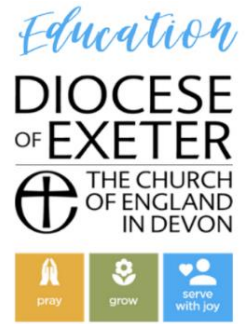


Exeter Diocesan Board of Education Committee

Advisory Note to Church of England Schools on Magic, Witchcraft and Halloween (Jan. 2024)



To enable all, through the love of God in Jesus Christ, to 'live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10b)

Nurture vision-inspired education; **Nourish** personal and spiritual growth; **Enable** connected communities that **flourish**

Introduction

Occasionally schools receive comments from Christian groups or families regarding references that may have been made within school to magic and witchcraft. At other times leaders may feel pressurised to undertake Halloween events in school. It should be recognised that where the school has a religious foundation this issue can be particularly sensitive. This guidance has been written to support leaders and governors should such concerns arise. It is hoped you will find it both informative and a useful tool in aiding discussions around the relevant issues, as well as supportive in any decision-making processes and communications.

References to witchcraft and magic in books

Some Christians would be opposed to any acknowledgement or popularisation of witchcraft/magic in any form within texts for children. This would include the reading of children's fiction depicting witches such as 'The Worst Witch' or the 'Harry Potter' series of children's books. While this may be a minority view, it should be treated with respect.

Governors and senior leaders should avoid over-reaction or an excessive response to such a view. Requests to remove all books and materials that contain reference to magic would be impractical and inappropriate and not supported by the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE). Literature and art which includes reference to witchcraft and magic have been longstanding features in British culture and education. As with all literature materials used, these should be appropriate for children's ages and schools should make professional judgements about the appropriateness of any texts mentioning witches, witchcraft or magic on the same basis as they would for any other materials.

Halloween

Halloween is All Hallows Eve, which falls on October 31 and refers to the day before All Saints' Day (1st November). For many years in the northern hemisphere different festivals have been associated with gathering in the harvest, preparing for winter, remembering loved ones who have died, and preparing for the time of longer nights and winter cold. Halloween celebrations are now increasingly becoming part of British secular culture. Some people do however find Halloween upsetting - we must be respectful of how things like 'trick or treat' can cause worry and concern to the elderly and isolated. We know too that some Christians do not agree with any involvement by adults or children in Halloween celebrations. As such schools need to show respect and deal sensitively with the genuine and deeply held views.

We encourage schools to consider how they might celebrate All Saints' Day rather than organising or engaging with Halloween based activities.

An alternative celebration event

All Saints' Day (1st November) is a major Christian festival within the Anglican tradition, and we encourage Church of England schools to place the positive emphasis on this day for celebration.

There is a great opportunity for churches and schools to work together to offer an alternative celebration event, in place of Halloween activities, such as a 'Light' party for their community's children and families.

Schools could think about themes such as light in the darkness and of changing the focus from trick or treat to gift giving.

There are also opportunities to make All Saints' Day a special day, for example, by offering an opportunity for learning about the Saint after which the school, town or church is named.

Contacts for advice or support

If you have any questions or require support, please do feel free to contact one of the team. You can do this by emailing education@exeter.anglican.org , or by emailing one of the team directly.

Advisory note agreed by the Diocesan Board of Education Committee's Standards and Ethos Group	Review date
31 st January 2024	Spring Term 2027