



MANCHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

ANNUAL REVIEW FOR DIOCESAN SYNOD

2024–2025



MANCHESTER DIOCESE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

MDBE seeks to serve both churches and schools across Manchester Diocese. We work in partnership with the DBF to deliver the diocesan vision and strategy. October 2024 saw a new Board of Education being established with the following members. The Director of Education holds the position of Secretary for the Board.

The Rt Revd Mark Davies	Chair/Bishop of Middleton
Hilary Henderson	Bishop's appointment
Vacancy	Bishop's appointment
Revd Adele McKie	Elected – Bolton Clergy
Canon Jill Pilling	Elected – Bolton Lay
Rev Canon Paul Hutchins	Elected – Manchester Clergy
Canon Dr Addy Lazz-Onyenobi	Elected – Manchester Lay
Revd Kirsty Screeton	Elected – Rochdale Clergy
Kathryn Hampson	Elected – Rochdale Lay
Rev Karen Hopwood-Owen	Elected – Salford Clergy
Iain Hodcroft	Elected – Salford Lay
Gareth Elswood	Co-opted – Executive Headteacher, St John Chrysostom Federation
Karen Sudworth	Co-opted – Retired Headteacher, Canon Slade Academy
Elliot Costas-Walker	Co-opted – Director of Learning & Partnerships, Forward as One Multi Academy Trust
Vacancy	Co-opted

The Board met three times during 2024-25 with Finance and General Purposes, Schools and Academy committees feeding reports into it. July 2025 saw board members and all staff gather for a visioning day. We revisited the history of the Church of England (CE) involvement in education, reaffirmed our mission, reflected on work during the year as well as considered future possibilities. It was a rewarding day of learning, reviewing, challenging and fellowshiping together and has been so valuable in writing this annual review.

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024-25

1. Develop ministry to/for/with children and young people in both churches and schools.

Ensuring that:

- Work with children and young people is central to each deanery's mission
- Opportunities are provided for children and young people to explore faith in schools and churches
- Training and support for lay and clergy equips them for ministry with children and young people
- We identify and develop the ministry gifts of children and young people and facilitate opportunities for them to be used

Progress/Impact:

2024-25 saw a fully staffed team of Man Dio Growing Faith (MDGF) deanery workers being established. Each was assigned to a particular deanery and mission community within that deanery. There was evidence of new worshipping communities for children, young people and their families being established and grown within both churches and schools. For example, Family Time service at St Peter's Leigh has grown to approximately 65 people attending, 20 of whom are children.

A Christian/confirmation club run in a CE primary school resulted in 11 children being confirmed and 4 being baptised. Weekly family time collective worship sessions in a Wigan primary school have on average 25 families regularly attending. 'This is Church' services especially for children and families with Special Needs are now taking place at St Luke's Benchill.

We have seen 3 new forest churches being set up in Manchester South and Stretford, supported by the MDGF team with other team members supporting churches in running 'Experience Christmas' and 'Experience Easter' events for local primary school pupils. Home-church-school links remain a priority across all aspects of MDBE work, through the work of diocesan Children and Youth Officers, the Places Project (PP) and MDGF project.

In Bolton a 'Love Your Neighbour' initiative was successful at building such links. 'Love Your Neighbour' involved year 8 form groups from Canon Slade High School being twinned with churches across Bolton deanery.

Highlights included:

- Windows designed by the group that depicted the Easter story and were displayed within St Maxentius church.
- An open-door event for older members of the community held at St Andrew's, Over Hulton.
- Walmsley church volunteers supported students in establishing 3 eco spaces within the school grounds with gardening club volunteers taking tubs of flowers back to the church.
- In partnership with Oldhams Church, volunteers and students worked with a local artist to create display boards expressing Christian values that were then displayed around the estate to encourage residents.

During the year an external evaluation of Phase 1 of PP took place. In broad summary it found:

‘Phase 1 shows what is possible to achieve within CofE schools, especially where they are seen as being of equal value to parishes and not just conduits; schools’ mission has its own distinctive value. Local ownership and freedom to be creative go hand-in-hand, and this project should be viewed as a very helpful long-term investment into the spiritual lives and leadership development of children and young people in Bolton.’

We are so blessed to have been able to expand and continue this project until the end of December 2028. Fresh Expressions of church that began in phase 1 are continuing to bear fruit. For example, the monthly Café Church at St Peter’s CE School, Farnworth, now in its’ 3rd year, has grown significantly in numbers to 39 children, 28 adults and 3 volunteers being regularly involved. June 2025 also saw 4 extra café church sessions for those wanting to go deeper in their faith, attended by 3 families.

