

24. Education Commission Report

Basic Information

Title	Education Commission
Contact Name and Details	John Barrett, jcabarrett@aol.com Chair of the Education Commission
Resolutions	As set out in the report.

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The purpose of this paper is to present the recommendations and associated proposals of the Education Commission.
Main Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributing to the provision of education is a major and proper part of Christian mission. Methodism has a distinctive approach to education, and has identified principles that underlie this approach. The forefront of Methodism's mission through education is the many Methodists who serve as governors, teachers, assistants, other staff, lay and ordained chaplains in schools and colleges and they deserve to be affirmed and supported. • Methodism, as a provider of formal education, has an opportunity to establish and develop schools in which there is a concerted commitment to address fully the 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural' dimensions of education. • Methodism should affirm and celebrate the education offered by its schools. • The advent of academies gives the Church an opportunity it should seize. • Proposals which provide the framework to develop and support the Church's future
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Interim Reports to the Methodist Council (MC/11/3) and the Conference in 2011 MC/07/04 (Projects 19 (iii) Education project) This project arises from the recommendations of Ground-Clearing Project 10 to set up an independent commission on formal education.

24. Education Commission Report

Consultations	Persons and groups consulted are listed fully within the paper
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Summary of Impact

Personnel	Resources are needed for a two year transition project.
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Summary of report and its recommendations

- Contributing to the provision of education is a major and proper part of Christian mission. However, despite the Methodist Church's tradition in this regard, it is not, at present, taking this seriously enough. The Methodist Church is at a critical moment, in which it could not only lose a significant opportunity to extend its mission through setting up new schools, but also risks losing control of the schools it has.
- The Church should recognise and support the contribution made by individual Methodists, in an employed or voluntary capacity, to their local schools and colleges and in the education sector generally, and at connexional, district and circuit level, should provide more fully for the pastoral needs of children, students and staff in schools, colleges and universities.
- Methodism has a distinctive approach to education. Methodist schools provide an opportunity to establish and develop schools in which there is a concerted commitment to address fully the 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural' dimensions of education.
- Methodism should affirm and celebrate the education offered by its schools.
- The Commission recognises the enormous opportunity the Church has to influence for good the lives of the 22,000 children currently in Methodist Schools. The Commission believes the Church should celebrate this opportunity and seek appropriate ways of extending this influence through the opportunities currently available.
- The advent of academies gives the Church an opportunity it should seize.
- The Commission brings to the Conference proposals which provide the framework to develop and support the Church's future policy in education.

Extracts from Section 48 inspection of Holly Hill Methodist/Church of England Infant and Nursery School, November 2011

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of Holly Hill as a Methodist/ Church of England school are both outstanding. Holly Hill is proud of its dual foundation with its strong desire to meet the needs of the young children and families it serves in a challenging area of social deprivation on the Birmingham and Worcestershire border. Here is a place where everyone is welcomed and encouraged to achieve. These young pupils are given excellent opportunities and experiences to nurture faith. Holly Hill is an excellent church school because its relationships are founded on Christian values ensuring everyone is included and belongs.

1.0 Preamble

1.1. Background

The Education Commission was initiated as a result of the recommendations which were defined within the Team Focus Project 10 conclusions (reported to the Methodist Council in January 2007). Specifically, Project 10 recommended that an independent "Commission" on formal education should be set up in order to:

- recommend, after a radical review of the status quo, why and how the Methodist Church should be engaged in all aspects of the education and training services in Britain;
- consider how Methodist people involved at all levels in the education and training services can be supported in their work and mission.

1.2. Terms of Reference of the Education Commission

Objective

To review and make proposals on Methodism's approach to formal education, in order to provide the final report to the Methodist Council and the Conference in 2012.

Scope

- a. Identify a set of principles and theological rationale, which underpin Methodist engagement with education in the broadest definition.

- b. Determine whether and why Methodism has a specific and distinctive voice and responsibility in education, and if so, articulates what it is.
- c. Aim to include all forms of Methodist education within the review (including understanding the linkages to all forms of Children & Youth Work, and the Methodist Church's infrastructure for ministerial learning, training & development), maintaining an initial priority focus on schools whilst including Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE) and all forms of chaplaincy in education.
- d. Consider where and how a Methodist view of education supports Our Calling and Priorities for the Methodist Church, and how Our Calling can link to formal education.
- e. Investigate and recommend the appropriate ways in which Methodists involved in education (locally and nationally) should be supported and encouraged, and how the Methodist Church can learn from those people and resources.
- f. Review and explain the current statutory responsibilities of the Methodist Church in relation to schools, and recommend resourcing models needed to

support education.

- g. Actively consider the current joint working with ecumenical and other partners (eg Action for Children, Church of England Education/National Society, joint faith schools, and Churches Together in England), and future configuration options.
- h. Understand and take account of recent developments of policy within the Methodist Church, legislation within the education sector and the educational activities of ecumenical partners, in order to explore future directions and help the Methodist Church to plan forward in the area of education.
- i. Review, reflect, and take account of previous reports to the Methodist Conference, for example in 1999: 'The Essence of Education'.

1.3. Membership of the Education Commission

See Appendix 1

1.4. Consultation and Research

- 1.4.1 The findings and recommendations of this report are based not only on the considerable experience of members of the Commission, but also upon extensive consultation and research. A list of those consulted is contained in Appendix 2.

1.4.2 Visits have been made to selected Methodist Schools, and questionnaires have been sent to heads (and chaplains where applicable) of all Methodist Schools, to Chairs of Districts, and to members of the West Yorkshire District (as a sample District).

1.4.3 The Report has been passed to the Faith and Order Committee and changes made in the light of its comments.

1.4.4 An invitation was offered through the General Secretary's letter to ministers, at the Conference last year and through the Methodist Recorder, for individuals to contribute to the work as consultants. Seventy two individuals responded or were recommended, and the Commission referred to these consultants during the drafting process.

2.0 Methodism and Education - Historical background

- 2.1 The Methodist Church and its people have always had a commitment to and involvement in, education, believing it to be essential for mission and service. It is not possible within the scope of this report to describe the history of that involvement. For a full outline of education from a Wesleyan perspective and the Church's involvement in education after Wesley see www.methodist.org.uk/educationcommission.

2.2 Suffice it to say here that John Wesley understood education to be a crucial aspect of mission - he established a system of society classes so that individuals could be nurtured and educated in the faith; he published many books as resources for Christians; he supported Robert Raikes in asserting the importance of Sunday Schools; and he understood the importance of providing a sound formal education, and gave expression to this in the setting up of Kingswood School in Bristol as a model of what a good school should be, combining learning and vital piety. Wesley preached at the opening of Kingswood from the text: Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is a man he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6), but also said that children should not be treated like parrots, but taught to think for themselves.

2.3 The early Methodists followed Wesley's example. Wesleyan Methodists alone were running 641 day schools by 1873, and a significant number of boarding schools were created in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, this posed a heavy financial burden and it was increasingly felt that it was preferable in principle to work with the state as it sought to create a national educational system which included non-denominational religious education. Slowly but surely, Methodists began either closing or transferring to local authority control

of most of their schools. By the Union of 1932 there were fewer than twenty boarding schools and the number of day schools had fallen to 115 Wesleyan, 7 United Methodist and 4 Primitive Methodist schools. A significant number of the remaining schools have since closed but some new ones have been created, largely in partnership with the Church of England. The newest opened in September 2010 and moved into its new buildings in January 2011.

2.4 In 1851 the Wesleyan Methodist Church founded Westminster College in London as a training institute of teachers for Methodist Schools. When the College moved to Oxford in 1959, it also began to offer degree courses in Theology and Education. In 2000, as a result of financial pressures, the Methodist Church leased the college's campus to Oxford Brookes University, and the academic life of the college was reconfigured within the university, initially as the Westminster Institute of Education, and (since 2011) through the School of Education and the Department of History, Philosophy and Religion, within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

2.5 Southlands College was opened in Battersea on 26 February 1872 as a training college for women teachers, subsequently moving first to Wimbledon (where it also admitted men) and then to Roehampton. In 1975 four education colleges in

the area came together to form a new collegiate Higher Education Institution (HEI) - the Roehampton Institute, which achieved university status allied to the University of Surrey in 2000 and independent university status in 2004.

3.0 The Current Situation

- 3.1 The educational landscape is a rapidly changing one. The Higher Education scene is very different from a few years ago, with a large increase in the student population of traditional age (currently around 47% of 18-25 years olds take part) and also a growth in mature, part-time and international students as well as those taking distance learning courses and participating in the virtual study environment. The increased participation in HE courses has in part been due to softer boundaries between Further Education and HE with many FE Colleges now offering HE courses, though importantly the FE sector itself remains vibrant. Both primary and secondary education have been on the receiving end of a succession of initiatives from government, with an increased emphasis upon standards and measurable outcomes. The current move to develop academies and free schools looks likely to lead to the eventual demise of the education departments of Local Authorities and to all schools having a measure of independence.
- Methodism continues to be committed to education in a variety of ways.
- 3.2 Many Methodists serve throughout the formal educational field as administrators, advisers, inspectors, researchers and as members of local Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs) and other educational bodies. In addition many Methodists serve as staff members and governors in church and community schools and colleges and see this as a definite vocation.
- 3.3 Although Methodist children's and youth work declined in the last part of the twentieth century, recent statistics show 133,000 children and young people involved in church based activities, and 48,000 attending church worship weekly. To these figures should be added a further 22,000 who are in Methodist schools.
- 3.4 The Methodist Church has 64 state-funded primary schools and 1 middle school in England, many of which are in the most deprived areas of the country. All the schools have a Methodist or Methodist/ Ecumenical Foundation, serve their local community and are fully inclusive with pupils of all faiths and none. They work closely with their local communities - often in partnership with Children's Centres, some of which are managed and run by the schools with the support of Foundation Governors. In addition

there are 14 independent schools, most of which were established in the nineteenth century, but have expanded and developed significantly since their foundation. The Methodist Church gives the independent schools no financial support, but does support them in other ways eg through the provision of chaplains, paid by the schools, and the appointment of governors.

