



Our Ref:

Your Ref:

8th September 2011

 THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

 Diocese of
Rochester

Board of Education

Bishop's Officer & Director of Education
Mr. Alex Tear MA(Ed) (Hons)

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Dear Colleague

Director's Letter - September 2011

A warm welcome back to the start of a new academic year and I hope that you and your staff have enjoyed a good break and a settled start to the term.

In my last letter in April, I wrote about the changes ahead for our Church schools and the possible implications from the new period of educational reform and the new White Paper.

Six months on, some of these changes are now becoming a reality with over a third of secondary schools across the country becoming academies which has made a significant impact on the role of the Local Authorities and their capacity to support primary schools.

On the ground, this has meant Local Authorities having to prioritise and target their school improvement activity on the most challenging schools and the withdrawal of the School Improvement Partner for many schools. It has also meant a reduction in the provision and range of services which primary schools have come to depend on over the last twenty years.

So what are the implications for our Church Schools and the Diocese?

One of the most significant changes for all Diocesan Boards of Education is that it is clear that going forward, we will be asked by the Department of Education to take on responsibility for a number of new areas including accountability for school improvement and performance of our Church schools and Academies.

For some Diocese and Church schools this will feel new and very different and will require us to develop a new relationship, working closely with you to support and challenge, to ensure that our schools continue to provide the very best for the children and young people in your care.

In response to these developments, we have decided to launch the *Rochester Diocesan Family of Schools (RDFS)*, a Diocesan wide collaborative partnership which is designed to be a new mechanism for providing the additional capacity we require to facilitate the sharing of best practice and provide support to our Church schools who face challenging circumstances or who are in difficulties.

A separate pack with details of the RDFS and the role of the Diocesan Schools' Forum has been sent to all our Church schools and you can also find details on our website.

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In addition, we also now have a growing team of *Associate Consultants*, who work closely with the Education Team, and are available to schools and Headteachers to use for external evaluation including Headteacher performance management and support for self-evaluation in the absence of the SIPs. Pen portraits of our Associate Consultants can be found on the RDBE website.

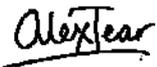
The news that Religious Education has not been included in the E-Baccalaureate despite the huge lobby from the Church of England, dioceses and schools across the country has come as a huge disappointment to all those that work with students in our secondary schools and academies. We will continue to press the Government on your behalf as we seek to ensure that the many benefits of RE as an academic subject and as part of young people's wider spiritual and moral development are understood by those responsible for making decisions at national level.

Despite the outcome, I believe that the whole debate has highlighted the importance of the work of Church schools and their Christian Distinctiveness. It also underlines the value of the self-evaluation process which is a critical part of the SIAS inspection of our Church Schools. We will continue to offer support and advice to our Church schools in developing your work on RE, Collective Worship and Christian Distinctiveness and we are currently developing new courses and training in these areas in response to your needs.

Finally, I am delighted to welcome Virginia Corby as our new Assistant Director of Education (Schools), Elaine Stanford-Beale and Jonathan Erodou as our part time Children's and Youth Work Advisers. Congratulations go to John Constanti who has been appointed as Deputy Director of Education. This now means that our Education Team is fully staffed and has the expertise and experience to support our Church schools across the Diocese.

We look forward to working with you in the year ahead.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Alex Tear
Diocesan Director of Education