Company registration number 85176 (England and Wales)

Charity registration number 525790 (England and Wales)

CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Members of the Board of Education

The Bishop's nominees: -

Ven Dr M Gilbertson
Canon D Hermitt

Members elected by Diocesan Synod: -

Revd J Arnott
Mrs M Cruxton
Dr D Cumberland
Mr P Gibbons
Dr C Gordon
Dr E Hemmings (appointed 01/01/2025)
Mrs S C Hudson
Professor D Walter

Co-opted members: -

Mr P Bostock (appointed 01/01/2025)
Revd C Corley
Mr I Gould-Jones (appointed 01/01/2025)
Mrs C Speed

Trustees

Ven Dr M R Gilbertson (Chair)
Revd J Arnott
Mr P Bostock
Revd C Corley
Mrs M Cruxton
Prof D Cumberland
Mr P Gibbons
Dr C Gordon
Mr I Gould-Jones (appointed 19/03/2025, resigned 25/03/2026)
Dr E Hemmings (appointed 19/03/2025)
Cannon D Hermitt
Mrs S C Hudson
Mrs C Speed
Prof D Walter

Secretary Mr C Penn

Charity number 525790

Company number 85176

Registered office
Church House
5500 Daresbury Park
Daresbury
Warrington
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Auditor
Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited
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CH1 4RN

Bankers
National Westminster Bank plc
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CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

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CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

TRUSTEES' REPORT (INCLUDING DIRECTORS' REPORT)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

The trustees are pleased to present their annual report and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2025.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out in note 1 to the financial statements and comply with the charity's Memorandum and Articles of Association of 1943 amended on 24 April 2017, the Companies Act 2006 and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019).

Objectives and activities

The charity acts as the Education Authority for the Church of England in the Diocese of Chester, in accordance with The Diocesan Boards of Education Measure 2021. The objects of the charity are:

- to promote or assist in the promotion of education in the Diocese that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England;
- to promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the Diocese;
- to promote or assist in the promotion of church schools in the Diocese;
- to promote co-operation between itself and other persons concerned with education in the Diocese.

One of the principal activities is the administration of grant claims in respect of building and maintenance work carried out on school properties together with all other related matters which promote the efficiency of, or otherwise benefit, the schools in the Diocese. This administration has become a more central feature as the grant funding is paid directly to the DBE for distribution.

The company also acts as custodian trustee for a number of specific trusts (referred to as Specific Purpose Funds in the attached accounts).

The strategies employed to achieve the charity's objectives are to:

- Administer and advise on building work, particularly in aided schools in the Diocese;
- Advise and support governing boards in aspects of their role such as appointments, admissions and ethos;
- Support and promote quality religious education and worship in church schools in the Diocese;
- Support staff and governors through denominational inspection procedures liaising with the C of E centrally and offering training and advice;
- Supporting staff and governors through the Ofsted inspection process;
- Provide training opportunities for staff and governors on aspects relating to church schools;
- Provide pastoral and other support to schools experiencing difficulties;
- Provide pastoral support for church school leaders;
- Promote wellbeing and provide opportunities for professional development;
- Facilitate school collaboration and support;
- Offer opportunities for children and young people to come together with others from church schools;
- Advise and support schools converting to academy status;
- Work with other Diocesan Boards of Education in the DBE Services group to provide high quality services to schools;
- Work with Local Authorities, academy trustees, the DfE and Regional School Director to support education in church schools across the Diocese;
- Represent the Diocese on committees and groups involved in school work; and
- Advise and support the trustees of church educational endowments held wholly, or partly for, or in connection with, any church school.

In order to track the success of these objectives, the DBE observes a number of performance indicators:

- The uptake of subscriptions to the Family of Schools membership;
- Increased engagement and sign-up by schools to DBE facilitated or endorsed CPD (Continuing Professional Development) training;
- Deve oped and strengthened engagement by school leadership in networks and individual contact with executive officers;
- Successful Ofsted and SIAMS inspections;
- Improved mental wellbeing of school leadership (notably headteachers);
- The engagement of outside bodies with the work of the Board; and clear links with the work of officers and the DBE vision.
- A greater alignment of the DBE's vision and strategy with the wider Diocesan vision and strategy.

