

The Bloxham Project

Valuing the unmeasurable...

Project Papers 45:

***School chaplaincy: what
does research tell us?***

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School Chaplaincy: what does research tell us?

Preface

The ***Bloxham Project*** has always had a concern for school chaplaincy. The foundational Bloxham Conference in 1967 brought together school heads and chaplains to reflect on the mission of Christian education, and since then the Project has been active in the support and development of school chaplaincy, offering induction for new school chaplains, and encouraging their continuing development through courses and conferences, as well as through individual support.

School chaplaincy is a key part - arguably the leading edge - of the Church's mission to the young. There are very few children and young people who still attend churches - *Christian Research* estimated a total of 200,000 under-20s in 2005 - but all our young attend schools. School chaplains minister in Church schools - maintained, independent and academies - to far more youngsters than are reached by parish churches. Anything up to half a million people, it has been estimated, are ministered to by chaplains in these schools.

However, school chaplaincy appears to be both unrecognised by the wider Church, unsupported and unexplored: almost a 'hidden ministry'. The research project reported in this paper was rooted in a desire to explore and understand the nature, extent and impact of this ministry in all sectors of the Church school system, to try to establish what chaplaincy practice looks like in our schools, and to consider how those working in school chaplaincy could best be supported and developed. The research question was, in effect: what are the characteristics and needs of this vital, hidden ministry to the young and to the extended communities of their schools?

The report which follows sets out the genesis of the research project; the funding sources which enabled it to take place; its methodology; and its initial outcomes. It is offered to those working in school chaplaincy as a tribute to their 'hidden' ministry, and with grateful thanks for the generous collaboration and friendship of the very many school chaplains who allowed themselves to be interviewed, who completed questionnaires, and who made their students available for interview. Without them, this initial report could not have been written.

1. The Genesis of the research project

The Revd John Caperon took up the role of Director of the **Bloxham Project** in 2006. He had previously, as a maintained Church school head, also acted as chaplain in his school, supported by a chaplaincy team of colleagues drawn from among the actively Christian members of the school staff. On taking up the Director's post, one of his earliest encounters had been with the school chaplains gathered at Trinity College, Oxford for the School Chaplains' Conference. This event triggered for him a strong interest in the wider ministry of school chaplaincy, and a clear sense of the **Bloxham Project's** key role in supporting chaplaincy in schools.

At about the same time, the Trustees of the **Bloxham Project** determined to seek an institutional base for the Project, and in September 2006 the administration of the Project was invited to move to Ripon College Cuddesdon, a leading Church of England theological college. The college Principal, The Revd Canon Professor Martyn Percy, had come from a background in the sociological study of religion, and undertaken his own research in 'the concrete Church' - that is, the actual Church experienced by its members.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, a focus on what the Church actually is and does, and how it is experienced by its members and those outside it, had become a key feature of Cuddesdon's thinking. One particular result of this was the establishment in May 2007 of the college's own research unit, The Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology (OxCEPT), under the direction of Dr Helen Cameron.

In 2007/8, Helen Cameron and John Caperon had a number of conversations about school chaplaincy, the eventual outcome being a decision that empirical research into school chaplaincy was needed as a first step, and that the **Bloxham Project** and **OxCEPT** should collaborate to undertake this. For the Project, this was in some ways a return to its origins. Following the original Bloxham Conference in 1967, the first priority agreed had been to research the attitudes and values of young people, and *Images of Life* by the Bloxham researchers Robin Richardson and John Chapman had been published in 1973.

In 2008, with the support of the Trustees of the **Bloxham Project** and of Martyn Percy at Cuddesdon, a research proposal was drawn up, a budget established and a researcher sought. The next need was to acquire the necessary funding.

2. Funding, oversight and staffing

The funding charities

Funding applications were next made to a number of charitable trusts with an interest in the areas of education and Christian faith, assuming a two-year research project to be carried out by a post-doctoral researcher between 2009 and 2011.

In the event, donations were forthcoming from a number of charities. The Dulverton Trust, the Haberdashers' Company, the Mercers' Company, the St. Gabriel's Trust - the major donor - and the Woodard Corporation all agreed to support the research project. In addition, the ***Bloxham Project*** contributed funds from its own reserves. In all, the cost of the two-year research project, including academic supervision from OxCEPT; part-time researcher's salary; expenses of the research itself and of the research reference group amount to some £47,500.

