

Christian Values Workbook:

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Two Images of Christian Values

"Christian values" can seem a nebulous term—what are those values supposed to be? What makes the nominated values specifically Christian, are they not universal values in some way? This is actually a question it can be difficult to answer because any culture such as ours which has absorbed centuries of Christian teaching can hold "Christian values" at its heart without actually realising how these values originated and making that link as to how they were embedded into the national psyche.

The two images above try to explain thinking about Christian values, and could be applied both to the Christian Church and to the life of a church school.

The first image is the carefully crafted cartwheel made of three distinct parts—each has an important part to play in the functioning of the whole and should one fail the wheel collapses:



At the centre of a wheel is the hub, the core which holds the whole together and on which everything depends—the wheel cannot be built without it. For a Christian this has to represent their belief in and relationship with God, and the teachings of the Bible which is the core of their being. In a church school this could be encapsulated as the two Great Commandments—love of God and love of neighbour.



From the hub comes the spokes—these are what could be called Christian values. The values are firmly rooted in Christian teaching, they are not free floating, and Christians will be able to link them with the teaching and example of Jesus or other pertinent Bible teaching. Christians (and church schools) are called to be Christ-like and rooted in God, just as the spokes are "rooted" in the hub.

Finally comes the rim—the part of the wheel which meets the road or the world. This is effectively what everyone sees of the Church or the school. In the church school this could be policies, relationships etc. It may be that in appearance these outworkings of the church school look strikingly similar to those of other schools, but if you follow back the route taken to reach these decisions you should be able to find they go back to Christian principles.



The second image is a stick of seaside rock. The chief characteristic of the rock is that the same words run all the way through every stick rolled from the first lump. So it should be with a church or a church school, if Christian values are at the heart of the organisation and shared effectively with the whole community through collective worship, relationships, policies and teaching, then “cut” the church or school anywhere and there should be an understanding of the Christian principles which undergird it, at an appropriate level of course....

The Concept of this Booklet

This is not intended to be an exhaustive collection of Christian values—that would be an impossibility! It is a selection of values which have been chosen because of their centrality in Christian thinking. Additionally some of them have been particularly selected because they are named as examples in the locally agreed RE Syllabuses used in the Diocese of Ely. Each value section has two parts—the first section is a VERY short explanation of the value, the second asks questions to explore how the value is worked out in school life (the rim of the wheel).

There are three other resources which will support a school’s work on Christian values:

<http://www.christianvalues4schools.co.uk/> This is a very good website which will grow and grow—go here for ideas of how to embed the values in the ethos, curriculum and worship of your school. It includes a number of cameo videos from real schools—so you know the ideas work! Heartily recommended.

Some of this booklet previously appeared in a Bible Study type of publication we use for governor training and sessions thinking about the aims and values of a church school. The original booklet is still available at http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/documents/Christianvalues.pdf there is a second version of the booklet **with materials for RE and collective worship** at http://www.ely.anglican.org/education/schools/collective_worship/documents/10values.pdf

Gloucester Diocese has an excellent collective worship pack called Values for Life—packed with materials and a very popular resource. You can acquire it from Jumping Fish <http://www.gloucester.anglican.org/downloads/798.pdf>

Using the materials to think about your School

Often church schools talk about their school being “built on Christian values”, or a similar statement, but it is sometimes difficult to tease out exactly what these values are in real terms. Often the Christian values are expressed in terms of being a caring community, but this is only a part of the whole, as the rich variety of nominated values in this booklet demonstrates. Can you actually identify what your key Christian values are?



Step One

Take the time as a group of professionals (staff and governors) to look at the “What is.....?” sections of this booklet—you can do this as individuals, pairs, or any other grouping—discuss the Bible base of the concepts and select those values which you feel particularly gel with your school and the way that it works as a community. It is very possible that you will be tempted to say “yes” to all of the values listed, but it is probably more helpful to limit yourselves to no more than half a dozen (or even just three) in the first instance! Agree as a group the values you are now going to work with.

Leave yourselves open to the possibility that there may be key Christian values described in the booklet which it would be good for you to adopt and to work on as a school, perhaps because there is some imbalance in the way pupils treat each other for example. It is always good to have something to aim for and develop!

Explore the questions in the “..... in school” section—if you feel the value you are looking at is one the Christian values strongly represented in your school, does it show itself in real actions (where the wheel hits the road..) *If not, why not?* There may be ideas on <http://www.christianvalues4schools.co.uk/> for how you can put this value into action—

take time to watch some of the real life videos and comment on them together.



Step Two

Now you need a plan! Decide how you are going to work at these chosen key values and share them with your pupils. Collective worship is an ideal vehicle for this and the folder of worship materials from Jumping Fish mentioned on the previous page is an excellent resource to support this approach.

It may be that you would wish



to partially incorporate your Christian Values into your Every Child Matters agenda and approaches, or other whole school projects.

It may be that you would wish to think in terms of promoting particular values at different times within the school, with a weekly "Child of Compassion Award" or similar. You probably already have awards of this kind—so why not overtly link them to your school's Christian Values? What about highlighting a Value for a term or a half-term? Particular values could fit closely to times of the Church's Year e.g. agape, service, and courage would all link with Easter, peace would be particularly appropriate at Christmastide.



Display your Christian values in the hall or entrance—perhaps your pupils could design appropriate posters when they have spent time thinking about the values in circle time or PSHE. This display could include child friendly definitions of the values and photographs of children being "caught" in appropriate actions. Create similar boards in your classrooms (especially the photographs!)

Other devices which could be used to share the chosen Christian values with the school as a whole is to create a "school backpack". Fill the backpack with tangible items which help tell the story of your school ethos and use this as a stimulus for collective worship and classroom work. What values would you like your pupils to carry with them in their backpack as they leave your school and move on into the world?

Use Bible stories which have a clear Christian message as a focus for RE, literacy lessons, and as a stimulus for putting Christian values into action. Give pupils a clear way of thinking about how key values would affect the look, the sound and the atmosphere of their classroom.



Step Three

And finally, don't forget to go back to those Christian values in staff meetings or governor meetings when new policies, strategies, etc occupy your minds! Are your key values an integral part of school life, and of your policies? After a year or so do you need to revisit the exercises in this booklet? Don't be tempted to divorce the value from its Biblical base—remember that as a church school you are talking about *Christian* values—revisit the hub!

Governors can take "walking audits" of their school over time—asking e.g. "if this school promotes peace as a key value, what evidence do we see that this is the case? What do we encounter in our walk? What would we hope to see that is not there? What are our pupils and staff telling us?" Remember, the questions in the "...in school" section are

Agape—Christian love

What is Agape? (ἀγάπη pronounced ah-gah-pay)

For Christians *agape* is the key Christian value—it lies at the root of all other values. It means respect, affection, benevolence, goodwill and concern for the welfare of the one loved. It is selfless, and means putting others first before oneself. The word is Greek and is used throughout the New Testament for Christian love—it is different from, and more than, friendship. The supreme explanation of the word agape is the unearned love God had for humanity — a love so great that God was willing to send his only son to suffer and die on the cross.