Wiggle Worship continues to impact and engage our youngest children across the diocese, with Manchester Cathedral, churches and schools involved in its delivery. Training for Wiggle Worship saw the involvement of 152 people during 2024–25. An exciting initiative this year was a follow-on worship programme called ‘Lift Off’ (Living In Faith Together) being launched with the aim of encouraging those children who are familiar with Wiggle Worship as they move from early years into Year 1 and beyond. An initial Lift Off session involved children exploring the story of David and Goliath. They considered what it means for God to be our strength and shield. We are hopeful Lift Off will, in time, be as widely used as Wiggle Worship. We have seen continued growth in Early Years ministry, especially with the additional appointment of an additional Early Years worker within Bolton deanery. Such growth has included new Wiggle Worship opportunities in school nursery classes.

Distinctly Christian toddler groups continue to flourish with at least 9 new groups being established and 20 toddler group leaders and volunteers being involved in training and support in their parish contexts. As a direct result of intervention we have seen 1000 early years children engaged with early years discipleship programmes. Particularly encouraging are stories of families connected to early years groups in local primary schools who have joined the local church as a result, as has happened with a family at St George’s Church, Bolton. 2025–26 will see more early years hubs established as well as an early years conference for clergy and church volunteers taking place in November 2025.



Supporting children as they transition from primary to secondary school remained a priority throughout the year, but especially during the summer term. Over 5,500 pupils, staff and clergy attended the Year 6 Leavers services at Manchester Cathedral. 121 primary schools attended the services, with 11 being schools that had not attended within the past 2 years. The services focused on the concept of prayer, providing the message that prayer is an opportunity for all to commune with God, to hear His voice and seek His wisdom. Prior to the event, pupils created prayer chains that in turn adorned the cathedral throughout the week. Each school made a prayer box that contained prayers of blessing. Boxes were swapped and returned to schools to be used by future year 6 pupils. The worship, led by iSing Pop was inclusive, joyful and spiritually moving. The inclusion of worship flags and scarves for all to accompany a rendition of 'A Million Colours' written by our very own Ni-Cola Scott, Shades Lead and Paul Saxon, Chaplain at Canon Slade High School was a highlight of each service. Feedback included such comments as:

‘It was so well organised, child-friendly, impactful and full of Christian hope, love and prayer..... I can’t tell you how lovely it was to be part of it and to watch. Some of our children were singing songs and doing actions as they walked back to Victoria for the tram home.’
(Headteacher)

‘The staff and children loved it. All of us... really enjoyed singing and dancing to the songs.... The children continued their singing on the way home and we all agreed it was the best service yet.’ (Deputy Headteacher)

‘It was by far the most spiritually uplifting service I have ever attended. The passion provided and promoted by all the organisers of the event is to be commended. Staff and children came alive and they’re still singing, dancing and rejoicing today.’ (Headteacher)

In Bolton through the work of PP the Beyond transition programme ran throughout the year. Workshops were delivered in 13 schools. Clergy and lay volunteers across 5 churches supported the programme. Highlights included Year 6 pupils from Bolton St Catherine’s Primary School visiting Turret House of Prayer in Clitheroe for a retreat day. Members of PP team accompanied them as they explored the foundations that would help them stand strong in year 7. Prayer stations linked to transitions were also explored. Pupils involved in Beyond reported:

‘It helped me to see God is with me everywhere I am.’
‘I enjoyed learning about God and Jesus....He gives us power to live, to move and to be who we are.’
‘I started the session more worried than I have been but by the end I felt better about High School.’



Work within Places Project also included a few community schools with pupils from Red Lane Community School visiting St James' Church, supported by clergy and PP youth team to explore how God can help in times of change. Many pupils were due to move up into to Bolton St Catherine's Academy and on a recent taster day were pleased to connect with members of PP again.

Other transition focused work included the MDGF team running 8 Emerge transition events across the remaining 6 deaneries, involving approximately 800 pupils from 19 schools. Volunteers representing at least 13 churches were involved. Through such events children heard how God goes before them and will be by their side as they move into high school. Such events impact positively on volunteers, as was the case for those involved from the Benefice of Atherton, Hindsford and Howe Bridge, who are now keen to be involved in further schools work with the deanery enabler.