Research oversight

The research project was overseen by ***OxCEPT*** in the person of its Director, Dr Helen Cameron. The research reference group, which guided the direction of the project, comprised The Revd Professor Mark Chapman (Ripon College Cuddesdon), Mr Nick McKemey (National Society), Ms Samantha Stayte (Bloxham Trustees), Professor Geoffrey Walford (Oxford University), with Dr Helen Cameron (OxCEPT).

Staffing

National advertisements were placed for a researcher, and there were eventually six applications forthcoming. Three candidates were invited for interview; two withdrew, and one candidate was interviewed, but the consensus of the interviewing panel was that an appointment was not appropriate. In the light of this, a solution was subsequently agreed in which the Director of the ***Bloxham Project***, John Caperon, would complement his part-time work for the Project with a part-time research role, with additional administrative support being brought in to strengthen the Project at its base at Ripon College, Cuddesdon. Keith Glenny, who had taken on the role of Bloxham administrator in 2008, agreed to adjustments in his work programme to enable this to take place; and without his skilled support the research project would not have been sustainable.

3. The Research Project: constituent elements

The research project was envisaged as a two-year, multi-method process, culminating with the presentation of a research report to the national conference on school chaplaincy held at Liverpool Hope University in June 2011 and arranged jointly by the Bloxham Project, the National Society, The School Chaplains' Association and the Woodard Corporation, in celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary both of the National Society (founded 1811) and of the Anglican educational pioneer Nathaniel Woodard (born 1811). The research project was conceived as having several elements, as follows:

Scoping interviews: The initial phase of the research consisted of a series of semi-structured, 'scoping' interviews with school heads and chaplains in three independent schools, three maintained Church of England schools, and two academies.

Literature review: A full literature review was next undertaken, locating school chaplaincy within the wider context of the *Missio Dei* - the divine mission to the world; of the Church's ministry of pastoral care; and of the so-called 'sector ministries' of the Church of England.

In-depth interviews: A series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with chaplains in schools across the system then followed, drawing on the literature review and the earlier scoping interviews to identify the issues to be explored.

National questionnaire: All those school chaplains the research project had been able to identify as working in Church of England secondary schools, a total of just under 400 chaplains, were then contacted by e-mail or letter. They were invited to complete an on-line questionnaire about their employment context; their understanding of school chaplaincy; the resources for sustaining chaplaincy; and the relation of school chaplaincy to the wider Church.

Student focus groups: Focus group interviews were carried out with students from all sectors of the system, to test student understanding of the nature and impact of school chaplaincy.

Data analysis: Data from the scoping interviews, the in-depth interviews with chaplains, from the questionnaire responses, and from the student focus groups were extensively analysed using an interpretive or hermeneutic model.

4. Research outcomes: the scoping interviews

Ten scoping interviews were conducted: two individual interviews with academy principals; two individual interviews with academy chaplains; two joint interviews with Church of England maintained school chaplains and heads, one interview with a Church of England maintained school head and deputy; and three interviews with independent school chaplains. Exploring some key issues - why a chaplain is employed; what the chaplain's role is; what impact the chaplain's work has in the school community; how the chaplain's work relates to the wider Church - the interviews painted a picture of school chaplaincy as having a common core of values but a wide diversity of contexts, styles and visions. Following analysis of the interview data, a number of broad questions for school chaplaincy were identified:

- *How does school chaplaincy relate to the mission and ministry of the wider Church?*
- *How professionally structured are the arrangements for the employment, accountability, support and development of school chaplains?*
- *What are the implicit theologies operating among school chaplains?*
- *What are the main models of school chaplaincy?*
- *Who pays for school chaplaincy?*
- *How valuable is school chaplaincy perceived to be, and what is its status in the Church?*

5. *Research outcomes: the literature review*

The literature review explored the idea of chaplaincy in the context of the participation of the Church in the mission of God to the world (the *Missio Dei*) through its ministry of word, sacrament and pastoral care. Looking at the specifically Anglican understanding of chaplaincy, the review identified Giles Legood's (edited) book *Chaplaincy: the Church's Sector Ministries* (Legood, 1999) as a key text; noting, however, that the chapter on school chaplaincy (Lindsay, 1999) occupies only six pages from a total of 176. Could this perhaps symbolise the wider Church of England's awareness - and valuation - of school chaplaincy, despite the book's fundamental recognition that chaplaincy itself is to be seen as a liminal, or frontier ministry?