In his *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, Jesus made the point that we should extend our Christian love to *all* people of the world, regardless of race, religion, nationality or any other artificial distinction. We must practise that Christian love even toward our enemies. (Matthew chapter 5: verses 43-48) in fact agape does not distinguish between worthy and unworthy people or friends and enemies — Jesus' Golden Rule is, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." We should not say or do anything unless we are certain that we are happy the same thing should be done to ourselves. We should also be positive about doing good to others.



I Corinthians chapter 13 verses 4-7: **Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.**

Agape in School

In school, *agape* translates into an ethos of care and concern which embraces all members of the school community and beyond. It should not be thought of as a wishy-washy concept—it can take the form of “tough love” for the good of the community.

Ethos

- How do you support the “friendless” members of your school community?
- How are those who seem different for any reason given support and shown they are wanted?
- How does the school position on rewards and sanctions / behaviour relate to the concept of agape?
- Do the “rules of the classroom” promote agape?
- Do pupils know we “hate the sin but love the sinner”?
- Do the verses from I Corinthians 13 (see opposite) help define the ethos of your school?

Worship

- How does the concept of God’s love feature in collective worship?
- Does your school’s worship draw on a variety of styles and cultures?

Curriculum

- What positive actions are taken to keep before the school the needs of the global community?
- How are pupils encouraged to act on behalf of others locally, nationally, internationally (e.g. charity fundraising)?

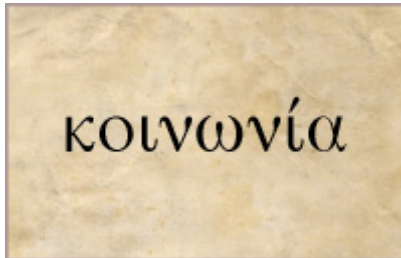
Leadership

- Do we believe we have an obligation to ensure every child has a good childhood, as a person in their own right with rights?
- Do we seek to build a world where every child has a place at its centre not on its margins?

Because agape is, in a sense, a great “catch all” value, the values and questions on the following pages can all be traced back to agape.

Koinonia—Community

What is Koinonia?



Yes another Greek New Testament word! This one also has a rich variety of meanings: fellowship; community; union; partnership. It is the same word as is used for animals which are yoked together and thus work together as a pair, sharing the burden equally. In Christian teaching “koinonia” describes how Christians come together as a family, with believers being regarded as “children of God” and brothers and sisters in Christ (see John chapter 17)

I Corinthians chapter 12 verses 12-31 gives us the picture of the Church as being like a body—in a body different parts have different functions, but each part is an important part of the whole, and the body would be incomplete without its legs or its hearing etc and not be able to function so well. Moreover, as we all know, if one part of the body is in pain, the whole part is affected—we cannot easily ignore a nagging tooth or a broken wrist. In the same way, the members of a family are interdependent: all are needed and valued and each person is important to the whole—this is the message for the Church... and for the school.

Koinonia also expresses the *quality* of relationship within the Christian community. It is based on fellowship with Jesus. Through him, Christians share the relationship that

Jesus has with God. In John chapter 17, Jesus prays that all his followers may be ‘perfectly one’ as he and the Father are one. Through him, Christians become sons and daughters of God and therefore brothers and sisters of each other. They are all members of the same family. The foundation of Christian koinonia is Christ’s self giving on the cross, the supreme demonstration of his love for all. We love



because he loved us first. For the first Christians, this was expressed in a genuine common life with shared meals, shared possessions and practical support for the poor. The Christian church today continues to serve not only those within the Christian community but any who are in need.

Everyone’s different gifts are at the service of the community.

Koinonia in School

The Christian value of koinonia asks you too look at your school as a place of Christian fellowship and of inclusion:

Ethos

- How do you know that all members of the school community feel included (and remember that the community is more than just the pupils)?
- How are pupils supporting each other and building friendships through buddy systems, peer mentoring etc?
- How are pupils given a stake in the school through ownership of school aims and missions statements?
- Do activities organised with other schools, particularly local church schools, encourage a sense of community?
- How do you generate a sense of community and belonging in school? Do pupils see themselves as part of "one body" in which *everyone* has a role?

Worship

- Do you have a shared school prayer which shows what it is to be part of the fellowship of your school community? Do you make use of the common hymns and prayers of the Church, in particular the Lord's Prayer?
- How are the values of the school shared through collective worship?
- Do the rituals used in worship help build a sense of community?
- Are pupils given the role of worship leaders to help demonstrate their importance in the worshipping life of the community?
- Do all pupils feel included in worship and able to participate at their own appropriate level?
- How does worship promote and reinforce the shared distinctive Christian values of the school?

Curriculum

- How are pupils encouraged to work together in a co-operative and mutually supportive way?
- Do pupils have the opportunity to learn about the Eucharist as the act of community for Christians?
- Are there links with the wider and world communities?
- Does the curriculum encourage pupils to build and sustain their roles in the school and wider communities?
- Do pupils learn about the worldwide church? Do they see their school as part of the worldwide church?

Leadership

- How are parents and the community made to feel a welcome part of your school?
- How do you support and encourage active involvement in the Friends of the School / PTA etc?
- Does the school stand at the heart of the community? How do you know?
- How far do you consider your school to be "in community" with local churches? How are two-way links with the local church community grown and maintained to the benefit of both?
- How are staff and governors supporting each other and valuing each other?
- In what practical ways does the school build a sense of community and mutual valuing amongst staff e.g. staff room facilities, social gatherings?
- How do you help staff and governors have a strong vision about what is special about a church school and their role in supporting the vision?

Thankfulness

What is Christian Thankfulness?

The concept of thankfulness is important in Christianity, and can be seen especially in worship where songs and prayers of thankfulness and praise are an important feature. Paul tells his readers to be thankful in all circumstances (I Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 18) and it is this conviction that everything is ultimately for good to those who love God that has sustained believers through the most dreadful trials.

Christians are thankful to God for many reasons firstly, and not least, for the gift of life itself. Seeing God as the Creator and Sustainer of all things naturally affects how one thinks of and treats the world and all that is in it. Here thankfulness is linked with the idea of stewardship, where mankind's thankfulness is demonstrated by his good care of the world.

It is important to remember that the word "Eucharist" actually comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving (*eucharistia*). This core Christian act of worship is an act of thanksgiving for the death and resurrection of God's Son which opened up the way of forgiveness to all mankind.

Saying thank you to other people is also important. The story of the ten lepers (Luke chapter 17:verses 11-19), in which only one came back to say thank you for his healing is a message for us all. Another practical outworking of thankfulness to God is generosity to other people (Acts chapter 20 verse 35: the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.')



Thankfulness in School

Ethos

- In schools there are many opportunities to be generous with time and support, and many people who work in schools or support them give “above and beyond the call of duty”. It is always important to remember to say thank you—especially for those things or those people that get taken for granted! Do you do that? Are opportunities to do this automatically built into the life of the school?
- Is saying “please and thank you” a matter of manners or a real sentiment in your school life?
- How is celebration and joyfulness built into the life of the school?
- Does the school encourage an appreciation of, and a thankfulness for, the benefits of education?
- How do pupils treat the adults such as cooks and playtime supervisors who are part of school life?
- How are pupils enabled to see the good things of life are a blessing and not a right?
- Are pupils encouraged to be thankful for more than just material possessions?