Since September 2024 we have seen further expansion of the Equip programme as we seek to support, resource and equip paid and volunteer children and youth workers across the diocese. Visiting speakers included Becca Dean from Ridley Hall, Cambridge where she serves as tutor in youth ministry and Mark Griff from St Padarn's Institute, where he was Dean of Discipleship, now Director of Missional Resources, Scripture Union. Their sessions focused on further development and understanding of 'intergenerational ministry' and outreach approaches, including 'effective strategies for reaching children and young people.'

Training sessions ran across the year with total attendance of 200+, recognising some will have accessed several sessions. The programme highlight was the Equip weekend where those on ALM/General Pathway joined together and explored aspects of children and youth ministry, such as, child faith development and how to plan youth and children's sessions to implement best practice. This year 30 people attended the weekend with 11 participating in the Lay Ministry Programme. Feedback was again encouraging with one participant reporting

'I found the whole weekend was helpful. I found the planning a session to be really beneficial and something that I'm going to be applying to my sessions from now on.'

Recently strategies have involved gathering those paid children and youth workers from across the diocese in order to offer support and a community where all can give and receive.





MDBE continued to recognize the value of chaplaincy across the school and university sectors, in particular where these link directly with local churches. Chaplaincy assistant church/school commitment within PP was reviewed with a 50/50 time split across church and school agreed. Such work within CE high schools across Bolton deanery continued to feed directly into local church youth groups and the gathering of said groups for a joint annual weekend event, 'Catalyst' is now established practice.

Thirty young people from local parish youth groups joined together for a residential to focus on 2 key themes.

1. Life in all its fullness (John 10:10)
2. Do not conform to the pattern of this world (Romans 12:2)

A few young people have taken on leadership roles within such groups as they grow in their discipleship. Likewise, the annual Finnish confirmation camp at Scargill House provided opportunity for a couple of our youth to develop and deliver their leadership capacities. Others are involved as young leaders within local church youth groups. Training in how to establish and lead Youth Sacred Spaces took place with an accompanying Padlet (online) resource being made available. The MDGF deanery hubs also created a platform to explore Youth Sacred Spaces. Consequently, there has been significant growth in this area with new Sacred Spaces set up in Bury and Rossendale as well as Manchester South and Stretford, alongside others across the diocese being in the pipeline.

University chaplaincy was reviewed considering the closure of St Peter's House, Manchester. A revised vision for distinctly missional chaplaincy was established and the post of Lead Chaplain for the 3 Manchester Universities recruited to. We look forward with anticipation to the growth and fruit of this work as local churches are encouraged to partner in the vision.

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024-25

2. Develop the distinctive Christian character of CE schools across the diocese.

Ensuring that:

- The 2023 Manchester Diocese RE syllabus is fully embedded in schools (by September 2024)
- All CE schools have a vision that is theologically rooted and appropriate to context
- Collective Worship is inspiring, inclusive and invitational as well as meets national expectations

Progress/Impact:

Since September 2024 all Voluntary Aided CE schools across Manchester Diocese have been required to use the new Diocesan RE syllabus. Support for the new syllabus continued with subject enhancement videos having over 200 views and being used frequently as part of school inset sessions. SIAMS inspection reports have frequently positively recognised the impact of the syllabus on the breadth and content being taught in RE. Some comments are particularly encouraging:

- 'Through their religious education (RE) lessons, students gain substantial factual knowledge about religion and worldviews. This equips them with a strong grasp of a rich and varied subject vocabulary.'
- 'The religious education (RE) curriculum is rich and creative. This enables pupils to explore and develop a deep and respectful understanding of world religions, including Christianity. As a result, pupils use RE as a safe space to explore and express their own personal viewpoints and beliefs.'
- 'Pupils value the creative and inspiring religious education (RE) curriculum. Training is of the highest quality and supports teachers to deliver innovative lessons. This leads to good progress for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.'
- 'Religious education (RE) is central to the curriculum for students at all key stages. As a result of carefully considered programmes of learning, RE excites and challenges students in their thinking. Teachers provide a safe environment in which to explore religions and worldviews.'

However, it is clear there remains a need for further embedding of the syllabus within a number of schools. Several schools had areas of development specifically around RE.

- 'Provide meaningful opportunities in RE for students to deepen their exploration of how faith influences believers' lives, worship and experience. This will enable them to apply their significant factual knowledge, heighten their understanding and appreciate diversity in religious practice.'
- 'Successfully implement the new religious education (RE) curriculum. In this way pupils will develop a deep, progressive understanding of a range of diverse religious and non-religious worldviews.'
- 'Further embed the new religious education (RE) curriculum so that pupils deepen their appreciation of Christianity as a living, world faith.'