Extant book-length studies of English school chaplaincy were identified as J B Goodliffe's *School Chaplain* (Goodliffe, 1961) - a retrospective, autobiographical account of public school chaplaincy in the immediate post-war era; and Sister Mary McKeone's *Wasting Time in School* (McKeone, 1993), an account of and reflection upon the writer's chaplaincy ministry in Roman Catholic maintained comprehensive schools in the 1980's.

The later compilation *At the Heart of Education: School Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care* (Norman, 2004), written from within the Irish and Roman Catholic context, offers the first empirical account of student valuations of school chaplaincy. The most recent relevant publication, Diane Tregale's *Fresh Experiences of School Chaplaincy* (Tregale, 2011) is the first attempt to describe models of school chaplaincy within an ecclesiological framework, but in the very brief compass of a 28-page Grove Booklet.

Recent publications from Roman Catholic sources - both the Catholic Education Service (CES) and various dioceses - indicate a far clearer and more purposive understanding of school chaplaincy than within the Anglican context, the dominant model being that of lay chaplaincy, with an emphasis on the 'spiritual accompaniment' which is seen as the chaplain's task in relation to the students in her care. There is one (unpublished) PhD study of school chaplaincy in Roman Catholic schools (Glackin, 2004).

Beyond the British context, an Australian federal-government-funded scheme to provide Christian chaplaincy from voluntary sources in (non-religious) state secondary schools in Australia has been described in *The Effectiveness of School Chaplaincy in State Schools in Australia* (Hughes and Sims, 2009).

In all, the literature review confirmed that school chaplaincy in Church of England schools in England had so far been largely undescribed and had so far remained completely unresearched from the empirical standpoint.

References

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6. Research outcomes: the in-depth interviews

Eighteen in-depth interviews were carried out with school chaplains in a cross section of schools, designed to be representative of the range of contexts in which Anglican school chaplains work. The schools selected covered all regions of the country and all sectors of the Church school system: maintained Church of England secondary schools, academies and independent schools, both day and boarding. Some 30,000 words of the digitally-recorded interviews were transcribed.

The wide diversity of contexts, people, and job framework contained within the field of school chaplaincy was the first and most powerful impression gained from the interviews. The contexts of school chaplains interviewed ranged from the most traditional and prestigious boarding schools with their rolling acres and noble chapels to the most cheaply-constructed, overcrowded, maintained Church schools set in the midst of run-down council housing estates.

The chaplains themselves also span a wide range. Ordained and lay, male and female, young and middle-aged, chaplains come from widely differing social, academic and religious backgrounds; evangelical or catholic, liberal or charismatic, chaplains inevitably bring who they are and their personal understanding and experience of faith to their ministry.

That ministry is structured in widely differing ways. In the most traditional context, the ordained chaplain has a high profile in the school's daily life as he leads communal worship and is seen to have close access to the head and other sources of power in the school. The chaplain will also be a classroom teacher, most often in the Religious Studies department, and will have a strong reputation in the school as someone who grasps the philosophical and ethical dimensions of Christian faith at an academic level.

At the other end of the scale is the non-teaching, lay chaplain in the all-ability Church school - perhaps untrained in academic theology and from an independent evangelical church background, but with a rapport with youngsters which animates her ministry and makes her office or *ad hoc* chapel a buzzing social centre at break and lunch times.

But if diversity is the first impression of school chaplaincy, further exploration reveals a common core of conviction and vocation: there *is* such a thing in Church of England schools as ‘school chaplaincy’, with a distinctive and recognisable identity, despite the wide variety of contexts in which it takes place and the wide variety of people who offer it. Its key features emerged from the interviews as follows:

- School chaplains have ***a specific vocation*** to work with the young within the extended community of the school: both children, staff, parents and governors - and the community within which the school is set - comprise their ‘parish’.
- Their work is ***missional and inclusive***: it is a service offered to all by the Church in a context where personal faith commitment may be minimal; it is prime mission in a liminal or frontier context.
- School chaplains place ***the pastoral dimension*** of their vocation as its heart: it is a ministry involving a range of functions, but pastoral care for the person is what matters most.
- In whatever form and style are appropriate to the context of the school and its pupils, ***liturgical leadership*** is treasured by school chaplains as an opportunity to create the conditions in which the presence of God may be experienced.
- Beyond and through all their ministerial functions, school chaplains exercise ***a ministry of presence***, representing and embodying the Christian faith.

