

# Dear Friends and Colleagues -

11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.

**Ecclesiastes 3:11**

Doesn't the summer holiday feel a long time ago? And the half term break is still three weeks away!

It is a busy time in schools and it at this point I think we are all beginning to feel a bit tired – adults and children. For some, autumn is not the easiest of seasons. Yes – the trees can be beautiful; the crisp mornings rejuvenating and there are some good new dramas on the TV. However, the shortening of the days and the dropping of the temperatures tells us that winter is ahead.

When times are tough, I look for symbols of positivity, hope and God's love. I often find these symbols in nature as I walk around my village. In the village, we have a large horse chestnut tree laden with conkers. I love conkers.

As a child, I remember going with my friends on our bikes to collect conkers. We would return home with carrier bags brimming with spikey green conkers. I loved discovering the beautiful deep-brown colour and smooth shapes within the spikey shells. I loved polishing them and I must admit I had lots of fun testing the strength of them in conker fights with friends.

I have fond memories of conkers and they make me smile.

Thinking more deeply about conkers in adult life, I see them as a symbol of hope and God's love for us, especially at times when we are feeling tired or challenged in some way.

Consider the contrast between the spikey shell and the smooth conker to reflect on God's transforming work. You may ask children and adults in collective worship to hold a green spikey shell and ask them to think about something that is 'spikey' in their life at the moment.

It might be that they have a friend or family member who is unwell, or it might be that they've had a disagreement with someone. It could be anything that they consider is not very nice; and they may choose to pray to God for his love and support. This could be done privately in the form of quiet reflection and prayer.





At this point, we may consider the verse Ecclesiastes 3:11 “He has made everything beautiful in its time.”

We could then carefully break open the shells and hold the conkers for a minute, reflecting on how something so lovely comes from something spikey, a picture of how God can transform people and situations.

You may also choose to leave a conker unopened somewhere everyone will see it. We could then pray the same prayer each time until the spikey shell opens to release the beautiful glossy brown seed of a conker.

From these conkers if planted rightly, would come a tiny shoot that would grow into a little sapling, that over time would grow into a wonderful tree, producing fresh horse chestnuts of its own.

As a seed, the conker represents potential. Let us think about our own potential and the potential we have in our school communities. For this conker to grow into a tree and produce other conkers, it needs the right soil, rain, and sun.

What conditions do we need for us and our school communities to grow and flourish?

We all know that we flourish when we are valued and feel included. We all thrive when there is justice and equity. We grow when we have the support of one another.

If you are feeling a little jaded or ‘spikey’ at this time, I ask you to hold a conker in your hand and think how you can break free from those spikey feelings or situations. Always remember that the diocesan education team is always here to work with you and alongside you. Please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

I wish you all the best for the rest of this term.

Canon Paul Thompson  
**Diocesan Director of Education**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**This morning, our team came together in prayer for all those affected by the recent attack on the Synagogue. We also prayed for peace—both in the region and across our communities.**


**If you have been impacted by these events or are in need of support, please don't hesitate to reach out. We are here for you.**

**The Church of England has shared a prayer that you may find comforting during this time.**



**A PRAYER FOLLOWING  
THE ATTACK AT HEATON PARK  
SYNAGOGUE, MANCHESTER**

God our refuge and strength,  
close at hand in our distress;  
meet us in our sorrow and lift our eyes  
to the peace and light of your constant care.  
Help us so to hear your word of grace  
that our fear will be dispelled by your love.  
Amen.



## Requests from the DfE

The DfE is requesting information from schools with the intention of the feedback informing policy and guidance documents that are currently being developed.

If you are willing to provide any feedback in relation to these matters, please e-mail Paul Thompson at [paul.thompson@lincoln.anglican.org](mailto:paul.thompson@lincoln.anglican.org) Paul will share any feedback with Dr Margaret James (Interim Head of Education Policy, National Society) who will then forward it to the DfE.

### 1. 'Voluntary' November Ofsted inspections

- If your school has volunteered to form part of the 'soft launch' of the revised Ofsted framework in November, please let Paul know. It is helpful to get a sense of where these inspections are taking place, in what type of schools etc.
- Once these inspections have taken place, the DfE is keen to hear some direct feedback from schools on the revised Ofsted content and methodology. If your school is happy to share their experiences and opinions, the DfE would welcome your feedback whether it is positive or negative.

### 1. Parental complaints

- New policy and guidance to support schools with parental complaints are in the process of being developed, and the DfE would like to hear of some 'real' examples from your schools' experiences.
- Firstly, they are looking for schools in which high quality parental engagement has led/leads to a low number of complaints. Details such as how the school sets its culture and how this translates to engagement with parents would be particularly pertinent. To have such case studies from Church of England schools in which we would expect that Christian vision sets the tone for this work would be good for the reputation of Church schools in general – an opportunity for us to blow our trumpet!
- They would like to hear about any parental complaints that either are legally vexatious or that the school considers having been so. These would be completely anonymised, but the DfE would like to increase and improve its guidance to schools on how to manage such complaints. Providing some case studies will enable them to do this. Details such as the main content of the complaint, how the school dealt with it, ways in which others, such as the DBE or church, supported, the impact of the complaint on staff and leaders, and any changes made subsequently to school policy would all be helpful.

