

# SOUTHWARK DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

## POLICY STATEMENT

### SECONDARY AND POST-16 EDUCATION

It is the Board's policy to have 11-19 secondary schools, with sixth forms. Thirteen out of the fourteen C of E secondary schools in the Diocese are designated 11-19 schools with stand alone sixth form provision.

The Board sees the distinctive ethos and contribution of religious education (RE) and worship to the spiritual well-being of post-16 students as vital. In general, development of these important areas has been neglected in post-16 education. OFSTED reports show that despite their legal obligation schools rarely make provision for post-16 RE and Worship. Within church schools with post-16 provision and in Church Sixth Form Colleges the experience is very different. In these institutions the religious and spiritual dimensions constitute an essential part of the creation of ethos and corporateness for the whole school community. Religious Education is not merely guaranteed as part of the curriculum but enhanced to reflect the wholeness of all that is best in a balanced educational offer, with appropriate resourcing, staffing and staff development.

The Board recognises that it is the right of parents and pupils to make decisions and choices as to what type of post-16 provision is appropriate. Many parents still seek small scale, safe provision where they feel closely involved in the education of their children. The sixth form in an 11-19 school offers a smaller social group, with all that this implies for cohesiveness and security. It offers continuity, both academic and pastoral: it is well known that to transfer from one educational establishment to another causes stress for a number of students. Schools, by reason of being concerned with children and compulsory full-time education, are inherently orientated to providing a complete curriculum to each student, and to be aware of each student as going through a process of personal maturation.

The Board appreciates that school sixth forms are expensive with group sizes of 10-12, on average, but cheapness will not guarantee quality. In church schools retention and examination pass rates show significant increases and demonstrate the high levels of academic and pastoral support on offer. A number of students would not have stayed on or gone on to university without the support, monitoring and nurture provided by the schools. Some pupils need time to develop and grow and Church of England sixth forms have examples of supporting pupils and families where there is no tradition of going on to higher education.

Finally, having a sixth form can impact significantly on the recruitment and retention of teachers. Many staff value the opportunity to teach and mix with the 16-19 age group. It is the context for entry and job satisfaction for some of the most effective teachers.

May 2004 (Schools Committee)