Performance

The Board's vision is:

Being deeply Christian and for the common good, our schools will be communities which are: Loving in relationships; Ambitious in aspirations; Bold in actions.

'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

DBE strategy and operational activities are influenced by this vision and are delivered across six key principles; relationships, outcomes, impact, resourcing, structures and trust.

Relationships

The Board has continued to support and develop its relationships with a number of organisations, primarily Diocesan schools and has worked to strengthen these throughout the year through a number of activities.

A focus on headteacher and senior leadership wellbeing has been managed through a wellbeing programme for headteachers. Headteachers were encouraged to attend the programme and Chairs of governors to signpost their leaders to it. The programme ran through the academic year 2024/25, with a revised delivery model offering single reflective days for school leaders at all levels. Training for governors was offered throughout the year to ensure governors were aware of their duties with regards to wellbeing. Individual tailored pastoral support was the most impactful work undertaken by executive officers as they supported leaders who needed additional individual support for a number of differing reasons.

DBE officers provided support, advice and guidance to schools individually and collectively, that included attendance at school ed clusters, upon invitation, inputting DBE information and supporting collaboration. Wider DBE briefings were planned into the CPD offer to engage schools across the Diocese. Termly surgeries for Chairs of Governors continued to be offered to support them in their role and ensure that they were aware of DBE policies and other statutory guidance.

For staff in schools a number of networks have provided support and helped develop relationships with staff beyond headteachers, for example RE subject leaders, deputy/assistant headteachers, and collective worship leaders. A rich programme of CPD has been on offer to support leaders, staff, clergy and governors across the Diocese.

Support for the most vulnerable within the Diocese has continued to be a focus for the work of the Board through the Disadvantage, Diversity and SEND networks alongside the Board's involvement with external partners. These have continued to impact practical work in schools to support these groups and also the professionals as they develop their provision by sharing ideas and good practice. As part of the commitment to support Diversity, the Board commenced a focus on developing Racial Justice as a key priority throughout 2025, following the school leaders' launch event in November 2024, including gathering information from every school about their work in this area.

The Board is involved in various partnership working both across the region and nationally including the Diocesan Directors of Education network, the Diocesan Governance Group (DGG) Diocesan Admission Group (DAG); RE/CW advisers, North West Association of Governor Advisor Services (NWAGAS), and the National Society for Education. These have ensured the DBE is kept informed of regional and national developments and also ensured the DBE has a voice and influence in these groups.

Collaboration with other Diocesan Boards of Education in the northern province has been positive over the year through DBE services and the sharing of good practice and resources on governance, RE, Collective Worship, SIAMS, and other aspects of the Board's work. The very successful Christian Leadership course finished and started another cohort in September with eight candidates from Chester starting. A North-west Diocesan Racial Justice group was established to share best practice across schools, acting on the 'From Lament to Action' guidance. This has now been expanded to include virtually all Dioceses within the Northern Province.

The Board continued to work with its nine Local Authorities providing support for maintained schools and academies with regards to Ofsted and data outcomes whilst maintaining its core purpose of supporting the distinctive nature of its church schools. A number of schools required closer collaboration with Diocesan Officers, working together to provide support with regards to leadership and school improvement. The Board also has representation on Local Authority Children and Young People Scrutiny Committees and Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACRE).

In order to support relationships between schools for children and pupils, the Board has offered training for school ethos groups, encouraged schools to undertake the Archbishops' Young Leaders Awards and supported school Vision ambassadors as well as bringing church school children together in the successful annual year six leavers' service. The Diocese is currently in the second year of the national Church's pilot of the Flourish initiative. This has seen four schools engaged in developing creative worshipping communities ed in partnership with pupils and young people. There has been significant impact on the communities involved, with greater numbers engaging than anticipated. The Board has supported this project through Executive Officer oversight whilst the project itself is managed by the Diocesan Outreach team.

Outcomes

In addition to Ofsted inspections, Anglican church schools undergo a denominational inspection under the auspices of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) (Section 48 of the Education Act 2005).

