

Bartley Green School: a review of the affiliation agreement with the Diocese of Birmingham and the Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels, Bartley Green

The formal affiliation agreement was signed on 30 April 2010, although the agreement had informally been working since the collation of Kevin Ellis as the new Vicar of Bartley Green.

We thought it might be useful for all parties involved in the affiliation (School, Diocese and Parish) to spend some time reflecting on what had been achieved so far, and thus the report is offered to the Governing Body of Bartley Green School, the Diocesan Board of Education and the Bishop of Birmingham, and the Parochial Church Council of St Michael and All Angels Church.

We decided that the best way of reviewing the partnership was to look at the Agreement signed by all parties, which involved commitments as well as aspirations.

Bartley Green School

- The School has welcomed Kevin Ellis into the wider school family, and provided opportunities for Kevin, and more latterly Lis Sparrow, to be involved in the leading of collective worship, involvement in lessons such as RE and PHSE. In terms of collective worship, Kevin was involved with Des Flood, Assistant Head (Pastoral) and Heads of Year looking at how to make collective worship fit for purpose in a school setting. He will be spending time looking at how collective worship is offered in form group settings.
- The School appointed Kevin as a Governor in October 2009. Kevin is involved in a number of areas of governance, and has become the Governor attached to both PHSE and Humanities, liaising with Des Flood, Assistant Head, for PHSE and Sarah Dawson for Humanities respectively. Kevin was part of a small-group of governors working with partner organisations to ensure the successful transition to Academy Status, and is now a Director of the Academy Trust, along with the Revd Jackie Hughes, who is Diocesan Director for Education.
- The School has sought to celebrate spirituality and faith in the broadest sense in its common life together. A key indicator of this is the School's continued commitment to the teaching of Religious Education, and the annual Year 8 trip to three places of worship: church, mosque and Gurdwara.
- The School has continued to develop its relationship with St Michael's CE Primary School, as it does with all its feeder schools. The School notes the improvements that have been made at St Michael's since the appointment on the new Head in April 2009.
- The School openly acknowledges its affiliation to the Diocese on its publicity.

St Michael and All Angels Church

- The Church continues to be committed to supporting BGS in its development of young people. To this end, Christine Owen was invited to speak on Education Sunday in 2010 with the view of communicating to Church members about the progress made by BGS. The wider community of Bartley Green, of which St Michael's Church is apart, can still sometimes see BGS as 'Adams Hill School' and thus not in a favourable light.
- The Church seeks to support the spiritual life of the school. This is not only in the use of clergy time in collective worship and speaking in RE Classes; but in hosting a Year 7 Carol Service in Church in December 2011, and inviting a pupil to speak about their experiences of school during our Education Sunday service in 2012. The PCCs invitation to the Art Department to contribute to the Flower Festival in 2011 (see below) and the further invitation of Kevin Ellis for the Art Department to do some work around the Stations of the Cross are indicators of supporting the spiritual life of the school.
- The Church needs to look at other ways of supporting events at the School and for its members to be present at events the School may hold in the Church; although a good number of church members were present at the signing of the affiliation agreement, and some have been in to School as part of a wider local history project.
- The Church regular prays for the School in its acts of worship and through the monthly and weekly prayer intentions.
- The Church supports the School in its pastoral care of pupils particularly with regard to bereavement. It can be that Kevin Ellis is aware that a member of a pupils' family has died before the School, and Kevin would speak to Dave Clayton (Deputy Head – Pastoral) and Paul Darby (Pastoral Manager) about concerns following bereavement. Kevin usually also speaks to Chris Owen and Dave Clayton should pupils ask him to pray for or with them when he is in School. For Kevin, involvement in the life of the School eases pastoral visits, parents and grandparents are comfortable speaking to a Vicar who their children and grandchildren know as 'Rev Kev'.
- St Michael's acknowledges its affiliation to Bartley Green School on its weekly news sheet in the section entitled 'St Michael's and Transforming Church'.
- St Michael's has sought to be proactive in creating relationship with the School and the wider School community in the following ways
 - In October 2009, following the art installation, which was produced by Rosie Hogg and pupils of BGS, and displayed in St Philip's Cathedral; the installation was 'brought home' to Bartley Green; enabling local primary schools to engage with it; and parents of BGS pupils to see it, especially those who would not go to the Cathedral or perhaps know where it was.
 - St Michael's sought funding for *The Transition Project* which took place in July 2010 over the weeks of 12-16 and 19-22. It involved 197 Year 6