Worship

- The saying of Grace at school mealtimes (either in the dining hall or the classroom) is a practical and prayerful way of engaging with this Value. Do either of these figure in your day to day school life?
- The notion of thankfulness figures in many Christian worship songs which you may be using in collective worship. Have you audited your collective worship provision lately and looked at the balance of messages the songs proclaim?
- How are pupils encouraged to express their thankfulness in prayer e.g. prayer trees, extempore prayer in worship etc?
- Church schools may also include regular Eucharists in their pattern of worship (termly for example). Is this something you need to think about?
- Do you use worship as the vehicle for giving thanks for significant events in the life of the school?
- Is your worship celebratory, creative and joyful?

Curriculum

- Does the curriculum allow time to pause for “thankful moments” e.g. an opportunity to respond to the wonders of Creation?
- How Eco aware is your school? Thankfulness for Creation is more than the annual Harvest Festival celebration, it is also about caring for the environment and thinking about the products used and wasted in your school. In practical terms this may be seen in the Creation of vegetable plots, sensory gardens or even spiritual gardens.
- How are pupils helped to understand how interdependent we are on the skills and labours of other people throughout the world and to express appreciation for this?
- How are pupils helped develop the skills of giving thanks to members of the community and visitors e.g. through writing letters of appreciation?

Leadership

- How do you express appreciation of all that staff members and volunteers do—especially when they have given far more than their contract requires?
- How do governors show their appreciation of the Headteacher and teaching staff?
- What would you include if you were to count your blessings?

Compassion

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What is Christian Compassion?

In the Gospels we find many stories of Jesus showing compassion to the sick and the downtrodden of society as he healed them or welcomed them into his circle. Christians believe that their attitudes and actions must reflect the kindness, mercy and compassion of Jesus, and the love of God for everyone, with that special concern for the poor and the oppressed. "Compassion" is a much stronger word than "sympathy", it is more than "feeling sorry for someone". If you have compassion for someone you step into their shoes, you share their experiences and sufferings, and you have a desire to support them and, where possible, to act on their behalf. If you read Colossians chapter 3 verse 12 you will see that Paul links the idea of compassion firmly with kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, and this shows you how what might be described as "acts of compassion" should be carried out.

Christians have always had to wrestle with the problem of how a loving God could allow there to be evil and suffering in the world. There is no simple response to this question, but part of the answer is that God the Father is not passively observing the suffering of the world from the outside—He identified with human suffering in the life and death of Jesus and continues to work to transform the sufferings of the world through the work of the Holy Spirit.



Compassion in School

Ethos

- In the school community compassion means showing kindness and true **respect** to each other. It is related to the way in which new people are welcomed into the school family and nurtured and supported. How is this worked out in your situation?
- How are members of the community supporting each other through difficult times, such as bereavement, and how are those who struggle supported and included?
- How do you enable pupils to demonstrate compassion?
- How are pupils enabled to understand the importance of ensuring that everyone feels included and not marginalised? How is this put into practice?

Worship

- Do the stories used in worship include ones which express Jesus' compassion towards the sick and suffering? How are pupils helped to reflect on these stories?
- Are pupils encouraged to pray for those in difficult circumstances e.g. at times of natural disaster? Is there both prayer and positive action?
- Compassion is also shown in the way a school responds at special times in the calendar—how is Remembrance Day marked? Is there an emphasis on reconciliation and healing of wounds?
- How do you ensure that "praying for others" is not just saying appropriate words and then moving on?

Curriculum

- The international dimension of compassion is not only about fundraising in response to regular charity initiatives (although this can be very important), but also in forming close links with an overseas partner, such as an African school, and coming to an understanding of their joys and needs through personal communication, sharing stories, and an understanding of their real-life context. What do you do?
- Is there material available in school to support children in times of bereavement?
- Do curriculum areas explore the way in which people can be affected by larger decisions e.g. Eco issues?
- Are pupils given the opportunity to enter empathetically into the lives of others in different places, situations or times e.g. in AT2 in RE or in drama?
- When do pupils get the opportunity to meet with visitors who have important stories to tell e.g. charity representatives?

Leadership

- How does the school demonstrate compassion? Are there more things which can be done, (such as hosting parenting programmes for the neighbourhood), or new relationships which can be created with local communities (such as those in sheltered housing schemes or night shelters)?
- Does the school leadership model compassionate caring?
- How do you initiate support for local and international charities? What criteria do you use? How do you maintain momentum?
- Are tough decisions made and communicated compassionately?

What is Christian Peace?

Matthew chapter 5 verse 9 says "**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God**". The word Peace is used frequently throughout the scriptures to describe God Himself, while the Christian message is "the Gospel of Peace". In Jesus' teaching "peace" is an almost tangible element. It is his gift to his disciples. Paul describes God as the God of peace, the Christian message is called the 'gospel of peace' and peace is one of the 'fruits of the Spirit'.



You may have heard the word used for peace in the Hebrew of the Old Testament—it is Shalom—a very close cousin of the Arabic word Salaam. The Biblical concept of peace is not just the absence of war. It includes peace with God, positive harmony and healthy relationships between people. It involves spiritual as well as material security. Peace is a state of true wholeness, a state of well-being.

The Biblical picture of the coming age of Shalom is not just about an age without war ("swords will be beaten into ploughshares") but one where traditional enemies live in total harmony ("the wolf shall lie down with the lamb") and their leaders govern with wisdom, understanding and justice (Isaiah chapter 2 verses 2-4 and chapter 11 verses 1-9) Peace, in the sense of total well-being for the whole of creation, is the ultimate goal; this includes harmony between people, harmony between people and God, and harmony between humankind and the whole created order. Peace is often linked with the word "righteousness" in the Bible—an indication that peace does not come automatically because, in order for there to be true peace in the world there must first be true justice for all. Christians are called to share in Christ's work of restoring this peace and wholeness.

Jesus told us not to worry or be concerned about material things for God knows our needs. Anxiety is a denial of peace. However this is a message people constantly have to re-learn as it does not seem to come naturally—our temperaments and our culture often means that our natural reactions in a situation are hostility and suspicion rather than Peace.



Peace in School

In the school context peacemaking actions can include everything from conflict resolution to creating times and places for stillness and reflection.

Ethos

- Who are the peacemakers in your school? How are pupils encouraged to be peacemakers *and* given the skills to take on this role?
- Is the atmosphere the school engenders one of deep peace, or uneasy truce?
- How are conflicts resolved between pupils and between adults? Is there a consistency of approach?
- Does the school have quiet spaces (for adults and children)? Are there reflection corners or spiritual gardens? Does the school environment promote peace?
- How does the school support the healing process for families or pupils experiencing trauma?
- Is peace in your school partnered with justice?
- How does the school deal with aggression?
- What contribution does your Christian ethos make to a peace filled school?