The charity continued to support schools before and after denominational inspection and these provide great benefit in further developing the Christian foundation of the schools as well as offering a means of pastoral support to senior leaders. Schools due for inspection were invited for specific training in orcer to prepare them for inspection as well as providing general training through the CPD programme alongside bespoke support. Across 2025, thirty-two schools were inspected under the SIAMS schedule. All were deemed to be living up to their foundation as Church schools and enabling pupils and adults to flourish.

Following the publication of the SIAMS annual report, the Board has encouraged schools to look in particular at the effectiveness of governor monitoring and evaluation of Church school distinctiveness, whilst continuing to develop opportunities for spiritual development, especially through the daily act of worship and ensure the focus on justice is central to their work around courageous advocacy. The aim was that by the end of the year more schools were able to articulate the language of spirituality and provide more opportunities for spiritual development for both children and adults, both across the curriculum and through worship. This work is ongoing with a number of schools taking the opportunity to host bespoke training on spirituality led by a Diocesan officer as well as attendance at a conference on this topic hosted by Liverpool Diocese Schools should have also gained a greater understanding of Inspection Question 5, how their Christian vision shapes a culture of justice and responsibility. In turn supporting children and young people to identify injustice and take action for lasting change, thus impacting wider society. Thirty-eight schools took part on the Archbishop of York Young Leader Awards to support their courageous advocacy work. This is a third of church schools across the diocese. A further significant development area arising from inspections is in regard to religious education and the opportunity to explore the diverse expressions of religious and non-religious worldviews. The Distinctiveness & SIAMS Officer has attended training with the National Society for Education in order to address this with schools in the coming year.

From January to July, nineteen schools were inspected under the pre-existing OFSTED framework, with all nineteen judged to be good or better. Two of these schools will be revisited to see if they have sustained their previous good standard. From September onwards, inspections were paused ready for introduction of the new Ofsted framework. From September to November, only one school has been visited for an interim inspection. The new framework is implemented from 1st December.
As of the end of 2025, ninety-six primary schools and five secondary schools were judged to be good or better under the Ofsted framework. Twenty-five schools were inspected during 2025. Due to the rapid change in grading systems and the conversion to a completely new inspection system, it is not possible to provide data showing which schools have retained or improved their grades on a like-for-like basis. However, as key reportable headlines, of those schools inspected from January to July, two formerly outstanding schools were graded 'good in all areas', with another two retaining all or most of their grades as outstanding. Six moved from Requires Improvement or Special Measures to good/good in all or almost all areas. Nine retained their 'good' status and one good school will be revisited to see whether they now demonstrate outstanding practice. However, those due a return inspection will be judged under a completely new framework with different grades and areas for inspection. A pattern emerged of schools improving from 'RI' or 'Special Measures' having implemented robust curricula, as well as clearly focusing on impactful leadership.

The Board had expressed its strong preference for diocesan schools to join a Diocesan MAT. Building on the close working relationship between the Board and Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT), established in 2014, and this has continued to develop over the years. Responding to the need and creating additional capacity, the DBE expanded its provision of Multi-Academy Trusts by establishing a second Diocesan MAT, Chester Diocesan Learning Trust (CDLT).

This work has been led by the Diocesan Deputy Director of Education who has been seconded for the academic year 2025/26 as Trust CEO, in a part-time capacity. The Trust was formally incorporated on 1st October and saw eight diocesan primary schools being the founding members. There is further interest in joining the Trust and it is expected to expand further in 2026.

In addition, CDAT has continued to grow with the Trust now being twenty-nine schools strong and further schools waiting to join. This has seen two trusts on church school articles, Rural Church Schools Academy Trust and The Samara Trust, merging with CDAT.

Impact

In order to achieve the outcomes expected the Board must ensure it has the required impact. The Family of Schools offer is the main source of financial engagement with schools, in addition to attendance at training and events. The Board encouraged all schools to join the Family of Schools and attend training and events by providing appropriate resources and support and ensuring a programme of training and events that supported schools' current priorities. The Board reviewed the offer before the start of the academic year and uplifted the charge slight y to cover costs, as well as charging for some additional aspects.

A commitment was also made for each school to continue to receive a visit from a DBE officer. To ensure the sustainability of this work, the DBE has recruited the support of a number of trained school leaders to support the Executive Officers in delivery of this objective. It has enabled the Board to have contact with each one of its schools through the visit as well as helping identify wider and more individual school challenges to help inform future planning. It has also resulted in the ability to link schools based on need and examples of good practice. All Diocesan schools bought back into the Family of Schools offer for 2025-2026.

