Company registered number (England & Wales) : 08334622
Charity registration number : 1151733

LINCOLN DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Report to Synod

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

The Diocesan Board of Education

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Company registered number: 08334622

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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

Report of the Director of Education

Throughout 2024, the Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education (LDBE) team has shown great resilience and commitment to provide consistently high-quality support for church schools and academies in the diocese of Lincoln.

Unusually, the team encountered high staff absence in the latter part of the year due to medical issues, family bereavement and personal circumstances. In this situation, the team responded with great care and compassion for one another. With robust systems and processes in place, we were able to be flexible and agile in managing the workload, ensuring that the support we provided to schools was sustained at a high standard.

The pastoral care we have provided school leaders during the year has continued to be an important part of our work. We are really pleased that school leaders have the trust and confidence in the LDBE team to help them through challenging times. We have supported school communities in a variety of difficult situations such as bereavement, illness, parental complaints, managing the pressures of inspection and responding to changes in government policy.

In the summer term of 2024, we saw a change of government which consequently led to new educational policy decisions. There have been policy changes which have had implications for the diocesan multi-academy trust (MAT) strategy. For example, the new government revoked the academy orders that had been issued to five schools with double 'requires improvement' inspection judgements. There was then a policy decision that meant schools could only receive a grant to cover conversion costs if they were in a group of three schools applying to join the same MAT at the same time. It was then announced later in the year that the 'three-school rule' would be removed and there would be no grants to fund conversion costs or MAT growth from the 1st January 2025.

This flurry of government announcements relating to academisation generally left school leaders and governors confused and lacking certainty in the future of multi-academy trusts. The LDBE has responded constructively to the government announcements. Like the National Society for Education and other DBEs, we expressed our concern to the government about the withdrawal of the conversion grant, stating that it could leave some schools vulnerable if they needed to join a MAT but they could not afford the 'one-off' conversion costs. In December, the LDBE agreed in principle to explore how it may work with schools, MATs, the Local Authorities and the Department for Education to support schools with this funding issue.

A major event in the LDBE calendar last year was the diocesan MAT roadshows. From a survey of church schools, the LDBE recognised that they needed to raise awareness with Governing Boards about the pressures many schools can potentially expect (e.g. budget pressures, recruitment and retention), and that the church MATs in this diocese can help ease the pressures whilst preserving the Christian character of the schools. Following these roadshows, and the development of video resources, the LDBE is assured that at least 79 church schools now have accurate information to make more secure decisions about their long-term future.

During 2024, six schools joined church MATs and the LDBE gave consent to four schools wishing to join in 2025. The total number of academies within MATs by the end of 2024 was 39 schools.

Another significant change for schools in 2024 has been the revisions to the Ofsted inspection process. The revisions were made in response to a coroner's inquest which found the pressure of an Ofsted inspection contributed to the death of a headteacher in Berkshire. While the revisions in 2024 have been generally well received by schools (i.e. removal of the single word overall judgement and the notification of inspection now only being on Monday), school leaders still feel considerable pressure with the very 'high stakes' inspection. The LDBE has supported schools throughout the inspection process, e.g. speaking with inspectors and attending feedback sessions. This is not always easy to manage when there have been multiple schools getting the Ofsted call on the same day. The DBE team is grateful to DBE directors attending some feedback sessions.

In 2024, there were 36 Ofsted inspections of church schools. 92% were judged to be at least good across all key areas of inspection.

During 2024, there were also 32 church school inspections (Statutory Inspection for Anglican and Methodist Schools - SIAMS). I am delighted that all church schools inspected were judged to be 'living up to their Christian foundation.' Common strengths identified included the clear theologically rooted vision that is enabling all children and adults to flourish. The quality of collective worship and Religious Education were also often noted as strengths. Thanks to the LDBE team for their hard work in supporting school leaders at every stage of inspection, including preparation, at the time of inspection and afterwards.

The breadth and quality of the LDBE training, courses, conferences and support services for church schools and academies are reflected in the positive evaluations, the recognition in some inspection reports and the high number of schools subscribing to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) and the MAT Partnership Agreement (MPA), In 2024, all church MATs subscribed to the MPA and a record number of 125 schools joined the SLA. This is in a climate when school budgets are under pressure.

In 2024, the LDBE team has also invested significant time in developing resources for schools. A key resource for schools is the new Religious Education curriculum materials for Early Years through to Key Stage 3. The Diocesan RE adviser produced this fantastic resource in the summer and there are a growing number of academies within, and beyond, the diocese using these.

The LDBE continues to work closely with Lincoln Cathedral, the Lincoln Diocesan Trust and Board of Finance (LDTBF) and the Bishop's Office. The LDBE enjoys operating out of the same building at Edward King House and working collaboratively on key priorities. For example, during 2024 the Diocesan Director of Education attended Bishop's Staff meetings and presented on items such as Growing Faith and the diocesan vision of education. We have been working closely with the DBF on issues such as aligning our IT infrastructure and supporting the work towards carbon net zero in the diocese. With the Cathedral, we plan and host very successful events such as the Church Schools Festival, the Carol service and the new Headteacher's commissioning service.

At the end of 2024, the LDBE came to the end of the triennium. In the autumn, the LDBE concluded that over the three years, there had been considerable progress made against targets in the Strategic Plan. I would like to thank the DBE directors for the support and challenge they have provided the DBE team in these three years. The Bishop of Lincoln and Diocesan Synod appointed DBE directors, who then co-opted other directors with a range of skills and experiences, to serve the new triennium from January 2025 through to December 2027.

The DBE has approved a new Strategic plan for the next three years. It is underpinned by the diocesan vision for education and shaped by the four core vision drivers - 'Called, Aspirational, Rooted and Empowering – C.A.R.E.' More details about the new plan can be found on page 5.

Canon Paul Thompson - **Diocesan Director of Education**

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Reference and Administrative Details of the Charity

Name of the Charity	Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education
Company registration number	08334622 registered in England and Wales
Charity registration number	1151733
Trustees	The constitution of the Board of Education and appointment of Directors is described in the section on "Structure, Governance and Management" on pages 27 et seq.
Diocesan Director of Education	Canon Paul Thompson
Contact information	The registered office of the company and principal trading address of the charity with other contact details can be found at - https://www.lincolndiocesaneducation.com/contact-us

Objectives

The objects of LDBE as stated in its Articles are:

1.1 The Objects of the Board are to promote or assist in the promotion of education for the public benefit of the Diocese

1.2 The Objects shall be carried out in accordance with the doctrines and principles of the Church of England

This is consistent as required by The Measure (see "Structure, Governance and Management" on pages 27 et seq.).

Vision and Mission

The Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education launched a new vision for education in October 2023. The vision is essentially our promise to schools. Throughout 2024, the vision has enabled us to deliver the LDBE's core functions of the DBE Measure 2021 and the objects as stated in our Articles. It is through our close partnerships with schools and academies that we have a clear understanding of the needs and aspirations of our church school communities. The LDBE's vision is our vehicle for meeting the needs of church schools so that all adults and pupils may flourish.

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Our diocesan vision for education:

'Believing we are **called** into fellowship with God who seeks the flourishing of all, we **aspire** to strengthen our school communities with wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

Through partnerships firmly **rooted** in Christian hope and in the love of God, we **empower** all in our Church school family to love one another with humility, justice and kindness.'

Our vision is theologically rooted in the story of Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:3-12)

There are four vision drivers and they are theologically rooted in the story of Moses and the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:3-12). They are:

CALLED – Like Moses was called to help the people of God. We are called to serve all adults and pupils in our school communities so that they may live life to the full.

ASPIRATIONAL – Just as Moses was aspirational in actively addressing injustice, we will work with schools and academies with the support of God to break down barriers and be aspirational for all.

ROOTED – Just as the burning bush is rooted in holy ground, our schools are rooted by a Christian foundation, through Christian hope and the love of God. Our work is driven by our deep roots of faith, hope, love, family, partnerships and links with the church and community.