Worship

- Does worship include frequent opportunities for quiet reflection?
- Do you foster peaceful styles of worship as well as the dynamic and lively?
- Have you explored the theme of peace in your worship?
- Do you use greetings in worship such as "The peace of the Lord be always with you"? How are pupils helped to understand these expressions?

Curriculum

- How do methods of classroom management foster peaceful classrooms?
- How do different methods of teaching and learning foster co-operation and mutual support?
- Do pupils have the opportunity to learn about some of the world's peacemakers (Nelson Mandela, Gandhi)?
- Have you looked at the various images for peace found in the Bible and elsewhere to support your thinking on creating peaceful communities?

Leadership

- Is there pastoral care for the staff? Does your church support you with this?
- Who can anxious people turn to in a "no blame" culture?
- What training is given to help resolve conflicts within the school in an appropriate and skilful manner?
- Is your school community whole and healthy? What strategies can you use to promote a peaceful and harmonious community in your school?

What is Christian Forgiveness?

In the Lord's Prayer we ask God to forgive us our sins or trespasses "as we forgive those who sin against us". What a thing to ask—we are saying we wish God to treat us in the same way we treat other people! God is merciful and forgives our sins and failings (Numbers chapter 14 verse 18). In the same way, the Lord's Prayer assumes, we must be merciful and forgive other people who sin against us or do us harm. Christians forgive because they know themselves to be forgiven (Ephesians chapter 4 verses 32) Unfortunately, as we know, people frequently find it difficult to apologise to other people, or to forgive each other. Jesus gave us an example of how this was done in his *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (Luke chapter 15 verses 11-32). An even more potent example of this is his forgiveness of his persecutors as he hung upon the cross..... Forgiveness is fundamental to the character of God. Throughout the Bible, God is described as slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin (Numbers 14:18).

Bearing a grudge and seeking revenge are *never* appropriate responses to a perceived wrong. A grudge destroys the grudge-holder with bitterness, and revenge only escalates hostilities. Jesus told us we must reconcile with our adversaries, forgive their transgressions, and let go of the anger that may tempt us to commit an act of revenge: **I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** (Matthew chapter 5 verses 43-45) On another occasion (Matthew chapter 18 verse 21) Peter (who probably feels he is being very generous) asks Jesus if he should forgive someone as many as seven times before he cracks. As Peter was known for his hot temper, forgiving someone this many times would have been a supreme act of will. Jesus' shocking answer is that no, you must forgive seventy times seven—this does not literally mean that when someone irritates you for the 491st time you can thump him at last, it is actually an expression meaning "forever". Or, in other words, "When can I stop forgiving?" "Never!"



Forgiveness cannot be given or received unless it is asked for, and the asking must be genuine and from the heart. Too often 'sorry' is said very easily (by adults as well as children), implying: 'All I need to do is say I'm sorry and everything will be OK'. Real repentance demands that we take what we have done wrong with the utmost seriousness and have a deep desire not to do it again.

If you look back at the laws in the Old Testament you will see that forgiveness literally requires sacrifice. Of course, animal sacrifices are no longer offered, in our worship, but the message of this action remains true— that forgiveness is *costly* to all involved. Once we understand that, forgiveness can be truly liberating both for the person who is forgiven and for the person who forgives.

Forgiveness in School

In school this Christian value relates particularly to repairing damaged relationships and conflict resolution.

Ethos

- Do children and adults know that whatever they do, forgiveness is possible? (“Love the sinner but not the sin.”) Or is there the sense that someone can be forgiven thus far and then no further?
- How are pupils reconciled to the school community—do they know themselves to be forgiven once they have come to terms with any wrongdoing?
- How are people encouraged to realise that if we make mistakes we can ask for forgiveness from God, as well as from each other?
- How are pupils involved in decisions relating to sanctions and behaviour?
- How are adults and children helped to understand the issues when inappropriate or challenging behaviour on the part of others affects their own learning?
- Is forgiveness seen by adults and children as an action of strength or of weakness?
- Do we seek to build a world where every child is allowed the freedom to explore, to make mistakes and to grow?
- How does the school build a culture where all are accepted?

Worship

- Is there an appropriate opportunity in worship for people to say sorry or to acknowledge things of which they are ashamed?
- What rituals could you develop in school to mark forgiveness and reconciliation (without humiliation)?
- Does the school have the opportunity to hear the stories of God’s love and forgiveness? How do you celebrate that nothing is beyond God’s forgiveness?

Curriculum

- In RE does forgiveness and reconciliation figure in your teaching on the understanding of the cross?
- Where in the curriculum do pupils learn about the complex nature of forgiveness and its place in relationships?
- How are pupils helped to empathise with the pain and hurt of others?
- Where do pupils learn about the need for forgiveness between communities e.g. rival families, Israel / Palestine?

Leadership

- How does the school respond to parents who object to children (other than their own) being forgiven and reinstated after extreme actions?
- Do we make sure that our own or others’ differences of opinion, shortcomings or mistakes do not come between us and those with whom we work?
- Do we work to ensure that no child is disqualified from a good childhood?
- Where are the opportunities for staff to speak to someone in confidence about the things that trouble them?
- Is exclusion compatible with Christian reconciliation?
- What is the balance between sanctions and forgiveness in the school behaviour policy?

What is Christian Justice?

See Amos chapter 5 verse 24: **let justice roll down like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!** There are many different facets to the Biblical concept of Justice.

Justice and mercy are key themes of the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Biblical justice is **more** than fairness and equality, it is a strong bias towards the weak, the poor and the socially disadvantaged who are cared for, *whether they 'deserve' it or not*. All have a right to life, freedom and dignity. In God's eyes every person is precious and oppression or discrimination, on any grounds, has no place (Exodus chapter 23 verses 2,6). God's justice is gracious and an integral part of His personality —He always acts justly and he calls on people to do the same.

Justice is often interpreted in terms of seeking rights for oneself or one's own group ('we demand justice') when Biblically it is really an action on behalf of others. This does not mean that one has to ignore injustices to oneself, but it does shift the focus. 'Justice' is not for 'just me'. This means that Christians will be more keen to protect others than themselves and will always wish to see right prevail. A commitment to justice is a fierce opposition of injustice.

When thinking about 'justice', some people will think first about giving wrongdoers the punishment they deserve. 'Justice' evokes ideas of 'just deserts', 'the punishment fitting the crime', 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. *(This oft quoted expression was actually an advance in its time as it was a demand that people should not embark upon a vendetta or feuding—once the original crime had been dealt with, that was the end.)* However, that would be a one-sided picture of justice. Justice builds a community where everyone's well-being is bound up with that of everyone else. Without true Justice there cannot be true Peace.

Matthew 23:23 *(Jesus criticising the religious leaders of his day)* 'You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness.'



Justice in School

In the school situation this Christian value relates to the call to take responsibility for one another, and is anti-discrimination. Pupils should also be inspired to recognise injustice in the world and to think about their own potential role in fighting it. In whole school terms this may include such things as becoming a Fair Trade school.