The comprehensive programme of continuous professional development (CPD) continues to benefit schools with over 85% of CE schools across MDBE accessing more than 1 training opportunity during 2024-25. The range of courses offered involved looking at 'spirituality in a CE school context', 'using Floorbooks as an assessment in tool for Early Years RE' and 'Understanding Christianity Refresher'.

RE development days covering Effective RE, Quality RE, RE Beyond Expectations were very well received. Such training recognised the needs of the non-specialist RE teachers and leads, predominantly across primary schools. An additional development day focusing on SEND support and adaptation has been added to the 2025-26 programme. To recognise the commitment of RE leads to their development a Diocesan Certificate for RE Leadership has been developed and will be launched during 2025-26.

Throughout the year work was undertaken to support school leaders and governors to reflect on their vision and ensure it was both appropriate to the individual school context as well as theologically rooted. During 2024-25 33 schools received a SIAMS inspection. All resulted in the judgement that each school 'is living up to its foundation as a Church school and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish.' Strengths included:

- 'The school curriculum is shaped by the Christian vision and ensures barriers to learning are swiftly identified. As a result, pupils flourish academically and spiritually, gaining hope and aspiration for the future.'
- 'Positive relationships contribute significantly to a climate in which adults and pupils know they are cared for. A strong emphasis on wellbeing empowers pupils and adults to overcome any obstacles or barriers they may face.'
- 'The Parable of the Mustard Seed, which inspires the Christian vision, underpins the curriculum. Leaders have shaped it carefully to enable pupils to flourish spiritually, make meaningful connections and learn well. The supporting Christian values suit the context of the school and promote pupils' ambitions.'
- 'Nurturing care and the focus on wellbeing is tangible. It is an effective outworking of the school vision of 'love God, love yourself and love your neighbour.' Pupils are encouraged to love themselves and relationships are supportive.'

There continued to be a focus on CE schools being distinctly Christian in all aspects of policy and practice with MDBE support offered for ethos/values groups, RE teaching, vision, policies, including admissions, Collective Worship resources as well as through the work of the Shades team. The establishment of new worshipping communities involving both church and school reflects the work of PP, MDGF and Children and Youth Officers.

Training for Collective Worship (CW) continued and built on the earlier CPD session with an advanced session developed and delivered. In response to need identified during training a Collective Worship guidance document and accompanying resource, 'RIPPLE' is to be released early in September 2025. Curates also received training on how best to support CE schools through governance as well as CW and RE delivery.

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STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024-25

3. Develop leaders in CE schools across the diocese

Ensuring that:

- Senior leaders are equipped to lead in a CE school
- Senior and middle leaders have access to and make effective use of National Professional Qualifications
- Senior leaders have a high level of Biblical literacy

Progress/Impact:

Throughout 2024-25 MDBE worked alongside senior leaders in school to support and equip them to enable them to fulfil their roles. 17 new headteachers took up post during the year. Visits from the Director and senior DBE staff welcomed them to their roles, outlined support available and signposted further diocesan involvement as appropriate. It is interesting to note that since 2022 we have seen similar numbers of new head teacher appointments annually, meaning at least a quarter of headteachers in CE schools across MDBE have 3/fewer years' experience in the role. October 2024 saw the Headteacher induction programme begin with a commissioning service at Manchester Cathedral where Bishop Mark Davies, as chair of MDBE, blessed each person's ministry. Induction sessions provided a safe space for new Headteachers as well as peer support for learning. Support for school leaders, emerging and current, continued through delivery of the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) which MDBE run on behalf of National Society. During 2024-25 the following courses ran. The programme was expanded to cover staff within Liverpool schools, in partnership with Liverpool Hope University who acted as facilitators for the Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) NPQ.

NPQ Course 2024 - 25	Nos
Senior Leadership	39
Headship	56
SENCO	104
Leading Behaviour and Culture	25
Leading Teacher Development	16
Leading Primary Maths	14
Leading Teaching	35
Total participants to date	289

The Christian Leadership Programme, run in conjunction with the other 5 North West dioceses is always rewarding to be involved in. Canon Jill Pilling continued as tutor on behalf of MDBE for 2024-25.