From the in-depth interviews a number of questions also arose for further exploration, including:

- *What are the employment contexts and conditions of those working in school chaplaincy?*
- *How do school chaplains understand their role and prioritise the range of functions they have?*
- *What are the varying espoused theologies of school chaplains, and how do these relate to their operant theologies, or practice?*
- *What helps school chaplains sustain their ministry?*
- *How do school chaplains see themselves and their ministry in relation to the wider Church?*

7. Research outcomes: the survey questionnaire

The survey offered the opportunity to seek the views of school chaplains across the country on these issues, and a four-section questionnaire was constructed around employment context; the role of the school chaplain; theological resources for school chaplaincy; and school chaplaincy and the wider Church. A range of questioning strategies was incorporated, including factual, box-ticking exercises, the use of Likert scales to weigh opinion, and sentence-completion free-writing tasks. The intention was to seek the personal views and convictions of school chaplains rather than simply to obtain external facts.

Using e-mail and letter, contact was attempted with a total of 382 people working as school chaplains, including 296 named persons, with a further 71 e-mails sent to schools with a request to forward the e-mail to the (un-named) chaplain, and letters being sent to 15 schools without available e-mail contact. Those contacted were invited to complete the questionnaire on the *SurveyMonkey* website. A link was also placed on the Bloxham website, enabling chaplains who had heard about the survey, but who had not themselves received an invitation, to participate.

The database of 367 schools and chaplains includes 242 independent schools; 108 maintained schools; and 17 academies. Although no definitive register yet exists, it is recognised that this may well not cover the entire spectrum of schools with Church of England chaplaincy provision; it is also accepted that other forms of chaplaincy - *ad hoc* or informal - may be operative in Church schools and also beyond.

During the two-month period when the survey was active, October and November 2011, 218 school chaplains responded to the invitation to undertake the questionnaire, an initial response rate of 57%. Given drop-out during the questionnaire itself, however, the final number of completed questionnaires was 160, representing an encouraging response rate of 42%.

Just under two thirds of responses to the survey (65% - 141) came from independent schools; just over a quarter (26.6% - 58) from maintained schools; fewer than a tenth (8.3% - 18) from academies. This inevitably means that there is an inbuilt bias in the sample - independent schools are over-represented. Analysis of the data, however, has taken this into account and distinguished between the different sectors' responses.

8. *The survey: key findings*

Accepting that the data is inherently incomplete and that the respondents to this survey may not be representative of the wider community of school chaplains, the questionnaire produced some clear findings, set out here under the headings of the four questionnaire sections.

a. The employment context:

- There is an overwhelming preponderance of ordained ministers working in school chaplaincy; only 31 of the 218 respondents (14.2%) identify as lay chaplains.
- Over two-thirds of chaplains (70.2%) are employed by their school, with fewer than a tenth (8.3%) being directly employed by the Church at local or diocesan level.
- A fifth of chaplains (20.2%) describe themselves as working on a part-time basis.
- The ‘typical’ chaplain in this sample is ordained, employed by his or her (independent) school, and spends a substantial proportion of his time - even a full timetable - in teaching.
- Almost three-quarters of respondents overall (72%) have a formal, written job description. However, all academy chaplains responding had a job description, although among maintained school chaplains the proportion was lowest at 63% (compare independent schools at 73.3%).
- Almost three-quarters of respondents overall (74.3%) have a regular review or appraisal in the school context. Here, the highest proportion is in the independent schools (80.3%), with the lowest proportion (58.6%) being in the Church maintained schools.
- Only 43.1% overall describe themselves as having a regular review or appraisal in the Church context; with something over half of academy and maintained school chaplains (55.6% and 56.9% respectively) having this, by comparison with just over a third (35.9%) of independent school chaplains.

b. The role of school chaplain:

In this section of the questionnaire, school chaplains were asked to prioritise six aspects of their chaplaincy set out in the Bloxham Project's own developed, functional model of school chaplaincy. There was a strong degree of convergence in the responses. Chaplains rated the importance of the different functions in the following order, with the two latter functions being seen as significantly less important than the others:

1. ***Pastoral***: caring for the whole community
2. ***Spiritual***: leading the spiritual life of the community
3. ***Liturgical***: leading prayer and worship
4. ***Missional***: commending the Christian faith and supporting other faiths
5. ***Prophetic***: 'speaking truth to power'
6. ***Pedagogic***: teaching about the Faith, and catechesis.

The unambiguous priority placed on pastoral care reflects and endorses the stances of chaplains interviewed earlier in the research project; and whilst the prophetic and pedagogic functions are seen as far less significant than others, it seems clear that the shape of the Bloxham model is endorsed by practising chaplains.