3.5 The Church's formal involvement in HE has significantly reduced. However, the Methodist Church continues to be represented on Oxford Brookes University Board of Governors and the university hosts the Oxford Centre for Methodist and Church History, the chapel and the Methodist Chaplaincy. Similarly, Southlands College continues to maintain its Methodist ethos and identity as a college within Roehampton University through its Head of College, the chapel and chaplaincy and the Southlands Methodist Centre.

4.0 **Contemporary challenges for which the Church is currently under-resourced**

4.1 Methodism is currently faced with questions about its policy on Academies and Free Schools and the enormous changes taking place in the funding and cost of Higher Education. (Research undertaken by the Commission in consultation with the Youth Assembly has highlighted the

importance of education to young people and indicated concerns about the increased cost of higher education which they feel the Church did not adequately reflect to government at the time - see Appendix 3.)

4.2 The Methodist Church ought to have responded to changes in Teacher Education, the current review of teaching standards, the National Curriculum Review, the review of Personal, Social and Health Education and the proposal of bursaries to replace the Education Maintenance Allowance. It should have commented upon the omission of Religious Studies from the Humanities section of the recently introduced English Baccalaureate, with serious consequences for the take up of RS at GCSE level, and thus on the status of the subject and the recruitment of Religious Studies teachers.

4.3 Individual members of the Connexional Team may have responded informally when opportunity arose, however there is currently no clear procedure to enable the Methodist Church formally to address educational issues or to communicate a distinctive view. The Free Churches Education Committee, which includes Methodist members, has continued to speak on behalf of the Free Churches on broad educational issues but it is not authorised to speak for the Methodist Church in

its role as a provider of education. The Joint Public Issues Team does not have education within its brief, and does not have the resources to address educational issues. The Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee, which includes a wider range of Christian churches, has not met for three years despite this being a time of immense educational change.

5.0 **Limited support is available for Methodist schools**

5.1 The independent schools fund the cost of the administrative and financial support they need, but there is no established procedure for the state-funded schools to obtain regular support beyond emergency trouble shooting. On the retirement in July 2007 of the then Education Officer of the Methodist Church, the post was not continued. A new post was created, part funded by the independent schools, to provide emergency support for the Methodist state-funded schools. This arrangement developed into the present post of Education Development and Improvement Officer within the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster of the Connexional Team, to offer limited support to the state-funded schools. The holder of this post has achieved a great deal with the limited resources available but the Commission believes that there is much additional support that should or could have been provided but has not. Furthermore, this is only

an interim arrangement, pending longer term decisions about staffing.

6.0 **Need for a clear policy for the future**

6.1 Despite the Church's long tradition of involvement in formal education, there is currently no established mechanism to create an educational vision for the Church and to oversee and drive that vision into practical outcomes. The Education Policy Committee was set up as an interim group to fill the policy vacuum for the maintained schools. Since January 2012 its role has been taken over by MAST (Methodist Academies' and Schools' Trust).

6.2 In addition, there is some uncertainty within the Church about its continuing role as a provider of formal education. If it is to continue this role, let alone extend it as it is being encouraged to by the present government, it needs to do so from a clear theological basis and with a clearly defined strategy.

7.0 **A Methodist Approach to Education**

7.1 Theologically we begin with our understanding of the uniqueness of each person, loved by God and full of potential. We are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-7) and called to know God, to find full life in Jesus (John 10:10) and be part of his mission (Matthew 28:19-20). As individuals we have self-awareness, autonomy and possess certain rights and duties which through education

24. Education Commission Report

- can enable us to gain wisdom and insight, a sense of what is right and just and fair and a direction we can follow through our lives (Proverbs 1:3-4). Through the power of God's transforming love, instead of conforming to society, we are called as Jesus's disciples to seek in this world what is good and acceptable and perfect to God (Romans 12:2). This has historically led Methodism to be involved in education as a means of providing a practical social expression of our convictions about discipleship and the nature of the human society.
- 7.2 As Methodists we are called to a particular form of discipleship which emphasises the importance of responding to God's grace by striving for Christian Perfection. Wesley saw education as a means of grace in which people may be challenged to understand their failings and their potential; appreciate the freedom that comes from giving attention to God and the responsibility that flows from that; grasp the need to seek God's forgiveness and empowering spirit and come to understand the importance of a life dedicated to serving God and other people. Wesley did not believe in solitary religion but in social holiness. Within this is an implicit understanding that the Arminian emphasis on "salvation for all" naturally leads to "education for all" as everyone matters to God and therefore none should be deprived of the opportunity to develop to their full potential.
- 7.3 Methodists have traditionally upheld two further important principles; that learning is life-long as we continue our journey of discipleship and that it takes place within community. This finds contemporary expression within Our Calling where it says the Church exists "to help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care" as one of four ways in which we live out our calling to "respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission".
- 7.4 The Commission affirms the much fuller treatment of the theological issues found in the 1999 Conference Report Essence of Education and in the resource paper Education from a Methodist Perspective, prepared for the Commission and available online at www.methodist.org.uk/educationcommission. From this flow a number of general principles which guided the Commission's work and which are offered as a set of principles for future Methodist involvement in education, both as a church and as individual members:
- a. Education should never be confined to utilitarian purposes: it is about the acquisition of wisdom so that individuals can give a proper direction to their lives in a fast-changing and complex world;
 - b. Everyone is a child of God and equal in the eyes of God and so every person of whatever

- age deserves to have their educational needs met, and this requires a diversity of approaches;
- c. Education should encourage a questioning approach which avoids indoctrination and searches for the truth through reason, research and debate based on freedom of thought and expression;
 - d. Education is not just about what we learn as individuals, it is also what we learn together as communities. It is about encouraging mutual respect and understanding, appreciating the importance of forgiveness, reconciliation, and renewal, and respecting cultural diversity;
 - e. Education should seek to promote our understanding of God and this includes encouraging people to encounter Christ in ways that may change their lives while showing sensitivity to those of other or no faith;
 - f. The best possible education should be available for all because it is a vehicle of God's grace, but in focusing on provision it is important to bear in mind Wesley's dictum "Go not to those who need you but to those who need you most", and focus special attention on the needs of the underprivileged.
 - g. Providing the right role models is intrinsic to creating a good education. Alongside parental responsibilities, the role of the educator, both formal and informal, is of paramount importance, and teaching has to be seen as a vocation and not just a form of employment;
 - h. Education is about realising human potential at every stage of life and is therefore a life-long process. It is about developing character, growing in goodness and aiming for perfection;
 - i. Education promotes self-discipline and hard work and a recognition that the more we are given, the more is expected from us. It helps people to develop a lifestyle based on service to others;
 - j. Education should be an instrument for reforming and reshaping society, not for maintaining the status quo. It should encourage people to want to change the world for the better. This includes generating greater social, political and environmental responsibility for the welfare of the world God has created.
- 7.5 We recognise that there may appear to be nothing distinctive about these ten principles, and that other Churches would subscribe to something very similar. But we believe

that the Methodist distinctiveness lies in the precise way these principles are expressed, the manner in which they are put into practice and also in our commitment to all of these principles together as the way education should be delivered.

In July 2011, a group of ten sixth-form pupils and three members of staff from Shebbear College had a two-week cultural exchange to Uganda. This was the culmination of almost two years' hard work; each pupil had to fundraise to cover this cost of their trip and for making a contribution towards the charities they would be visiting in the country. During the two weeks, the team visited three primary schools on the outskirts of Kampala and experienced first-hand the impact of the Ugandan government embracing the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education.

8.0 The context in which we respond

8.1 **Social and political confusion** The Church faces these issues against a background of rising economic deprivation and educational need; an increasing ignorance and even suspicion of religion and the effects of religious teaching in some quarters, prompted in part by the aggressive 'new atheism' on one hand, and religious fundamentalism on the other; and major changes in government policy towards education.

8.2 England, Scotland and Wales

The Education System in England differs from Scotland and Wales and also in some respects from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. In this report we concentrate upon the situation in England, partly because of limitations of time and resources, but also because Methodism's commitment to formal education has been focused upon England and the recent changes in English educational policy have the most significance for us as a Church.

8.3 Ecumenical partnerships

8.3.1 In 2004, the Methodist Conference adopted the Priorities for the Methodist Church. The preamble to the Priorities talks of working "in partnership with others wherever possible". This commitment to partnership is especially evident in our working together with the Church of England – encouraged by the Anglican-Methodist Covenant for England signed in 2003. Of the 65 state-funded Methodist schools, 39 are joint Methodist/Church of England schools.

Spenn Valley Faith in Schools Trust Creative ecumenical working and imaginative use of funds resulted in the creation of a joint Schools Worker post in the Birstall and Spenn circuit. In 2011 700 children attended 90 minute multi-media events at the end of each term and over 1000 New Testaments were distributed (and are being read) in junior schools.