In addition to the CPD that is chargeable, the Board offered a wide variety of support that was not charged, including cluster groups, briefings, training for governors, support for voluntary aided schools with regards to capital work and general individual guidance and support. The Board publicises this support through various means including regular bulletins and social media. Schools have engaged well with these offers.

In order to encourage greater engagement and thus Board impact, the offer of meetings, briefings and training in a hybrid model of in-person and virtual allowed those from the extremes of the Diocese to attend without the need to travel. This has been well received with some schools preferring to take up the virtual offer and others preferring to attend in person; by offering both, the Board has been able to support a wider range of schools.

Through the year the Board, as anticipated, was made aware of a number of recruitment opportunities to leadership positions. DBE Officers have supported the recruitment of strong church school leaders by guiding governing boards throughout the appointments process at both Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher level.

Resourcing

The Board uses an efficient cloud based financial recording and reporting system. Processes have become more efficient and refined, making the interface and interaction simpler for external partners through an updated event booking system and the ability to pay for training online.

Quarterly management accounts are prepared and reported to the Board, alongside an high level of scrutiny and review of the company finances. The retirement of the School Assets Officer and resignation of the Buildings and Finance Officer in December 2024, saw a review of personnel and the creation of a new role as Finance and Operations Office, appointed to in April 2025. This has seen a further review of the existing financial processes and procedures. Additional finance support is now also being provided by a part-time Finance Administrator, appointed in December 2025.

Aided schools in the Diocese have continued to demonstrate their trust in the charity by having their Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) monies held centrally, enabling the Board to allow some schools to expend money which they will not receive until the following year.

Voluntary Aided schools must obtain DBE permission for capital work as well as fund 10% of the total grant-aided costs. In order to ensure transparency, the Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) and Schools Capital Allocation (SCA) monies are separated from DBE central funds and held in designated bank accounts. Some monies from CCLA investments are transferred to the general bank account to assist cash flow.

The SCA monies are paid directly to the DBE. The Board continues to ensure that projects are funded based on appropriate priorities of safeguarding and health and safety. A further focus has been achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A working party has been created to look at strategies to achieve this and it is also being introduced as part of the decision-making process around capital projects.

Many schools benefited from building work and the support of staff and consultants from DBE Services Ltd. Projects with work over £100,000 included:

Completion of projects begun in 2025:

• Altrincham CE Primary	Boiler Room Replacement
• Bebington, St Andrew's	Roofing Works - Pitched Tile
• Burton, Bishop Wilson	Boiler Replacement
• Chester Blue Coat	Timber Cladding Treatment and External Works
• Hartford CE High School	Mechanical Replacement Works Phase 4 of 4
• Heswall, St Peter's	Flat Roof Replacement (Roof 3)
• Lower Peover	Pitched Roofing Works and Internal Alterations
• Prestbury CE Primary	Car Park Alterations
• Stockport, St George's	Specialist Repair of Ventilating Couplas
• St Berteline's	Boiler Replacement
• Stockport, St George's	Renewal of Heating System - Junior Building
• Windle CE Primary	Replacement Nursery Building
• Witton Church Walk	Main School Boiler Replacement

New projects in 2026:

• Runcorn All Saints CE Primary School	Asbestos Removal Works (Phase 2)
• Mottram CE Primary School	Septic Tank
• Altrincham CE Primary School	Partial Replacement of Flat Roof Coverings
• Prestbury CE Primary School	Electrical Refurbishment Works (Phase 1)

With the Buildings and Finance Officer leaving in December 2024, DBE services were appointed to oversee the Capital work for Chester DBE going forward, in a similar service they provide for other DBEs in the northwest.

Human resource is one of the main ways the Board hoped to achieve its objectives. By ensuring well trained and resourced school staff and governors the Board impacts outcomes for children within its schools. As identified earlier, good leadership recruitment is essential followed by induction and support. The Board's CPD programme is designed to develop leaders from the start of their career on to leadership. An extensive ECT programme, designed to run alongside the national training, has been developed to ensure teaching professionals understand the distinctiveness of church schools and the impact they have. Training and support for middle and senior leaders has continued to be provided alongside that for governors and RE and worship leads. The CPD offer remains a central focus for the Board and its impact.