Further findings from this section of the survey include:

- There is a very strong sense of personal vocation (88.4%) to this specific ministry.
- School chaplains overwhelmingly (97.7%) see their ministry as one to the whole school community, not just the young.
- However, there is a strong (89.0%) conviction that school chaplaincy offers particular opportunities to influence the young and change the course of their lives.
- Fewer than half of respondents (42.8%) felt they would at a later point be in parochial ministry.

- More than half of respondents (52.0%) said that pupils of other faith traditions saw them as a faith leader.
- Only just over a third of chaplains (34.1%) - and only a quarter in maintained C of E schools (25.6%) - were keen about working with committed pupils in the Christian Union.

In the personal response question of this section of the questionnaire, respondents were powerfully eloquent about their own 'take' on their ministry: a key, recurrent theme was the idea of chaplaincy as a 'ministry of presence', expressed in various ways but in strong endorsement of the perceptions of the chaplains interviewed earlier in the study: the chaplain is 'the God person', the representative embodiment of the Christian faith in the school community.

c. Theological perspectives on school chaplaincy

What theological and spiritual resources animate and support the ministry of school chaplains? This section of the questionnaire provides some clear and unambiguous responses.

- Predominant theological influences for school chaplains are the Christian scriptures and the field of pastoral and practical theology.
- Chaplains in independent schools appear to have the broadest theological heritage, by comparison with their colleagues in C of E maintained schools and academies.
- Chaplains in academies rate liberation theologies and contemporary evangelical theology more highly than their colleagues elsewhere.
- Chaplains in C of E maintained schools rate the inheritance of Anglo-Catholic thought more highly than others.
- Lay chaplains rate contemporary evangelical theology more highly than their ordained colleagues.
- Contemporary radical/sceptical theology appears to be a relatively minor influence among school chaplains.

Broadly, school chaplains appear to be animated by the whole sweep of the theological tradition rather than by more temporary fashion,

and to bring to their work a rich heritage of theological thinking, with a focus on the scriptural sources of faith and the practical resources of pastoral theology. This acknowledged debt to pastoral and practical theology indicates clearly a group of ministers for whom theology is less an intellectual interest than a 'way in' to the practice of ministry itself.

So what sustains school chaplains in their ministry? Again, there were clear responses.

- Schools chaplains are spiritual people: their inner life of prayer and meditation is described as sustaining by 98.8% of respondents, and they are also sustained (97.0%) by their private spiritual reading. Recreation is also significant for them: holidays and personal interests receive the endorsement of 97.7% of respondents.
- Equally, school chaplains are relational people: the backup of family and friends is described as sustaining by 97.7% of respondents.
- Worship is important for school chaplains: 85.5% of respondents name the Eucharist as a sustaining source for them; although participation in a worshipping community beyond the school is far more significant for academy and C of E maintained school chaplains than for those in independent schools, of whom fewer than three-quarters (74.3%) say this sustains them.
- Collegiality matters to school chaplains: over 80% of academy and C of E maintained school chaplain respondents refer positively to their involvement with local clergy and church workers - but for independent school chaplains this drops to fewer than half (49.5%).
- The 'college' of school chaplains counts for less, however; worryingly, fewer than half (48.8%) of C of E maintained school chaplains feel sustained by the nation-wide community of school chaplains, and overall the figure only rises to under two-thirds (61.8%).
- Almost all chaplains, though, (94.5%) feel sustained by the appreciation of pupils: here are people who relish being with the young and who are appreciated by them.

In the personal response question of this section of the questionnaire, chaplains were again eloquent about their personal, spiritual lives, displaying a rootedness particularly in the two dominant spiritual traditions of the Church of England, the Evangelical and the Catholic.

For many, there was a strong sense that their vocation as school chaplains was validated by the difference which their work potentially made to the lives of the young people in their care.

d. School chaplaincy and the wider Church

Concerns expressed by school chaplains interviewed earlier in the research prompted this section of the questionnaire, and respondents echoed the views previously expressed. There appears to be little confidence among school chaplains that - despite support from their bishop, perceived by two-thirds of chaplains overall (67.5%) - the wider Church of England either understands or properly supports school chaplaincy. Some of the responses are as follows.