Ethos

- Do pupils and adults show respect for each other e.g. in respecting each other's property and that of the school?
- How are pupils encouraged to support each other e.g. buddy benches or the use of "family" groupings?
- Is peer mentoring used to support pupils who behave badly?
- Do pupils clearly understand the school's behaviour or rewards and sanctions policy and appreciate the reasons for it?
- Are sanctions always followed by reconciliation?
- In what ways is a concern for fairness demonstrated in your school? To what extent are pupils encouraged to debate what is fair or just in different circumstances?

Worship

- How are pupils encouraged to reflect upon Jesus' teaching on justice and compassion for the poor and oppressed, and perhaps to follow this with positive action e.g. supporting Christian Aid?
- How does worship help people to come to an understanding of what is fair and just?
- Is a concern for fairness and justice reflected in the prayer life of the school?

Curriculum

- Where in the curriculum are issues such as Fair Trade discussed?
- In RE and History do pupils have the opportunity to learn how the Church plays, and has played, a role in supporting the poor and oppressed?
- How are pupils helped to understand that with rights comes responsibility?

Leadership

- How is the school budget used creatively to provide experiences for pupils (and staff?) which they might otherwise be unable to afford such as trips, artists in residence, music tuition?
- How is everyone included in an open and fair decision making process (staff, governors, pupils, families, church?)
- How do you ensure that the sanctions and procedures that you have in place are fair?
- How are school rules (and class rules) / behaviour policies decided and reviewed?
- Have you thought of becoming a Fair Trade school?
- Do you believe that schools can make a difference to issues of justice in local or global communities? How will your pupils be equipped to "make a difference" when they leave school?
- How do you ensure that yours is a school where weightier matters are not sometimes neglected because of the accumulation of circumstantial and relatively trivial issues?

What is Christian Service?

Properly understood, Christian Service is a revolutionary concept. The notion of service calls individuals to lay selfish things aside for the needs of others. It is also an important value for all social relationships. Words relating to 'servant' and 'service' are central in Christian theology. Some of the most important prophecies in Isaiah speak of the coming of the 'Servant of the Lord' and his role as a 'suffering servant.' That is why Jesus said that he 'came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

The story of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper is well known—this is where he takes on the role of the lowest servant rather than that of the master. Jesus tells us clearly what is the meaning of this action: 'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done.' The action also symbolises the fact that Jesus himself, in his incarnation, has taken on the role of servant, the ultimate task of this servant being to give his life "as a ransom for many".



Serving God means serving others (Galatians chapter 5 verses 13f). Meaning is found in service rather than in self-centredness. It runs counter to the idea that life is all about competition, or that freedom simply means doing what suits me, or my group, best. It also means that we cannot serve other masters as well (i.e. focus on these as the things of greatest importance) - such as money and possessions. This service is given freely without expectation of return—as in the parable of the Good Samaritan, or in "going the extra mile" (Matthew chapter 5 verse 41).

However, Christians would say that service of Christ and imitation of Christ is not all about restrictions: "His service is perfect freedom."

Service in School

Ethos

- Many involved in the life of a church school will be able to describe their role in terms of service or vocation. Are pupils being inspired by the same notion?
- How do pupils show gratitude for those who help them in school., including helpers like “the lollipop lady”?
- How are people encouraged to “find” their gifts and to use them for the good of the (school) community?
- How are pupils encouraged to serve others where possible?

Worship

- How are “acts of service” celebrated or remembered in collective worship (celebration assemblies)?
- How is remembering Maundy Thursday and the washing of the disciples’ feet incorporated into worship as a model of service?

Curriculum

- How do different areas of the curriculum, or ways of working, support the notion of sacrificial giving and service?
- How does the area of citizenship promote the concept of serving community and country?
- What opportunities for serving others are built naturally into the curriculum?

Leadership

- How do you show gratitude for those who serve / help your school?
- Is the notion of headteacher as servant leader in the image of Christ a helpful leadership model in school? Does it create any tension in your thinking? How would you resolve this?
- What are the characteristics of servant leadership in a school?
- How do you achieve a good work / life balance, and encourage other people to do the same?
- Does your vision for the school’s role in the community address the notion of service?

Courage/ Endurance & Self-Sacrifice

What is Christian Courage / Endurance & Self-Sacrifice?

Basic to Christian faith is the belief that God is present in every situation, and this has led to great acts of courage. Courage takes many forms: it may mean facing up to opposition or personal danger; it may mean overcoming your personal fears or phobias; it could mean making a stand for the right. The Bible is full of such stories of courage: David and Goliath; Daniel in the lions' den; Paul on his missionary journeys; Jesus himself in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Emphasis upon endurance is common in the New Testament where it is linked with patience and suffering. St Paul is certain that endurance is honed by suffering, is character building and is characterised by love (Romans chapter 5 verses 3-4; I Corinthians chapter 4 verses 12 – 13). It is linked with self-control, godliness (II Peter chapter 1 verses 6) and steadfastness.

At its root, endurance is recognition that life is sometimes difficult and painful, and that it is important not to give up in the face of adversity. Jesus endured rejection, abuse and the cross, and his followers are warned that they may well have to share that pain as persecution took hold. Discipleship is depicted as 'taking up the cross daily' and following in Jesus' footsteps (Luke chapter 9 verse 23)



It often takes real courage to be truly self-sacrificing, which is why the two values are linked here. The ultimate picture of this is shown in Philippians chapter 2 verses 6-8 where Paul describes how Jesus "emptied" himself of all the privileges of being God to become a man, subject to cold, pain, rejection and , ultimately, a painful lingering death.

For Christians this self-sacrifice may include sacrificing their personal plans and ambitions, their property, reputation or comfort, for what they know to be the will of God in their lives.

Self-sacrifice is not an occasional event (a giving up of chocolate biscuits for Lent) but a formative lifestyle. Christians would argue that a life which looks inward to one's own personal pleasures becomes dull and boring, but a life which looks outward to put others before self is a fulfilling life.

Courage / Endurance & Self-Sacrifice in School

In the school situation this could relate to questions of self-esteem, standing up to bullying, or challenging oneself to do one's best. Many of your children may already be "children of courage" as they deal with home problems or ill-health.

Ethos

- How does the school positively support children who are facing personal difficulties, for a variety of reasons, and help them to face these problems with courage?
- Is your school culture one of selfishness or selflessness?
- Do your pupils understand that some things are worth working for or worth waiting patiently for? How do you develop patience?
- What encourages the people of your school to persevere in the face of difficulty?
- When everything is changing rapidly around us, from fashion to policies, how do you help pupils, staff and governors to identify and treasure those things which are of enduring value?

Worship

- How do you tell the Holy Week and Easter story so as to present the meaning and message of Jesus' life and death in an appropriate way?
- What opportunities are there to hear the stories of those who have suffered for their faith, and to be inspired by them?
- How does worship help people develop a sense of hope that will sustain them through difficult times?

Curriculum

- Does your target setting and your marking policy encourage and motivate pupils or discourage them?
- How do learning and teaching strategies encourage perseverance and motivate children to give of their best?
- How do we give pupils an appreciation of the difficult situations that many people throughout the world endure and the courage and resilience they show? How can this inspire us?