8.3.2 The Church of England is certainly the most obvious educational partner for the Methodist Church. It is vital that a proper and permanent mechanism is created to ensure the two churches work together on formal education issues. The two churches have their own formal and informal contacts with members of the government, but there are occasions when an Anglican representative speaks for Methodism. There is an informal understanding that in bilateral discussions with Ministers or Department for Education officials, the Anglican representative also speaks for Methodist schools. The administration for the denominational inspection of Methodist schools is currently managed through the Anglican system because of our lack of resources, although this arrangement does not always work well.

8.3.3 The Church Schools of the Future Review, published by the Archbishops' Council Education Division in March 2012, recommends an education strategy for the Church of England for the next few years, addressing similar issues in regard to Academies and Free Schools.

8.3.4 Of course, the Church of England is not Methodism's only educational partner, and traditionally we have partnered other Free Churches in speaking out on national issues. On education, however, Methodism differs from other Free Churches in being a provider of formal education,

leading to some specific concerns and a different approach to some issues.

"As the new Buckshaw Village housing development took shape on the drawing board, the churches of Chorley determined to explore ways of engaging with the community. One potential way was through involvement in a new primary school, so then the local authority announced a new school "competition", the Blackburn diocese and the local Circuit submitted a bid which was successful, and a two-form entry school was established in September 2010. A beautiful new building costing £5m was completed in 18 months and Trinity Buckshaw has become the fourth school with Methodist involvement in the newly configured Chorley & Leyland Circuit."

Andrew Mashiter, Superintendent Minister,
Chorley & Leyland Circuit

8.4 **Current Initiatives and emphases**

The Commission brings this report against a background of a number of ongoing initiatives relevant to the Church's educational task, including the Fruitful Field project, the Youth Participation Strategy and the Youth Assembly.

8.4.1 The Fruitful Field project's recommendations were not available to us at the time of writing this report, and because of that project's work the Commission has not included ministerial formation

and theological training within its considerations, except for a reference to the need for specific training to work with young people.

8.4.2 The Commission affirms the importance of recognising and affirming young people within the Church. The themes of the Youth Participation Strategy - valuing; teaching and challenge; participation and speaking out - are values that formal and informal education both share. The Commission applauds the opportunity for young people to have a voice through the Youth Assembly and endorses the inclusion of the national Youth President within the Connexional Leaders' Forum and the Council.

“There have been a number of clear benefits that have come both directly and indirectly as a result of the job of Youth President moving back to full-time - the more effective building of relationships with other members of the Children & Youth team, other members of the Discipleship & Ministries Cluster and District Chairs; being a representative of children & young people in CLF, Council and throughout the Connexional Team; allowing me to visit more churches, projects & schools and talk to the young people in them; and a greater involvement in more projects eg organising a visit to Israel & Palestine, exploring developments of worship leader training for children & young people, and involvement in the Connecting Disciples conference.”

8.4.3 A survey among members of the Youth Assembly revealed, not surprisingly, the importance to them of access to higher education in realising their aspirations. The survey underlined the importance they attach to chaplaincy and Christian teachers and, where possible, the provision of a Christian ethos within formal education, but also affirmed the importance to them of informal education within a church setting.

8.4.4 Perhaps most importantly the General Secretary's report to the Conference of 2011 described Methodism as “a discipleship movement shaped for mission” and urged the Church to see every initiative in the light of its mission. The continuation, and extension, of the Church's commitment to education can only be justified in terms of its appropriateness to that mission.

8.5 **Previous reports**

A number of reports concerning the Church's mission in education have been written in recent years, notably *The Essence of Education* (received by the Conference in 1999), and *Schools with a Religious Character* (a paper presented to the Methodist Council in 2004 by the then Education Officer in the Connexional Team). While affirming the broad understanding of education contained in these reports, we also recognize that the educational landscape has changed dramatically since they were written.

8.6 **Resource Implications**

The Commission is aware that any proposal requires additional resources which have to be drawn from various sections of the Church and has kept this in mind when formulating its proposals.

Recommendations

9.0 **An annual gathering to support all those involved in education**

9.1 The Commission recognises that many Methodists work or volunteer in schools and colleges, seeing this as a vocation. We are aware that often their commitment is unacknowledged and little support or training is offered by the Church. It is clear that, where such opportunities to serve in schools and other institutions are given encouragement, there is much to be gained in mission and relational terms. We would encourage Districts and Circuits to take responsibility for facilitating networking for those who are involved in the educational institutions within their area in the various capacities.

9.2 As resources permit, this could include encouragement and resourcing for local churches to form links with their local schools and children through eg homework/breakfast/after-school clubs; Messy Church; use of their building especially in meeting the needs of the RE curriculum; and not forgetting the links made with young families through parent and toddler groups and playgroups.

Recommendation 1: Recognising that those who serve as governors, teachers and support staff, lay and ordained chaplains, and volunteers in schools and colleges are at the forefront of the Methodist Church's educational mission, the Commission recommends that Districts explore the possibility of annual regional gatherings for Methodist people involved in education to offer advice and support, and the opportunity for networking and personal development.

The Hope Journey

A group of Methodists on the Wirral reach out to children of all backgrounds in a number of schools in the community by providing amazing in-church, experiential learning on a range of themes from The Nativity with views from the animals in the stable to Remembrance and World War II. Children love it and learn of God's compassion and love in new and different ways, teaching staff think it is "brilliant", and the churches involved have found a new lease of life. No training is required, just time, energy and a desire to share God's grace!

10.0 **Encouragement of lifelong learning within congregations**

10.1 While recognising that the Commission is expected to focus on formal education, it is clear that we are asked “to include all forms of Methodist Education within the review” (Scope items c and d) and to place our thoughts about formal education within the context of the Church’s role in nurturing and developing the whole people of God with the skills needed for mission and ministry. In doing this we seek to re-assert the principle of equality of opportunity for Methodist people of all ages and backgrounds to be nurtured and equipped for witness and service¹. We note that this finds an echo within the Fruitful Field consultation document (p. 3: “Equipping and nurturing the ministries of the whole people of God ... is a key task, and one where our use of resources must ... come to match our rhetoric.”).

10.2 Although not all Districts and regions have the same experience, we note the strength of the collaborative and strategically efficient nature of some of our current Regional Training Forums which can ensure training resources and personnel are used to their fullest potential.

10.3 Circuit Leadership Teams are in a unique position, within the life

of their Circuit and churches, to foster learning and development, to encourage ecumenical contacts and to facilitate wider links. We urge Circuit Leadership Teams to encourage a commitment to and opportunities for learning within Local Churches. The CLT is also an umbrella body, facilitating learning and contact with other bodies and making possible wider networking for extension of learning beyond the very local. Research in the sample District showed that Local Churches and Circuits value opportunities for learning and growth and yet appear to have little awareness of the wide variety of connexional resources available to them.

10.4 This would suggest a closer link is needed between CLTs and district groups which promote learning and development. As Circuits reconfigure their roles, geography and ways of working, there is an opportunity to address this and we recommend that each Circuit appoint (as a volunteer) a Coordinator for Local Church Learning and Growth in order to encourage and help church members be equipped and empowered in their church roles and personal discipleship. This would give some expression to the encouragement in the report of the General Secretary to the Conference of 2011 for the use of small group work within our churches (para. 35 p.37) and offer

¹ Training Report to Conference 2001, section B - Connexional Training Strategies, section 1.1 entitled ‘Learning and Developing as the whole people of God’

a specific person locally for the links needed for the development of training for youth and children's work, safeguarding programmes, and links with district evangelism initiatives.

Recommendation 2: In light of the reconfiguration of many Circuits, the Commission recommends that each Circuit appoint a Coordinator (lay or ordained) for Local Church Learning and Growth in order to encourage and support Local Churches in their learning and training.

11.0 Training of all presbyters and deacons for work with young people in schools and colleges as well as in church.

11.1 Ministers often have a substantial role in fostering the learning of adults, children and young people, including, but not exclusively, through chaplaincy and other work in schools or colleges, and within local community groups. There is evidence to support the benefit of giving some greater attention within ministerial training to the role of minister as a leader of worship for the young, as an educator with children, young people or adults and as chaplain. Exploring the role of a chaplain also demands a place within that programme, given the increasing understanding of its value within local communities.

Recommendation 3: The Commission recommends that the Ministries Committee review the

Initial formational programmes of student ministers and probationer ministers in order to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to the formation of ministers as educators, facilitators of mission and ministry, and as representative people who can act as chaplains to educational institutions and key links between the Local Church and local schools.

"I love welcoming the children into school as they arrive, involving them in collective worship and sharing meals with them in the dining hall. Once a week I work alongside the learning mentor giving extra time and attention to some of the children who need it most. Circuit support includes putting on free Fun Days at the school; bidding for funding for additional work with hard to reach families; and providing a team of volunteers to run ex-curricular clubs or be pen-pals with the pupils."

Julie Coates, Chaplain at Rosehill Methodist Community Primary School, Ashton-under-Lyne

12.0 Support for School, College and University Chaplains

12.1 The critical issue facing the church today is finding a way to engage with an increasingly secularised society where most people do not know our stories, do not speak our language and do not have any grasp on our framework of understanding. Chaplaincy is the oldest, best tried and most widely accepted way of facing that challenge. To have the

24. Education Commission Report

opportunity to take on that challenge within the scope of education is a privilege and responsibility.

12.2 Circuits usually appoint a chaplain to Methodist related state-funded schools in their area, often an ordained minister. The Ashton-under-Lyne Circuit so values this role that their presbyter is allocated two days a week to work in the school. Methodist independent schools have a full-time chaplain, usually a presbyter, in which case the appointment is seen as a station.

