

Exeter Diocesan Board of Education



Annual Report to the Diocesan Synod Academic Year 2019-20

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Executive Summary

This has been a particularly busy and unique year for the Exeter Diocesan Board of Education. During the spring and summer terms all schools have been at the forefront of the nation's covid-19 response plan. We pay heartfelt tribute to our schools and their leaders; headteachers, MAT leaders, governors, teachers and support staff for their selfless dedication and imagination with which they continue to serve their communities, and especially the most vulnerable children and families. This is what makes our family of church schools so special and their resilience and adaptability have been drawn on as never before. The responsibility and accountability that school leaders are currently facing is extreme and unprecedented. In our diocese, as well as nationally, schools demonstrated extraordinary acts of kindness and professional generosity. We remain extremely proud of the support, love and care that they continue to show all pupils and their families.

We have been heartened by the levels of collaboration, mutual understanding and respect that has been deepened within and across our region. This improved collegiality will continue to develop in the months ahead. We have seen the family of church schools strengthen through more intentional partnership and collaborative activity. The team managed to ensure that they had a meaningful engagement with every one of our 133 church schools through either a personal school visit or attendance at an EDBE training event. Increasingly we are delivering our services to multi-school groupings (federations, clusters or MATs). Here there is greater opportunity to add value and improve local sustainability when geography and community are common priorities together with our collective ethos and mission.

Although, like Ofsted, the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection cycle has been paused the Board continues to celebrate that, for a further year, no school has received a less than 'good' judgement despite facing more challenging expectations. An important contributor of this outcome has been the creation of SIAMS hubs right across the diocese. Here groups of schools are supported (during 'twilight' training) to network whilst receiving up-to-date and best practice advice. The team also spearheaded the introduction of the new agreed syllabus for religious education across our three Local Authorities. For the first time all schools will now be using identical materials. The diocese played a valuable role to ensure every school (community too) received their own copy of the documentation and could attend a launch conference to support its effective adoption within school.

2019-20 represents our best ever combined inspection results at 'good or better' levels and indicate that diocesan Church of England schools collectively are 'inspected' at above national averages. (Some further comparative analysis in outcomes section). We are on track with our three-year strategic plan targets, however sustaining this excellent profile under the tougher inspection frameworks will continue to demand our collective best efforts and continued collaborative activity. The higher expectations within the SIAMS and Ofsted frameworks are challenging but our support to schools to help them 'crystallise' their Christian vision is impacting positively within Ofsted too as this framework focuses on a school's curriculum 'intent'. In-line with the national trends schools are finding it harder to retain outstanding/excellent judgements in either Ofsted or SIAMS. Nationally during 2018-19 of the 382 outstanding schools inspected, only 63 retained their outstanding Ofsted rating. Although there has been a small reduction in outstanding/excellent grades, we are not concerned given the national context. Disappointingly, there has been an increase in the number of Ofsted requires improvement judgements. But all these schools are now receiving additional support to assist them on their improvement journey.

We continue to assist church schools in navigating the national expectations concerning academy status and support them, once local decisions have been made, in joining with other schools in multi-academy trusts (MATs). There are now 15 mixed MATs where our church schools are working collaboratively with community schools inclusively serving their pupils and families. We actively support and encourage multi-school groupings and have seen federations and MATs grow during this year. Our transparent process to

secure additional school to school support for church schools has resulted in nine schools now having a management partnership with a neighbouring school or multi-school grouping. Through this model of school improvement collaborative advantage adds value and speed to improvement activity. Many of these previously 'stand-alone' schools will end up federating or joining the MAT as they are able to witness, at first hand, the tremendous advantages of being part of a larger organisation. This year four schools used the management partnership as a route to secure either their inclusion in a MAT or federation. We firmly believe that strength and sustainability is enhanced through being well connected within a multi-school grouping that shares and respects a distinctive Christian ethos.