EMPOWERING – Just as Moses was empowered by God to be an agent of change. The LDBE empowers church school leaders and pupils to be agents of positive change so that church schools can serve the common good in deeply Christian ways.

This is our vision. We **CARE.**

We have been very clear with schools that our vision is not to serve as their own school vision. Also, it does not replace the Church of England's national vision for education. Schools have been advised to relate to the national and diocesan vision for education and consider how the Church of England (at national, diocesan and parish level) can work with schools to fulfil the bespoke vision they have for their own unique communities.

Many schools have welcomed the diocesan model for developing a vision, that has deep theological roots. It is evident in schools that the national vision and diocesan vision is supporting the work in schools. Our new vision is shaping every decision, every policy and every aspect of our work with schools.
It underpins our new three-year strategic plan.

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The diagram below shows how the national and diocesan vision helps to support and shape the bespoke vision schools have for their own unique communities.

Strategy

At the end of the academic year in 2024, the LDBE evaluated the progress made in the key priority areas listed in the strategic plan for 2021 to 2024. In the plan, there were 31 objectives across the four key functions of the DBE Measure. It was agreed that the following 23 objectives had been **fully achieved** but of course ongoing monitoring and attention in many of these areas is needed to sustain the good practice:

- ✓ Support every church school to get at least good in SIAMS.
- ✓ Ensure pupils and adults in church schools are able to flourish as people made in the image of God.
- ✓ Develop theologically-rooted strategies to best mitigate the impact of the cost of living on delivering education that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England.
- ✓ Develop the capacity of RE support for church and community schools beyond the RE adviser.
- ✓ Support schools with the successful implementation of the new collective worship guidance.
- ✓ Develop support for high-quality secondary RE.
- ✓ Establish collective worship networks to help collective worship leads improve the impact of collective worship
- ✓ Support schools to develop pupil leadership of collective worship
- ✓ Expand the highly successful REConnecting Lincolnshire so that it has a wider impact on more communities.
- ✓ Raise the profile of Religious Education in schools in the diocese and deliver the RE Council Worldviews Project.
- ✓ Ensure schools are able to effectively monitor pupil progress and attainment in RE.
- ✓ Evaluate the capacity and impact of staffing to effectively fulfil the strategic objectives of LDBE.

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- ✓ Support pastoral and wellbeing needs of DBE team – ensuring team have right support and resources in place to manage workload, and health and wellbeing.
- ✓ Support and develop future church school leaders at all levels.
- ✓ Strengthen School Improvement Partner offer with a focus on supporting vulnerable schools to provide a high-quality education for all pupils.
- ✓ To increase capacity to support secondary schools.
- ✓ Provide support and guidance for Governing Boards of small schools to secure a sustainable future.
- ✓ Establish post-Covid best working practices
- ✓ Develop financial and business transparency; to ensure financial sustainability for the work of LDBE.
- ✓ Ensure DBE relationship with all church MATs is equally strong.
- ✓ Support church schools to ensure all pupils, especially the most vulnerable.
- ✓ To foster connectedness across the church school family through effective communication
- ✓ To be a valued partner of key educational organisations/stakeholders.

For the other eight objectives, the work is ongoing and moving in the right direction:

- Develop and implement a programme to support school leaders to develop confident biblical literacy.
- Support and challenge developments in diversity, including developing diversity in leadership at all levels.
- Ensure all members of church schools communities develop a shared understanding of spiritual development and work towards developing everyone spiritually.
- Strengthen governance in church schools, academies and MATs.
- Support school leaders / governors to form the remaining two MATs required for diocese.
- Engage DBE in the conversations relating to Resourcing Sustainable Church in the Diocese of Lincoln [now Time to Change Together, TTCT].
- Develop partnerships between church schools, clergy and families (Growing Faith).
- Ensure LDBE is aspiring to the Church of England expectation of net zero by 2030 and DfE guidance on environment, climate and sustainability.

A new Strategic plan for 2025 – 2027

In autumn 2024, the LDBE team approved a new strategic plan to address key priorities for the DBE over the next three years, 2025 to 2027.

The plan is informed by the following:

- Priorities shared by DBE directors at their meeting on 18th June 2024.
- The new DBE vision for education – Called, Aspirational, Rooted and Empowering
- The national Church of England vision for Education – Wisdom, Hope, Community and Dignity
- The DBE Measure 2021 – the four core functions.
- Priorities which are on-going from the previous DBE strategic plan
- Local Authority Strategic Plans e.g. ESOP plan for Lincolnshire
- National annual report for Religious Education
- National annual report for SIAMS
- Areas for developments noted in SIAMS and Ofsted inspection reports
- Educational priorities under the new Labour government e.g. SEND and disadvantaged pupils
- School performance, attendance and exclusion data

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- Pressures facing schools (now and expected) – budget pressures, recruitment and retention

This chart shows the three key strategic priorities and the 12 areas of focus for the DBE over the next three years.

Strategic priorities			
Strategic priorities			**Areas of focus**
1	Ensure all Church schools live up to their Christian foundation	1.1	SIAMS
		1.2	RE
		1.3	Spirituality
		1.4	Collective worship
		1.5	Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI)
2	Ensure Church school education is sustainable	2.1	Well-being and pastoral
		2.2	School improvement and sustainability
		2.3	Finance and income growth
		2.4	MAT strategy
		2.5	Governance
3	Develop and sustain partnerships for the benefit of church, school and home	3.1	Vision
		3.2	Partnerships

Public Benefit

In determining the activities the charity will pursue; the Board has had due regard to the guidance on Public Benefit issued by the Charity Commission.

LDBE works with various partners and with the 142 Church Schools within the diocese. Services are generally delivered to schools and to teachers, but the Board and staff are continually aware of the impact of its work on the pupils and students within the schools, then on the wider community.

Risk management

The key financial, educational and reputational risks, to which the charity is exposed, as identified by the Trustees, has been reviewed and systems established to manage those risks.

The Risk Register provides detailed information about the risks to the charity, the potential consequences if the risks are not managed, the actions being taken and a RAG rating of how well the risks are being managed.
An example of key risks and actions being taken are as follows:

Insufficient growth and development of majority church MATs

Actions include an updated strategy to develop up to 6 majority MATs. In response to a school survey, the LDBE worked closely with church MATs to plan a MAT roadshow in Autumn 2024. The roadshow encouraged school leaders / governors to evaluate their capacity to manage pressures and consider how being part of a MAT can help them sustain good quality education. The LDBE gained approval from the DfE to establish a fifth MAT in Autumn 2024. Throughout 2024, the Diocesan Director of Education had led regular CEO network meetings to support MAT growth and development.

Inability to appoint suitably skilled foundation governors

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Actions include the appointment of a new DBE administrator to develop systems and processes for recruiting new foundation governors. The LDBE team provides induction training, professional development and support for all governors. In 2024, a survey for governors identified future training needs. A MAT toolkit has been updated to strengthen local governance in MATS.

Inability to maintain links between schools, the church and the clergy to understand their role to protect and develop distinctively Christian education in their local church schools

The LDBE has continued to work closely with the church community to strengthen partnerships between church and school. For example, we support clergy to be effective foundation governors; we have developed the Bishop's Visitor programme, and we are promoting the Growing Faith Adventure through our training and SLA visits to promote links between church, school and home.

Inability to recruit appropriately skilled and qualified people to the LDBE team.

Actions include training and deployment of Associate advisers to support central team.
The RE adviser now undertakes SLA visits to talent spot Leading RE teachers.
The LDBE continues to review and develop policies and terms and conditions on a regular basis. There is robust induction, appraisal and training for staff to ensure the team is well placed to meet the needs of the organisation and schools – considering staff workload and wellbeing. Robust systems and processes have been developed to support business continuity.

Inability to support LAs and schools robustly enough to improve and maintain standards of education

Actions include diocesan advisers supporting and challenging LA and school leaders on issues impacting on quality of education. The LDBE continues to embed robust and effective Head Teacher Performance Management (HTPM) service for schools. The LDBE has established a comprehensive monitoring programme for church MATs.