2024-25 Participant's current role	School represented
Headteacher	St Mary's Prestwich CE Primary
Head of School	Crompton House High School
Assistant Headteacher	Canon Slade High School
Assistant Headteacher	St Peter's CE Primary, Farnworth
Deputy Headteacher	Bury Church High School
Director of Personal Development and Safeguarding (resuming January 2026)	Bishop Fraser Trust

The programme culminated in a celebration service at Liverpool Cathedral. Reflections from the programme include such statements as:

‘Being on this course has literally been life-changing; I’ve made life-long friends, discovered myself and altered my approaches to leadership.’ Although available to any senior leaders, we continue to target those within 2 years of new headship, in particular any who have not had previous senior leadership experience in a CE school, as well as aspiring headteachers. Support in advance of SIAMS inspections was offered for all senior leaders in schools due to be inspected between Sept 2024 – July 2025. These consisted of bespoke 1:1 conversations, visits and training as appropriate. Discussions and training regarding theological underpinning of the Christian vision remained a helpful part of the support offered. A small cohort of leaders completed The Bible Course for Leaders, recognising how much this helped develop their Biblical literacy, knowledge and thinking.

‘As Headteacher, I recently completed The Bible Course and can wholeheartedly recommend it as an invaluable training tool that school staff members would find both spiritually enriching and practically beneficial. It provides a comprehensive and accessible overview of the Bible, revealing the Bible not as a collection of disjointed books, but as a single, coherent narrative. By tracing the chronological journey of its key events and characters, the course clearly illustrates how each component fits into "one big story": enlightening for those with some prior knowledge and really accessible for newcomers. The content is directly aligned with and supportive of our delivery of the diocesan syllabus. The deepened understanding of biblical themes that I have gained, has supported me in leading and participating in collective worship and in supporting my staff team to do the same. I believe this course is a useful and worthwhile investment for every member of staff.’

The benefits of undertaking this course to leaders’ subject knowledge and understanding are recognised and as a result the content and sessions will be integrated into Headteacher induction programme from September 2025.

Termly Headteacher and Chairs of Governor meetings continued to be popular and well attended. These took place both virtually and in person. They provided a platform for communicating updates, responding to need and a time to encourage. Alongside this the Annual Schools Conference, ‘Distinctly Christian in a Changing World’ took place at Manchester Monastery in October 2024. 180+ attendees heard from a range of inspiring speakers, including Rev’d Canon Grace Thomas, Canon Missioner at Manchester Cathedral and Chris Curtis MBE, CEO of Youthscape. We considered how we can sustain and strengthen the distinctively Christian nature of Church of England schools and our work with and for children and young people. We reflected on how the world around us changes so fast yet our God ‘is the same yesterday and today and forever’ (Hebrews 13:8). The world our children inherit is so different from the one many of us grew up in. We considered how can we equip, inspire and empower them to live within the present and the future?

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024-25

4. Develop governance across maintained and academy schools within the diocese.

Ensuring that:

- Ex Officio governors/substitute Ex Officio and Foundation governors are equipped to support CE schools
- Academy members, trustees/directors and Local Advisory Boards understand their respective responsibilities in sustaining the distinctive Christian character of CE schools

Progress/Impact:

During 2024-25 several meetings were held with Archdeacons to review needs for substitute ex officios. Where possible these are recruited to from curates or PCC members. At times such vacancies presented challenges, especially where a period of interregnum was taking place or where there were no plans to recruit to a parish post. Schools remained anxious where there was no Ex Officio governor in place. The DBE also appoints a diocesan foundation governor to each maintained school. During 2024-25, 29 diocesan foundation governors were appointed/reappointed. Vacancies remain higher than we would like with 14 schools/8% of diocesan foundation governor posts currently vacant. We would love to get such vacancies down to below 5%.

Work with governing bodies included advising on admissions, complaints procedures, Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher recruitment, school organisation and acting as an external adviser for Headteacher performance management processes. Several governing bodies had a Diocesan Schools Adviser assigned to them as an Associate Member. This is so that they could more closely offer support, model expected governor practice and further develop capacity within governing bodies. Such arrangements are reviewed annually on a case-by-case basis. Where there were disputes/complaint situations within school leadership MDBE offered a listening ear, support, including signposting to other useful support/bodies such as National Governance Association and guidance. Such work was undertaken in collaboration with Local Authorities. We are thankful that these situations remained rare within CE schools, whilst recognising they do occur at times.

As Diocesan Corporate Member on Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) the director continued to be involved in approving the appointment and reappointment of MAT trustees, on behalf of MDBE. During 2024-25 we will be piloting the Flourishing Leaders for Trustees programme, established by National Society, with 2/3 MAT trustee bodies. The hope is this will be expanded to include all CE MATs within MDBE over the following 3-5 years, once the pilot has been completed.