Some of our most memorable achievements this year include:

- Our combined 'good or better' external inspection results are the best ever with SIAMS outcomes showing 97% of schools with at least a 'good' judgement from their last inspection;
- Senior leadership representation at our induction training was very promising with good networks and connectivity developing;
- We held a successful residential conference just before the national restrictions were introduced – although there were late cancellations, the delegate feedback was supportive particularly in relation to the key notes & workshops;
- The 'Be a Governor' media campaign was successfully launched, as was the 'Family Fun Cooking Club';
- St Luke's C. of E. Secondary School formally joined the Ted Wragg Multi Academy Trust. The trust have adopted Church Articles and this provides additional capacity to our church schools' family. Our system leadership networks now formally align with Exeter University and Exeter College (initial Ted Wragg MAT partners);
- A new 'School Improvement Strategy' has been written that clarifies our role and makes clear the strategies that we will follow.

Challenges:

The most pressing challenges ahead include:

- Finding meaningful ways to support schools remotely due to the pandemic restrictions and the increased pressure on school leadership teams;
- Responding positively to the financial implications of the pandemic so that future structures optimise our capacity to make the most difference to our family of church schools;
- Filling foundation governor vacancies – our new recruitment campaign has been overtaken by events;
- Supporting schools to match national pupil progress, particularly for disadvantaged pupils;
- Coping with the uncertainty in relation to national education policy especially with regard to the academy agenda, vulnerable pupils, school funding and small schools;
- Increasing our income generation during such a turbulent and fast changing context.
- Helping to ensure that children, young people and schools are considered in all aspects of diocesan life, including ministerial education, diocesan appointments, development reviews, parish profiles and mission action plans, so that they become increasingly well integrated within the diocesan mission.

There are 133 Church of England schools in the Diocese of Exeter, increasing to 134 from 2021, across the three local Authority areas of Devon, Plymouth and Torbay. Five of these are secondary schools, four C. of E. (two in Exeter, one in Plymouth, and one in Ilfracombe) and one joint Roman Catholic/Church of England secondary in Torquay. Among the current total, 67 are academies, 31 are voluntary aided and 35 voluntary controlled schools. Over 28,000 children and young people attend a Church of England school in our Diocese. Of the 67 church schools which are academies, five are single-academy trusts (two of which plan to join multi-academy trusts in the near future). The rest operate within fifteen MATs, eight of which have articles of association providing for a majority of C. of E. foundation directors on the board. Of the seven MATs with minority articles, two presently include no church schools.

It has been diocesan policy over many years to welcome formal partnerships between church schools and community schools within federations and multi-academy trusts. More recently, we have been encouraged by increasing numbers of MATs without historic church links seeking to adopt foundation articles so as to be able to receive C. of E. schools in future. For both these reasons, what we actively regard as our 'diocesan family of schools' is significantly and increasingly larger than the group of 133 schools which are strictly speaking 'C. of E.' We are thankful that that our wide network of relationships with educational provision across the diocese offers us opportunities to share the best of our Church of England ethos more widely and to learn from best practice in the community sector as well. For example the new Estuaries MAT based in Newton Abbot (Newton Abbot College) has opened with church articles and despite having no church schools currently actively links with the local clergy team at parish and Trust Director levels.

Our professional team based at the Old Deanery, Exeter includes the Director of Education and the Deputy Director; three Education Advisers specialising in (i) governance, admissions, and school organisation, (ii) religious education and the Statutory Inspection of Anglican & Methodist Schools, and (iii) educational projects and vulnerable pupils; two Education Officers supporting (i) training and traded services and (ii) compliance, communication and the work of the Board; and a team administrator. Some other work is carried out on a consultancy basis using a small dedicated budget available for the purpose. Central to our operational approach is the development of strategic partnerships with Local Authorities, Teaching School Alliances, MATs, and other key stakeholders in securing improvement and sustainable futures for church schools in the diocese generally.