Disruption and business continuity

Actions include the Senior Leadership Team responding to government guidance and national and local restrictions accordingly. The LDBE have further developed the systems in place to maintain close relationships and stay in contact with schools when face to face visits are not possible or feasible e.g. zoom. A new electronic file management system has been developed to enhance security and remote working practices. The LDBE has secured an IT agreement with the DBF to ensure IT infrastructure is secure and reliable.

Break even budget moving to profit

Actions included regular reviews of diaries and income generation streams e.g. course delivery, development of new training resources to adapt and develop new ways of working in the future. The sale of disused school properties and the strategic management of investments has led to the LDBE being able to set a budget for 2025 with an in-year surplus for the first time in many years.
The activities that LDBE has undertaken throughout 2024 to further the charity's purpose for public benefit are listed under four core functions which relate to the DBE Measure 2021. They are:

- To promote or assist in the promotion of education in the diocese that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England (with a focus on SIAMS – Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools)
- To promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese
- To promote or assist in the promotion of church schools in the diocese (with a focus on school improvement to sustain good church schools)
- To promote co-operation between itself and other persons concerned with education in the diocese (partnerships).

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Activities

The activities that LDBE has undertaken throughout 2024 to further the charity's purpose for public benefit and are listed under the four key functions that relate to the DBE Measure 2021, referenced below.

AREA 1 - To promote or assist in the promotion of education in the diocese that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England (with a focus on SIAMS – Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools)

- Throughout 2024, we have supported every church school inspected to achieve a positive SIAMS outcome which demonstrates the schools are 'living up to their Christian foundation enabling all children and adults to flourish'.
- The Diocesan School Effectiveness Adviser has led the justice, equality, diversity and inclusion (JEDI) working party to drive forward the work we have done in this area with schools e.g. courses and conferences, audits, bulletins and the development of website to promote resources. The LDBE has been nationally recognised for the work it is doing to promote JEDI, e.g. at the national DDE conference and by Lord Boateng.
- We have continued to provide a significant level of pastoral care and guidance for school leaders in challenging situations.
- We have continued to support church school communities to develop a shared understanding of spiritual development which supports schools to develop everyone spiritually.

AREA 2 - To promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese

- The Diocesan RE adviser's work in Religious Education is recognised nationally, supporting the Church of England Education Office with RE development projects. The Diocesan RE advisor has been invited to speak at national conferences. In the summer of 2024, new RE curriculum materials were written and now being rolled out to academies within and beyond the diocese.
- For every headteacher recruitment process, we ensure that candidates lead collective worship and constructive feedback is provided. The LDBE continues to host cluster meetings for RE and Collective Worship leads. Training, guidance and resources are promoted through our professional development programme.
- We have continued to support schools to effectively monitor collective worship and pupil achievement in RE.

AREA 3 - To promote or assist in the promotion of church schools in the diocese (with a focus on school improvement to sustain good church schools)

- We continue to strengthen governance in church schools, academies and MATs. This has involved developing training, networking and communication to ensure all involved in governance are aware of key responsibilities in church schools.
- We have continued to evaluate the capacity and impact of staffing to effectively fulfil the strategic objectives of LDBE. This has involved ongoing monitoring and evaluation of finances, capacity, workload, staff wellbeing, staff effectiveness.

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- We have continued to ensure that the pastoral and wellbeing needs of LDBE team are met with the right support and resources in place to manage workload, health and wellbeing.
- We have continued to promote national leadership programmes to all schools and support governors to recruit high quality school leaders.
- We have continued to focus on supporting vulnerable schools to provide a high-quality education for all pupils. This has involved working effectively with external partners and governors to support schools that are less than good (Ofsted and/or SIAMS) to become distinctive and effective church schools.
- We have supported Governing Boards of small schools to secure a sustainable future. This has involved working with key stakeholders (e.g. LA) to develop a strategy to support governing bodies of small schools to evaluate current provision and long-term sustainable options. This has led to some schools entering federations or church MATs.
- We have updated the LDBE MAT strategy and provided clear guidance for schools exploring options. Roadshow events and Governing Board briefing sessions have been held.
- In addition, the MAT Partnership Agreement (MPA) has been successfully implemented for a second year.
- Within the LDBE team, we continue to engage staff in LDBE financial planning, analysing current income streams in light of changing educational environment to mitigate risks to financial sustainability.
- We have developed communications and support for all church MATs established through MAT Partnership Agreements, CEO networking meetings and MAT presentations to the LDBE.

AREA 4 - To promote co-operation between itself and other persons concerned with education in the diocese (partnerships).

- We have further developed good quality communication between LDBE and school leaders. School leaders have provided positive feedback for our weekly bulletins, briefing sessions and responses to support and guidance.
- We have established successful working partnerships with the Teaching School, Lincolnshire Education Group, Local Authorities, Church of England Education Office and associated bodies, e.g. CEFEL and AADE, to ensure our services complement and support those offered by external partners.
- We have ensured we are a valued partner of church and other Christian organisations. This has involved developing partnerships with the Growing Faith Foundation to foster connections between church schools, churches and families.
- We have continued to engage in the work required to meet the Church of England aspiration of net zero by 2030 and related to the DfE guidance on environment, climate and sustainability. We commissioned an audit of the investment needed for voluntary aided schools to become carbon neutral. We have continued to advise schools on how to reduce their carbon footprint.

Courses, conferences and festivals

Over the past few years, to accommodate changing working patterns and school needs, we have continued to reduce the number of courses offered during the year and instead focused on what schools need. We have continued with the pattern of three conferences in a year. This is a more effective use of time for the schools and the education team.

By reducing the number of courses throughout the year, this frees up time for officers to deliver bespoke sessions in schools. Looking at the data from previous years, it was clear that the demand for these types of sessions has increased. This new way of working started in September 2023 and has continued into 2024. Feedback from schools for courses and conferences is overwhelmingly positive.

Topics for training events include RE, Christian Distinctiveness, Church School Inspection, School Improvement and Collective Worship. We have also seen a high demand for courses on spirituality and the governor and headteacher briefings.

LDBE continues to insist on high quality leaders and speakers for all the conferences, to ensure schools get the best support they need to be successful church schools.

The Church Schools' Festivals for infant and primary schools continue to grow in popularity. In 2024, eight days of Church Schools' Festival were at capacity after the success of an extra day being introduced the previous year. This ensured as many schools as possible, who expressed an interest, could attend. The 2024 Church Schools' Carol Service held in Lincoln Cathedral was, once again, successful with many parents joining to see their children involved in the afternoon worship. The LDBE Board meeting was arranged on the same day as the Carol Service to allow the trustees the opportunity to attend the service. This was appreciated by the trustees and very well attended. The popularity of this event has resulted in two dates secured for 2025. This will provide as much opportunity as possible for pupils to attend, subject to the number of the places available in Lincoln Cathedral, a key element of the events success.

Achievements and Performance

LDBE Strategic Overview

Education

SIAMS inspections

Since January 2024, there have been forty-two SIAMS inspections carried out in the Diocese of Lincoln. Every school received the first inspection outcome: "The inspection findings indicate that the school is living up to its foundation as a Church school, and is enabling pupils and adults to flourish". Two church schools had inspections deferred during this period.

The Diocesan RE and SIAMS Adviser continued to attend diocesan SIAMS lead briefings, deliver training and support for schools in the Diocese preparing for SIAMS inspection. SIAMS continued to be a focus in central courses and conferences held for school leaders and teachers throughout this year.

The education team have continued to provide SIAMS support and training for schools through virtual courses, conferences, bespoke reviews and SLA visits. Schools that are expecting inspection in the next year are accessing this training and support.

School leadership

Partnerships

The diocesan education team has continued to work closely with a variety of organisations to support church schools. Strategy meetings with the Local Authorities has taken place, mostly through virtual meetings, which have been productive in providing collaborative support and advice to schools. The LDBE senior leadership team continues to be a member of several partnership boards including the Lincolnshire Education Group, the North Lincolnshire Education Standards Board and Standing Advisory Council for RE. LDBE has nominated DBE directors to sit on LA scrutiny committees.

