

Director's Statement

UPDATED ADVICE AND REMINDER

Recording of Children's Attendance at Church Services and Applications to Church of England Schools

I understand that some churches are continuing to record the attendance of children and young people at worship services for the purposes of supporting Church of England Schools in their Admissions process.

I would like to remind all churches and schools in Manchester Diocese that Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer of the Church of England, in consultation with the DfE and Office of Schools' Adjudicator (OSA) along with all Diocesan Directors of Education have issued advice that **attendance at church worship should not be recorded until after Covid 19 restrictions have fully ceased**. This is because we are not yet in a position where all churches can open fully for worship. Restricted seating measures are often in place in order to make churches Covid secure, hence technically churches are not fully open for worship.

We are asking all churches within Manchester Diocese to adhere to this advice.

Schools using faith based over subscription criteria were advised to apply to the OSA for a variation to their Admissions Policies for September 2021 to take into account church closures from 17 March 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. The Board of Education has supported schools with these applications.

Therefore, diocesan and national advice remains that children applying to a Church of England School to enter in September 2021 should not have their attendance at church services recorded post 17 March 2020 until restrictions imposed by Covid-19 have passed **and** there is unrestricted and open access to all for public worship, that is, until it is **without any restrictions on numbers attending**.

Where attendance at church is required longer than within one school year schools may need to formally consult on changes to admission policies for 2022 and beyond in order to take this period into consideration. Requirements for formal consultations are included within the School Admissions Code. We expect this to be updated shortly so are awaiting further national advice from OSA on this.

Parents are advised to thoroughly read the admissions policy of any school. If the policy is not clear or easy to understand, please do contact the individual school to ask for further clarification.

To recap

- Churches **should not** record child attendance until public worship is fully open to all.
- Church of England schools' admissions arrangements may include an agreed variation to faith-based criteria post 17 March 2020.
- Schools may need to undertake further work to make changes should admission policies require more than a year's attendance at church. This will include formal widespread consultation to make further changes to their admissions arrangements for September 2022.
- Parents are asked to always read the school admissions policy on each school website.

Regards

Deborah Smith

Director of Education

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