

Chaplaincy and Training

A significant area of work, which, based on the evidence received by the Review Group, is currently underdeveloped in the Diocese, is that of chaplaincy. The Dearing Report (2001) recommends that the Church should become more involved in secondary and tertiary education with ecumenical, clerical and lay chaplaincies established.

It remains a concern that the commitment made in the primary sector has no direct follow through in secondary education, and the Review Group feels that further consideration should be given by the Diocese as a whole, to ways in which the Church can be significant in the lives of young people in secondary education, and also provide pastoral support to the teaching profession. The Review Group has given careful consideration to the role of chaplaincies in Community Schools. Head teachers of twenty-one of the County's thirty-two secondary schools responded to a Questionnaire from the Review Group, which sought their views on the need or desirability of having a chaplain, and establishing what, if any, chaplaincy arrangements currently exist in Cornish secondary schools.

Chaplaincy and Secondary Schools

Only three Cornish secondary schools have a formally recognised chaplaincy team, and two others are currently exploring the possibilities of creating one. Each of these teams is ecumenical, and each is recognised as contributing substantially to the well-being of students and staff. In addition to ministers of religion, each team includes at least one trained counsellor. The Review Group recognises the work done by the Churches Together in Education Group, which has tried to deal with the issue of chaplaincies in schools. Initially, potential members of the chaplaincy teams are usually identified by the local Churches Together group and recommended to the school concerned, which interviews potential chaplains and arranges for relevant Criminal Record Bureau checks to be carried out. Rabbi David Hampshire, the County Adviser Religious Education and Personal, Social and Health Education, has been instrumental in setting up these teams, and his trenchant advice has been highly valued.

The Role of a Chaplain

Where chaplaincy teams exist, the role of a chaplain is generally to deliver some assemblies, assist with some teaching in lessons and provide a presence at lunchtimes, usually four days out of five. Chaplains provide links for a wide number of Church-attending students, as well as offering another dimension of support for all students and staff. The need for schools to provide for the spiritual development of young people is assisted by the presence of the chaplains sometimes in direct delivery, more often by reminding schools of the spiritual dimension to life. To have a range of adults from a range of backgrounds, including faith, enhances the whole development of young people.

A number of head teachers wondered what, if any, additional dimension to education and life skills might be provided by having a chaplain. In the twelve schools where no formal arrangements for chaplaincy existed, only two felt that nothing at all was to be gained by considering it. Ten of the schools without chaplains had, at one time or another, received regular visits from local clergy, and these were welcomed. It was very noticeable that if a parish priest or local Methodist or Baptist minister moved, and his or her successor did not seek to pursue the relationship, it lapsed. There is very little evidence to suggest that the schools themselves sought out contact with local clergy or ministers.

The Work of the Parish Priest

Where clergy have, through their own sense of vocation and natural abilities, wished to contribute to school life, it is very clear that this has been enormously valued. A number of schools speak of the informal contacts that clergy have been able to build up, especially where they have a natural aptitude with the young, or when they are able to offer professional skill in, for example, music, drama, art or sport. Essentially, clergy are then valued for the person that they are, rather than for the role which they exercise in the Church or ecclesial community. Warm tributes are paid by a number of head teachers to individual parish priests who see involvement in their local school as being very much part of their work. However, the assumption made in schools is that when a priest moves, someone, who will see involvement with schools in the same light, will replace him or her. Sadly, this is frequently not taken into account when new appointments are made and some schools therefore feel forgotten or neglected.

A number of schools are saddened, or hurt, that contacts with local clergy have declined or disappeared in recent years. Some acknowledge that the fault may lie with the school, but many feel that local clergy find the challenges of secondary school life are not for them. The answer would seem to lie with teams of people, lay and ordained, chosen by the churches for their skills in communicating with young people, and empathetic with the problems and opportunities of the teaching profession. In this way, when one member of the team moves on continuity is provided and encouraged by those remaining, who can ensure that the team is kept up to strength. It is noticeable however, that many head teachers are uneasy with the term 'chaplain', which seems to suggest a particular faith concept which some find unsettling.

The Review Group feels that head teachers have identified a weakness in the level of pastoral interest shown at the time of a clergy vacancy occurring in a parish, where there is a significant school presence. Such parishes should always indicate the existing relationships with schools and their future expectations, when drawing up their Statement of Needs.

What might Chaplaincy bring?

One head teacher, who for ten years taught Religious Education, who states *'I have no faith'*, says that he taught RE with *'a sense of curiosity which the children, who were very often resistant to religion, found refreshing.'* As a head teacher he wonders what a chaplaincy might provide. *'For many of our pupils, Christianity is an 'ethnic minority' and just as curious and different as Islam. 'I believe', he writes 'that exposure to people of faith extends children's understanding and tolerance of them. Therefore in essence, I feel that some form of chaplaincy would be a valuable contribution to school life. However, for chaplaincy to work in a modern secular school, preparation and a shared understanding of intentions must always be clear. '*

A number of head teachers share his views and feel that there is much work to be done if chaplaincy is to be understood and useful within the current delivery of secondary education. Many feel that it would be better to build on existing good relationships with individual ministers, rather than to formalise an arrangement by calling it 'chaplaincy'. The weakness of this lies in the transient nature of individual ministry; therefore the consensus supports chaplaincy teams, provided on the recommendation of local Churches Together. There is little doubt that if the Diocese gave an indication of interest in fulfilling a chaplaincy role, schools would respond. It would however, be essential that, whilst the initiative might be from the Diocese, chaplaincy should never be seen as an exclusively Anglican provision but should reflect the spiritual needs and composition of the area which the particular school serves.

It is also worth noting that several head teachers welcomed this Questionnaire, coming from the Dean of Truro, and hoped that such an approach might be the beginning of a relationship with the Cathedral itself *'since no one else has ever approached us to consider this issue'*. This in itself indicates a weakness in approach of the Church in Cornwall to secondary education.

Chaplaincy and Further Education

Traditionally, the Further Education (College) sector has had formal chaplaincy arrangements with the Churches, although some situations, notably at the Duchy College at Stoke Climsland, local clergy, in that case working as the Rural Link Officer, have been able to offer some pastoral contact and valued support for students and staff. This has depended largely on the credibility of the clergy concerned; in particular instances, local clergy may have served on governing bodies or have made church premises and facilities available for use the local college.

Both the Diocese and the Methodist District have nominated clergy to be available as chaplains to some of the colleges, but the status of these appointments has usually been formally recognised by the colleges themselves. This is unlike the situation in local hospitals, where formal recognition of chaplains is a long-standing arrangement.

In Further Education colleges in Cornwall, Church-appointed chaplains have been, at best, welcome guests but recognised members of staff.

In other cases, local churches may have taken it upon themselves to see their local college as part of their 'patch', with a view to extending their youth work and evangelistic activity. Their agenda can tend to be *'let's 'get in' to the college and evangelise'*, a policy not always welcomed by the colleges themselves. This, in some instances, has made it difficult for the churches to establish more formal links where past 'bad experiences' have bred suspicion.

Summary of Recommendations:

- 1 The Diocese should, in consultation with our ecumenical partners, build up a network of chaplaincies in all secondary schools and further education establishments, and continue to encourage the active involvement of clergy and pastoral competent lay leaders in the primary sector.

- 2 Many Church Schools value the support they receive from parochial clergy; however, when appointing new priest to a parish(es), the Diocese should require that where schools exist in those parishes~ relationships with them should always feature as part of the Statement of Needs.

- 3 The Diocese, working with its existing partners, should ensure that funding provision is established for a continuing full-time chaplaincy post at Tremough to serve the Combined Universities in Cornwall.