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Officers meet with representatives from the schools' leadership team, the Local Authorities, Department for Education, teaching schools and Ofsted to provide tailored support for schools in focus. We also work collaboratively with the LEAD teaching school to allocate mentors to new headteachers. In Lincolnshire, the LA consider the LDBE as a key strategic partner and we have developed an Education 'One Plan' for Lincolnshire schools.

The LDBE continues to support and deploy Associate Advisers to enhance the capacity of the LDBE team. Associate advisers are serving headteachers with knowledge, and a proven track record, in church school leadership to be able to support other schools. They are briefed on national and diocesan policy and provided with templates and website resources to support schools in Service Level Agreement visits. The Associate Advisers, and other experienced headteachers, undertake mentoring roles for new headteachers when required.

Support for Schools

Service Level Agreement

In 2024, 125 (88%) of all Church of England schools chose to subscribe to the Diocesan Service Level Agreement (SLA) or MAT Partnership Agreement (MPA), which is an increase of 4 schools from the previous year. Despite the financial pressures facing schools, 2024 saw the highest number of schools joining the SLA or MPA.
Any school that joins a MAT is required to join the MPA if they not already done so. A Diocesan Officer or a Diocesan Associate Adviser makes an annual support visit to every school. Schools within a multi academy trust (MAT) are visited by the same advisor, a member of the LDBE team, and a report is provided to the MAT CEO after all visits have been completed. These visits have enabled the team to have a clearer insight in to the schools' strengths and areas for future development. Through these visits the team have been able to celebrate successes with the schools, identify and share good practice and provide appropriate support. Since the introduction of the National SIAMS team publishing a list of schools that may be inspected in a particular academic year, diocesan officers have offered an autumn support visit to schools that are expecting a SIAMS inspection, to ensure they feel prepared for the inspection. This has proved successful and popular and will continue, moving forward.

Schools in Focus

Through regular partnership meetings with the Local Authorities, school visits, inspection reports and data records, we have a good oversight of church school performance.

We maintain comprehensive confidential records about schools with vulnerabilities and those in need of careful monitoring, support and challenge. The vulnerability may include one or several of the following issues: poor inspection outcomes; below average pupil outcomes; unstable or weak leadership; staff recruitment and retention; underdeveloped curriculum; financial issues and general concerns about capacity to sustain a good quality of education for all pupils.

Four out of the five church schools that received a second 'requires improvement' judgement had their academy order revoked by the Department for Education due to a change of government policy. Two schools chose not to continue with academy conversion and will now receive government funded school improvement support instead.

In January 2024, 40% of schools recorded to be facing at least one of the challenges listed above. The most common vulnerability was end of Key Stage 2 (KS2) outcomes for pupils being below average in one or more core subject. The Lincolnshire average at KS2 remained below the national average for all schools.

With the intelligence we have about schools, we have been able to work with school leaders and key partners, such as the Local Authorities and teaching schools, to provide support and challenge needed to improve the quality of education in schools. For example, supporting the recruitment of new heads, training for subject leaders, strengthening governance, headteacher performance management and developing vision.
More details about our school improvement offer can be found on page 17.

During 2024, some schools were taken out of focus for multiple reasons e.g. standards had improved, or leadership was more secure, but some different schools with vulnerabilities had come into focus. By October 2024, the figure rose to 45%. This is high but less than the 50% of schools reported to have a vulnerability in January 2023. We continue to work with our collaborative partners and develop the MAT infrastructure to help ease the pressures on schools.

Headteacher recruitment

During 2024, the LDBE team supported 28 recruitment processes. 18 out of 28 schools made successful appointments of substantive headteachers or heads of schools. 10 schools were unable to appoint a head and so we worked with the LA and Governing Board to secure an interim leader whilst continuing the search for a permanent headteacher or head of school. At the end of year, two headteachers announced they were retiring in 2025, and we will support the schools with these recruitment processes as well. The three most common reasons for headteachers leaving their schools are retirement, promotion to a larger school or senior post or resignation to leave education. These reasons each account for about a third of all departures.

To ensure the recruitment process is rigorous, the Diocesan Director or Education (DDE) invests a lot of time helping the governors to develop high quality recruitment packs and well-structured selection activities. The DDE, or his representative, attends all shortlisting and interview days and advises governors if candidates are appointable or not. Recruiting high quality headteachers continues to be a challenge for schools.

Induction visits take place for all new heads appointed and they are provided with a mentor, guidance and support needed to lead a church school. Headteachers appointed in 2024 were invited to special commissioning service in Lincoln Cathedral. The next commissioning service is planned to take place in March 2025.

Religious Education

Partnerships

The RE Adviser for LDBE attended Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) meetings in Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire. In addition, working closely with the Local Authority RE Adviser for Lincolnshire and with staff at Bishop Grosseteste University on their regional RE hub meetings. Training has been provided on Religious Education for a range of ITE programmes, including Bishop Grosseteste University Primary PGCE, LEAD Equate Teaching School Alliance and Lincolnshire SCITT groups. A series of regular regional RE networking meetings were delivered, that are affiliated with the National Association of Teachers of

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RE (NATRE) and advertised via the national RE Hubs. These sessions were open to all schools and academies in line with the requirements of the LDBE Measure in relation to RE.

As well as actively supporting and promoting high quality RE within the Diocese, the RE Adviser worked regionally and nationally; a member of the Church of England Education Office's RE Working Group, representative of the Archbishop's Council on the RE Council of England and Wales, a member of the Education Committee of the Faith and Belief Forum, the Oak National Academy Expert Advisory Group and a Trustee of Culham St Gabriel's. The RE Adviser continued to work as a supervisor for the Farmington Scholarship (Farmington Institute, University of Oxford) and as a mentor on the Leadership Programme offered by the Culham St Gabriel's Trust.

The Lincolnshire locally agreed syllabus for RE has been in use across greater Lincolnshire. This has enabled the Diocesan RE Adviser to offer more consistent support to church schools across the Diocese. To further support the effectiveness of this work, the RE Adviser continued to work alongside three Associate Diocesan RE Advisers, who provide RE support across the Diocese. The Lincolnshire locally agreed syllabus for RE is currently under review with the expectation that it will be available from summer 2025. In response to requests from MATs and standalone academies, the Diocesan RE Adviser has written a Primary RE Curriculum and is marketing it locally and nationwide. The RE Adviser is beginning to shape training and support in light of anticipated changes to RE, as well as in response to the National Content Standard for RE (2023) and the Ofsted RE Subject Report (2024).

This work forms the basis of support for teachers and subject leaders around the Diocese of Lincoln.

Work with schools

A Diocesan Board of Education should "promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the diocese" (LDBE Measure, 2.1a). Throughout this year, the Diocesan RE Adviser delivered primary and secondary RE networking meetings around the Diocese of Lincoln. These sessions remain free and open to all teachers and subject leaders of RE (both church and non-church schools). The Diocesan RE Adviser produced three annual newsletters, as well as running social media accounts on Twitter and Facebook to keep in touch with RE teachers, subject leaders and other professionals around the country.

The courses and conferences programme included training sessions on teaching different religious worldviews, designing a RE Curriculum, meeting the expectations of Ofsted and SIAMS in relation to RE, assessing pupil progress in RE and other relevant topics. Bespoke training is frequently requested. Support was provided for teachers taking on the role of RE subject leader, as well as supporting head teachers and governors in their monitoring of RE. There was close working with colleagues to support schools to develop their distinctively Christian vision and monitor their effectiveness as church schools using the current SIAMS inspection framework. This included working with schools to ensure they are meeting the expectations of the Church of England Education Office's *Statement of Entitlement* for Religious Education (2019). In addition to this, the Diocesan RE Adviser continued to deliver keynote and workshop sessions at conferences accessed by teachers within and beyond the region.

