, and derive a sense of fulfillment from, their work in school;			
staff are committed to the Christian ethos of the school.			

### Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation

### 3. School leadership

*The degree to which:*

**the headteacher and foundation governors promote the Christian vision for the school;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- prominence of the mission statement
- use of National Society contracts
- links with Church and Diocese
- church support for school
- school support for church

**the headteacher, governors and senior management maintain and enhance the Christian ethos of the school;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- acts of worship
- policies
- job descriptions, person specifications and the appointment process
- governing body minutes
- school development plan

**the headteacher, governors and senior management provide direction, support and encouragement to the school community.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- development plan
- policies
- governing body minutes
- governors' involvement in school
- attendance of headteacher, governors and senior management at school activities
- involvement of headteacher, governors and senior management in extra-curricular activities
- the vision, commitment, conduct, management and teaching abilities of the headteacher and senior management team

### 3. School leadership

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
the headteacher and foundation governors promote the Christian vision for the school;			
the headteacher, governors and senior management maintain and enhance the Christian ethos of the school;			
the headteacher, governors and senior management provide direction, support and encouragement to the school community.			

#### Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation

## 4. Relationships

*The degree to which:*

**fruitful and caring relationships exist between members of the school community, characterised by Christian love, kindness, respect and trust and a mutual concern for each other's well-being.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- observation in playground
- mission statement and aims
- behaviour policy
- policies on personal issues
- knowledge of the children by headteacher and all staff
- staff involvement
- support for each member of the school community
- PTA / Friends involvement
- performance management procedures

#### 4. Relationships

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
fruitful and caring relationships exist between members of the school community, characterised by Christian love, kindness, respect and trust and a mutual concern for each other's well-being.			

#### Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation

## 5. Parent – school relationship

*The degree to which:*

**parents and carers are aware of and support the Christian character of the school;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- school brochure/prospectus
- questionnaire to parents and carers
- parents' and carers' attendance at acts of worship and school events in church
- information on church activities in newsletters
- non-withdrawal from worship and RE

**parents and carers feel that they are treated as partners in their children's education;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- home-school agreements
- questionnaire to parents
- consultation with parents and carers on, for example, policies and curriculum
- advance information on curriculum
- parents' and carers' attendance at meetings, events and progress meetings
- individual education plans

**parents and carers are kept informed and up-to-date;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- newsletters
- reports and target setting
- attendance at parents' evenings
- annual reports

**parents and carers are recognised as having a vital contribution to make, and assisted in their efforts to do so.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- information sent out on how to support children's education
- information on pupils' progress
- thank you letters to parents and carers
- timing of parents' meetings and events
- crêche for attendance at meetings and events
- use made of parents' and carers' help and expertise
- workshops and courses for parents
- open days
- availability of headteacher and staff

**5. Parent – school relationship**

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
parents and carers are aware of and support the Christian character of the school;			
they feel that they are treated as partners in their children’s education;			
they are kept informed and up-to-date;			
they are recognised as having a vital contribution to make, and assisted in their efforts to do so.			

**Priorities for development:**

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation

## 6. Community and church

*The degree to which:*

**the school feels valued and supported by the local churches and community;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- involvement of clergy and members of church and community in leading worship
- involvement of clergy and members of church and community on the governing body
- clergy, PCC and other church and community members' support of school life
- clergy, PCC and other church and community members' support for special occasions
- prayer support for the school
- publicity in the church magazine and community newsletters

**the school actively supports the local churches and community;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- joint ventures e.g. harvest, charity work, visits to Day Centres
- events for the community e.g. concerts, school fairs, parties
- publicity in the school newsletter
- contributions to church magazine and community newsletter
- school involvement in services e.g. Education Sunday, festivals
- prayers for the church and community
- children's developing attitudes, relationships, knowledge and understanding of church and community

**the school supports the world-wide church;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- charitable ventures e.g. harvest, sponsor a child
- curriculum plans involving the world-wide church
- twinning schools
- displays
- information in the library
- prayers and worship involving the world-wide church

**the school shares its understanding of its role with the church and community;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- the display and clear statement of the mission statement and aims
- the clarity of the admissions policy
- school prospectus
- community and church notice boards in school
- school publicity to the church and community
- home – school agreement
- questionnaire to parents

## 6. Community and church

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
the school feels valued and supported by the local churches and community;			
the school actively supports the local churches and community;			
the school supports the worldwide church;			
the school shares its understanding of its role with the church and community;			

### Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation

## 7. Worship

*The degree to which:*

**worship is seen as a focus for the life of the school;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- policy and planning for worship
- planned and significant time allocated for worship
- curriculum links to worship
- worship co-ordinator
- staff attendance
- visual focal point in the hall and classrooms

**there is an explicit link between the Christian foundation, worship policy and general practice;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- worship policy
- worship records
- observation of acts of worship
- clergy and / or church involvement

**pupils and staff have opportunities to experience spiritual growth from worship.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- worship records
- observation of acts of worship
- time, guidance and support given for reflection
- staff attendance at worship

**pupils and staff derive inspiration, affirmation of self and strength from worship;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- talking to staff and pupils
- response of staff and pupils in a variety of ways
- observation of acts of worship
- staff attendance at worship

## 7. Worship

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
worship is seen as a focus for the life of the school;			
pupils and staff derive inspiration, affirmation of self and strength from worship;			
there is an explicit link between the Christian foundation, worship policy and general practice;			
pupils and staff have opportunities to experience spiritual growth from worship.			

### Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments /evaluation

## 8. Teaching and learning

*The degree to which:*

**the learning experience is stimulating and demonstrates the core value of care for each other;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- curriculum records e.g. variety of learning methods, differentiation and inclusion
- learning environment e.g. interactive and stimulating displays
- classroom observation e.g. group organisation and variety of interaction
- inspection reports

**organisation of, and access to, resources encourage independence and inter-dependence;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- planning
- children's knowledge of targets and expectations
- children's involvement in self and peer evaluation
- observation of resources e.g. labelling, arrangement, quality, appropriateness to task
- observation of opportunities for children to work on their own and in a variety of groups
- systems of support e.g. from staff, outside agencies and other pupils

**the school provides a calm and purposeful environment in which the work and life of the community is able to flourish without interruption or intimidation;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- behaviour policy, including rewards and sanctions
- incident book
- observation
- attendance and punctuality records
- questionnaire to parents and pupils
- parents' comments on reports

**the school challenges pupils to achieve their full potential.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- observation of lessons
- scrutiny of books
- pupils' portfolios of evidence
- class records
- records of value added achievements
- parental comments
- questionnaire to parents and pupils
- variety of extra-curricular activities and opportunities
- records of celebration of pupil achievements

## 8. Teaching and learning

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
the learning experience is stimulating and demonstrates the core value of care for each other;			
organisation of, and access to, resources encourage independence and inter-dependence;			
the school provides a calm and purposeful environment in which the work and life of the community is able to flourish without interruption or intimidation;			
the school challenges pupils to achieve their full potential.			

### Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation

## 9. Extra-curricular activities

*The degree to which:*

**opportunities are provided for personal development, including spiritual development;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- list of extra-curricular clubs
- records of visits and visitors
- school support for charitable work
- inter-school events and school twinning
- pupils' involvement in religious events and organisations through school

**good relationships are fostered outside the taught curriculum.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- provision at lunchtime and before and after school
- observation of pupils at lunchtime and before and after school
- opportunities for community links and service and involvement with the community
- written and verbal comments by parents, other people and organisations

## 9. Extra-curricular activities

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
opportunities are provided for personal development, including spiritual development;			
good relationships are fostered outside the taught curriculum.			

### Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation

## 10. The physical environment

*The degree to which:*

**the school witnesses to its Christian foundation through visual symbols;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- Christian symbols in the entrance area and around school
- focal point in worship
- badges
- displays
- care for the school and its environment

**the school witnesses to its Christian foundation by being a secure, welcoming and inspiring environment;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- observation of the entrance area
- observation of notice boards and display areas
- visibility of the mission statement
- comments from staff, parents, pupils and visitors

**the school provides an environment where individuals may grow spiritually;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- children’s work
- provision for quiet, reflective times and places
- displays
- gardens and wildlife areas
- entrance area, hall and library
- class and children’s prayers on display

**all feel a shared responsibility for the environment.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- governing body minutes
- school development plan
- staff meeting minutes
- school council minutes
- observations in and around school
- roles of class and school monitors
- talking to school neighbours

**10. The physical environment**

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
the school witnesses to its Christian foundation through visual symbols;			

the school witnesses to its Christian foundation by being a secure, welcoming and inspiring environment;			
the school provides an environment where individuals may grow spiritually;			
all feel a shared responsibility for the environment.			

**Priorities for development:**

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation

## II. Equality and justice

*The degree to which:*

**there is a commitment to promote the Christian values of justice, equality and respect for the individual, which is understood and shared by all and reflected in the everyday life of the school;**

*Evidence gained from:*

- mission statement

- school and class rules
- inclusion policy
- special needs policy
- behaviour policy
- worship plans and records
- celebration assembly
- displays of good work and awards
- awards to the school e.g. Healthy Schools Award and Investors in People
- professional development of all staff
- contribution of all staff to school development and life
- school council discussions
- information sent to parents
- lunch and break time policies and practices
- observations

**good order is achieved and maintained with justice and compassion, protecting the needs of all.**

*Evidence gained from:*

- mission statement
- inclusion policy
- equal opportunities policy
- behaviour policy
- display of school and class rules
- home – school agreements
- parental views
- incident book
- individual education plans
- displays

## 11. Equality and justice

<i>The degree to which:</i>	almost fully	getting there	early stages
there is a commitment to promote the Christian values of justice, equality and respect for the individual, which is understood and shared by all and reflected in the everyday life of the school;			
good order is achieved and maintained with justice and compassion, protecting the needs of all.			

### Priorities for development:

action	by whom	when	costs	other comments / evaluation