primary school children, together with between around 40 secondary school pupils chosen as ambassadors. The Project involved a Community Artist working in the Primaries (St Michael's, Woodgate, Kitwell and Nonsuch) making gargoyles. The Year 6 pupils then went into BGS to finish off the gargoyles and experience life at secondary school



- In June 2011, as part of the Church Flower Festival, the PCC provided monies to the Art Department to provide a display that would be placed in the porch area. The display is described as 'using several skills, techniques during the making process such as tie dyeing, stencilling, screen printing, batik staining and card, paper and wire craft as well as traditional drawing and painting. Pupils have also made individual flowers out of card and decorated them using a variety of mixed media to represent their personality. A key memory that will linger for Kevin Ellis is that pupils from BGS came throughout the summer to look at their work. The Church became a place where their work was displayed and cherished. Many will not have had that experience out of a school setting before.



The Diocese of Birmingham

- The Diocese recently invited Kevin Ellis, Christine Owen and Sam Cosgrove (Head of St Michael's CE Primary) to take part in a CME 1-4 Training Morning.
- The Diocese were keen both at interview (through Peter French) and in conversation with the Archdeacon of Birmingham to stress the importance of the proposed affiliation to the Diocese.
- Jackie Hughes and Peter French have both been to the School. Chris Owen has been to Diocesan Training.
- Jill Stolberg is actively seeking to make links with the RE Department.
- The Bishop of Birmingham was the guest of the School at its prize giving evening in 2010.

General Conclusions

Both the Headteacher of the School and the Vicar of St Michael and All Angels believe the partnership has been an unqualified success to date. This has been made possible for three principle reasons:

- The ease with which Kevin works in the School and his commitment to the young people and staff alike. Kevin can be an ambassador for the Christian faith without appearing to do so.
- The welcome that the Head and SLT have afforded to Kevin, based on the work done previously particularly by Colin Mansley in the area of governance and the Franciscan Brothers in the area of mentoring.
- The commitment of the Parochial Church Council, unwittingly or otherwise, to allowing their Vicar to spend a substantial amount of time nurturing the relationship with the School.
- Kevin Ellis and Christine Owen recognise, appreciate and respect the fact that they come from different faith positions. Both acknowledge that in the cultural context of Bartley Green that the School and Church have more to offer by

working together than each ploughing their own furrow. Kevin would openly acknowledge that the Church has gained far more from the partnership that he would have dared to imagine.

The Next Steps

In some ways given the current nature of the relationship between the School and Church, there is limit only in terms of capacity as to what could happen. The following are some realistic examples.

- Kevin is going to be involved in teaching a session of RE during someone's maternity leave.
- Given that Kevin is about to training to be a SIAS Inspector, there will be things that he can bring to the ethos of the School.
- Further, now Lis Sparrow has settled into her role as curate, there may be opportunities for her to provide another role model within the school. Prior to ordination, Lis' vocation was as a structural engineer. Lis' path through engineering and to ordination has not always followed the conventional route. It may be appropriate to use engineering as a gateway to share her experiences. Relationship could build which may provide encouragement and self belief for pupils who only see barriers.
- The Church may wish to look at the re-establishment of the Q Club, particularly as most Y7 and Y8 pupils will have been used to working with Kevin at their primary schools.

At some point particular with a view that at some stage there will be a change in Headship and Incumbency, it may be appropriate for Kevin Ellis, Christine Owen, Jackie Hughes and the Churchwardens to establish what Chaplaincy means for both BGS and St Michael's Church. This will be essential for ensuring that the good foundations laid are not lost in any succession.

**Kevin Ellis
Christine Owen
1 January 2012**