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Work beyond schools

The Diocesan RE Adviser is currently working with a variety of collaborative partners, including Shooting Fish Theatre Company and cultural solutions UK, to deliver *Empowering Voices, Exploring Worldviews*, the fourth phase of *REConnecting Lincolnshire* project. This project has received grant funding from a number of funders, including Culham St Gabriel's. The project involves supporting children and young people to engage with a diversity of religious and non-religious worldviews through the medium of podcasts and accompanying educational resources. To date, seven out of the proposed eight 30-minute podcasts have been launched; the final episode is in progress.

The Diocesan RE Adviser has been leading a national team of RE teachers and leaders to deliver The Religion and Worldviews Project, funded by the Templeton Foundation. This project is a major piece of work that involves trialling the draft National Statement of Entitlement for RE, which seeks to set a consistent standard for RE in schools and academies across the country. The project outcomes were launched in May 2024 and continue to be used to inform the future direction of Religious Education in England.

Bishop's Visitors

The Education team tries to ensure that each school has a Bishop's Visitor, although the task has proven difficult in recent years. In 2024 we had 44 active Bishop Visitors, this reflects a reduction of 15 from the 59 in 2023, however some of this data is due to more accurate communication from schools and Bishop's Visitors. This does not cover all schools. There is now an action plan in place to look at raising the profile of Bishop's Visitors, and their role, by working with the new Diocesan Children and Young People Enabler. We are also spending time training current Bishop Visitors, so they are better equipped to work in the schools.

School Improvement

School Reviews and general work with schools

LDBE is aspirational for all pupils and staff in all its schools. As such, strategies for school improvement are uniquely offered through the lens of the Church of England's vision for education. Whilst reflecting the Christian inspired vision, the offer is robust and of high quality. It reflects up-to-date thinking in education practice, pedagogy and policy. The offer also reflects the inspection frameworks for both SIAMS and Ofsted. Please note that since autumn term 2024, Ofsted's grading of schools has changed. Grades are now provided for key and provision areas but no overall grade is provided.

Strategies for school improvement in 2024 included:

Head Teacher Performance Management

School Improvement Partner days and packages

School Reviews e.g. for special needs, governance, curriculum, pupil premium, etc.

Bespoke training for individual schools e.g. governance, curriculum, pedagogy

Planned training programmes with a particular focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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Head Teacher and Governor briefings

Liaison with Local Authority school improvement partners and attendance at school strategy meetings

In 2024 a small number of schools bought into the school improvement package, accessing support in many areas. Areas of focus included: curriculum development, middle leader development, special needs and governance.

Bespoke training has been a feature of school improvement work and this has allowed school leaders the opportunity to really focus on the particular needs of their school. This area is a competitive market, particularly with the growth of the DfE funded offers for the wide range of National Professional Qualifications and the development packages provided by national education and teaching hubs e.g. Maths, English, behaviour, etc.

There continues to be an increased number of requests for bespoke governance training. Often these are focused on the roles and responsibilities of boards or to support boards' understanding of inspection. A Multi Academy Trust also requested whole trust training. We provided support for one governance review in 2024 and a further schools requested a full website review.

Themes of special needs, justice, diversity and inclusion continue to be a priority. A series of training focused on all forms of inclusion took place throughout the year.

Justice, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are a significant thread through all LDBE work. In response to Lament to Action, racial justice remains a priority. A change of approach this year has seen elements of this training woven through the whole training offer. This work has formed part of governor and head teacher briefings.

25% of schools accessed support for their head teacher's performance management in 2024. A real strength of this offer is the opportunity it provides to work with governing boards, to support the professional development of their senior staff through the lens of the Church of England's vision for education. Robust conversations ensure head teachers' targets are appropriate to context, reflective of local and national priorities and the school's own Christian vision. As an increasing number of schools join MATs, the number of schools requesting this support is beginning to reduce.

Members of the central team maintain strong links with local authorities. This enables appropriate support to be offered to schools when needs arise. LDBE members provide additional support for all schools who are under scrutiny from their local authorities. Partnerships across local authorities continue to be prioritised. LDBE is a partner of LEG (Lincolnshire Education Group) and works closely with other organisations including Teaching school Hubs, SEND partnership boards and Research schools.

Head teacher and governor briefings continue to be well attended. They enable the central team to communicate updates to reflect both National and local priorities.

Church School Distinctiveness and Statutory Inspection of Church Schools (SIAMS)

The LDBE team have continued to provide the support schools need to further develop an effective and distinctive Christian character. There has been an ongoing focus on developing a Christian vision for the schools. Support and training are provided to help school leaders and governors to develop and embed a vision, that is

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rooted in theology, in line with the Church of England and Diocesan vision for education and meets the needs of the community. This focus on vision has been particularly powerful for many schools as they have used this to steer through the challenges and identify areas for development. With the LDBE training offer in place, and the schools increasing engagement with in-person and virtual training, schools are well placed to further develop their Christian character and be successful at their next inspection.

In response to requests from schools the team has:

- Provided SIAMS training and support for school leaders and governors;
- Developed resources and training for collective worship;
- Focused professional dialogue at SLA and MPA visits on developing Christian character:
- Delivered RE, SIAMS and Governor training as well as RE cluster meetings and surgeries.

Courses, Conferences and Festivals

873 delegates attended a total of 37 training events in 2024. This year shows our new structure of offering fewer courses, giving officers more time to deliver bespoke training in schools. (2023 - 1,088 delegates attended 62 events). This also gives officers time to diversify their work and create resources that are needed by schools. Courses, conferences and events are now just one element of our provision for schools rather than the main element. SIAMS related topics and RE training are the most significant topics, as well as our free briefings for Headteachers and governors. The programme of courses, conferences and training opportunities is reviewed annually and aimed at a range of stakeholders including senior leaders, governors, teachers, RE subject leaders, support staff, Bishop Visitors, and clergy.

In addition to central training events, the team has provided 48 school-based training sessions for individual schools and MATS.

2,459 pupils attended the Church School Festival in 2024 (2,071 attended in 2023). 253 pupils attended the carol service in December 2024 (266 attended in 2023). The number of pupils attending the carol service is heading back to pre-covid levels. Next year a theme linked to Christmas will be explored, which will hopefully encourage more schools to attend.

Schools' capital (2024)

19 of the Church Schools in the Diocese of Lincoln, including 1 in North Lincolnshire, had Voluntary Aided (VA) status at the end of the year. One school in North Lincolnshire that began the year as VA school within a federation, moved to an academy trust on 01 September 2024.
Therefore, 2024 started with 20 VA schools but this figure reduced to 19 by the end of the year.

The 2024/25 academic year was the fourth year of the School Condition Allocation (SCA) grant. LDBE continued the partnership with the Diocese of Sheffield, established in 2020, continuing to share knowledge and expertise that has developed into a strong working relationship. LDBE remained the lead receiving the 2024/25 grant allocation for both organisations.
The grant was allocated to priority projects identified in the conditional surveys of all the VA schools across both Dioceses and beyond the financial capabilities of school budgets. Projects selected typically cost tens if not hundreds of thousands of pounds. To utilise the grant, and to get through as much priority work as possible, projects are considered being completed in phases that also helps the school manage their 10% financial contribution.

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A panel discussion convened of representatives from both LDBE and the Diocese of Sheffield along with the architects, who work closely with the schools, consider projects that meet the criteria of most urgent need, the school financial position and whether it is necessary to complete the work in phases. A number of site visits to schools were organised to assess the current fabric of the buildings and where priority work was required to aid the decision making process. The rising cost of raw materials remains a financial constraint, leading to projects being phased to tackle the areas in most urgent need. When tenders have been issued, the number returned has been low so finding contractors can sometimes result in the work being planned later than in previous years. Projects that received funding this year included several roof replacements, like previous years, along with plans to replace single glazed windows.