Leadership

- What encourages you all and inspires you to persevere if your school passes through difficult times?
- What practical resources does the school use to support those who are struggling? Could more be done?
- How do we develop the strength to carry on in the face of difficulty?
- How do the governors and senior management team help cultivate a climate of hope and a vision that sustains a school in challenging circumstances?
- How can we ensure that the Christian values shared in school endure into the next phase of a child's education and into adult life?

What is Christian Hope?

Hope is a word that we use a great deal in ordinary conversation and has consequently lost something of its power—"I hope you can join me for lunch" - "The children hope that the school will be closed by snow tomorrow".

At another and a much deeper level, hope is a universal human phenomenon which sustains people in times of great personal difficulty . People hope for peace in time of war; for food in time of famine; for justice in time of oppression and this hope can sustain them and give them energy. Where there is no hope society spirals downwards. For some people, hope is so strong that it inspires self-sacrifice to turn their hope into reality.

Some people might "place their hope" in technology or modern science, as they see the improvements that these make to lifestyles, at least in the developed world. But these advances have not brought progress in the human heart—there is still war and terror, disease, and self serving leaders who neglect their people. Christian hope is more than a general expectation that things will get better, it is grounded in the Christian's understanding of the nature of God: God is known to be loving and faithful, and there is a confidence that His promises can be trusted. This confidence in God supports Christians through the greatest suffering. Christians' hope is a future hope, to be with Christ, it is based on God's promises and salvation through the death of Jesus. Love and goodness ultimately will (in fact already have) overcome all evil.

Hope is linked with faith and love as one of the three gifts of the Spirit in I Corinthians chapter 13 verse 13.



Hope in School

Ethos

- How does the school give children “hope for the future” by recognising their potential and encouraging them to fulfil that potential?
- Is the school a place which offers “a new start” to those who need it? What if they need a second or even a third chance?
- How does the school create a climate of positive optimism?
- What do the children in your school hope for? Does it relate to Christian hope?

Worship

- How are pupils encouraged to “hope and dream” in worship—and to bring these hopes to God in prayer and praise?
- Does the presentation of the Christian message in collective worship give people a basis for hope in their own lives?

Curriculum

- Are your school’s links with other areas of the world an active way of supporting / bringing hope to others?
- Do pupils have the opportunity to learn about those who inspire others and work for a better future as examples to emulate?
- How are pupils encouraged to see the potential of scientific discoveries for changing the world for the better?
- How are pupils helped to see that their contributions can make a difference to the world?
- Which curriculum areas encourage pupils to form a vision for a better future for themselves and others? How can they share this vision e.g through the creative arts?

Leadership

- Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the life chances of your children? If pessimistic, what can you do about it?
- What is your vision for the school and its future? How was this vision grown? How is this future hope shared with your wider community? How do you become a community of vision builders?
- How do you deal with difficult situations which lay any school low— including problems within local families and the community which have their ramifications in school?
- How does the school work with other agencies to bring hope to those in difficult circumstances (locally, nationally, globally)?
- Are your hopes for the school distinctive in any way because it is a church school? Why not ? Or should they be?

What is Christian Humility?

Genesis begins with stories of mankind's pride—the Fall and the Tower of Babel. Both these stories demonstrate man's attempts to overreach his capabilities to, in effect, to try to be God. Thousands of years later we still use this same expression when people dominate and try to have everything their own way—"he thinks he's God"!

By contrast, humility has a central place in Christ's teaching. It is in direct contrast with the kind of pride, where people "think they are God" Ultimately, this kind of pride drives someone to "compete with God", whereas *humility* acknowledges that God is God and that we should live in trusting dependence upon God.

Jesus taught his followers that if they wished to enter the Kingdom of Heaven they must be like children (Mark chapter 10 verse 14). We all know that children are quite capable of various types of both good and poor behaviour, and are programmed to believe that the whole world revolves around them, but this is not what Jesus is talking about. Jesus is challenging people to be humble, like those who, in his time and place, had no legal or social standing. Throughout his teaching, Jesus uses a series of



images and examples to encourage his disciples to "take the lowest place" (Luke chapter 14 verse 10) , or "to wash each other's feet" (John chapter 13 verses 13-15). Similarly In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector, Jesus criticises those who are 'confident in their own righteousness' (Luke chapter 18 verses 9-14). The Pharisee's prayer is nothing but loud self-congratulation, whilst the tax-collector is full of penitent humility and here Jesus concludes with the words: 'Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.'

The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation - the Son of God taking human flesh - is presented by Paul as the ultimate act of humility in which Christ 'emptied himself' and took the form of a slave (Philippians chapter 2 verses 5-11). The Christian message insists that it is through identifying with Christ's humble service and sacrifice that we rediscover that other truth about ourselves - that we are sons and daughters of God and made in God's image.

Thus humility is an attitude that challenges the values of our surrounding culture. It does not exclude satisfaction in the successful use of our talents or in a job well done, but the truly humble person will always recognise that our gifts are from God and that, in relation to God, all human achievements are small and short-lived.

(And when you are thinking humility don't think Uriah Heap!)

Humility in School

Ethos

- How are pupils and adults encouraged to put others first?
- How do you encourage pupils and adults to recognise their mistakes and learn from them?
- How do you encourage pupils to be proud of their achievements yet at the same time humble, without it being a false humility?
- How do you encourage people to celebrate others' achievements, even when it means they personally have been surpassed by someone else?
- How do you encourage a sense of self-worth in people without feeding arrogance or self-centredness?
- How do you encourage pupils and adults to ask for help when they need it?
- Many children, when asked, simply want "to be famous" - how do you give pupils opportunities for service, and the ability to appreciate the need for people to play supporting roles or carry out mundane tasks?

Worship

- How does the school plan "celebration assemblies" so that they include worship of God as well as the giving of thanks for the gifts and talents one has been given?
- Are special acts of worship (e.g. at Christmas) to which parents are invited planned as worship or as a "show"?
- How does worship, at Christmas time in particular, help convey the message of the Incarnation?

Curriculum

- In RE, do pupils learn about the mystery of the Incarnation?
- How do you help pupils listen to, and understand and appreciate, the views of other people, rather than always putting themselves forward?
- How are pupils able to come to terms with a problematic value such as humility when they live in a celebrity focussed culture?
- Where do pupils learn about people who are examples of service to others, and think about them as examples for their own lives?
- Are we humble about the limits of our own knowledge, and open to the idea that we may be mistaken?

Leadership

- How do senior leaders and governors consult with others on matters of policy and practice in the school?
- Does your leadership style demonstrate humility and a willingness to listen to others and value their opinions?
- What do *you* count as true achievement and success?

Wisdom

What is Christian Wisdom?

Wisdom is not the same thing as “education” or “cleverness”, although obviously these are related, it is not even the same thing as “gifted and talented”! Wisdom can best be described as an ability of discernment or understanding which doesn’t come automatically but is gained from life experience—these experiences are then meditated upon and distilled into the guiding principles of a person’s life.