The recruitment of foundation governors remains a challenge not just for the Board but nationally. The Board still expects foundation governors to be regular worshippers but will employ an alternative framework of appointment where circumstances require it. The Board has continued to work with local parishes and national bodies to both encourage involvement and recruit to schools. The recruitment of Academy Directors as well as to local governing boards following varied Articles has added complexity to the situation.

The Board's central team of officers has been expanded as it continues to develop the Board's offer and respond to national and local circumstances to ensure Diocesan schools are equipped and supported in all situations. The Diocesan Director of Education fulfilled an additional role as interim Diocesan Secretary through the year until the end of August on a part time basis. The Deputy Director stepped up to fulfil the Director's role on a part-time, interim basis in this period, whilst also taking on the role of CEO of the second diocesan trust.

To increase capacity within the team of officers the Distinctiveness and SIAMS lead increased their working hours by an additional day. The additional need for capacity was also recognised by the creation of a Schools Advisor role which commenced in January. The retirement of the School Assets Officer and Buildings and Finance Officer posts at the end of the year provided the DBE with an opportunity to review how these aspects of the DBE can be delivered. In addition to the appointment of DBE Services for the capital work, the DBE's accountants, Mitchell Charlesworth, provided additional finance support in the first three months of the year prior to the creation and appointment of the new role of Finance and Operations Officer. The finance work being further supported by a part-time Finance Administrator from December 2025.

As Chester Diocesan Board of Education is an Incorporated Company which operates financially independently from Chester Diocesan Board of Finance, the DBE does not receive any income from local parish churches via the parish share scheme. The DBE is, therefore, responsible for sourcing its own income and, due to the financial strains on schools, relies heavily on income generated by investments, dividends and rental income from previous school sites. These income sources fund the majority of the DBE's day to day activities to further its aims and charitable objectives, with income from Family of Schools membership and attendance at training courses and conferences supplementing this income. These resources are managed carefully by the Board to ensure efficiencies whilst still investing for impact.

Structures

The Board of Education meets four times as year in addition to an AGM with detailed work being undertaken by two committees, Finance and Estates (F&E) and Distinctiveness, Standards and Governance (DSG).

The Board has held senior officers to account for the offer and impact of the Board on its schools, Trustees and wider communities. It has challenged practice and ensured that financial oversight is rigorous.

A number of working parties and sub-committees also support the work on academies, net-zero carbon and School Capital Allocations.

Trust

In order to achieve its aim regarding relationships, outcomes, impact, resourcing and structures, the Board must be trusted by all those linked to it. The Board has worked hard to ensure it is transparent, engaging and reflective and that it is both supportive and challenging to support the best outcomes for its schools.

Through its work the Board has continued to support its schools in being Loving in Relationships; Ambitious in Aspirations; and Bold in Actions.

Reserves Policy

The charity is almost entirely dependent on the income from its investments to support its work. Consequently, investments are maintained, and the trustees would only consider expending capital in exceptional cases. With the continued volatility in national and world markets the reserves have reduced by around 4%.

The Restricted Funds arise out of the sale of school properties which in past years came under various Educational Endowment Orders and were amalgamated into a uniform statutory trust in 1995 following the provisions of the Education Act 1993. The use of these funds is restricted to the following:

a) funding the purchase, or erection of, improvement or enlargement of, relevant school premises in the area;

b) funding maintenance costs of any relevant school in the area; or

c) funding the costs of the administration of the trust and the costs of providing advice, guidance and resources in connection with any matter related to the management of, or education provided at any relevant school in the area.

The Unrestricted General Funds held are historic funds and may be used for the general purposes of the Board in achieving its charitable objectives.

Free unrestricted reserves at the end of 2025 were £1,928,510 (2024 - £1,951,577), Total restricted reserves were £10,281,458 (2024 - £ 10,908,122). A detailed breakdown of restricted reserves, along with notes of the restrictions on these funds can be found in note 20 of these accounts.

