

# Rural Church schools serving communities across Britain



Langar Church of England Primary School is a small rural school in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham. With just under one hundred pupils, it has spent the last four years putting values at the heart of everything it does. They started by asking 'who do we want to send out into the world?' The headteacher, Emily Brown, is passionate about the impact this has had on both the school and the wider community.

Church of England schools come in all shapes and sizes but over half of them can be found in rural areas. Many have served their communities for hundreds of years. What they have taught may have changed over the years, but their ethos has stayed the same.

## *Life in all its fullness*

The Church of England Education Office is working with rural schools to ensure every child can have life in all its fullness. We want our schools to bring people into community with each other and serve the common good. Pupils should flourish as individuals, but also as members of families, communities and institutions.

In March 2018, the Church of England published *Embracing Change: Rural and Small Schools*, a report on the context and challenges for small and rural schools. Since then, there have been four rural conferences for school leaders, a symposium with members of parliament, farming unions, local authorities, academics, head teachers and pupils, and the introduction of Peer Support Networks, supporting school leaders with leadership development, resource sharing and online collaborations.

Emily, the headteacher at Langar Church of England Primary School, has been working with the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership for 18 months now. She began with a conference on character education and is now a member of the Peer Support Network. 'It was lovely meeting with other people on that journey, and knowing the journey never ends. The work I did with that group really informed my work in school,' she said. She has made valuable 'professional friends' from the network. Some are at schools very different from Langar, 'but you realise you're all facing the same issues.'

## *Values enhance outcomes*

One of the Church of England Education Office's key themes is that values do not come at the expense of outcomes. Values *enhance* outcomes. This has definitely been true at Langar. Emily said it can be hard to take time away from day to day tasks unless you know that your values are the foundation for everything else working well. Their five school values – take care, thoughtfulness, love, fairness and respect – are key to the way they work. 'This year they just thread through everything we do,' she said, 'We don't have school rules anymore; those five values are our rules.'

Although the local vicar, Canon Bronwen Gamble, has just left, she was a crucial member of the school community. She came in weekly, linking Bible stories to the values. She came up with the idea of having the new school badge in the shape of the Celtic Trinity, which the children then designed. The church building is just down the road, so it is a part of the life of the school and is used for special services throughout the year.

There are many challenges in rural areas but there are also excellent teachers, governors, vicars and school leaders in those places. The Church of England wants to ensure that all schools, not just Church of England schools, are supported in their valuable work. The work of the Foundation for Educational Leadership is open to everyone. We want to ensure that children and families continue to have access to excellent education, long into the future.

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