There is a type of literature in the Bible that is called ‘Wisdom Literature’ (the book of Proverbs is the best example) and an important idea in these writings is that ‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom’ (Proverbs chapter 9 verse 10) (fear here means “awe” rather than “cringing”). Thus Wisdom is having a true insight into the way life works: this means having a realistic understanding of the consequences of our thoughts, words and actions upon ourselves and upon others, coupled with an awareness of the true value of things. Wisdom is rooted in worship of God, who is the source of all life and all values.

The opposite of wisdom is foolishness, which is a wrong understanding of life. Jesus tells us the parable of the Rich Fool (Luke chapter 12 verses 13-21) which is essentially a warning about putting our trust or faith in the wrong things (here, money and possessions). The fool has missed the point of life—he does not realise that his soul is ‘on loan’ from God, who can require it back whenever He likes. The fool thinks that the aim of life is to ‘be happy’, however you interpret that, and he thinks that he personally can gain happiness by doing what he wants and by accumulating possessions. The wise person recognises their own limitations, trusts in God and understands that there is more to life than may be seen on the surface.



The Bible often points out that God’s wisdom is the reversal of ‘the wisdom of the world’ (I Corinthians chapter 3 verse 19) and this means that Christians may often come in conflict with the perceived wisdom of society or of their peer groups. Christ’s sacrificial life and his teaching about love and humility may appear foolish by the world’s standards but, in reality, it expresses the Wisdom of God.

Wisdom in School

Ethos

- How do you share the Christian values which underpin the school with pupils, staff and the wider community?
- How are pupils taught to respect the wisdom of people of all ages and walks of life (not just the teaching staff)?
- Do teachers recognise the wisdom of young people?
- How are pupils helped to be empathetic, discerning and sensitive towards the needs of others?
- How do we enable our children to grow in wisdom? Do they understand the difference between being clever and being wise?
- How are people encouraged to examine honestly the values upon which their lives, their attitudes and their decisions are based?

Worship

- How does worship help pupils to grow in understanding of themselves?
- How are pupils helped to understand that Christian values challenge the secular views of the world?
- How do you encourage pupils to reflect on what is of real value in life?
- Do pupils have the opportunity to hear from people of all ages in worship (including a pupil worship team)?
- How does worship help people grown in understanding of themselves and of their relationship with God?

Curriculum

- RE—where do people encounter wisdom teaching from Christianity, but also from other faiths?
- History—how does history help pupils to see that it is not necessarily the best educated who are the most wise in their actions and dealings with others?
- Do pupils realise that much “knowledge” is actually “provisional”?
- How are pupils helped to understand the difference between fact and advertising?
- How are pupils made aware that there are many kinds of wisdom and that wisdom is not a prerogative of people of a certain age or certain way of life, or even of themselves?

Leadership

- What are the leadership team’s personal sources of inspiration?
- What are the foundation values of the school? How are these shared?
- How do the adults of the school community ensure that they are “life-long learners”?
- Who are the sources of wisdom in your school and community? How can you ensure that each one of them is heard and valued?
- Are your decision making processes structured in such a way that you will make wise decisions?

Reverence in School

Ethos

- Is everyone in school, or who enters the school, treated with respect?
- How are people (pupils and staff) encouraged to listen carefully and considerately to each other?
- How does the school encourage respect for different faith perspectives and world views?
- How are those in authority regarded and spoken of and to?
- Are pupils encouraged to treat each other's belongings and the property of the school with appropriate care and respect?
- How does the school respond to attitudes, actions or language that show insensitivity, lack of respect or irreverence?
- Do pupils have a concept of "the sanctity of life"?

Worship

- What special words, symbolic actions, or religious symbols, are used in worship to help worshippers to understand the nature of God?
- Does worship encourage feelings of awe, wonder and mystery? How can it do that?
- How does the way the hall is prepared for collective worship help set aside the time as "special"?
- How are pupils helped to connect the ideas of reverence for God and respect for each other?

Curriculum

- How are pupils taught to have respect for the earth's resources?
- Where do pupils learn about different cultures and different faiths, and learn to show respect for their neighbours, whoever they are?
- How does the RE curriculum help pupils understand teaching about the nature of God and not just to look at the externals of a religion?
- How does the RE curriculum help the pupils' concept of God mature over their school career, so that they do not simply reject Him on the basis of long held childish misunderstandings?
- How are pupils taught to act with respect towards holy places, practices and sacred objects of any faith?

Leadership

- How do staff achieve a work / life balance which allows time for wonder and reflection? Is there space in the school where they can go for peace and quiet?
- How do school leaders earn the respect of their staff?
- Do all policies and practices in the school engender respect for all members of the school and the community?

What is Christian Trust?

Trust is essential to human life and lies at the heart of all relationships. Trust entails being vulnerable, because by trusting you are putting yourself into others' hands. We have to trust experts - pilots, dentists, surgeons with our day to day existence and comfort; we trust that a floor will not give way as we walk on it; or that a car driver is going to obey the rules of the road and not drive at us up the pavement.... Yet, within our society as a whole we are not good at practising trust; there often seems to be a mutual distrust between people, and a noticeable and pronounced distrust of government figures and politicians in our national life. We have developed as an "us and them" culture.

'Trust in the Lord' is a central theme in the Psalms. Time and time again, God is acknowledged as the source of all true security and strength. This is contrasted with trust in chariots, horses, weapons, wealth or princes (Psalm 20 verse 7; 118 verse 8-9). (I expect you can easily think of the modern day equivalents of these weapons.) Trust placed in the wrong things is close to idolatry, and will probably let you down.

Marriage is another institution which is founded on mutual trust, and could be described as a God-given framework in which human trust can actually be developed. The wording of the Christian marriage vows spells out this mutuality of trust and support, and should be seen as a strong message to nurture trusting relationships in a society where the breakdown of trust is widespread.

Trust is central to civilised society, we need it to live together in harmony and to function as a peaceful unit, so it is to be valued and honoured. With wisdom and discernment, we can relearn to trust each other. We can begin to rebuild trust in our mistrustful society by being reliable ourselves and by not letting people down. When we work with others we should be willing to let go of the controlling position and trust in the abilities and integrity of others, and ultimately the result will be that all will find this enriching. Jesus himself is a wonderful example of this, as he entrusted his ongoing mission to his disciples (whom many would have regarded as quite a bunch of misfits) and ultimately, of course, that mission has now been entrusted to us.



Trust in School

Ethos

- How does the school deal with situations where trust has been broken?
- How are diffident pupils helped to trust their own judgement and over-exuberant pupils helped to give way to others?
- What positions of trust do pupils hold in the school? Is everyone given an opportunity to be trusted with something of significance?

Worship

- The Psalms convey the message of trust in God strongly—are they used in school worship (probably in the form of more popular worship songs)?
- Does prayer help pupils understand how they can place their trust in God?

Curriculum

- How do pupils learn trust and co-operation through a variety of classroom activities?
- Where do pupils learn about and experience true teamwork?
- How do pupils learn to make and trust their own judgements?
- Where do pupils learn how to build relationships of trust with people from different cultures and backgrounds?
- How do we encourage our children to trust, whilst at the same time balancing this with the message that they should be personally careful and not trust everyone?
- Where are pupils taught about the need for trust in the building of relationships, including in marriage?

