

Educating for Community and Living Well Together

We are only persons with each other: our humanity is 'co-humanity', inextricably involved with others, utterly relational, both in our humanity and our shared life on a finite planet. If those others are of ultimate worth then we are each called to responsibility towards them and to contribute responsibly to our communities. The good life is 'with and for others in just institutions' (Paul Ricoeur)⁸. So education needs to have a core focus on relationships and commitments, participation in communities and institutions, and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together.

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The conviction that we are created and sustained by God for living together in families and communities is at the root of our dedication to educating for life together.

Living before God and living with and for others go together in Jesus. He embodies the centrality of relationships in love, compassion, generosity, truth-telling, forgiveness, and gathering a community. The community of his followers is bound together in a covenant that commits us to love God and be good neighbours to all, in line with his Jewish scriptures that Jesus taught: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' and 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; see Matthew 7:12, 22:36-40; Luke 10:27). Jesus's Sermon on the Mount gives a vision of life as part of

the family of a God who is fully inclusive in loving, 'making the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous' (Matthew 5:45). The centrality of relationships in education is inspired by our conviction that the love Jesus taught and lived is at the heart of reality.

Each school is to be a hospitable community that seeks to embody an ethos of living well together. Here the flourishing of the pupils goes along with the flourishing of the teachers and other staff. Management practices are assessed not only by ethical standards but by whether they are as wise as possible. We have been deeply impressed by the many examples of this that we found among all types of school. These schools are also highly varied in their inspiration and practice, which encourages our commitment to the system's healthy diversity rather than pursuing 'one size fits all'. We aim to bring together a network of schools that have similar concerns and challenges, to encourage and enable the sharing of good practice (both directly and through incorporation into training courses and resources on our website), and to sponsor research that assesses, supports and extends good practice. A notable recent initiative to improve education for living well together has been on character education in schools.⁹

Beyond the individual school or group of schools, the largescale institutional setting is also important. The Church of England has three main commitments that embrace the whole country. One is to local, regional and national presence in parishes, dioceses and central bodies, with a network of congregations and other organisations. Another is to chaplaincy, with thousands of workers, both paid and volunteer, involved in schools, colleges of further education, universities, hospitals, workplaces, prisons, the armed forces, airports, and other settings. The third is to educational institutions. Each of these three settings benefit from interaction and cooperation with the other two, and all are concerned with the quality of life together in this country.

The Church of England works in close partnership with the Methodist Church, especially through joint schools and the provision of an inspection framework for denominational schools. Of other educational providers, only the Roman Catholic Church has anything like the scope of this national coverage, involvement and commitment to the common good, and the Church of England seeks to collaborate with it when possible, including through joint schools¹⁰

A crucial task is to enable both new synergies between the Church of England's three commitments (above all by realizing the immense potential it has through connecting its national network of church communities and organisations more fully with their local schools), and also a new level of collaboration with others, which is even more vital with the blurring of boundaries between education which is based in schools, in colleges and in universities. The Church of England wants a healthy plurality of providers, who converse and collaborate as much as possible together, and are able to respond critically and constructively to governmental initiatives and other challenges, negotiating settlements in the light of the vision for education we are describing here.