On the net zero carbon agenda, Heat Decarbonisation Site Reports (HDSR) were completed for all but three of the VA schools within LDBE and the Diocese of Sheffield by the supplier selected in the previous year. The results for each site to achieve net zero carbon status listed projects to be completed, the reduction in CO2 emissions that would be achieved, an estimated cost of the work and any potential savings year on year. As a result of the reports, LDBE and the Diocese of Sheffield were able to consolidate the results and state, based on those findings, the total cost of all the work required. There are a number of caveats and assumptions, but this is the first piece of work commissioned and reported back to LDBE and the Diocese of Sheffield in the challenge to achieve net zero status for the VA school sites alone. The summary revealed a shortfall of £ millions to achieve net zero carbon at the VA school sites based on the funding likely to be received on current figures. The results of the findings have been reported back through the various panels and committees for further scrutiny and how this information can be used going forward.
The reports identified smaller projects that schools were encouraged to note and look to use the additional devolved formula capital funding received in December 2022. This has seen work on the installation of solar panels, replacement doors, additional insulation in the roof, improving boiler controls and temperature gauges. In some cases, the funding has been earmarked to fund replacement windows referenced above.

Several VA schools with LDBE were identified by the CofE Education Office as in scope for a survey on LED lighting to replace older less energy efficient installations. LED lighting is one of the quick wins in terms of reducing carbon emissions and saving money within the net zero carbon agenda.

During the year, other companies have approached both LDBE and the Diocese of Sheffield with potential solutions and improvements to reduce energy usage including the funding of larger scale installation of solar panels and additives to improve the performance of existing boilers.

The SCA grant continues to be received into the LDBE bank account. The contracts remain between the Governors and the suppliers and for the grants between the Governors and the DfE. The income and expenditure are not included in the LDBE Statement of Financial Activities for the charitable company. Note 12 to the Financial Statements discloses the amount of grant involved.

LDBE accounts continue to show a fee charged to the schools for administering the funds and completing the relevant returns to the DfE.

Site Trusts

Site trustees hold the school buildings and playground on trust for education in accordance with the principles of the Church of England. In many cases, the trustee was Lincoln Diocesan Trust and Board of Finance Limited (LDTBF), but often the Vicar and Churchwardens of the parish were appointed and sometimes a local charity is the Trustee, or the land rather than being freehold is leased.

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Under the Transfer Agreement of 2018, LDTBF site trusts and custodian trusteeships have transferred to LDBE. To ensure the directors of LDBE, as trustees of the sites, are made aware of site matters these are presented to the Finance & Administration Committee and ratified by the full board.

During 2024 we have continued the exercise to ensure that all such trusts and land holdings are in order.

The table below indicates the types of trusteeship, and number of schools included in each category –

Trustees

- Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education (LDBE) - 60
- Lincoln Diocesan Trust Board of Finance (LDTBF) - 1
- Vicar & Churchwarden - 47
- Charity / Committee - 16
- Archdeacons - 4
- Lease Interest - 3
- No Trustee - 4
- Orphans - 2
- Unknown - 4

Custodian Trusteeships

- LDBE Custodian Trusteeships - 20

The category 'Orphan' is used to indicate sites where work is needed with the Charity Commission, essentially these are sites where the trustees no longer exist. It is hoped these can be brought into LDBE's trusteeship.

Four sites remain completely unknown; work is ongoing – but it is possible that all routes may be exhausted without success. In such cases, work with the Charity Commission to determine a trustee will be needed.

Closed Schools General Purpose Reserve Fund

This is an LDBE restricted fund; its purpose is to support Christian education within the Diocese of Lincoln. During the year 19 grants of up to £500 totalling £9,056 (2023 - £5,930) were made to individual schools. The number of grants approved in 2024 was 10 more than in 2023. A common request in 2024 was for funds to promote and display the new LDBE vision around the school. Creating places of peace and reflection for both indoor and outdoor settings were requested on more than one occasion.

The £ value of grants submitted and approved, meeting the eligibility criteria in 2024, represents a 53% increase on the previous year. To maintain the fund over the long term the eligibility criteria have been revised. A school can now only apply every three years for a grant, previously this has been annually, but the clock is reset if a new head teacher is appointed.

The 2024 budget received Board approval to transfer £20,000 recorded as part of the grant income, from the fund to support the Schools Improvement programme.

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Financial Review

Reserves policy

The Directors of LDBE considered the reserves policy at the Finance and Administration Committee in March 2025 and agreed to hold reserves equivalent to 12 months of operating costs.

At the end of the 2024 financial year, the total reserves have increased to £7,576,816 with unrestricted accounting for £847,248 (2023 - £795,011), restricted £811,077 (2023 - £784,142) and the endowment £5,918,491 (2023 - £5,642,826). The endowment includes properties and sales proceeds for surplus assets. The £1.1m debtor in last years accounts was realised as cash in October 2024 when the release of the funds was approved. The funds were invested by the investment managers for the long term for income generation from the fund aligned to total return accounting in December.

The level of free reserves, unrestricted less fixed assets, equates to £844,628.

Income

- The significant income sources remain unchanged over the last 12 months; investments and properties held under the Uniform Trusts under the endowment heading, courses, conferences and training primarily aimed at schools and their governors within the Diocese.
- The type of assets held in the portfolio changed in January 2024. The LDBE investment managers sold all assets in equities, bonds and alternatives re-investing the sale proceeds in a multi asset funds aligned with the LDBE total return investment strategy. The returns generated from the funds were higher than previous years, as shown on the Statement of Financial Activities. The purchase of an additional 2 million units in the fund in December 2024 will strengthen the return from investments in the years ahead. The interest rates also remained favourable for most of 2024 for any cash balances generating a return. The return on investments was a major factor to the improved financial performance for LDBE in 2024 when compared to budget assumptions. The change in the investment portfolio to one specific fund has also seen a reduction in the management charges, that also contributed to the improved financial position when compared to previous years and the budget assumptions.
- The service level agreement (SLA) is maintained as a key source of income and as mentioned under Support for Schools, the number joining in 2024 for the 2024/25 academic year is the highest it has been despite financial pressures on school budgets.
- The revised strategy for key conferences once a term, that was introduced in the previous year, continued with one key event per term. LDBE has an awareness of other events taking place, of interest to school leaders and heads of schools, which lead to the rescheduling of a conference to avoid a date clash. LDBE has also been aware of the delegate cost of similar events and changed its pricing strategy accordingly, to ensure a successful and well attended event.
- The other underlining reasons for consolidating key training events into one per term was to free up time for other areas of income generation. Work with the 142 CofE school within the geographical boundaries of LDBE continues, but increasingly more work is being gained from non-church schools and academies both within and outside those boundaries. The past year has allowed time to develop an RE Curriculum syllabus that is already being marketed to generate income in future years.
- The LDTBF currently provides a £100,000 grant subject to a triennial review shown under Note 2 as part of the Other Grants, General Funds.

Expenditure

- The start of the year LDBE received a letter of resignation from one member of staff, the Governance and Compliance Lead. This provided LDBE with an unexpected opportunity to review the staff structure. As a

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result of the review, it was decided another full-time position to support the administration team would be the best option. The appointment to the administration team would see all three members able to share common duties whilst retaining their own areas of specialism. The recruitment period resulted in a two month period of pay savings where no one was in post. Recurrent savings year on year as a result of the changes implemented were also achieved. The staff complement at the end of the year remained at eight, all of whom are employed on a full-time basis. Staff costs remain the largest area of expenditure. This brings its own challenges with inflation and getting the right balance between a pay award and long-term financial stability of a small team. Different scenarios are presented to enable LDBE directors to have that discussion with the calculations on the recurrent impact before any decision is approved.