- Fewer than half of respondents (40.1%) perceive their diocese as having a strong sense of the significance of school chaplaincy for the future of the Church; and over half (56.9%) of respondents agree that the national strategy of the Church takes little account of the potential of school chaplaincy.
- Almost two-thirds of all respondents (64.4%) feel 'somewhat detached' from the work of the diocese and deanery, although among academy chaplains the proportion is fewer than a third (30.8%) and among independent school chaplains it rises to almost three-quarters (72.6%).
- Although only some 7% of chaplains in academies and C of E maintained schools agreed that their work was 'unsupported' by their diocese, the proportion of independent school chaplains agreeing rose to 20.7%.
- Whilst almost half (46.2%) of academy chaplains consider their diocese offers guidelines and support for school chaplaincy, the proportion of C of E maintained school chaplains is only a third (34.2%) and of independent school chaplains fewer than a fifth (17.9%).
- Only a quarter of academy chaplains see their work admired by the Church as a pioneering ministry; only a tenth of chaplains in the other sectors.

In the personal response section of the questionnaire, school chaplains were outspoken about their relation to the wider Church. They write of the 'crucial opportunity' presented by school chaplaincy but see this ministry as neither understood nor valued, with school chaplains as the 'poor relations' who are seen as having 'sold out / copped out' of the 'real work' of the Church in the parochial setting. There is an alarming lack of confidence that what school chaplains do is seen as remotely as important as what is done by parish priests in 'proper' ministry.

9. *Research outcomes: student focus groups*

Student focus groups offered the opportunity to gauge senior students' understanding and valuation of school chaplaincy in a selected sample of schools. These interviews with small groups of students in the top years of their schools lasted between a half and three-quarters of an hour and some 10,000 words of discussion have been transcribed. The fundamental question being pursued was, 'What value does your school chaplain add to the life of the community?' Students perceived chaplaincy in remarkably clear ways, often expressing with terse clarity what chaplains themselves might find harder to put into words.

Some key perceptions were:

- Chaplaincy is about helping people on their spiritual journeys - a ministry of accompaniment.
- A chaplain's public role as leader of faith and spirituality in the school is central to the school's ethos: without the chaplain as figurehead, ethos is diminished.
- A chaplain makes faith present in the school as its public representative and as a role model of Christian character and behaviour: she incarnates and exemplifies faith.
- Beyond functions, the chaplain's being and identity are key: 'It's his *'-ness'*, who he is, his essence, his being, not his tasks,' said one pupil.
- A chaplain acts as a 'bridge' between the teaching and disciplinary function of the school on the one hand and its function as a place of care and inter-relation; she is there as a person, humanly, available to all.
- The title 'Father' can express an important aspect of a chaplain's role of care, love and compassionate concern for a 'family' or community of people.
- A chaplain may be seen as a 'scaled-down version of Jesus, a kind of mini-Jesus', as one student expressed it.

The ability of students to ‘read’ chaplaincy seems clear; their grasp of a chaplain’s functional role and of the essence of the vocation is compelling. It is in itself a powerful argument for the significance and impact of school chaplaincy.

10. The research project: overview, implications and issues arising

The specific research activities and their outcomes detailed above were complemented by numerous informal conversations with individual school chaplains, heads, teachers and pupils. The (part-time) researcher's ongoing work as (part-time) Director of the Bloxham Project meant that he was also involved in a number of formal meetings for the induction and development of school chaplains, and in school chaplaincy consultancies and reviews during the research period. The research data were therefore surrounded by a penumbra of informal, additional sources of information; in what follows, conclusions are drawn directly from the research data, but supported by this wider context.

a. Overview

School chaplaincy in Church of England secondary schools is a widely diverse phenomenon. Mainly carried out formally by ordained ministers of the Church, it spans the whole of the social and educational world of contemporary England, from the 'privileged' contexts of the most prestigious independent schools, through the well-established C of E maintained schools, to the newest and most challenging of Church-sponsored academies.

As the number of Church academies grows, so the number of chaplaincies is increasing; but it is not yet standard policy for all C of E maintained schools to have chaplaincy provision, even in the most educationally-engaged of dioceses. Although some diocesan education teams have an enlightened approach to school chaplaincy's potential,

see it as a key branch of 'youth work' and invest seriously in it, in other dioceses there is less energy and conviction about school chaplaincy. It is probably the case that it still remains the independent sector in which - for a whole variety of reasons - there is the largest investment, both institutional, financial and ideological, in school chaplaincy.