The Board holds free reserves - restricted and unrestricted - of £12,209,968 at the end of 2025 (2024 - £12,859,699) and £1,198,280 (2024 - £1,202,209) of Endowment funds. Of this, £10,700,614 (2024 - £11,125,586) is held in investments in order to provide some capital appreciation and a flow of investment income. Of the investments, £1,485,203 (2024 - £1,546,858) are unrestricted, equivalent to over two years of expenditure. While the Board has no intention of liquidating these investments, it could do so with little difficulty. As such the Board considers it has adequate reserves to enable it to respond to changing church education needs and fluctuations in the economic environment.

It should be noted that these levels of reserves are partly historic and partly received through Act of Parliament; they are not hoarced donations.

The Finance and Estates Committee of the Board will continue to review levels of reserves and make their findings known to the Board of Trustees.

Financial Review, Reserves and Going Concern

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102), the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2011.

The Statement of Financial Activities shows a net deficit of £224,759 (2024 - £280,301 deficit) and investment losses of £428,901 (2024 - £301,834 gain) together with a loss on revaluation of fixed assets of £3,929 (2024 - £23,571 gain) resulting in net decrease in funds of £ 653,660 (2024 - £21,533 increase).

The financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis, as the trustees consider that the Board has sufficient reserves to continue operations.

Investment Policy and Outcome

To determine where the charity should invest its financial assets, the DBE follows the national Church of England's Statement of Ethical Investment Policy, which states that taking account of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues is an intrinsic part of being a good long-term investor, for both ethical and financial reasons.

To achieve this, the charity holds cash together with holdings in the Central Board of Finance (CBF) Church of England General Investment Fund, the CBF Church of England Global Equity Income Fund, the CBF Church of England Trust Property Fund and the CBF Deposit Fund. The intention is to provide income together with capital appreciation to afford long term protection against inflation. The value, of investments has fluctuated over the year but as always, the DBE's response to short-term investment fluctuations is to focus on the long-term viability of the investment portfolio of which it is confident. The Board has reviewed its investments and held discussions with CCLA to reassure itself that its monies are managed in an ethical and efficient way to ensure the long term viability of the Charity.

The CBF guarantee that investments are made in accordance with the ethical standards of the Church of England. The trustees will continue to regularly consider the performance of the shares to ensure that the return in terms of capital growth and income is appropriate to the long-term needs of the charity.

The Finance and Estates Committee will continue to keep investment policy and the investments themselves under review and keep the board of directors informed.

Risk management

The trustees have a risk management strategy which comprises:

- a regular review of the risks the charity may face;
- the establishment of systems and procedures to mitigate those risks identified in the plan; and
- the implementation of procedures designed to minimise any potential impact on the charity should those risks materialise.

Trustee indemnity insurance is in place.

The Board considers the main risks to be in the following areas:

- Risk to/Loss of Capital/Decrease in value of CCLA investments
- National or global events causes school capital projects to change in priority, overrun or overspend
- Changes in school funding reducing viability of small schools
- Rise in energy bills and other costs impact on schools budgets leaving less resource to support education and development
- Risk that DBE bucget will be in deficit
- Changes to DBE staff that may leave the Board unable to fulfil all of its functions
- Libel/Adverse media coverage inc. due to high profile, national or global events.

Mitigation for these risks have been identified and continue to be monitored.

The Board, with local authorities, continues to support schools in facilitating discussion around school organisation and possible structures to manage school funds.

A key element in the management of financial risk is the work of the both committees considering the detailed risks and the Board understanding the high risks and the mitigations for them.

Remuneration of Key Management Personnel

As DBE employees are joint employees with Chester Diocesan Board of Finance, the salaries of key management personnel, as per all DBE employees, is set according to the Chester Diocesan Board of Education pay scale as determined by the HR Committee and the Finance and Scrutiny Committee of the DBF. Any pay increases determined outside of the DBF committees are proposed by the DBE Board and taken to the DBF committees for approval.

Supplier Payment Policy

The Company's current policy concerning the payment of trade creditors is to follow the CBI's Prompt Payers Code (copies are available from the CBI, Centre Poirt, 103 New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1DU).

The company's current policy concerning payment of trade creditors is to:

- Settle the terms of payment with suppliers when agreeing the terms of each transaction;
- Ensure that suppliers are made aware of the terms of payment by inclusion of the relevant terms in contract and other legal obligations.