Leadership

- Do leaders model trustworthiness?
- How do pupils, governors and staff know they can trust each other? How do you promote relationships of trust within the school?
- How far are leaders able to “let go” and trust in the ability of others?
- What do you feel are the most important things that you have been entrusted with as leaders of your school?

Friendship

What is Christian Friendship?



Friendship is an undisputed value in our society, with children and teenagers often spending more time with their friends than with their family.

Jesus was criticised for being 'the friend of sinners' and eating with those whom society rejected, he also chose his disciples from groups that

other religious leaders of the day would not even have spoken to! Jesus knew that friends should be chosen for who they are, not what they are! Jesus explicitly calls his disciples not servants but friends (John chapter 15 verses 14 - 15).

Sharing a meal with someone is an explicit sign of friendship and the word 'companion' literally means 'one with whom you share bread.' Meals figure heavily in the Bible as times of fellowship and friendship, and Jesus particularly tells stories of the heavenly banquet to which all are invited. At the banquet the apparent barriers between people are broken down in a loving community around God Himself, and Jesus had stern words to say to those who refused to recognise that all people are included in this community of friendship, not just the "worthy". This friendship community is echoed in the Eucharist, where all are welcome. The Bible has many sayings about friendship:

- 'A friend loves at all times.' (Proverbs 17:17)
- Friends are not afraid to tell each other the truth and a friend's loving criticism is worth more than the empty compliments of someone who does not really care for you. (Proverbs 27:6)
- 'Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.' (Proverbs 27:6)
- The writer of Ecclesiastes puts it very simply: 'if one falls down, a friend can lift him up'. (Ecclesiastes 4:10)

True friendship enables each person to grow and ensures that the unique individuality of each person is recognised. Friendship is all about trust, feeling comfortable in each other's company, and being able to share joys and sorrows. We value our friends—and this is an echo of the value placed by God on each person as His friend.

Friendship in School

Ethos

- Children often fall in and out of friendships—are they given strategies for making and retaining relationships?
- How are those who find it difficult to make friends supported e.g. friendship benches, playground buddies?
- How do older pupils support younger pupils in the school?
- How are new children or staff included in the school?
- Are relationships in the classrooms good?
- Are relationships in the staffroom good?
- What are the signs that your school is a friendly school? Is this everyone's experience from the moment they enter your building or you pick up the phone?

Worship

- Are friendship ties created through worship e.g. sitting as "family groups"?
- Does worship convey the possibility of friendship / a relationship with God?
- How are people helped to reflect upon the demands and responsibilities of friendship?

Curriculum

- Do class reading books model sound friendship relationships and / or promote discussion on relationships?
- Do pupils co-operate well in class and support each other?
- Are there opportunities to explore relationships in a Christian context?
- What opportunities are there to build friendships with other schools both locally and abroad? How do you work with your cluster of schools and / or your local secondary school?

Leadership

- How does a leader in school show themselves to be friendly and approachable, whilst at the same time maintaining the necessary professional distance?
- How do leaders and governors offer constructive criticism in a way that ensures it is both given and received without animosity and in a spirit of friendship?
- What structures are there in place to support new children and new staff as they enter the school?

Creation & Stewardship

What is Creation and Christian Stewardship?

The first part of the opening question seems almost too simple, if you believe in a Creator God, then Creation is surely both all that He has made and that very action of making. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 contain the most well-known accounts of Creation, and you can read of God as Creator in Job chapters 38-41 and Isaiah chapters 40-45. Also, in the New Testament, Paul explains how Christ was central to Creation (Colossians chapter 1 verses 15-16) and that not only humankind but all Creation shares in the redemption and renewal that Christ achieved (Romans chapter 8 verses 19-22). The New Testament vision of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation chapter 21) is strong in Creation imagery including the *spring of the water of life* and the *tree of life* which are both made available to all at that time when Creation is renewed in the new Jerusalem.

What about man's place in God's Creation? In Genesis, God gives humans certain rights over His Creation, accompanied by responsibilities (chapter 1 verses 28-30). We are stewards. A steward manages an estate on the owner's behalf. If someone is a good steward / representative / deputy and is attuned to the will of their leader / head then looking at their actions and the effect of those actions should be like looking at the will of the Master Himself. We have been given the earth to look after by God, and to hold it in trust for future generations. If the earth is to sustain our twenty-first century children and their descendants, then this should place limits on how we treat the earth today..

There have always been elements in the Christian tradition to remind us of our responsibilities and priorities—a famous example of this is St Francis of Assisi who addressed the sun, moon, earth, wind and water as his mother, sisters and brothers. Our own annual cycle of Harvest and Rogation celebrations remind us of our dependence on the earth for our survival, and lead us to thank God as the ultimate source of all the earth's riches.

When discussing Christian Values it is our role as "good stewards of Creation" which is foremost here. The respect for Creation which shines through the Bible, and can be found in most later cultures also, has faltered in the face of the technological



advances which encourage many to see the earth's resources as there to be plundered and exploited. Now we are face to face with the issues of climate change, crises over access to water and food, destruction of habitat and the rapid extinction of species. It is not clear whether the earth can still renew itself or whether the damage has gone too far. What should we be doing now?

Associated with this value is "creativity", our way of sharing in God's gift of Creation.

Creation & Stewardship in School

Ethos

- How does the school foster an appreciation of the richness and diversity of God's creation? Are practical experiences planned to support this?
- What is the school policy on recycling, saving water and electricity etc?
- How does the school encourage everyone in the community to behave responsibly towards Creation?
- What use is made of the school grounds to support wildlife or teach gardening?
- Are you an Eco School?

Worship

- How does the school create opportunities for awe and wonder in collective worship?
- How does worship help children to see the world as a gift to be treated with respect?
- How creative is your worship (drama, art, music, dance)?
- How do you plan worship for festivals such as Harvest in order to deepen pupils' understanding of God as Creator?

Curriculum

- Where do pupils learn the Creation stories of different cultures and faiths and the messages they teach us?
- How are pupils helped to address the moral choices we have to make when thinking about our lifestyles and the needs of the wider world (e.g. deforestation versus beef burgers)?
- Where in the curriculum are pupils encouraged to explore creative responses and to nurture their creative gifts? Is creativity valued in the curriculum? Do pupils have the opportunity of meeting creative people who may in turn inspire them?
- Where do pupils address the concept of mankind as a steward of Creation?
- How does the school seek to integrate the teaching of RE and the teaching of Science? Does it give a balanced view of the two and encourage children to ask questions and search for answers from both perspectives?

Leadership

- How can you make the optimum use of the school's natural and built environment when planning both worship and the curriculum?
- Are the school's buildings and environment managed in a way which could be described as good stewardship of the earth's resources?
- How do you ensure that the school makes good use of its resources—including the resource of the friends of the school and the local community?
- How do you use the creativity and gifts of your staff?
- Are you a "creative school"?