This wide diversity of context in which school chaplaincy is carried out, and its uneven provision across the sectors, may well have held back its recognition as a key ministry of the Church, and contributed to its

‘hidden’ nature. The conviction behind this research, though, and one which has been reinforced by the numerous encounters it has involved with school chaplains and others engaged in education, and with pupils, is that this is a vital ministry of potentially transformational contact with the young, whose significance in what is now commonly thought of as a ‘post-Christian’ society is huge. It is probable that the rising generation’s greatest chance of engaging with a licensed minister of the Church, ordained or lay, is in the context of school chaplaincy.

The research has brought out clearly the commitment and dedication of school chaplains in all our diverse school contexts to living and sharing the Gospel with the young, to accompanying them on their own journeys of spiritual development, and to accepting the challenge of ‘keeping the rumour of God alive’ among the young and in the school communities where they learn and grow. In the light of this, some of the research outcomes should be matters of real concern for the Church, and have serious implications, some of which are indicated below.

b. Implications

- The Church’s most significant ministerial engagement with the young is largely being paid for by the state (in maintained schools and academies) or by private charities (in independent schools): a situation paralleled, as it happens, by chaplaincy in the armed forces and the health service.
- More than a quarter of school chaplains overall and approaching half in Church maintained schools have no formal job-description: in an increasingly professionalized educational world, there is an urgent need for clear thinking about what a chaplain’s role is and what a job description should look like.
- Over a quarter of school chaplains have no review of their work carried out by the school; in Church maintained schools the proportion approaches half. Again, this is a matter of real concern: school cultures now assume the entitlement of all staff to careful, reflective and developmental review: an entitlement which eludes far too many school chaplains. Independent schools, seen by some as the exemplars of older, more amateur approaches, are more professionally ordered in this respect.

- Only just over half of Church maintained school and academy chaplains have a regular review in the Church context: nearly half of this key ministry of the Church is being left to its own devices in these schools, and independent school chaplains are even less likely to have a Church-based review.
- That the Church is not regularly reviewing and supporting the development of school chaplains as a matter of course indicates that it is out of touch with many of its most pioneering ministers, apparently unconcerned about their ministry and development.
- There also appears to be a major ‘disconnect’ between the worlds of parochial ministry and of school chaplaincy, with fewer than half of school chaplains considering a future in parish ministry: what could be seen almost as an ‘apartheid’ between these two ministerial and contextual worlds cannot be healthy for the Church.
- There are also strong perceptions within the community of school chaplains that the wider Church neither knows nor cares very much about what ministry in schools involves or what its outcomes are.
- There is an urgent need to re-connect parochial and schools ministry in a shared re-evaluation of what ‘youth and schools work’ could mean for the Church.
- The sense of detachment from deanery and diocese described by school chaplains is a worrying feature: it appears that isolation may be a problem for many, and that there is a need for greater coherence and collegiality in the wider ministerial community, rather than the apparent current disputes about where the ‘real work’ of the Church’s ministry is done.
- Equally, there is a need to develop a sense of the national and local communities of school chaplains.
- Since the Dearing Report (Dearing 2000), it is arguable, the Church has focused on the establishment of more secondary schools at the cost of concentrating on what they are for, and what kind of spiritual education they might offer to the young.
- Ministry in Church maintained schools has come second to the provision of those schools: there is now a need to focus more closely on the spiritual dimension of a Church school education, including the central contribution of school chaplaincy to the Christian ethos of a school.

c. Issues arising

In addition to the implications set out above, there are other issues and dilemmas arising in relation to school chaplaincy which the research programme has brought out, and which should be of concern for the Church.

- The fact that the Church has no national register of those formally engaged in school chaplaincy is a concern. The current *Crockfords* lists some 220 school chaplains across the sectors, but this may amount to no more than about half those currently engaged in a formal school chaplaincy. And, of course, *Crockfords* only lists the ordained: there is also a significant number of lay chaplains. An urgent task is for the Church to establish the full extent of formal school chaplaincy, and to maintain and keep up-to-date such a register.
- Beyond formal, institutionally-recognised appointments as school chaplain, there is also a need to begin to establish what is the extent of *informal* chaplaincy, by which is meant links developed by parishes, parish priests and lay ministers with their secondary schools, whether Church schools or not.
- There is also a need to set out with clarity what models Anglican school chaplaincy is built around. Understood by its practitioners as primarily a pastoral ministry of care and a ministry of ‘presence’, is school chaplaincy seen like this by the institutional Church? And how does school chaplaincy ‘fit’ into national and diocesan models of the mission and ministry of the Church of England?
- Equally, how does what school chaplaincy offers as ‘pastoral care’ differ from or add to the school’s pastoral and support systems – whether through Year or House structures, or through the provision of in-school support by, say, a professional counsellor? What, in brief, is distinctive about school chaplaincy’s pastoral care?
- Clear, coherent and integrated national and diocesan guidance on what school chaplaincy is, how it is best understood and practised, what are its distinctive characteristics, and how its practitioners can best be reviewed, developed and supported is also needed.