- There were additional audit costs for completing the 2023 accounts associated with the introduction of total return accounting and the presentation of the notes, specifically note 13 Funds of the Charity. The trustees decided it would also be an appropriate time to review external audit costs for the future as part of good governance. After inviting audit companies to submit their proposals, there were two returns and the incumbent reappointed. The process revealed changes to the audit sector trustees had not appreciated and how the accounts of LDBE had changed over the last few years.
- Only one contract changed in year. There was the opportunity to extend an existing contract that generated a financial saving that was accepted.
- LDBE continues to review and internally challenge current practices to ensure they are fit for purpose. Time continues to be referenced as a limiting factor. Planning workloads to free up time and place less reliance on external support continues. This has seen a reduction in the number of SLA visits scheduled to be delivered by external advisors with more from within the LDBE team itself.
- The Church of England and Dioceses are looking to reduce their carbon footprint. LDBE commissioned reports on the Voluntary Aided schools as mentioned under Schools Capital on page 19. LDBE continuously look to do its bit with virtual training where possible to reduce travel costs. Working out of serviced offices, LDBE is not directly involved with the selection of supplier but will add and assist with data and adopting new practices.
- Expected annual operating costs for 2025 as per the latest five year plan are stated at £626,082 with annual increase year on year with assumptions around inflation and potential future pay awards factored into the figures. At the end of the current five year plan, the annual operating costs are expected to rise to £674,000.

Based on the above in the context of the current economic and political environment, the Charity will aim to hold free reserves equivalent to 12 months of operating costs, in line with the reserves policy. 2024 general expenditure equals £579,708. At the 31 December 2024, the general funds stand at £847,248 ratio of 1 : 1.46 of 12 months operating costs.

The directors note that in the current five-year plan, maintaining free reserves equivalent to 12 months operating costs is achievable. This will be subject to any market fluctuations and the impact of the value of investments outside of the trustee's control in a challenging world order. A positive recurrent change to income generation potential going forward, the additional 2 million units purchased in multi asset fund in December 2024 mentioned in Income summary above. The returns on these units will begin to appear in the figures going forward that have been included in the current five year plan. These funds have been referenced for several years and are now in LDBE control to boost the financial sustainability in the years ahead.

LDBE is aware of the boost to the investment income, but challenges lie ahead with other income streams and costs expected to rise throughout the current five year plan. LDBE's own MAT strategy, promoting the benefits of joining will, in time, lead to a reduction in some income streams. This will depend on the level of services currently purchased by schools from LDBE, prior to joining a MAT. A change in government has led to the withdrawal of the £25k grant for schools converting to academy status. LDBE is now looking at how it could potentially support this change financially to ensure the education and Christian distinctive of the schools is maintained when it comes to joining a MAT in the future. Inflation has continued to fall over the last 12 months

but, as the largest area of expenditure is salaries, any increase through a pay award increases the recurrent costs of structure in place. There is the balancing act of rewarding, retaining and recruiting staff with affordability over the long term whilst addressing the other points raised above in this paragraph.

The risk register is split into two key sections; one of those deals specifically with financial issues, that are reviewed on a quarterly basis by the appropriate committee. The points raised above around how some income streams are likely to fall if more schools join MAT's, which is being promoted by LDBE, and the withdrawal of the conversion grant are noted as areas that need to be addressed. The risk register identifies various plans and ways these hurdles can be addressed to mitigate potential losses.

The directors are satisfied the reserves at 31 December 2024 are sufficient and the policy will be kept under review and revisited in 12 months' time. The review will compare 2025 performance against budget, forecast adjustments that will be recurrent, income assumptions in future years, new income streams, changes in policies, the implementation of any further cost reduction plans and the impact on the forecast reserves.

Principal funding sources

The Income and Expenditure Account shows Grants for the year totalling £195,442 compared to £1,324,129 in 2023, as per note 2. The reduction reflects the one off event in 2023 recognising the sale proceeds from a surplus asset. The investments generated £253,676 of income compared to £202,619 in 2023.

The total income earned from fees charged is shown in note 3. Fees are charged for attendance at courses, conferences and festivals with different rates for face to face and online delivery of training. Conferences remain face to face, allowing delegates the opportunity to network during planned intervals and workshops. HTPM and School Improvement Programme are two other key funding sources but are likely to reduce in the years ahead if schools currently purchasing these services from LDBE move into a MAT.

The Closed Schools General Purpose Reserve Fund receives income from investments which must be spent or granted in accordance with the terms of the fund.

Plans for future periods

As noted on page 5, the LDBE has approved a new strategic plan for 2024 to 2027 to set out its key operational approaches for carrying out the functions of the DBE Measure 2021, and realising the national and diocesan vision for education.

In addition to this plan, LDBE has updated its Diocesan Strategy for Academisation. This can be found on the diocesan website via this link: https://www.lincolndiocesaneducation.com/matstrategy

This is a public facing document that every diocese is expected to have according to the new model Articles for Church of England multi-academy trusts (MATs). The document provides comprehensive information about how the LDBE will relate to all key stakeholders in order to support the development and growth of church MATs in the diocese.

The LDBE MAT strategy aims to ensure that the church MATs in the diocese are supported to flourish, so that they can serve church schools of different sizes and in different contexts. The Diocesan Director of Education will continue to hold termly CEO network meetings, having proved to be a useful vehicle for implementing the MAT strategy. The roadshow events and developed videos for school leaders and governors have helped school leaders deepen their understanding of the MAT strategy and the benefits of being part of a church MAT. Due to the

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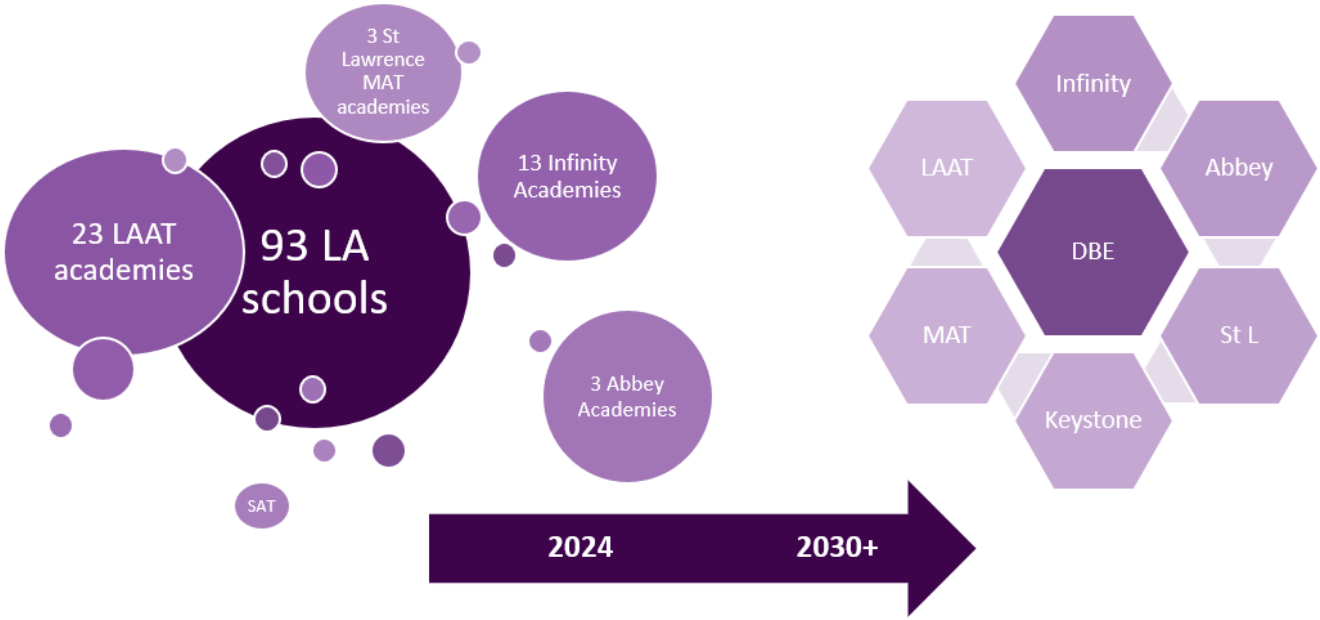
increasing pressures upon schools, the LDBE have stated that is their 'desire and preference' for church schools to join a church MAT. It is, of course, made clear to schools that we respect it is ultimately the Governing Boards' decision.