The Exeter Diocesan Board of Education physically met twice and once virtually during the year but a great deal of its work was progressed through its three key subcommittees plus EDEN:

- **School Organisation and Governance Group (SOGG):** This committee led by Revd. Prebendary Robert Harris supports good governance with particular focus on Multi-Academy Trusts and federations and is the body which considers applications by Church Schools for academy conversion. SOGG makes recommendations to the EDBE regarding academy consents and the appointment of Foundation governors and to EDEN for the appointment of Foundation Directors. The group is strengthened with external places taken by a small group of headteachers and governors. It meets monthly due to the timing of schools requiring approval to progress to academy status. New policies on admissions and Trust governance were also debated and agreed by the EDBE during the year.
- **Standards and Ethos Group (SEG):** This committee is chaired by the Revd. Alan Smith and it specifically focuses on the in-year monitoring of standards (both academic and in Christian distinctiveness) at Church schools and academies with reference to OFSTED and SIAMS outcomes. It also monitors and reviews the education standards related aspects of our strategic plan. Here again additional capacity is provided by senior leaders from across our three Local Authorities. A new School Improvement policy was edited and

approved during the year - this should create greater consistency in our approaches to schools requiring support.

- **Work in Progress (WIP) Group:** This committee brings together officers from the Education Team and Property Services Department. WIP provides detailed assessment of property matters at Church schools and academies, and is the forum for EDBE approvals (based on EDBE policy) for capital funded building projects at Voluntary Aided schools and Church academies and all other Church school property related matters. WIP is also the forum for discussing and reviewing new school opportunities before submitting recommendations to the full Exeter Diocesan Board of Education for consideration and or approval.
- **EDEN (Exeter Diocesan Education Network):** The Company acts as a Corporate Member for those church schools within the Diocese of Exeter that convert to become an academy. Its main objectives are to:
 - safeguard and promote the values of each Academy Trust and its Christian ethos;
 - support, foster and nurture an open and inclusive relationship between each Academy Trust and the Church of England through the Diocese of Exeter and its officers, local clergy and parish organisations and through the academy's Foundation Trustees;
 - support the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance in delivering public benefit through community engagement, resourcing education and supporting those in need both spiritually and physically.

The EDBE actively supports church schools in the following ways: improving governance (especially through the role of foundation governors), reviewing and advising on good admissions practice, supporting effective headteacher appointments, developing the quality of RE teaching and collective worship, fostering parish links, deepening Christian distinctiveness and ethos, and preparation for successful inspection outcomes. To achieve this the EDBE provides a range of opportunities to deliver this support, as well as a full programme of Continuing Professional Development, advertised in the EDBE section of the diocesan website. One particular aspect for new colleagues is the provision of training for newly appointed foundation governors, including ex officio governors.

The EDBE guiding vision and purpose is rooted within the Church of England Vision for Education 2016:

Our vision for education is deeply Christian, with Jesus' promise of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart.

Our Vision statement reads:

To support, champion and challenge school communities to flourish together as an expression of God's love.

We will achieve this through our mission to transform our communities through wisdom, hope and aspiration, dignity and living well together. We will ensure that our Christian values of **courage, honesty, hope, joy, love, trust** and **wisdom** are witnessed by all who work and walk alongside us.

The EDBE has established three key strategic objectives for the current triennium:

Achievement: Pupil progress and attainment results (aggregated) show a year on year upward trajectory;

Mission: To ensure education settings are integrated well within the diocesan mission;

Leadership: Effective leadership and management of the EDBE is ensuring the teams' work has a positive impact on pupil outcomes.

Priority 1 Achievement

Effective partnerships continue with our Local Authority colleagues that enable more appropriate support to be provided to Church of England schools. School improvement, good governance, leadership and management, pupil place planning and capital and buildings related matters benefit from this joint activity. The education team have undertaken a number of shared visits with LA colleagues to schools where we had

common concerns. Our focus on management partnership agreements has been particularly effective this year. This has proven to be a brilliant way to facilitate school to school support and to ensure that the support remains fit for purpose and effective. With no school performance data this year 'softer' school standards related intelligence has become more important. Our strong relationships with LAs and our pastoral outreach should ensure that we get an early warning when leadership and governance issues emerge. Our role focuses on ensuring that the leadership and governance of a school is able to access the support required to make the necessary improvements. We work with the leadership of the school (including governors) to evaluate the impact of the brokered support.