Plans for Future Periods
'Being deeply Christian and for the common good',

The Board will support its schools to be communities which are: Loving in relationships; Ambitious in aspirations; Bold in actions in the following ways:

Relationships
The Board will continue to invest time into the relationships it has with various organisations particularly its schools, and as the academy system develops, the academy trusts in which its schools sits. It will work particularly closely with its Diocesan Trusts, CDAT and CDLT. It will also support other Trusts that may wish to grow or merge.

There will be a continued focus on wellbeing for school leaders through targeted wellbeing support, governor training and individual support. In a time when pressures on school leaders are so great, there is a need to support them through both practical and pastoral activities and the Board will prioritise this through the year. School leaders manage the wellbeing of school children/students, staff and communities and so by supporting the wellbeing of leaders this should have a positive impact on those they support.

Chairs of governors in turn are a source of support for school leaders and do this in a voluntary capacity. Termly Chair of governor networks will continue to be held to provide information, answer questions and support networking. The Board will continue to support schools and local parishes as they look to recruit governors and the Board continues to strengthen relationships with its academy trusts as DBE appointees/recommendations are recruited to all levels of governance in them.

Networks for senior leaders, clergy, chaplains, RE leaders and worship leads will continue to be supported by the Board. These will enable the Board to share information and understand the current needs of those involved in church schools. A rich programme of CPD will also be on offer to support leaders, staff and governors across the Diocese.

Support for the most vu nerable within the Diocese will continue to be a focus for the work of the Board through the Disadvantage, Diversity, SEND networks and Racial Justice group alongside the Board's involvement with external partners, such as the National Society for Education

As part of our focus on diversity and in response to the From Lament to Action report, racial justice will continue to be a key commitment across workstreams and in recruitment, for the foreseeable future.

The Board will continue to work with a number of organisations and strategic partners, including the Department for Education and Ofsted to support its work and the work of others. Various partnership working is planned with the National Society for Education and officers will continue to be involved in a number of national and local networks.

Collaboration with other Diocesan Boards of Education in the northern province will continue through DBE Services and through the sharing of good practice and resources on governance, RE, Collective Worship, SIAMS, and other aspects of the Board's work. The very successful Christian Leadership course will run again through the year. The Board continues to support the carbon net zero plan for the Diocese through collaboration with the DBF's Environmental officer and DBE services with regards to Capital work.

As the education landscape evolves the Board will support schools seeking conversion to academisation, managing the route to academy status if they choose to do so. Officers will advise and support Governing Boards, liaise with academies and advise the Board on proposals.

In order to support relationships between schools for children and young people, the Board will ensure its offer of resources and events includes opportunities for pupils and students.

Outcomes

The Board will continue to support schools in understanding the SIAMS inspection process and has the aim that all the schools inspected through the year will be judged as 'Living up to its foundation as a church school'.

Working alongside Local Authority and academy colleagues, the Board will support schools with the aim that all schools receive at least the equivalent of a 'Secure in all areas' judgement in their latest Ofsted inspection. The Board will provide guidance and support to schools that are due an Ofsted inspection; identify schools that may need additional support because of data or other aspects of concern and give additional support to schools that have not yet achieved a 'Secure in all areas' Ofsted outcome. It will also support school leaders as they prepare for inspection, focusing on their wellbeing.

The Board will continue to signpost schools to appropriate resources and support, working in collaboration with LA and academy colleagues, in order to raise outcomes for all children and young people. The expectation would be that all diocesan schools have ambitious aspirations for all.

Resourcing

The Board has an efficient, cloud-based financial recording and reporting system. This has been further refined to support efficiencies, and the Board will continue to monitor its impact and develop further resources as necessary.

Voluntary Aided schools are aware that the governors' contribution must be paid upfront and that the Board cannot fund deferred payments. The process will be refined in 2026 to reflect changes to project costs that require an adjustment/reduction to the amount to be paid.

The Board remains focused on achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. A dedicated working party is exploring ways to support schools in resourcing their decarbonisation efforts, while also collaborating with DBE services to provide guidance and support for decisions related to SCA bids and their impact on sustainability. A further partnership has been established between the DBE and the national organisation 'Let's Go Zero' to strengthen support for schools in completing Climate Action Plans and fostering sustainable attitudes, behaviours, and cultures within school communities.