12.3 Methodist HE chaplaincy began to be formalised in the 1920s as increasing numbers of Methodist students were to be found in the few universities. The students were gathered into a specific Local Church where the solidarity of numbers and a degree of autonomy gave them an intense experience that allowed them to mature into the leaders of the church. In the 1960s and 1970s the model changed. There were more students and more Higher Education Institutions and chaplains increasingly moved to a way of working that was akin to Workplace Chaplaincy. They started to engage with all students and staff (including

and sometimes particularly Methodists) on a range of levels and issues. The new particular focus was to engage with the institution and this has given chaplains a new and more significant involvement in the HEIs they serve.

12.4 In the last 40 years, Methodist chaplaincy in FE colleges has seen slow and non-linear growth but this has pioneered the development of multi-faith chaplaincy.

12.5 The Commission believes that the Methodist Church has an important role in education through the provision of chaplains.

- a. They offer pastoral care from a Christian perspective. Chaplains can bring a specific and in-depth level of caring, an offer without expectation of return, which is an act of grace. This is not of course to say that the chaplain is the only pastor - every institution should have its own pastoral support system and that needs to fit with its own ethos.
- b. They provide a particular responsibility for spiritual

“As a University Chaplain, I work with those preparing to step into life in an adult world. They are training for responsible jobs, entering into serious relationships, becoming independent, and will leave the University environment well-equipped for this. We support students to grow also in their journey of discipleship; to question, be challenged, explore their calling, and to take up their roles as adult members of the Body of Christ – its present and its future.”

Catrin Harland

“As Chaplains at HMYOI (Her Majesty’s Young Offenders Institution) Wetherby, we minister to some of the most vulnerable young offenders in England and Wales. Many of them have very low self-esteem, poor educational levels and mental health issues. We support them all aspects of their time in custody, encouraging them to face up to their lives and to help them realise that the Gospel offers them hope of forgiveness and a fresh start.”

Andrew Marshall, chaplain

support within Methodist institutions. In schools, for example, the chaplain has a special role in supporting the Head/Principal in developing the spiritual life of the community. Where opportunity arises, he/she will be a leader, with others, of worship and prayer.

- c. They are an essential component in establishing a strong Methodist culture and ethos in Methodist institutions. In non-Methodist institutions, Methodist chaplains will, alongside ecumenical and multi-faith colleagues, convey something of the inclusiveness, warmth and sense of justice that characterises the Methodist tradition.
- d. They give the Church an opportunity to influence young people in positive ways in the critical phases of their development.

Recommendation 4: The Commission recommends that the Conference

- a. affirms and recognises the tremendous opportunities offered by engaging in**

Education Chaplaincy

- b. affirms existing plans within the Connexional Team that will:**

1. Develop a network of chaplaincy conferences within all Methodist state-funded schools (including Children’s Centres, where they exist) and provide resources for selection, training and ongoing development.
2. Develop formal chaplaincy models for Community schools and to test a range of models in pilot schemes with schools which are willing to work with the Methodist Church.
3. Determine with the Methodist Independent Schools Trust ways in which Connexional Team officers can assist in developing chaplaincy in their schools in ways which creatively enhance their Methodist identity and ethos.
4. Develop the network of (full

or part-time) chaplains in Further Education Colleges in a more concentrated way, recognising that this will need to be done ecumenically and largely in a multi-faith environment.

5. Review the support given to Higher Education Chaplains at a time of great change in HE and to encourage processes of selection appropriate to the current climate, and put in place more effective initial and ongoing training for all HE Chaplains.

- c. notes that the Connexional Team believes that the management of these developments can be financed within current budgetary levels.

13.0 **Support for schools of a religious character**

- 13.1 The government's current drive to turn schools into academies has implications for schools with a religious character. Current government policy is that by 2015, virtually all schools will be "independent" and that the old

A matter of months ago, I had no idea we even had a Methodist school, but now I'm completely blown away by the work they do.

I've visited four Methodist schools. All four of these schools have a lot in common; they all have good or outstanding Ofsted reports, all have enthusiastic, well-behaved kids, all have a strong Christian ethos, and all are meeting a need in their community.

All of them are placed in the vicinity of deprived estates, therefore a lot of their kids come from these less advantaged backgrounds. The schools are a place of support and advice for the parents and all of the family, and in some cases are the first port of call whenever there is a problem.

I guess this is where we should be as a church. I spoke to one head, who saw her school as 'the church's mission'. What these schools are doing is what we should be doing as churches! These schools are going out to those who are in need, are meeting a need in their communities – what a lesson we, as a church, could learn from that.

I talked to a lot of kids and asked them what they thought of church – most answers were that church is dull and boring, they don't know when to stand up or sit down, or they have no interest in it (there were some positive ones thrown in too!); then when I asked them what they thought of their morning worship in school, it was completely different! They were able to participate, they sang good songs, they were allowed to have a bit of a laugh...again, what a lesson we can learn as a church. How much of our worship is fun and engaging without being patronising to these kids who are actually very capable of a mature spirituality!

Sam Taylor. Youth President 2011-12

divisions of community schools - special schools, voluntary-aided schools, voluntary-controlled schools and so on - will have largely disappeared. We recognise that many head teachers, governors and teachers see strong arguments in favour of developing independence, seeing an opportunity to adopt their own approaches to learning and assessment, to pastoral care and discipline, to staffing conditions, to the shape of the school day, to develop their own specialisms and create less bureaucracy. We recognise too that not all share this view. We affirm the guidance already being given to Methodist Schools wishing to convert to academy status.

- 13.2 Currently about a third of state-funded schools have a faith foundation largely because of the work of the Church of England and the Catholic Church, and these churches are already seeing the changes in the educational system as an opportunity to extend their involvement by: strengthening the identity of what it means to be an Anglican or Catholic school; generating at diocesan level a model whereby their schools, whether publicly or privately funded, collaborate together, sharing wherever possible, resources and facilities; encouraging the creation of more church schools - in some instances this might be a response

to parents wishing to take up the government decision to encourage the creation of a new school (the so-called free school). The Church of England's The Way Ahead Report in 2001 identified church schools as "the Church's major opportunity to serve the young"² and, since then, it has created 100 additional church secondary schools in targeted areas.

- 13.3 The government has been supporting faith-based schools for two reasons: they have a reputation for "consistently outperforming other schools"³. This is true of a number of Methodist schools, both state-funded and independent. Almost all generate an environment in which everyone is clearly valued and in which high standards of education are attained. OFSTED's 2009 Report on Independent Faith Schools concluded that these schools have a positive impact on pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development and on being a good citizen, and that they promote community cohesion.

² The Way Ahead, Church Publishing House 2001 pg 12

³ *ibid*

Kent College, Canterbury, is the winner of the south-east region in the 2011 Church School Awards. The judging panel was impressed by the school's commitment to local community, national and international issues. Students are regularly engaged in projects to support Action for Children and MHA, and the College has a global school partnership with Kierruu High School, Iringa, Tanzania.

13.4 The Commission believes that the Methodist Church is right to be promoting schools of a religious character. In making this affirmation, we note the following:

- a. Modern society is culturally diverse and, within the many voices that seek to shape our educational system, it would be a tragedy if Christianity were to be silent. The existence of church schools is one of the most important vehicles for giving Christianity a significant voice in education.
- b. Community schools may keep faith at a distance and the requirement for worship of some kind in them, even though still a legal obligation, is largely ignored, especially at secondary level, where it is virtually non-existent. The National Curriculum expects schools to address students'

- "spiritual, social, moral and cultural" education, and the Commission believes that the spiritual aspect of education can only be delivered if students are exposed to experiences of worship. Faith schools have a special opportunity as well as a special obligation to take this seriously.
- c. Secondary schools are also less effective at delivering religious education according to OFSTED. It reports that "inadequate achievement in RE in primary schools is rare", but says RE is "good or better in only four out of ten schools"⁴ at secondary level. The 2004 non-statutory national framework for religious education quite rightly says that a good religious education programme is one that makes pupils more self-aware, more open-minded, more ready to accept other people's opinions and beliefs, and more sensitive to the impact their ideas and behaviour can have on others. It is our belief that church schools have a special opportunity to do this, which is not always open to a non faith-based school.
 - d. Many Christians welcome faith schools because they can provide worship and religious education that is more sharply focused on a particular faith, whilst, of course, still being expected to convey an

⁴ OFSTED: Making Sense of Religion June 2007 p. 6

appreciation of all religions. Christian thinking can play a part in any school, whatever its foundation, but it is only within a church school that this influence can be given a much freer rein.

“I didn’t expect a church school to be so different, but it is. I think the children get something quite special out of being in this school community, and I do too.”

AC, Teacher at a Methodist School

13.5 The greater freedom to express Christian belief is well illustrated within the existing Methodist schools. For example, research undertaken in 2008 by Roehampton University into the impact of branding an educational institution ‘Methodist’ in a sample of state-funded Methodist primary schools and independent secondary schools, found that worship featured regularly and that the Christian character of the schools was very visible, particularly in the primary schools where “school reception areas display symbols of Christianity and, specifically, Methodism, both to view and touch”⁵. The questionnaire issued to Methodist independent schools by this Commission showed that not only do these schools give religious studies a high profile (to the extent that in four of the schools around 20% or more of sixth-formers opt for RS at A level)

but also they regularly provide whole school services, often with a range of external speakers, as well as the shorter assemblies that run through the week. Alongside these there are voluntary Christian fellowships and a vast array of activities designed as expressions of Christian love.