An important strand of this priority area is our work to support the attainment and wellbeing of disadvantaged pupils. To add value to the system we seek to facilitate collaborative projects that bring together clusters of schools ideally with parish links embedded. A regular vulnerable pupils newsletter (available on the diocesan website) also identifies good practice case studies, synthesises research and signposts to new opportunities. We have successfully infiltrated a number of key collaborative partnerships and by so doing we ensure that C. of E. schools are able to access additional support and connectivity.

Priority 2 Mission

The EDBE is fully involved in supporting the diocesan vision and we are currently well advanced in delivering the 'growth' priority activities. Cross departmental working is flourishing as this is essential to ensure that our combined efforts make the most impact. We play an active role within the Worship, Prayer and Spirituality Group as well as the Mental Health Roundtable. 'Resource schools' are now providing a placement for curate training. This initiative has tremendous potential to add capacity to the diocesan vision and schools' work in their parishes. New requirements have been set for clergy pre-ordination and ministerial training that will add vital child and school focused elements. The 'resource schools' will then be supported to play an active role within future clergy training programmes.

We offer a number of standard and bespoke courses to update governors, school leaders and staff about the requirements of the new SIAMS evaluation schedule. The termly SIAMS hubs have been rationalised to secure more even take up across the Diocese. These meetings continue to play a key role in supporting schools in developing their vision and ethos and result in better preparation for their next inspection. They are free, open-access, twilight meetings, facilitated by Diocesan Advisers and aimed at encouraging schools to network and share best practice. We are also being more intentional with regard to our training programme and trying to get schools and multi-school groupings to clarify their training needs so that we can establish a bespoke offer through our service level agreement arrangements. This is more efficient of our time and is better value for schools too. Unfortunately our summer training programme had to be cancelled but an on-line programme is in place from September 2020.

Priority 3 Leadership

As a system leader the EDBE ensures that its officers, particularly its Director and Deputy Director, represent the diocesan perspective on a number of stakeholder strategic groups. The most significant of these involve contributing to LA governance and quality assurance processes. The Devon Education Forum, DCC scrutiny committee as well as LA standards boards all have EDBE representation. Effective and trusting relationships with the Regional School's Commissioner's office, local Teaching School Alliances and Clinical Commissioning Groups all contribute to managing potential risks to church schools. During the year the Board has reviewed and adapted policy on a number of issues covering admissions, school improvement, governance and several approvals for academy orders. Talented school leaders, governors and directors contribute to our discussions and consultations to ensure that we collectively find the right path to travel. The Diocesan MAT Leadership Forum has made a useful contribution towards building greater connectivity between clusters of schools. The Team run four area leadership briefings every term open to senior leaders, governors and incumbents to debate and discuss matters of local or national educational policy. These briefings also provide a useful barometer to support our self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the EDBE and its strategic

plan. We have also introduced an ‘Annual Conversation’ with our MATs to ensure we can become critical friends to each other’s work and further improve our effectiveness in serving schools.

Our three year strategic plan is systematically reviewed and scrutinised through EDBE committees. This ensures that we remain focused on our key priorities. Staff appraisals are linked to plan activities and the quarterly report summarised progress against our agreed objectives.

Regional: Work with our neighbouring dioceses has continued to strengthen this year. The traditional LA boundaries between schools are being blurred as MATs are crossing county and diocesan borders. There are currently three church based MATs that have more than one diocese to relate to and this is expected to increase further in the coming year. We are already finding practical solutions with Bath and Wells and Salisbury Dioceses to ensure our approaches are aligned. However there are a number of informal shared arrangements already in place where we support each other’s work through networking and discussing current regional best practice. The SW DDEs meet at least half-termly (on-line at present) for mutual support and encouragement as well as to debate current shared concerns.

National: The EDBE remains well connected to national developments and plays an active role within C. of E. networks. We are represented on a number of influential national groups including: the Religious Education Council; the RE Today editorial team; the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education; the National Diocesan Governance Group and the National Diocesan Admissions Group. Members of the team have spoken at a number of other diocesan conferences delivering keynotes on a number of issues including mental health, RE leadership, collective worship, RE teaching and networking, and SIAMS related matters. This connectivity means that the Education Team can influence and are influenced by best practice for the benefit of our learners.