All continuous professional development (CPD) sessions offered by MDBE were accessible to governors, trustees and members. Sessions appropriate for governors included:

- What does admissions consultation look like?
- What makes church schools different?
- What is effective RE?
- What does an effective RE link governor do?
- What makes an impactfully theologically rooted vision?

However, there is a recognition that further engagement from governors could be developed. To that end future sessions will explicitly recognise and address governance needs as appropriate. Alongside this, a discreet section within the termly schools newsletter for governors/trustees/members is being considered. All DBE appointed members will also be invited, and expected to attend, an update training session in the new year, run in conjunction with the diocesan registrar.

It remained important to MDBE that CE schools across the diocese wanting to convert to academy status only joined a CE MAT in line with their foundation document/trust deed. The Director periodically met with the CEOs of CE Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) within MDBE. Such meetings were useful to understand trust priorities, growth strategies and any issues MDBE could support with. Where schools were requesting permission to become an academy and join a MAT they were supported through this process by either the director or a member of MDBE team. During 2024-25 6 schools gained MDBE permission to convert. 8 schools converted and became academies with others being part way through the process.

- Holy Trinity CE Primary, Dobcross gained MDBE permission to join Crompton House MAT
- St Stephen's CE Primary, Audenshaw gained MDBE permission to join Forward as One CE MAT
- St Margaret's CE Primary, Heywood gained MDBE permission to join Bishop Fraser Trust
- Walmsley CE Primary gained MDBE permission to join Bishop Fraser Trust
- Christ Church CE Primary Ainsworth gained MDBE permission to join Sycamore CE MAT
- Turton and Edgeworth CE / Methodist Primary gained MDBE permission to join Bishop Fraser Trust

The following schools converted to an academy and joined a CE MAT:

- Bolton Parish CE Primary converted to an academy joining Archbishop Temple MAT
- St Paul's CE Primary, Oldham converted to an academy joining Crompton House MAT
- St James CE Primary, Oldham converted to an academy joining Crompton House MAT
- St Thomas CE Primary, Newhey converted to an academy joining Forward as One CE MAT
- St Luke's CE Primary, Weaste converted to an academy joining Thrive CE MAT
- St John's CE Primary, Kearsley converted to an academy joining Archbishop Temple MAT
- St Mary's CE Primary, Balderstone converted to an academy joining The Watergrove Trust
- St Matthew's CE Primary, Chadderton converted to an academy joining Cranmer Education Trust

The following have MDBE permission to convert and continue through the process. It is hoped they will convert during 2025-26:

- Stansfield Hall CE Primary wish to join Watergrove MAT
- Blackrod CE/Methodist Primary wish to join Forward as One CE MAT
- Middleton Parish CE Primary will be a sponsored academy joining Forward as One CE MAT

DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024-25

5. Develop a racial justice strategy for Diocesan Board of Education.

Ensuring that:

- Actions identified within 'Lament to Action' (2021) are addressed
- All staff have access to national DEI initiatives and programmes
- Children and young people understand racial justice Shades evidence.

Progress/Impact:

With the publication of Lament to Action (2021), dioceses and DBEs were encouraged to address 5 areas, including (1) participation, (2) education, (3) training and mentoring, (4) young people and (5) structures and governance. MDBE racial justice strategy focusses on working with children and young people, school staff, church volunteers and clergy through the work of the Shades project. Over 900 children and young people, including more than 30 schools, engaged with elements of the project such as Collective Worship sessions or the Black History and Faith tour. Within Bolton, where Shades was more established as part of PP, 21 schools engaged with the Shades Black History and Faith tour. We saw significant growth in numbers of children and young people (over 100 pupils) who acted as Shades ambassadors, through Shades groups promoting Shades values within both schools and churches.

During 2024-25, 21 schools were involved in collective worship sessions linking racial justice and faith followed by the delivery of 22 Shades workshops. As a result, Shades ambassadors in many of our schools led on this work, alongside school leaders. A Shades ambassador group from a CE high school delivered a presentation at the 2024 diocesan annual school leaders conference and subsequently led collective worship and a safe space workshop, supported by the Shades team, at a local primary school. This partnership working, with children leading, further developed their confidence by allowing them to demonstrate the Shade Christian values and be ambassadors in their community. Through the Shades Black History and Faith Tour many children, young people and staff were able to explore racial justice and faith. As a result of Shades days held in school pupils reported how the experience led to increased knowledge and understanding and reflected on their future actions:

I've learned that racism is a major thing not a minor.
I have learned that you need to be yourself.