13.6 Critics sometimes talk of the danger of religious indoctrination yet the real danger of indoctrination lies in permitting the young to surrender their thinking entirely to the many secular and materialistic pressures that come from society. Head teachers and chaplains of Independent Schools were sent a questionnaire and asked to encourage pupils to make their views known to this Commission. Those who responded via their chaplains made it clear that in their experience their Methodist school has a fair and open-minded approach in religious matters and manages to convey what is “a good way to live” without resorting to anything that might smack of indoctrination.

13.7 It is clear from applications for admissions that parents – not only those with some Christian belief, but those of no faith as well as adherents of other world faiths – want their children to attend church schools. One of the points to emerge from the Maintained Schools Conference in 2011 was that some parents see the schools as replacing

⁵ Research into the impact of branding an educational institution ‘Methodist’ pg 10

lost Sunday school teaching about morality and religion. It is also clear that many parents appreciate being invited to attend special services and assemblies and, in a sense, the school acts as their church.

- 13.8 Some within the Methodist Church have argued to end our involvement with faith-based schools on the grounds that they generate a privileged elite within the national system and take a disproportionate amount of the Church's attention when it should be focusing on the needs of the poorest community schools. It is true that the Methodist Church should not devote disproportionate attention to Methodist schools, not least because we have so very few of them, but we find it hard to understand how promoting Christianity within all schools will be assisted by removing "the privilege" of greater contact with Methodism and therefore with Christianity in 79 schools.

Westleigh Methodist Primary School and Children's Centre

The centre fulfils a need within the community to engage with 0-5s who are 'slipping through the net' in the present health and education systems. The three Family Partners offer universal and targeted support for families around many issues. Groovy Tots targets obesity; Baby Massage tackles poor emotional health and well-being/attachment issues, engaging parents and children from the outset; Dads Stay and Play engages dads in child development and care.

- 13.9 Far from all being privileged, many Methodist state-funded schools are located in areas of social deprivation and many have children whose families are homeless, refugees, or asylum seekers. Many also have significant numbers of children with special educational needs. Methodist schools in very disadvantaged areas find it hurtful that their community status is not always recognised by the Church. The fact that they are voluntary-aided or voluntary-controlled does not make them less of a community school than those schools called community schools.

- 13.10 The Commission therefore affirms the Church's provision of faith-based schools and believes that the present time offers a particular opportunity for the Methodist

Church, alone or in partnership with others, to extend that provision.

Recommendation 5: The Commission recommends that the Conference reaffirms its commitment to the provision of schools of a religious character and actively seeks to extend this commitment.

14.0 Continued commitment to provision of some State-funded Schools

14.1 Existing Schools

Even before the additional problems arising from the wish of some schools to become academies, the Methodist Church had difficulty supporting its schools. We have commented above that the current post of Education Development and Improvement Officer does not enable adequate support for our schools. The Commission notes with grave concern that resources are not at present available to provide adequate Methodist input into the selection and induction of head teachers, the appointment and training of governors, inspections, curriculum support, and supporting the Districts and Circuits in which schools are placed.

14.2 Academies

14.2.1 There are now three types of academies. All are funded by the Department for Education directly through a funding agreement. They have freedom from the Local Authority, are their own admissions

authority (subject to the School Admission Code) and have other freedoms including the ability to set their own curriculum. However they are still subject to statutory inspections by OFSTED and all pupils have to sit SATs or GCSEs.

14.2.2 The original academies set up under the Labour government were failing schools that required significant investment from an outside sponsor. Although some of these sponsors claim a Christian character, they are not, in most cases, directly affiliated to any church or denomination. A few independent schools have become academies.

14.2.3 The second group of academies has been created under the coalition government and does not require funding from the sponsors. Schools with an outstanding grading in their last inspection by OFSTED have been invited to become academies and receive funding directly from Government. This has now been extended to schools which are 'performing well', the definition of which is based largely on examination success. Selwood middle school in Bristol became an academy in December 2011.

14.2.4 The third group of academies is being created by the Coalition government from failing schools. These are defined as schools which are in an OFSTED category requiring "special measures" or "a notice to improve" or which have not met

specified performance standards. While the original academies were mainly secondary schools, the Government has now moved to require failing primary, as well as secondary, schools to “academise”. It is very likely that two Methodist/Church of England primary schools will have converted to academies by the time the Conference meets.

Queen’s College, Taunton and the Taunton Academy

When a failing C of E secondary school was required to become an academy, Queens College, Taunton was asked by The Diocese of Bath and Wells to become the lead educational partner in the setting up of what has become Taunton Academy. The Headmaster is a founder governor of the academy and serves on the Standards and Student Welfare Committee. He and senior staff have been involved in the planning of the curriculum, co-curriculum and the pastoral structure of the academy, and there is regular contact between Queen’s College students and academy students.

14.2.5 It is vital if Methodist schools are to keep their religious character as they transfer to academy status (either willingly or because of necessity) that the Church is able to be a sponsor of them; otherwise, a secular sponsor will step in and the school will cease to operate as a school with a Christian character. Because of the urgency of this issue it has been necessary to take

certain actions in anticipation of the acceptance of this report. The Methodist Church, with the approval of the Conference in July 2011, has already made provisional application to become a multi-academy sponsor. The Methodist Council in January 2012 approved the establishment of MAST (Methodist Academies and Schools Trust) as an Umbrella Trust for all new academies and (should they be approved by Conference) Free Schools.

14.2.6 The Commission believes that wherever possible, any new Methodist academies should be focused upon the needs of poorer and disadvantaged communities. It also believes that any Methodist school which is deemed outstanding and is seeking academy status should agree to support a less effective school raise its standards.

Recommendation 6: The Commission recommends that the Conference:

- a. affirms the decision of the 2011 Conference to seek Multi-Academy Sponsor Status for the Methodist Church, and the guidance issued to schools wishing to convert to academy status.**
- b. welcomes the creation of the Methodist Academies and Schools Trust (MAST).**

15.0 **Cautious support for free schools**

15.1 The DfE has encouraged the setting up of ‘free schools’ by groups of parents, teachers, universities,

businesses and charities who see a need in their local area, either because there is a shortage of school places or because the existing schools do not offer what they want for their children.

- 15.2 The Commission believes that the Church should see the possibility of free schools as an opportunity to extend its provision of formal education, but only if certain conditions apply. Therefore, each proposal for a free school with Methodist involvement must be considered against a list of principles to establish an appropriate response, however we recommend that the following criteria be adhered to before a proposal could move towards a formal application to the DfE.

There must be a demonstrable local need for a 'church school' and it must not threaten the viability of any other local schools.

The proposers of the school must work in consultation with the Local Authority to ensure that free school projects do not create unnecessary school places.

The proposal must have the backing of the local Circuit and the approval of the District Policy Committee.

The proposal must be distinctive and inclusive and have an admissions policy that complies with the Statutory Admissions Code and SO342.

A free school must be financially and

educationally viable. (Funding to support the creation of an approved free school is available from the government, but there needs to be a review in each case of any obligations falling to the Church.)

The proposal must be discussed with the designated member of the Connexional Team.

The local Circuit must have the capacity to see the project through to fruition, being able to provide appropriate support and governance and the capacity to sustain the project for the foreseeable future.

The school must come under the jurisdiction of MAST.

Recommendation 7: The Commission recommends that the Conference accepts that there may be situations where the creation of a school of a religious character as a free school may be appropriate, provided necessary support structures exist at national, district and circuit level.

16.0 A Future Policy for Methodist Schools

- 16.1 The Methodist Church has reached a crucial point in relation to its existing state-funded schools: it either has to create the structures necessary to support effectively those that it has or it give up all involvement in the sector. There is nowhere in between. As more and more church schools become academies, either through choice or necessity, other sponsors will take over and the Meth-

odist ethos will be eradicated unless the Methodist Church has the properly funded structures to serve them.

- 16.2 Governors of schools should be of a level of experience and credibility to ensure effectiveness. This does not imply any particular background, but there is a need for appropriate training and for good channels of communication so that both expertise and problems can be shared.
- 16.3 The Commission believes the Church must not only respond to these present challenges but should also grasp opportunities to expand the number of state-funded schools that it works with, thus increasing its opportunities for mission. The number can be grown by seeking to establish schools in new housing areas - which can then also provide worship centres - and by taking into MAST some Community Schools which have been forced or have chosen to become academies, and any free schools which so choose. (Where a new school is created on a housing estate, for example, then the developer is responsible for the church's share of the costs.)
- 16.4 The Commission believes that our Methodist imperative - to go to those

who need us most - leads us to give priority to the establishing of schools in areas of significant socio-economic deprivation and urges Districts and Circuits actively to look for opportunities in such areas.

- 16.5 The Commission recognises the importance of the ecumenical relationships that already exist in schools and colleges. It encourages such ecumenical working as a way forward, particularly in the establishing of new state-funded schools, including academies, provided that resources can be made available to encourage and support the Methodist contribution to such initiatives.
- 16.6 The Commission notes that the costs of Academies (including free schools) are born by the government. The cost of support services could, in general, be borne by the schools through setting up Service-Level Agreements between MAST and individual schools.

Recommendation 8: The Commission recommends that the Conference seeks to increase the number of Methodist schools over the next ten years as opportunity arises with a priority for areas of socio-

Blackrod Luncheon Club

Every week a group of Year 6 children from Blackrod Anglican/Methodist Church Primary School volunteer to serve the elderly attendees at the Age Concern Luncheon Club. The Luncheon Club members tell stories and jokes, the children listen and talk about their lives and hopes.

economic deprivation. To this end, Districts should assess the need and opportunity in its local communities and report to MAST no later than 2014. Such schools should have an ecumenical foundation wherever possible.