- One dilemma which needs to be resolved is whether school chaplaincy should be seen as an essentially 'Christian' or 'inter-faith' enterprise. The dominant model embraced for Further Education and for Higher Education by the national Church of England has been - arguably in response to government prompting on the 'social cohesion' agenda - one which is deliberately based on the inter-faith model.
- The conviction behind this research project, and reinforced by it, however, is that Church schools should be places of clearly Christian identity where the ministry of chaplaincy is carried out inclusively, but by Christian ministers. Where this ministry is being carried out in schools with a significant inter-faith population, as is the case with both some inner-city Church comprehensives and some independent boarding schools, there needs to be a clear basis for deciding how best to meet the needs of other-faith pupils.
- There is already evidence that a Christian chaplain is well able pastorally to support pupils of other faith traditions in the school context, although the possibility of inviting other faith leaders into the school for educational or chaplaincy purposes needs also to be considered.

11. *The Research Project: further exploration*

The research project described in these pages is the first empirical study of school chaplaincy in Church of England schools. It has been undertaken within a brief time scale and has produced significant outcomes both for school chaplaincy and for the wider Church.

It has, however, the inevitable limits of a short study, and the topic 'school chaplaincy' is far too important not to be studied further. The research project will therefore be the subject of a doctoral dissertation, which will be able to explore and analyse the research data in more detail and to deal more exhaustively with some of the background and policy issues briefly set out here in this initial report.

Beyond this, however, the researcher remains conscious of the relatively small scope of this two-year project and of further aspects of, and issues in, school chaplaincy which would also benefit from detailed, empirical research.

Two aspects in particular of *the impact of school chaplaincy* could be explored with profit: first, how closely interconnected are school ethos and the effective practice of school chaplaincy; or, how does chaplaincy impact on ethos? Second, what is the impact of school chaplaincy on the spiritual and faith development of pupils?

A further dimension of this second question is how well school, FE and HE chaplaincy are linked to provide continuous, ongoing support across the phases of education both for pupils and students of settled Christian conviction and for those of any other faith or non-faith background: the current picture appears to be one of serious 'disconnect' between the phases of education.

There is also the question of *lay chaplaincy*, and what may be distinctive about lay chaplaincy - in some dioceses a key feature of in-school 'youth work' - as opposed to ordained chaplaincy. This raises the further question, also, of how well school chaplaincy enables other Christian staff in schools to act pastorally and Christianly in their work.

Also, following what is essentially a 'snapshot' of school chaplaincy, there is the question, what is the longer-term impact of school chaplaincy? A longitudinal, qualitative study would be fascinating.

The Research Project: conclusion

The research project was rooted in a desire to understand the nature, extent and impact of school chaplaincy in all sectors of the Church school system, to try to establish what chaplaincy practice currently looks like in our schools, and to explore how those working in school chaplaincy can best be supported and developed. What was initially perceived as something of a 'hidden ministry' has become far clearer through the research process.

What has been revealed is a multi-functional ministry, both lay and ordained, whose core awareness is of being the representative presence of the Church, even of Christ himself, in the educational workplace: the context where the young are growing, learning and developing their identities and their values for living. Centring on inclusive pastoral care, but offering also spiritual leadership and the liturgical provision which helps people learn to pray, school chaplaincy has a core, missional impulse to nurture and commend the faith-based life. It is a transformational ministry.

From the outcomes of the research project emerge two key insights: that the potential impact of school chaplaincy on the lives of the young is considerable; but that there is as yet little clear, shared understanding of the nature of the role and accountability of school chaplains, who are also in effect asked to undertake their work without any clear structures for effective support and development.

School chaplains exercise a vital ministry among the young - and among all those who work in schools to lead and support them - a vital ministry which should no longer be hidden. It is the researcher's conviction that the Church now needs urgently to grasp the strategic significance of this ministry, and to develop a proper, professional framework for school chaplaincy, together with a well-resourced structure of support and development which is recognised nationally. The pioneering ministry of school chaplaincy, and the young whom it serves, deserve no less.

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Valuing the unmeasurable...

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