In Autumn 2024, (following LDBE consent), the DfE approved for Keystone Academies Trust to become a church MAT. It is expected that it will take in the first church school in 2025. There are now five church MATs in the diocese. The current aim is to have six MATs in place across the diocese, as that number is considered to give the diocese the MAT capacity to serve all church schools wishing to join a MAT. The number of MATs needed however is continually kept under review.

The diagram below shows how the educational landscape may change if all the LA maintained church schools and stand-alone academies are part of the six church MATs. The LDBE will be at the centre of the 6 diocesan approved MATs, and have a pivotal role in supporting them to maintain the Christian character of all church schools within them. This diagram has been used regularly in our briefing and training sessions to explain the diocesan MAT strategy to school leaders.



The LDBE's strategic plans are regularly reviewed and designed to be flexible to accommodate emerging priorities.

Factors affecting our success

All church schools are subject to statutory legislation. The many and substantial changes over recent years are therefore significant to LDBE, as to other DBEs:

- Government policy (national level) directly impacts our work
  - Regional Director (DfE) and their intervention powers
  - Teaching School responsibilities

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    - Changing school improvement funding streams
- Ofsted framework
    - Quality of Education
    - Leadership and Management capacity
    - Safeguarding expectations
- National Church policy
    - The SIAMS framework
    - The National SIAMS management of SIAMS and inspector capacity
    - The Growing Faith Adventure
    - 'Flourishing For All – Anti-bullying guidance for church schools'
- Diocesan Church Policy
    - Time to Change Together
    - The role of the ex-officio foundation governors
- Economic climate
    - Cost of Living
    - Turbulent world issues impacting on investments
    - Pressure on budgets for the Board itself and for schools
    - Streamlining of external services for schools

Lincolnshire's geography has challenges relating to rural, coastal and urban poverty. There are many small, rural schools that are increasingly finding it difficult to attract a high calibre of staff or the resources they need to sustain high quality education. Promoting diversity in leadership and through the curriculum is also a challenge in some mono-cultural villages and towns in the diocese.

The LDBE continually reviews its Risk Register to ensure there are strategies in place to address the factors that may affect our success.

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Structure, Governance and Management

Diocesan Boards of Education

Diocesan Boards of Education are regulated by measures – which stipulate how the board that oversees the Director of Education's work should be made up.

Members of the unincorporated Diocesan Board of Education became the first Members and Directors of LDBE on incorporation in 2013 and the company became active on 1 January 2014.

In April 2021, a new measure was approved by the General Synod. This required that a new scheme of the board be drafted, and certified by the Archbishops' Council, allowing it to then be ratified by Diocesan Synod. This scheme came into force on 1st March 2022, and states that the board will be comprised of:

(a) The Bishop,
(b) at least 1 but not more than 5 members appointed by the Bishop,
(c) at least 5 but not more than 8 members elected by the Diocesan Synod, and
(d) at least 4 but not more than 6 members co-opted by the LDBE

Where the number of nominations is within the maximum allowed within (b) or (c), the individual is automatically appointed to the Board. It is possible that under (c), there may be more nominations than the maximum places available. At this point, all nominees will be asked to present their case in front of the electing body as to why should be appointed to the Board. The electing body will decide who to appoint. Any unsuccessful applicant can apply under (d) to be a co-opted member of the LDBE. The appointed members of the Board under (a), (b) and (c) will make the decision around the appointment. All appointed trustees have equal voting rights.
If a vacancy becomes available, under (c) an individual can be nominated by members of Diocesan Synod to be elected to the Board. If a vacancy arises under (d), an individual with the skills set to aid the Board in meeting its strategic objectives may be approach. The individual may or may not choose to join the Board.

This new measure also required that new articles for the company be drafted, which were adopted by special resolution of the directors of the board on 10th February 2022, and which came into effect from 1st March 2022.

Committees of the Board

The Board delegates closer involvement in the work of LDBE to two committees, Learning & Development and Finance & Administration, each supported by a designated Officer. A Committee will be quorate at least 40% or five Members being present. In addition, the Director of Education or his Assistant Director must be present.

Trustees

The Trustees who have served at any time during the year or who were in post at the date of signing this Report are noted below:

Surname	Forename(s)	Date appointed	Date retired	Committee	Appointment
Adnitt	Michael Iain	01/01/19		F&A	CO-OPTED
Allain -Chapman	Justine Penelope Heathcote	19/04/22		n/a	BN
Bacon	Julie Kathleen	21/11/20		F&A	E
Barron	Sonia Patricia	01/01/16	31/12/24	L&D	E
Beverley	Joan Hilary	01/01/16		L&D	E
Booth	Fiona Beth	14/01/25		L&D	CO-OPTED
Brewster	Paul David	01/03/22		F&A	CO-OPTED
Brown	Nicholas James Watson	01/03/22		F&A	BN
Clements	David	01/01/19	31/12/24	F&A	E
Conway	Stephen David	11/11/23		n/a	EX-OFFICIO
Edwards	Cherry Anne	01/01/16		L&D	E
Ely	Sonya	12/03/20		L&D	CO-OPTED
Fisher	Nicolete	16/12/13		F&A	BN
Holmes	Leanne	14/01/25		F&A	CO-OPTED
Kyle	Martin James	10/10/19	12/09/24	L&D	CO-OPTED
Lawrence	Victoria	01/01/25		F&A	E
Machell	Georgina	07/05/19		L&D	BN
Mann	Frederick Frank	01/03/22	31/12/24	F&A	E
Robinson	Ian	01/03/22		L&D	BN
Sarvananthan	Sudharshan	15/07/23		F&A	E
Stern	Julian	01/03/22		L&D	CO-OPTED
Warrick	Alison	01/01/16		F&A	E
Webb	Michelle Dawn	09/04/25		F&A	E
Whiteoak	Daphne	12/03/19		L&D	CO-OPTED

F&A – Finance & Administration Committee
L&D – Learning & Development Committee
E – Elected by Diocesan Synod
BN – Bishop's Nomination

Remuneration of Key Personnel

LDBE officers and staff are all employees of the LDBE, a key responsibility of the Directors. The Finance & Administration Committee will make a recommendation to the Board on pay awards using the previous 12 months CPIH statistics as a guide. Affordability and the current economic trends will form part of those discussions. Benchmarking with other comparable organisations is also considered and provided where the information is available.

Induction and training of Trustees

Members are supplied with a Directors Induction Pack, which includes the Measure, the Memorandum and Articles of Association. Members also receive Charity Commission guidance on the Responsibilities of Trustees on appointment. In reporting to the Board and Committees, Officers ensure that they provide sufficient background information and explanations to enable Members to make informed decisions.

Company registered number : 08334622
Charity registration number : 1151733

Conduct of Business

The full Board meets four times a year. It is responsible for ensuring that the charitable company complies with the requirements and regulations outlined above and that it works efficiently and effectively to further the diocesan vision for education. Board members are volunteers.

The Board delegates business to two sub-committees. Committee responsibilities are broadly as follows:

Finance and Administration Committee Chair: Canon Nicolete Fisher Members: 9	Reviews budgets and forecasts for the company and monitors financial results. Oversees the implementation of policies and procedures, processes and systems. Supervises the appointment process for Foundation Governors. Reviews the financial risks recorded on the risk register.
Learning and Development Committee Chair: Rev S Barron Members: 9	Monitors school effectiveness Considers school place provision Produces strategy around teaching and learning particularly of RE Reviews the educational risks recorded on the risk register

The Board has delegated day to day management of the charity to the Diocesan Director of Education and their team. During 2024 this included:

Education Officers	Assistant Diocesan Director of Education
School Improvement Officers	Two Schools Effectiveness Adviser
Core support staff	Finance & Operations Manager Two Administration Officers Third Administration Officer (started 03 June 2024) Compliance & Governance Lead (left 28 March 2024)

Within a small team it is often the case that we are working across different activities and helping each other.

The full Trustees Report, with financial information, can be found on Companies House in due course –

https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/08334622/filing-history