17.0 Support for Independent Schools

17.1 Since the main thrust of the Methodist Church's mission has been and should remain towards the poor and disadvantaged, the Commission is not recommending that the Church should seek to put resources into its independent schools (though some denominations do), but it accepts that a genuinely inclusive church has a responsibility to all sectors of society and that the points made earlier in support of the Church's provision of independent education apply to the Methodist privately-funded independent schools as well as to the publicly funded ones. The Commission recognises that some Methodists find private independent schools incompatible with their principles, but this has never been the majority view, which is why the Church has repeatedly endorsed that its schools have a continuing role to play.

17.2 The Commission accepts that the Methodist independent schools have a very strong Christian ethos that makes them very different from some other schools in the independent

sector. Those who work in them strongly promote an active concern for the needs of the poor and underprivileged through the worship offered, local community projects, the World AIMS scheme run in conjunction with MRDF, environmental groups, and fundraising for a wide range of charities (cumulatively pupils in the fourteen independent schools raise around £250,000 per year). World AIMS is a particularly impressive example of commitment to a vision of a world where poverty and injustice are always challenged in order that people may exercise their rights and live with dignity. It has encouraged the schools to undertake work in a number of countries, including refurbishing a disused clinic at Marakissa in the Gambia, biennial projects at the Open Arms orphanage at Blantyre in Malawi, and other projects in Uganda, Sierra Leone, Nepal, El Salvador, and Zambia. New projects are currently being developed in Ethiopia and Tanzania.

In November 2011 Woodhouse Grove Year 9 students joined with peers from nearby Ashville College to create animations that show a glimpse of what it means to live on planet Earth. Using media, ICT, English and design skills the students created five pieces of work that explore religion, language and culture in our world. These animations are now available on the World AIMS Website (www.worldaims.org.uk) for state-funded and independent schools to use.

17.3 Within the independent sector as a whole the Methodist schools are among those who most voice the importance of avoiding elitism and parents who wish to try and buy future career success through 'old-tie' networks do not choose them. The research undertaken in 2008 by Roehampton University showed that the motivation of parents choosing a Methodist school was largely twofold. First, it was to try and ensure their child received a good education if they did not feel that was available to them within the local state provision. Secondly, they wanted a school that offered more than academic lessons. Some wanted the holistic approach; some were attracted by the palpable sense of community; and some welcomed the 'international mix' that arose from having a boarding element. Those parents with a religious conviction welcomed the presence of a chapel and the strong role played by a chaplain. Above all, the most recurring theme that emerged from the research was that the parents choosing Methodist independent schools did so because of the pastoral care on offer and their strong emphasis on meeting individual needs.

17.4 The popular caricature of the independent school as being a haven for the rich is not borne out within the Methodist independent schools. They have some pupils who come from very wealthy families (as, of course, do some publicly

funded schools in affluent areas), but many families struggle to meet the fees. By choice the schools would prefer to be able to offer as many scholarships and bursaries as possible, but they understand this cannot be a priority for the Church. They therefore do the best they can, primarily by using 5% of the fees paid by other parents. This may sound a small percentage but it probably represents for many of the schools close to 50% of the money they have after paying salary and running costs. MIST (Methodist Independent Schools Trust) calculates that approximately £10 million is distributed annually in bursaries and scholarships from one source or another.

17.5 The fact that the Methodist independent schools still offer boarding – full, weekly and occasional – remains a significant part of the service they provide because this is not fully met by the current state-funded provision. For those parents working in certain countries overseas or involved in constant moves (eg the military) or faced with work that takes them away from home for long periods, boarding offers their children security and stability and friendships that otherwise they would lack. Others – especially single-parent families or those families where both parents are engaged in work that makes it difficult for them to be at home until late in the evening – find weekly boarding reduces tensions and

enables better quality family time at weekends. It is unfortunate that the image of boarding is too often bound up with images that stem from the past rather than as it is today because this may cloud people's perceptions. There are some young people for whom boarding would be a very wrong choice, but there are others to whom it offers an ideal environment. The boarding element also gives the schools an international mix (children from over thirty different countries attend the schools, some specifically because of the Methodist connection).

- 17.6 It is no accident that some of the Methodist independent schools also organise international exchange programmes and are among the most prominent in the country in organising and attending Model United Nations events (Kingswood School, for example, organises the biggest conference in the south of England for maintained and independent schools).

Students at Kingswood school in Bath have created a website - Sustainable School Links - designed by students for students in order to share ideas on sustainability (www.sustainableschoollinks.com).

- 17.7 The Commission welcomes the fact that the 2011 Conference agreed to

replace the Board of Management by the better structured MIST, although its role is essentially the same - to promote beneficial links between the Methodist schools, monitor that the local management is effective, and make sure that the schools sustain a sense of belonging to the family of the Methodist Church. MIST, like the Board before it, has the legal authority as the governing body over nine⁶ of the fourteen schools but three others (Kingswood School, Ashville College, and Rydal Penrhos) have agreed a Code of Practice that commits them to be fully involved with MIST, including regular attendance at meetings. It is regrettable that the other two schools (The Leys and Queenswood) are currently not attached to MIST but its Chief Executive Officer is ex officio on their governing bodies and will be seeking ways of more actively involving them. The Commission believes that the newly created MIST and MAST should eventually form one body.

- 17.8 The Commission notes with some concern that currently none of the schools has a head teacher who is a Methodist and that four have chaplains who are not Methodist presbyters. It therefore welcomes the fact that MIST has already approached Heads and Chairs of Governors of both Trust and Associated schools about the importance of maintaining a

⁶ Culford School, Farringtons School, the two Kent Colleges (in Canterbury and Pembury), Kingsley School, Queen's College, Shebbear College, Truro School, and Woodhouse Grove School.

distinctive Methodist emphasis and hopes it will continue recent initiatives to encourage Methodist presbyters to explore the role of a chaplain. The Commission encourages MIST to develop an appropriate system to help non-Methodist governors, head teachers, teachers and other staff understand the particular emphases of Methodist education.

- 17.9 The Commission is concerned that, although the independent schools are the subject of various external inspections, there is currently no common system of external monitoring of the Christian nature of the schools commensurate to the Section 48 inspection of state-funded Methodist schools. It therefore also encourages MIST to develop an appropriate system to monitor the religious character of the Methodist independent schools that includes some element of external inspection.

Recommendation 9: The Commission recommends that the Conference:

- a. affirms the contribution made by the Methodist Independent Schools and articulate the expectation that all 14 schools should participate fully in the development of MIST so that it becomes the body that can best support and challenge the schools in maintaining their Methodist ethos and offering service to others.**
- b. directs MIST and MAST to work closely together, sharing resources wherever possible, with a view to becoming a single trust within five years.**

18.0 Supporting all Methodist Schools

18.1 Religious education, collective worship and inspections

- 18.1.1 There are some excellent examples of work that the Methodist Church does centrally to focus thinking and promote learning. For example, the World Aims project has been very successful in providing excellent materials and support for learning. The Hope Journey in Ellesmere Port is a wonderful example of the local Methodist people working directly with children in schools (both church and non-church) to provide meaningful, relevant and real-life spiritual experiences. There is exceptional practice in a small number of outstanding Methodist schools, but in its current form, the Methodist Church cannot co-ordinate, promote or actively and significantly contribute to the sustainable development of worship practices and experiences in its or other schools.

“The Nutgrove School Community starts every week by worshipping together. Staff and learners contribute to the interactive worship which is planned around a key theme/Christian value. PowerPoint presents verses with eye-catching images, encouraging memory retention. Our modern arrangements of worship songs engage all ages. Often, learners lead singing using our sound and light system to further energise the experience.”

Ian Rimmer, Headteacher,
Nutgrove Methodist School

18.1.2 Academies need an equivalent to the Local Authority's Agreed Syllabus, which would reflect the Methodist view of religious education. The Agreed Syllabus is required in VC schools; VA schools must have a syllabus reflecting their trust deed. Currently most ecumenical VA schools use their local diocesan syllabus, and the two pure Methodist schools both use the Blackburn diocesan syllabus which is designed for Methodist primary schools as well as Anglican. But we have no syllabus for the new academies, and may need one for secondary schools.

18.1.3 The Education Commission believes that resources need to be made available within the Connexional Team to provide support in these areas.

The chaplain of Kent College, Canterbury regularly goes into local Junior and Infant Schools to take assemblies. There is a particularly strong link with the nearby Methodist state-funded Junior and Infant School, forming a Global School Partnership with Santasi School in Ghana.

18.1.4 OFSTED is not tasked with looking at "denominational education" - this is left to the churches to inspect, for which they are paid by OFSTED. A parallel inspection system has been developed by both the Catholic Church and the Church of England, called "Section 48 inspections".

(The Anglican system refers to them as SIAS - Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools.)

It asks four questions:

- How well does the school, through its distinctive Christian character, meet the needs of all learners?
- What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?
- How effective is the Religious Education in VA schools and academies?
- How effective are the leadership and management of the school as a church school?

18.1.5 Since 2007, the National Society of the Church of England has taken over this responsibility on our behalf, operating through its dioceses. Negotiations are ongoing for the SIAS inspections to incorporate a module on Methodist distinctiveness in their standard training. It should be possible to ensure that, with the cooperation of those dioceses with Methodist schools, our schools are inspected by Methodist or Methodist approved inspectors. The Education Commission believes that it is important for the Methodist Church to be able to make a significant contribution to the inspection of Methodist schools, in order to ensure the continuation of distinct Methodist emphases as indicated above. But this needs to be coordinated and resources provided to do this.