Outcomes and Impact

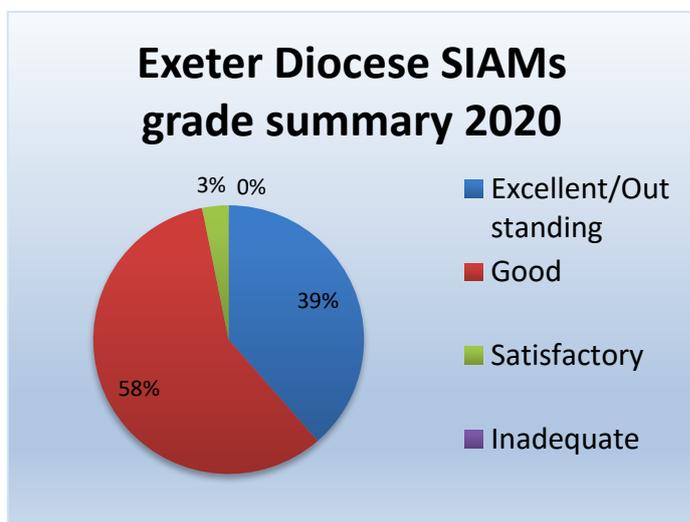
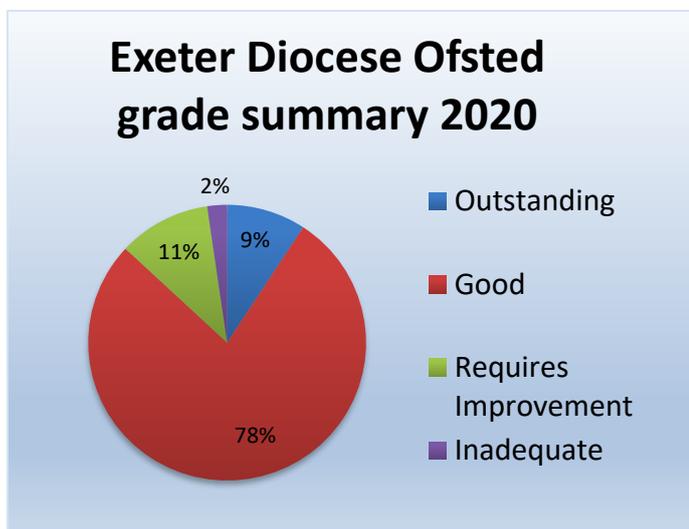
This table enables us to compare our ‘performance’ over time. The RAG indicator key helps to identify successes and areas that may require further focus, however the pandemic has impacted KPIs this year.

RAG KEY

Worse trend/result than previously	Trend/result in-line with previous	Better trend/result than previously

Performance indicators with comparative data	2020	2019	2018	RAG
Percentage of schools buying SLA	61%	62%	49%	
Total number of training events run	39	65	49	
Number of delegates attending training	836	765	558	
% of schools attending diocesan training programme	94	100	70%	
Total income for the year (training, SLA, consultancy)	£39K	£39.6K	£47.4K	
Number of C of E schools supported to achieve academy status	3	6	11	N/A
Number of MATs with church articles	15	14	14	

The above indicators confirm, that despite the additional global challenges this year (we had to cancel 30 training courses), performance compares favourably to last year. It is our aim and mission, to reach out to every school to provide high quality support and guidance, so that each school feels better-connected, supported and mutual understanding flourishes. The number of delegates attending this year saw a healthy increase despite the large number of training events cancelled. We continue to provide many collaborative opportunities as well as pastoral support and understanding to nourish and sustain our family of church schools particularly through these turbulent times. We have intentionally reduced the number of meetings so as to consolidate our engagement levels and make the best of our time commitments. Bringing schools together for meetings or training, either geographically or organisationally, has benefits in terms of managing our diaries and the effectiveness of the team’s impact on a wider group of colleagues. The financial pressure on schools remains intense and we acknowledge the impact this has on their ability to buy back additional support from us. However, more importantly, the quality of educational provision, as determined by our school’s latest inspection results, has remained in-line with last year in terms of Ofsted but has continued to improve for SIAMS. There were 15 SIAMS and 17 Ofsted inspections during this school year. Our combined good or better inspection results dropped by 1% for Ofsted but rose by 3% for SIAMS and our overall results are now as follows:



Grade	OfSTED			SIAMS		
	2020	2019	2018	2020	2019	2018
1 Outstanding/Excellent	9%	12%	15%	39%	42%	42%
2 Good	78%	76%	72%	58%	52%	50%
3 Requires Improvement	11%	10%	11%	3%	5%	7%
4 Inadequate/ineffective	2%	2%	2%	0%	1%	1%

Our schools compare favourably against LA and national averages. The team are particularly proud of the fact that no school has received a less than good SIAMS inspection grade since March 2017. National LA Ofsted statistics do not include inadequate inspection results as when the school is sponsored and becomes an academy Ofsted removes the report from their website as technically the ‘old’ school has closed. However

we continue to refer to the poor inspection judgement until the 'new' school is re-inspected about three years later. If we used Ofsted's approach then we would have no schools in the inadequate category.

Good or better Ofsted outcomes by Local Authority		Comparative diocesan data
Devon LA	85.9%	88% (110 schools)
Plymouth LA	75%	60% (10 schools)
Torbay LA	86.8%	91% (11 schools)
SW average	82.1%	87% (131 schools inspected)
National average	86%	87% (131 schools inspected)

Comparative data from our three LA areas shows again that C. of E. schools are more than holding their own against other local schools and against the national average. We are extremely proud of their combined efforts to ensure that all pupils are able to live life to the full and are supported towards reaching their academic, social, creative, physical, emotional and spiritual potentials.

The following chart shows the diocesan averages across the South West. This was produced for us by the Regional Schools Commissioner's Office and it shows that our diocese is the third best performing behind Bristol and Gloucester each having less schools than Exeter.

Good or better Ofsted outcomes by diocese July 2020

Diocese	Denomination	No. schools	% Good+
Diocese of Bath & Wells	C. of E.	181	86%
Diocese of Bristol	C. of E.	69	91%
Diocese of Clifton	RC	61	79%
Diocese of Exeter	C. of E.	130	87%
Diocese of Gloucester	C. of E.	116	91%
Diocese of Plymouth	RC	36	72%
Diocese of Salisbury	C. of E.	189	82%
Diocese of Truro	C. of E.	43	79%

The following table summarises our progress against our three year strategic plan key performance indicators. The RAG ratings are agreed by each committee of the EDBE that has oversight of the priority area and are quality assured again at full board meetings.

EDBE Strategic Plan 2019 -22 Monitoring and Evaluation			
Theme Focus 1		Achievement	
Key Outcome(s)		Pupil progress and attainment results (aggregated) show a year on year upward trajectory	
KEY PRIORITIES	IMPACT RAG	EDBE MONITOR	COMMENTARY
1.1 Add capacity to the Education Team to be able to support schools' improvement work increasingly effectively.		EXEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have secured some temporary administrative backfill pending the 2021 budget Liaison with LAs continues to be strong especially for schools causing concern. No 2020 school performance data will be used by Ofsted, the RSC office or LAs. We will have to review the wording of this KPI. Our management partnerships continue to provide additional leadership expertise and capacity to schools facing challenges. Project working is receiving good levels of media interest 'The Family Fun Cooking Club' being a good example of this but the lockdown has limited the opportunities.
1.2 Develop more efficient and accurate intelligence about church school performance and vulnerability.		SEG	
1.3 Ensure that schools causing concern receive timely and appropriate additional support.		SEG	
1.4 Provide, commission and facilitate high quality training, and collaborative projects, that have a positive impact in schools.	↑	SEG	

Theme Focus 2		Mission	
Key Outcome(s)		To ensure education settings are integrated well within the diocesan mission	
2.1 Integrate the work of the EDBE more fully into the diocesan vision.		EXEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved links are being made with the clergy appointment processes and further opportunities for CMD and Ordinand training are planned. The part-time Chaplaincy Adviser will bridge Education & Mission and Ministry Teams to further improve our shared working The aggregated SIAMS quality of collective worship judgements for all schools show that 99% is good or better with 95% of RE teaching being at least good or better.
2.2 Build capacity and expertise to support schools and multi-school groupings so that the quality of RE teaching and collective worship flourishes.		SOGG	