I've learned to ask questions as long as it's not rude.

I have learnt about the N-word history, and I will stop it by
speaking and using my voice to speak up.

I learnt new hair names.
I didn't know about the Windrush.

I can learn how to be a role model and tell people not to be racist.

I will stand up to racism and talk about how racism affects Black people.

This lesson has made me learn that you always use respect to every person.

During 2024-25 13 staff/clergy attended a Train the Trainer Shades session as well as 23 schools and 2 churches attending a Shades webinar. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with participants recognising the following impactful parts/learning from such sessions:

- The project aims: to educate, develop understanding, a sense of belonging, a strong sense of racial identity and to remove racial barriers to children experiencing faith in schools
- I joined the session with some of our senior leaders. The opener reminded us of why racial justice is everyone's priority, specifically, the points you made regarding the importance of being active allies.
- Those statistics about the felt impact of racism on global majority children in our schools. And the testimony at the end by the boy who felt God answered his prayers through the group.
- The impact that Shades education can bring to both school and local churches/community. Engaging students to give them a real and purposeful voice.
- The links to safeguarding were really interesting, as this is not an area usually discussed when looking at safeguarding.
- It was also a reminder that students need to see themselves represented and areas in school are vital to this such as through curriculum, when looking at careers and role models, visitors we bring into school, even the mannequins used to model uniform and within the onsite Hair and Beauty Salon.

One school noted that racist incidents in their school had significantly reduced from 15 to 1 since the Black History and Faith Tour and a safe space workshop took place in school. Another high school pupil reflected following attending a collective worship as part of the Black History and Faith Tour:

"The assembly given by the Shades project was outstanding. The message portrayed through it was powerful and truly taught me a lot about stereotypes aimed at different cultures and communities, and what we as young people can do to prevent them. We live in a world with many different people, with each person having a unique feature to themselves, making everyone special. With harmful heretics and false labels gone, we can use our words to empower friends, family, and those around us, which I think is an amazing goal to strive for as a project, and I know it can be achieved. As a Deputy Head Ambassador of my school, it is imperative I take care of and acknowledge all students. The assembly allowed me to reflect on how I can improve acceptance within our school community or grow as a person, even by simply saying 'how are you' to someone who seems upset. This topic can be very difficult to explain to young pupils, but the Shades project has made an amazing impact within our school and town. With enough support—not only by listening but by further acting on it—we can spread this amazing message throughout the world and care for everyone, no matter race, ethnicity, or appearance."



Despite such good news stories there remains much to be done to address areas identified within 'Lament to Action.' Applicants for school leadership positions remain very low from those of Global Majority Heritage. MDBE promotes national programmes to target such future leaders although numbers of participants from within MDBE are less than 5. The new Flourishing Leaders programmes from National Society include one for developing Leaders of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice. We are hopeful we will recruit a small cohort.

We were delighted to receive funding as part of the Diocesan Racial Justice project that enabled us to expand the Shades team and develop work more widely across the diocese.

During 2025-26 we will see the team grow by from 3 to 6 team members. With the expansion of the Shades team we look forward to increased impact across the diocese.

Resources to support schools and churches with racial justice and faith are currently being produced with the Shades 'It's not alright' film resource due October 2025, a language workshop resource available September 2025 as well as a collective worship series for primary/secondary schools.



DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2024-25

6. Develop a net zero carbon strategy for the school estate.

Ensuring that:

- Opportunities for schools to become more energy efficient were promoted and adopted by maintained schools and academies
- Resources to promote net zero targets were prioritised
- Children and young people were involved in opportunities towards net zero carbon targets

Progress/Impact:

During 2024-25 MDBE worked alongside schools to develop the school building estate. We promoted an approach to 'sealing the building' in order to prioritise energy efficiency. This included upgrading windows to triple paned glass as it is UV protected, installing extra loft insulation and LED lighting as well as development of forest school provision as appropriate. MDBE continued to hold the view that heat decarbonisation pumps are not always possible or cost effective, especially in ageing buildings.

Monies spent included:

- £138,000 on LED lighting
- £945,000 on upgrading water heating
- Fabric sealing including £1,366,000 on roofs; £6,910 on doors; £185,000 on damp proofing
- £5,532 on forest school developments

Plans for 2025-26 include spending £500,000 at Godfrey Ermen CE Primary School replacing the roof, insulating the loft and installing solar panels.