18.2 Role of the District and the Circuit

18.2.1 In order to form a link to the Connexional Team, each District requires its own or a shared District Schools Officer. Such officers also will form essential links for the schools with other partners, including the local diocese and Local Authorities (either as a Methodist representative or through the diocese), ensuring two way communication between the Connexional Team and Districts. They organise the state-funded School Visitors, supporting them and ensuring that schools have regular contact with the District. The challenge for Districts is to find suitable professional people who will be able to fulfil this and wider roles. They organise regular visits by the Chair of District to all the schools and keep him or her informed of all issues or delights. Just as with Circuits and churches, the District should include a description of its schools in the information for new Chairs.

18.2.2 The superintendent minister (or his/her nominee) is an ex officio foundation governor of all Methodist and Methodist/ecumenical schools in his/her Circuit. This leaves the minister of the church connected to the school free to be the chaplain, without any of the legal responsibilities falling to the governors. The existence of the school, the links with the Circuit and church should be spelt out in

the Circuit's statement when a new member of staff is to be invited - too often it is not.

18.2.3 The circuit meeting acts as the managing (and, in ecumenical schools, joint) trustees to state-funded schools within its Circuit. It is the duty of the circuit meeting to appoint the foundation governors who should be able to contribute the necessary skills to the governing body and willing to invest their time in the life of the school. The schools provide opportunities for mission and service, and their life and work should be a regular item on the agenda of the circuit meeting. Both foundation governors and chaplains need training for their roles: this might be provided by the District in association with the Regional Training Forum, the Connexional Team or in association with the local diocese.

18.2.4 Similarly, the local church and its members can be involved, in ways appropriate to their talents and skills, in the life of the school. This should be done by each advertising the other's activities as well as an annual report from the school on the Church Council agenda.

Recommendation 10: The Commission recommends that Districts and Circuits review their engagement with Methodist schools and those who work in them reporting to MIST/MAST no later than June 2014.

18.3 **The appointment of a senior officer within the Connexional Team, responsible for education**

18.3.1 The Commission recommends the appointment of a senior officer responsible for education who, together with a newly established Methodist Education Forum, will enable the Church to:

- a. have clear educational policies
- b. provide the necessary support for schools to raise standards of learning and improve personal development
- c. seize new educational opportunities as they arise
- d. know what there is to celebrate within its schools
- e. promote the work of the schools to the Connexion and encourage participation and support
- f. seek to assist those whom the current educational system fails
- g. respond quickly to and challenge government educational initiatives in an informed way in liaison with other Churches

The Commission suggests that an appropriate title for such an officer would be Director of Education. The Commission is aware that resources are not available to establish such a post immediately.

Recommendation 11: The Commission recommends that a senior officer within the Connexional Team be appointed to take responsibility for overseeing all of the Methodist Church's Involvement In formal education. This officer should be accountable to the Cluster Head of Discipleship and Ministries.

18.3.2 The Education Commission strongly stresses that the post of the senior education officer proposed above cannot be seen as a replacement for the Education Development and Improvement Officer, but must be seen as an additional post if the Church is to be able properly to fulfil its responsibilities. The Education Development and Improvement Officer (or a similar post) is an essential part of the structure envisaged. The Commission notes that the Connexional Team has resources available to enable the post of Education Development and Improvement Officer to continue at least until 2014.

18.3.3 The Commission envisages two other key roles: a senior officer with responsibility for MIST (the present Chief Executive of MIST is currently funded by the independent schools) and a senior officer with responsibility for MAST (this role might initially be fulfilled by the senior education officer, but as the work develops would need to be an additional post, funded in part by the schools themselves). The Commission is not envisaging any hierarchical structure here but rather

close team work. The Commission envisages an Education sub-cluster within the Discipleship and Ministries Cluster. It is vital that the various education officers are located in close proximity to encourage regular exchange of ideas and in order that their expertise can be used for the benefit of all Methodist schools, whatever their status, and, indeed, for schools generally.

The above posts will require appropriate administrative support.

18.4 **Creation of an Education Forum**

18.4.1 The Commission recommends the formation of an Education Forum. The Forum would be the chief means of discussing and advising the Church's senior officer on educational policies and, where possible and appropriate, issues arising from those policies would be progressed and sometimes actioned by members of the Forum.

18.4.2 We recommend that the Education Forum consist of a core group of no more than 12 members, meeting twice a year and more regularly as required.

Recommendation 12: The Commission recommends that an Education Forum be appointed to advise and assist officers of the Connexional Team in respect of educational policies and practices.

18.5 **Speaking and acting ecumenically**

18.5.1 The Commission acknowledges the close working partnership that exists between the current Education Development and Improvement Officer and senior education officers within the Church of England and recognises the significant support that has been provided by the Church of England, both nationally and at a diocesan level, in the oversight of Methodist/Anglican and Methodist Schools. It strongly hopes this will continue, while hoping also that Methodism is able to provide the resources to become a more equal partner. Crucial to this is the role of the proposed senior education officer for the Methodist Church. The Commission looks forward to a time when the senior education officers of both Churches can speak out together on educational issues.

18.5.2 The Commission acknowledges the work undertaken by the Free Church Education Committee (FCEC) and those who represent the Methodist Church on it, not least with regard to liaison with Standing Councils on Religious Education. The considerable changes within the education system mean that this role may well change, and there should be ongoing reflection on the need for the FCEC in its current form.

18.5.3 There needs to be clarification as to the appointment and accountability of those who serve the Methodist Church on the FCEC. The Commission regards the proposed Education Forum as an appropriate

body to whom the FCEC should report, and as the body who will have oversight of the Methodist Church's involvement with the FCEC.

18.6 Resources and Funding

18.6.1 It is recognised that the Methodist Church has limited resources and that, at this time of falling income, it will not be easy for the Church to find additional resources to support its educational mission. But the Commission believes that there is not only an urgent need to find additional resources to maintain our current commitments, but also a real opportunity for the Church to extend its mission if further resources can be made available.

18.6.2 We note that at present the independent schools fund the central support they receive from their own income, and without drawing on the finances of the Methodist Church. We believe that the state-funded schools can also be expected to pay for some central support and buy in services supplied by the Methodist Church.

18.6.3 But we also recognise that it may be unreasonable to expect the schools to fund all the support that is required, and that the cost of a senior education officer and other officers, the Education Forum, together with necessary secretarial support, will need to be borne by the Church.

Recommendation 13: Noting that some of the cost of support for the schools could be borne by the schools themselves, the Commission recommends that future budgets should be adjusted to enable resources to be available to support the post described in 18.3.1 - 3 and the services referred to in paragraphs 18.1.1- 18.2.4 .

18.7 Interim arrangements

18.7.1 The Commission is aware of the need to move forward taking account of financial constraints under which the Connexional Team is currently working and appreciates that the necessary resources to implement its proposals may not be available immediately. It is aware, too, of a number of factors (including uncertainty about the number of schools wishing to move to academy status and for whom such a move is appropriate, uncertainty about the response from Districts wishing to establish new schools in areas of educational need, and uncertainty about the actual resources required to provide the proposed support) leading to some caution in bringing specific staffing and resource recommendations to the Conference at this point. Further the Commission recognises that, even if the Conference agrees to support all its recommendations, there is a continuing task in helping the wider church, through its Districts and Circuits, to appreciate the mission opportunities available through supporting community schools, local

FE and HE institutions and through existing and new Methodist and Methodist/ecumenical schools.

18.7.2 The Commission therefore proposes a transitionary two year project in order to achieve rapid and practical progress, involving the appointment of an appropriately experienced person to be Project Leader, who can:

- work with the Connexional Team to plan and implement the strategic recommendations of this Report, including establishing an Education Forum;
- liaise with the Chief Executive Officer of MIST, and the Chair of MIST and MAST, discussing how the two trusts (both legally and practically) can start to work more closely together and most efficiently utilise the limited resources which they have available;
- liaise with senior officers in the Church of England and the Free Churches on educational issues;
- work closely with the Education Development and Improvement Officer, in supporting publicly funded schools and identifying what additional support may be required;
- act as an advocate and champion for Methodist schools to the Connexion, to the Districts and to Circuits, discussing the opportunities and responsibilities in the establishing of academies and

free schools, and urging support and closer ties with existing schools;

- review the proposal for a senior education officer, establishing, in discussion with members of the Connexional Team and the Boards of MIST and MAST, a job description and post details for future appointment;
- take a leading part in bringing to the Conference of 2014 proposals for further implementing and fully integrating the proposals of this Report.

18.7.3 The Commission further proposes that the Connexional Team establish a Steering Committee which will ensure continuity with its work, and therefore guide and monitor the transitionary arrangements.

18.7.4 The Commission is grateful that the Council agreed an application could be made to the Connexional Grants Committee to fund the above project for two years, 2012/14, and, if that is approved, the Commission seeks the Conference's approval to seek an appropriate person to undertake the role of Project Leader for immediate appointment to a two year post.

Recommendation 14: The Commission recommends that, subject to necessary funding being available from the Connexional Grants Committee, the Council should appoint a project officer to undertake the tasks described in 18.7.2.