Theme Focus 3	Leadership		
Key Outcome(s)	Effective leadership and management of the EDBE is ensuring the teams' work has a positive impact on pupils.		
3.1 Continue to develop the effectiveness of the EDBE so that the mission of the diocese is realised, and outcomes for pupils improve.		EXEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be a governor campaign has had good media coverage although take up is modest. But the message is out and the links have been made.
3.2 Ensure the work of the EDBE is transparent and effective at driving forward the strategic plan.		EXEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The diocese is represented on all three LA standard's board committees to ensure better joined up thinking and coordinated actions.

RAG/ TREND	'Slippage'/ poor trend	↓	On track/ no trend	↔	Positive impact & trend	↑
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CYP – Children & Young People SEG – Standards & Ethos Group SOGG – Schools' Organisation Governance Group

The Future

The pandemic will require us to review our strategic plan and ensure that we are giving appropriate attention to key areas including student and staff mental health and well-being but also to the likely widening of the achievement gaps as home education is forecast to widen these significantly. The Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 1991 will be significantly renewed to reflect the seismic changes, which have moulded and remoulded the educational landscape, since it was written. This will allow the EDBE to make a decision about its future constitutional model. The current proposals are with General Synod but should provide for a series of options that include the EDBE becoming a 'statutory committee' of the EDBF, becoming an incorporated board (a company limited by guarantee) or becoming an unincorporated board but separate from the EDBF. Any revision of the current DBE Measure carries political risks. A revised Measure will, of course, have to be passed by the General Synod and approved by the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament. The new DBE Measure is likely to begin at the earliest at the start of the next triennium.

Locally we have a strong and trusting relationship with all our strategic partners and will use this firm foundation to continue to advocate and champion Church of England education. We will also seek to open new C. of E. schools to serve new communities or provide this option where this currently doesn't exist.

Our current Director of Education retired at the end of this academic year and we have started our search for his successor, with interviews scheduled for November 2020. In the interim, Sue Lockwood (Deputy DDE) is serving as Acting Director of Education.

Conclusion

Given the financial storm that has accompanied this pandemic we are currently looking at the implications this will have for us as a diocesan education team. Our financial well-being is under pressure too from a three pronged attack; investments held on behalf of education are yielding lower returns, our income through the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and training is expected to be down and lastly common fund contributions to the diocese are bound to be impacted too. To mitigate this position half the team were quickly furloughed but we will soon need to find new and creative ways to respond to the 'new normal'. The majority of C. of E. schools do contribute to our SLA and we are confident that this will continue for the common good, even though, in the short-term, it may be difficult to visit and provide direct support. On-line training via Zoom or Teams will feature in our programme next year as we find many new opportunities for practical and effective support in partnership.

The national lockdown did provide an opportunity for schools to show how they live out their values and Christian mission. They remained authentic to our shared common purpose, and as the sands shifted beneath us all, they provided a strong foundation for the continued future success of our schools as caring, compassionate and worshiping communities.

We are very grateful to the senior leaders, governors, directors and staff who work tirelessly and selflessly to improve the life chances of all pupils in our church schools as well as supporting the common good through their combined expertise and wisdom. The Board of Education wishes to pay public tribute to our outgoing Director of Education John Searson for his outstanding leadership and his deeply valued service to education in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, and equally for his personal commitment to the wider mission of the Diocese of Exeter and the Church of England nationally. We wish him a long and happy retirement. We thank Deputy Director Sue Lockwood for her excellent work in that role and for her willingness to step up as Acting Director during the search process for a new DDE, together with the whole diocesan education team for their dedication, passion and commitment to our shared purpose in making new disciples, growing in prayer and serving the people of Devon with joy.

The Ven. Douglas Dettmer, Archdeacon of Totnes
Chair, Exeter Diocesan Board of Education
October 2020