During 2024-25, and as a direct result of RAAC within several MDBE schools, 4 new school buildings are in the early stages of being planned. All Saints CE Primary, Newton Heath; St Andrews CE Primary, Over Hulton; Canon Slade High School and St James CE Primary, Daisy Hill are to be rebuilt according to the latest eco and heat decarbonisation targets. We continue to work with the DfE on these. Our schools are often leading the way regarding net zero carbon work. Recent examples include:

- A partnership between City of Trees project and St Augustine's CE Primary, Pendlebury resulted in pupils planting trees in the local environment, nurturing their green skills, whilst also boosting their wellbeing, developing their love of nature and making their local community greener.
- Canon Burrows CE Primary created an eco-prayer garden.
- Children at St Anne's CE Primary School took part in an Easter experience forest school style in the forest school area. They visited various stations where they experienced Jesus' last week on earth. Children were invited to partake in a simple Eucharist by receiving bread and wine. At each station children collected a letter, Easter hunt style, which created an Easter phrase: 'He is Risen!'.

MDBE facilitated £115,000 in green grants to schools as a way of prioritising net zero carbon targets. We also worked with the Public Sector Low Carbon Skills Fund allocating £330,000 to carry out in-depth surveys in order to prepare for larger decarbonisation plans.

Working with MDBF the Buildings' Officer contributed to the Diocesan Environmental Working Group, reporting on heating systems in schools and the fabric first approach promoted by MDBE as examples of good practice. As part of the Diocesan Net Zero Senior Officers group we shared information regarding MDBE work on the Low Carbon Skills Funding and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme with Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Through this work we were informed the local authority is providing funding for solar panels in at least one of our schools. A priority for MDBE remains that all voluntary aided schools have a 5-year plan to continue to improve the fabric of the building. Working with their assigned building consultants MDBE continued to encourage schools to consider and prioritise work to reduce carbon admissions.

The Planet Savers Award continued to successfully engage both schools and pupils involved in considering applications. 2024-25 saw 4 schools submit applications with pupils judging 2 (All Saints CE Primary, Hamer and St Margaret's CE Primary, Hollinwood) to be worthy of the award, 1 needing more work and the other lacking in evidence. Once again, their commitment to the task of judging was considerable and they were unwavering in applying the following qualifying criteria for the award.



Applications MUST have shown evidence of the impact of the following:

1. A pupil eco group in school
2. A named 'eco governor' who worked with the eco group and raised eco issues at governing body meetings
3. A completed Church of England Energy Footprint Tool
4. Registering the school with an eco schools account and have begun the process of working towards Eco Schools Green Flag Accreditation
5. Recycling throughout the school as well as projects to encourage more recycling at home and within the community
6. Encouragement of care for wildlife, planting trees, vegetables etc in school
7. Reduction of litter around school
8. Reduction of plastic usage, especially bottles
9. Developing eco links/projects between school and church.

FUTURE PLANS FOR 25/26

The next academic year is likely to be a busy one, in both MDBE statutory and non-statutory work spheres. During 2025-26 MDBE will consider and agree its priorities for the next 3 years. With the submission of a considerable bid to the church commissioners these will hopefully involve the roll out of both the Encounter and Equip programmes across the diocese in order to double the numbers of children and young people engaged in discipleship pathways. Both will increase capacity at local and archdeaconry level. The current Equip programme of training will continue as follows:

- ALM/GLT pathway – children's and youthwork essentials
- Equip training weekend – including DBE satellite teams
- Equip Spotlight – input from national experts
- Equip bespoke – individualised support
- Equip clergy – for existing clergy and ordinands

Expansion of the Equip programme in 2025-26 will include various new elements such as:

- Equip hubs – opportunities to gather geographically
- Equip Connect – ½ termly drop-in Q&A sessions
- Equip podcast – structured conversations

There is the introduction of a revised accountability framework for all schools leading to changes in Ofsted inspections and reporting as well as the promise of a Schools White paper, both expected in the autumn term.

MDBE plan to release a Service Level Agreement for community schools to support Religious Education delivery as well as a Certificate for RE leads to evidence their knowledge, understanding and development.

We are also developing a Quality Mark for Collective Worship, having successfully been granted the trade mark for this in 2024-25. We are also offering a traditional specific School Improvement support to schools.

We will once again be recruiting for National Professional Qualifications and have been approached by the National Society to deliver their national programme for Senior Leadership. With the introduction of a suite of Flourishing Leaders programmes being launched by National Society we will be piloting these within MDBE.



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Manchester

CHURCH
FOR A
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