***RESOLUTIONS

- 24/1. The Conference receives the report of the working party.**
- 24/2. The Conference affirms and recognises the opportunities offered to the whole church by engaging in chaplaincy across the educational sector.**
- 24/3. In affirming its commitment to the provision of schools of a religious character and aspiring to increase the number of Methodist schools over the next ten years, the Conference encourages Districts to report to the Methodist Academies and Schools Trusts (MAST) no later than 2014 on both the need and opportunity for the development of such schools in local communities.**
- 24/4. The Conference affirms the contribution made by the Methodist Independent Schools and urges all of the Methodist Independent schools to participate in the continuing development of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) so as to achieve the aspiration contained in recommendation 9 of the report.**
- 24/5. The Conference welcomes the creation of the Methodist Academies and Schools Trusts (MAST) and; directs both it and the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST) to work together wherever possible with a view to becoming single trust no later than 2017; urges Districts and Circuits to review their engagement with Methodist Schools and report on such engagement to MIST and MAST respectively no later than June 2014.**
- 24/6. The Conference recognises that there may be situations where the creation of a school of a religious character as a free school may be appropriate, provided necessary support structures exist at national, District and Circuit level.**
- 24/7. The Conference refers to the Methodist Council Recommendation 1, 4b, 11, 12, 13 and 14 and directs that the Council considers the proposals contained in them, taking any action that it deems appropriate, and reports on such consideration and action to the Conference of 2013.**
- 24/8. The Conference refers recommendation 2 and 3 to the Ministries Committee and directs the Committee to consider the recommendation in light of ongoing developments in respect of initial ministerial training and the potential development of learning Circuits.**

24. Education Commission Report

Appendix 1: Membership of the Education Commission

The Revd Janina Ainsworth, Chief Education Officer, Church of England
Ms Pauline Appafram, HR Business Partner, Essex Police; School Governor
Mr Mark Bagnall, Methodist Training Officer, NE England; former Regional Youth Officer
The Revd Dr John Barrett (Chair), Former head teacher and chair of World Methodist Council, Education Committee, School Governor
Mr Gary Best, Former Head of Kingswood School; School Governor
The Revd Stephen Burgess, Chair, York and Hull District
Mr Luke Curran, Director, Training Network, Methodist Church in Wales; Tutor, St Michael's Theological College
Dr Marilyn Holness, Head of Education Department, Roehampton University
The Revd Robert Jones, Chaplaincies Coordinator, Connexional Team (CT)
Dr Lois Loudon, Chair, Methodist Education Policy Committee; Lancashire District Schools Officer
Mr Ian Mason, Vice Chair of Governors, Stafford College (FE); former primary school Deputy Head
Mr James Royal, Head teacher, Blackrod Anglican/Methodist Primary School
The Revd Eileen Sanderson, wide professional experience in a broad range of educational fields; ex-member of the Methodist Council

Appendix 2: Consultation

The Commission consulted a number of witnesses; names are given below, including the posts that they held at the time.

Professor John Howson, Visiting Professor in Education, Oxford Brookes University
Mr David McVean, Deputy Director, School Collaboration, Organisation and Fair Access Division, DfE
Mr David Brown, Academies Officer, National Society.
The Revd Dr Mark Wakelin, Secretary for Internal Relationships, CT
Mr Doug Swanney, Head of Discipleship and Ministries, CT
Mr Siôn Rhys Evans, Ministries, Learning & Development Coordinator, CT
Mr Mike Seaton, Director of Children & Youth, CT
Ms Rachel Lampard, Leader, Joint Public Issues Team
Mr Paul Morrison, Joint Public Issues Team, CT
Ms Liz Clutterbuck, Research Officer, CT
Mr Graham Russell, Secretary, Methodist Independent Schools Trust
Ms Lisa Nolan, Education Development & Improvement Officer, Children & Youth, CT
Ms Laura Cook, World AIMS Officer, Methodist Relief and Development Fund (MRDF)
Ms Jude Levermore, Participation Development Officer, Children & Youth, CT
Ms Claire Herbert, Head of Christian Communication, Evangelism and Advocacy, CT

Ms Carole Richmond, Methodist Publishing Manager, CT
Mr Toby Scott, Director of Communications and Campaigns, CT
The Revd Dr David Deeks, Chair, Methodist Independent Schools Trust.
The Revd David Gamble, Ex President of Conference; Officer for Legal & Constitutional Practice, CT
Ms Sarah Lane-Cawte, Free Churches Education Officer
Mr Hugh Thornberry, Strategic Director of Children's Services, Action for Children
Rt Revd Dr Richard Cheetham, Bishop of Kingston, Chair of Christian Muslim Forum
The Revd Jonathan Kerry, Director, Guy Chester Centre
The Revd Alan Bolton, Superintendent Minister, Hyde and Denton Methodist Circuit
Mr Sam Taylor, Youth President 2011-12
The Methodist Youth Assembly
The Stakeholders Forum, Methodist Schools
The Methodist Education Policy Committee
The Board of Management of Methodist Independent Schools
The Education Policy Committee
Methodist members of the Free Church Education Committee
The National Society
The Methodist District Chairs meeting
The Hope Journey, Methodist Church in Ellesmere Port
The Catholic Education Service
The Methodist Maintained Schools' Conference

Appendix 3: Methodist Schools

Updated (2 July 2012) version available on www.methodist.org.uk/educationcommission

Appendix 4: Youth Assembly consultation (November 2010)

Two members of the Education Commission attended the Youth Assembly and carried out two tasks. One task was to distribute a questionnaire asking questions about their formal and informal education experience and the other task was to run an interactive workshop around education.

There were 169 questionnaires were completed. The overall response (97%) was that the experience of formal education was positive, character building and setting the building blocks for later life. The response regarding informal education gave a result of a high positive experience (95%).

The interactive workshop attracted 47 young people including 6 young people from Finland who were on an exchange visit with some of the young people in the workshop. The young people represented inner city, rural and urban areas. Through a series of different learning activities working in pairs and groups education in its widest sense was explored.

The feedback from the young people was that education was very important to them. That formal education was a step onto becoming a positive citizen and allowing their aspirations to be realised.

The response to informal education in a church setting was that it was a very positive experience; it allowed them to develop and grow as a person and was a place where their faith could be explored and developed.

An exploration of the Methodist Church's involvement in formal education including chaplaincy and the influence of Christian teachers gave the following response. The young people said that the Church should be involved in formal education, that the influence of a Christian ethos was important and that Christian teachers offered a valued presence in schools.

Higher Education Fees Survey (January 2012)

The survey elicited replies from 37 respondents (aged 16-21) from 16 Districts. 86.5% of the respondents were going to apply to university, and 65.7% of those were concerned about the higher tuition fees. The overall feeling from the comments collected was that a university course was the only way that respondents could achieve their goal in the employment market. They raised concern of having to carry a high debt with them into their working life and the added pressure it put on them.

There was a sense of the respondents feeling that no one had challenged the higher fees at a level of national campaigning and speaking out regarding the implications for young people of the higher fees.

Appendix 5: GLOSSARY

State-funded Schools

There are two types of state-funded schools: Academies (including free schools, Studio Schools and University Technology Colleges) and maintained schools.

Academies

Academies are “state-funded independent schools” – ie they are independent of the Local Authority. They are freed from following the National Curriculum and the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Regulations, but they must follow the School Admissions Code. They are funded directly by the Education Funding Agency of the Department for Education (formerly the Young People’s Learning Agency), through a Funding Agreement which lasts for seven years and which contains specific details about their religious education and worship (and, in the case of a faith-based academy, its inspection). All land (including playing fields) is transferred to the trust behind the academy. Free Schools are also, in effect, academies.

Maintained Schools

There are four types of [Local Authority] maintained schools, all receiving their funding from the authority:

Community Schools (formerly known as “county schools”) are funded by the LA, with staff employed by it, with the LA as the “admissions authority”, and which must follow the LA’s Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education, and provide a daily act of Collective Worship of a “broadly Christian” character.

Voluntary Controlled Schools are similar, but the daily act of Collective Worship must be in accordance with the tenets of the religious body which founded the school.

Voluntary Aided Schools are funded by the LA, but the staff are employed by the governing body, which is the admissions authority, and the religious education and worship must be in accordance with the tenets of the religious body which founded the school. The governing body may claim a Genuine Occupational Requirement for applying faith criteria in appointing staff.

Foundation Schools are similar to voluntary aided schools, except that most do not have a religious designation.

Local Authority (formerly known as Local Education Authority) has also been known as Children’s Services Authorities. It has responsibility for funding all maintained schools and providing the equivalent amount for each academy.

CJEPC - Churches Joint Education Policy Committee

FCEC - Free Churches Education Committee consists of three members of the Methodist Church, two from each of the Baptist Union and URC, one from Salvation Army and three to represent other churches in membership of the Free Churches Group. To these are added between four and eight co-opted members. Its purposes include encouraging

and supporting regular involvement of Free Churches in education; reflecting on issues of current concern in any field of public education and suggesting appropriate responses in the name of the Free Churches; recruiting, informing and supporting Free Church SACRE members; and considering the wider ecumenical possibilities of co-operation on public education.

JPIT - Joint Public Issues Team of the Methodist, United Reformed and Baptist Churches; responds on their behalf to many issues in the public domain

FE - Further education

GCSE - General Certificate in Secondary Education

HEI - Higher Education Institutions

MAST - Methodist Academies and Schools Trust

MIST - Methodist Independent Schools Trust

OFSTED - Office for Standards in Education

SACREs - Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education are required to be set up by Local Authorities. They consist of four groups: the Church of England (except in Wales), Local Authority Members, Teachers Associations, and the religious traditions prevailing in the area (broadly reflecting their strengths). The Methodist Church members (where appointed) are part of the Free Churches representation in this last group. The functions of a SACRE are to advise on the religious worship in all schools without a religious character and to develop or adopt another Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education (including methods of teaching, choice of materials and training for teachers) to be used within the schools without a religious character and voluntary controlled schools.

SATs - Standard Assessment Tests