

In Christian service of those of all faiths and none

Our school aims to be both excellent and distinctive, celebrating its Church of England status alongside being a special place of teaching and learning. Our Christian ethos is our fundamental and guiding principle and more than an additional or incidental feature of our school's life.

In our Church of England school, we start with the belief that all people are of ultimate worth and accordingly should be valued and treated with equal respectⁱ. In our school community everybody is included in God's love and care, and ours. Following Jesus' own example, we have a particular concern for those who may be described as disadvantaged or excluded in any way, either educationally or socially. Every person deserves to live a life in all its fullness and fulfil their potential, and it falls to us, within our role of Christian service to all in this locality, to strive to counteract all barriers of difference such as race, nationality, religion, gender and status which limit their personal flourishing. Our actions are the outworking in our daily school life of the two great commandments of love of God and love of neighbourⁱⁱ.

The two core New Testament values which underpin our school ethos are agape (ἀγάπη – Christian love) and koinonia (κοινωνία – community).

The essence of agape love is goodwill and delight in the object of love, wishing the best for them in all things. Agape love involves faithfulness and commitment and is distinguished by its moral nature and strong character. Agape love is described in both 1 Corinthians 13, and through the self-giving nature of Jesus himself.

Dr Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, said that 'church schools embody the truth that a context of firm principles suffused by faith and love is the best and right basis for learning and growing'.ⁱⁱⁱ This is the basis of our church school community which works and lives together in the way best described in I Corinthians chp 12 vs 12-26 with its teaching on the Body of Christ.

All our school's Christian values, and our British Values, can be summed up within our understanding of agape and koinonia.

In 2016 the Church of England Vision for Education helped us explore our thinking further using four key drivers of wisdom, hope, community and respect.^{iv}

Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills: "Wisdom" is one of the great themes of the Bible where it is not simply religious wisdom which is talked about, but all aspects of life and culture including economic, political, relational and environmental. In the educational world this tells us of the importance of being daring in the exploration of "big questions", and of the need to be open to new experiences, new knowledge and new people. Jesus' teaching was vivid, imaginative and challenging, and so should ours be. The wisdom tradition also sees the natural world as a place of wonder, exploration, reflection and self-discovery which is important in a time of ecological challenges. Thus, educating for wisdom in our school is about ethics, values and purposes, as well as maths, literacy, knowledge and facts^v.

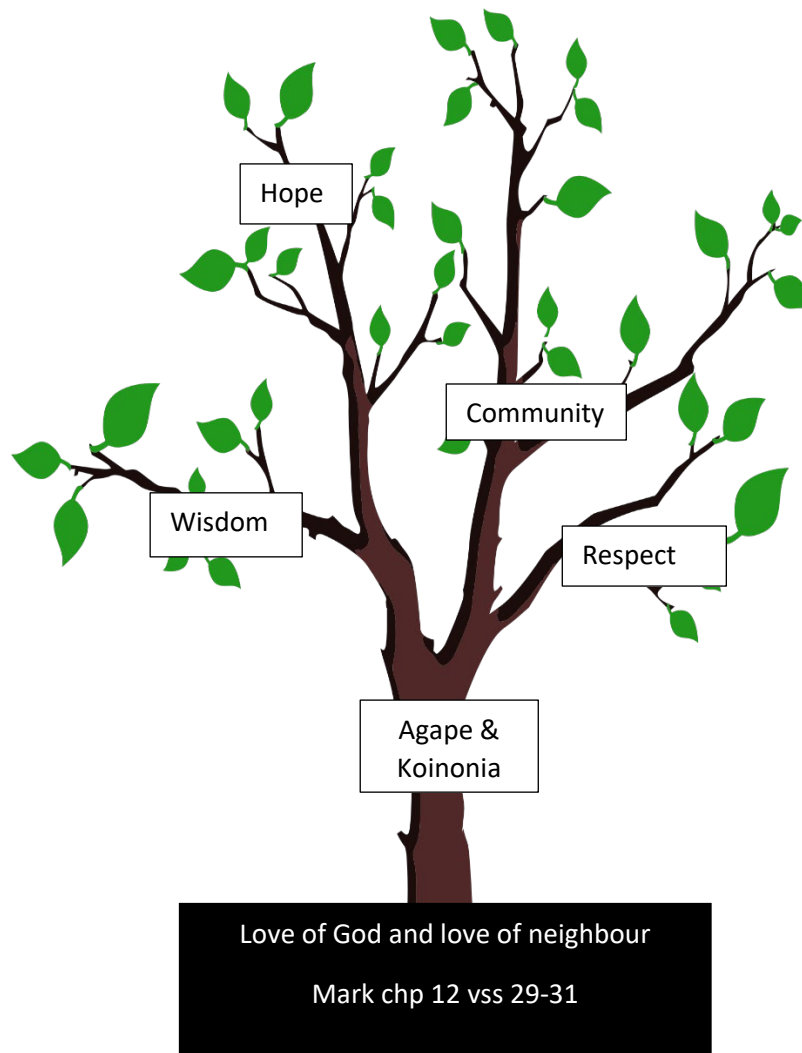
Educating for Hope and Aspiration: Educating for "Hope" is about how we approach the future and, in Christian teaching, is bound up with hope in God's future for the world. Every pupil in our school should be encouraged to stretch themselves spiritually, morally, intellectually, imaginatively and actively as well as being well-educated. Hope also helps us cope wisely with things and people going wrong. It shows us that bad experiences, bad behaviour and wrongdoing need not have the last word, there is always room in our school for healing situations, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Educating for Community and Living Well Together: In education this is a core focus of relationships within the school itself and in the role our school plays in the local and wider community. We strive to be a hospitable community of "warm fires and open doors"^{vi} where all are welcome.

Educating for Dignity and Respect: A belief in the ultimate worth of every person and in human dignity is at the heart of a good education. Ensuring our children are kept safely from harm and

educated in an environment where all God’s children are valued is of the highest priority and may be encountered especially in the areas in our school relating to safeguarding, bullying, special educational needs and disabilities.

Within the context of this holistic Church school education, we strive to meet the expectations of both Ofsted and SIAMS, and to prepare those for whom we have responsibility with the important tools they need to build their futures.



ⁱ This statement is based on the Christian belief that all mankind is “made in the image of God” – this does not mean that God physically looks like us, but rather that we should endeavour to “see God in everyone” and so treat each individual with the highest respect, putting all prejudice and hesitations aside.

ⁱⁱ See Mark chp2 vss 29-31 and parallels

ⁱⁱⁱ “The Way Ahead, Church Schools in the New Millennium” aka “The Dearing Review” (2001)

^{iv} The second half of this document is a brief summary of “The Church of England Vision for Education, Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good” (2016)

^v The Church of England Vision for Education states in full: “(The Vision) offers a healthily deep, broad and long-term context within which to consider other key educational concepts and practices such as knowledge, information, skills, excellence, academic rigour, critical thinking, measurement and assessment, appraisal, outcomes, ethos, values, and religious or other forms of literacy. Wisdom is about ethics as well as cognition, values and purposes as well as facts, and above all tries to make sound judgements that do justice to the whole ‘ecology’ of life.” (page 14).

^{vi} David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon – and used in the Church of England’s discussion paper on Character Education “The Fruit of the Spirit” (2015)