Policy and guidance are both currently in the process of being developed and so time is of the essence. We have no deadlines from the DfE, but it would be a shame to delay any feedback you may have and subsequently miss the opportunity to inform their decision-making.

**Many thanks for your help with this.**



## New School Development Toolkit – Online Preview Session

Lincoln DBE is excited to invite church school leaders to an exclusive online session showcasing a brand-new resource designed to support strategic school development, monitoring, and self-evaluation.

Written to align with the latest SIAMS and Ofsted (2025) frameworks, this comprehensive toolkit includes practical templates and guidance for:

- Vision-led strategic and operational leadership
- Monitoring and evaluation for leaders and governors
- Subject leader support and tracking
- Governor roles including SEND, Pupil Premium, RE & Collective Worship
- Self-evaluation and strategic planning tools, including sample Headteacher reports

**Date: Friday 10 October 2025 Time: 1:30–2:30pm Location: Online (link sent after booking)**

Join us to explore what's included, see how it works, and share your feedback. We look forward to seeing you there!

[\*\*Book your place\*\*](#)

## Cultivating a Culture of Belonging Conference 2025

This year's Autumn term Conference focuses on how we can embody Christ's welcome and lead the way in creating inclusive, just, and hopeful communities.

A key feature is the launch of the Primary Difference Programme – a free, literature-based resource supporting PSHE, SIAMS, Ofsted (Sept 2025), and the Church of England's Flourishing for All guidance. It helps pupils embrace difference, build empathy, and thrive together.

**All attending primary and infant schools will receive a free copy of Heroes of Hope (RRP £14.99), funded by the Church of England's Racial Justice Unit.**

### Keynote speakers include:

- Lorraine Prince
- Shammi Rahman (Race Equality & EDI Consultant)
- David Carter (Senior HMI)
- Lois Delong (Alive Church)

**Date Tuesday 21 October 2025 The Showroom, Lincoln**

**SLA £150 | Non-SLA: £300**

[Book Your Place](#)

## Cultivating a Culture of Belonging



Tuesday 21st October 2025

The Showroom, Tritton Rd, Lincoln LN6 70Y

Early Bird Discount £100

After September 19th £150

Non SLA schools £300

### Keynote Speakers



Lorraine Prince  
Head of Networks, CEFEL



Lois Delong  
Lead Team Alive Church



Shammi Rahman  
Inclusive Leadership and  
Race Equity Strategist



David Carter  
Schools Senior HMI  
(East Midlands)



Called — Aspirational — Rooted — Empowering



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# October dates for your diary...

[www.lincolndiocesaneducation.com](http://www.lincolndiocesaneducation.com)

Called — Aspirational — Rooted — Empowering



## October dates for your diary...

- New Headteacher Induction Day**  
Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025, 10am-4pm
- Aspiring Leaders Session 1**  
Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025, 4pm-5:30pm
- Collective Worship Cluster**  
Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 4pm-5pm
- Members Training**  
Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 5:30pm-7:30pm
- RE Subject Leadership**  
Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 1pm-3pm
- Governor School Induction**  
Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October, 4pm-6pm
- Cultivating a Culture of Belonging**  
Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> October, 10am-3:45pm

## Courses to book

The Diocesan  
Board of Education

Date	Time	Course		Book Here
7/10/2025	16:00-17:00	Collective Worship Cluster	Online	<a href="#">Book</a>
8/10/2025	17:30-19:30	Member's Training	Online	<a href="#">Book</a>
9/10/2025	16:00-18:00	Governance and SEND	Online	<a href="#">Book</a>
14/10/2025	13:00-15:00	RE Subject Leadership	Online	<a href="#">Book</a>
16/10/2025	16:00-18:00	Governor Church School Induction	Online	<a href="#">Book</a>

## Still time to join – The Bible Course: Schools Edition

Starting 14th October, this 8-session course helps church school leaders explore the Bible's big story and apply it to key areas of school life including vision, RE, Collective Worship, SIAMS, and spiritual development.

Each session includes short films, a manual with reflections and readings, and tailored Schools Edition resources linking to Understanding Christianity and SIAMS.

### Starts: 14 October Online sessions

Grow in confidence and connect with others across the Diocese.

For more details and to book: [Click here](#)

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## Our Freedom: Then and Now Project

We are delighted with the interest schools have shown in the project. Please see attached additional guidance in response to some queries.

At this stage of the project it would be helpful if those participating schools could let us know.

Please email [simon@mrholly.co.uk](mailto:simon@mrholly.co.uk) to confirm your participation.

If you need support with uploading images do get in touch.

The deadline for submitting your images is Friday 17 October.

<http://www.nowandthenfreedom.com/>

Thank you, **Our Freedom: Then and Now Project Team**

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## Black History Month: Collective Worship resources

The National Society for Education have released new materials for schools to use during Black History Month and throughout the coming year.

You can find the resources here: [Curriculum: collective worship — National Society for Education](#)