The Board in fulfilling its responsibility to offer guidance on denominational RE that meets the Church of England Statement of Entitlement for RE, continues to deliver further training to ensure schools plan a curriculum that is contextually appropriate using the Questful syllabus, for VA schools, and engage with effective use of the assessment system. Work for 2026 in the area of religious education will ensure the delivery of the National Society for Education's resource for effective teaching of Global Christianity. Work to replace the current High School diocesan syllabus for RE, through a Farmington scholarship collaboration, is underway, with the intention of a small, cross-diocesan working party created to fulfil this objective reporting its findings in summer 2026. This shared project has had a positive impact on the networking and connections across the three diocese involved. A second cohort of Farmington scholars have been identified and are in the process of submitting an application in order to continue this work. This will build on the pedagogical research of year one and contribute to the content matter of the syllabus.

The Board continues to offer a range of support and training for schools to enhance their provision of collective worship that leads to spiritual flourishing in line with guidance from the National Society for Education. This year this has also included partnering with the Faith in the North initiative by writing material and promoting worship and events linked to The Lord's Prayer. Networks for collective worship leaders and clergy enable the sharing of good practice and secure leadership development of this vital area of Church school life.

Human resource is one of the main ways the Board hopes to achieve its objectives. As identified earlier, good leadership recruitment is essential followed by induction and support. The Board's CPD programme will continue to support staff in schools at each stage of their career to ensure an experienced staff that understand and can support and develop the Christian foundation of their school.

The recruitment of foundation governors continues to be a challenge not just for the Board but nationally. The Board will continue to work with local parishes and national bodies to both encourage involvement and recruit to schools and academy trusts. The alternative appointment criteria for one Board member of a VA (or previously VA) school has enabled schools to recruit more diversely or retain experienced governors upon academisation.

The Board's central team of officers, supplemented by a small number of consultants, will continue to develop the Board's offer and will respond to national and local circumstances to ensure Diocesan schools are equipped and supported in all situations.

Impact

In order to achieve the outcomes expected the Board must ensure it has the required impact. The Family of Schools offer is the main source of financial engagement with schools, in addition to attendance at training and events. The Board will encourage all schools to join the Family of Schools and attend training and events by providing appropriate resource and support and ensuring a programme of training and events that supports schools' current priorities. This will be offered in a mixture of chargeable and non-chargeable events and also a hybrid of virtual and in person to encourage uptake.

Further work will be undertaken to develop the DBE's online presence, including online and recorded resources for schools that can be accessed at any time helping reach an even wider audience.

Through the year the Board expects there to be a number of recruitment opportunities in leadership positions. It will continue to support the recruitment of strong church school leaders by guiding governing boards throughout the process for both deputy and headteacher appointments.

Structures

The Board will continue to provide appropriate support and challenge to its executive officers as they seek to fulfil the terms of the DBE measure and objects of the charity. This will be achieved through the work of its two committees and working parties as well as through the meeting of the full Board.

The Board will measure itself against the Good Governance Code and periodically reflect on its policy and practices.

The Board will further develop its role in the academy system and give further thought to how it develops its relationships with schools and academy trusts as the number of schools converting to academies increases. It will continue to ensure that, where Diocesan schools are included, academy structures will ensure each church school is fully living up to its foundation. As the direction of the government shifts, the need for every school to consider academisation is less of a priority but the Board will continue to support schools that wish to take up this option due to local circumstances and context.

Trust

In order to achieve its aim regarding relationships, outcomes, impact, resourcing and structures, the Board must be trusted by all those linked to it. The Board will ensure it is transparent, engaging and reflective; both supportive and challenging to ensure the best outcomes for its schools.

The Board would hope to have all of its schools engaged with its work, at least at some level with a large number fully engaged across all aspects of its work.

Structure and governance

Chester Diocesan Board of Education is a registered charity no. 525790, and a company limited by guarantee no. 85176.

Governing Document

The Chester Diocesan Board of Education is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales and governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association amended on 1 January 2023. It is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. The Board comprises:

(1) the **Bishop**;
(2) at least one but not more than two members appointed by the Bishop ("Bishop appointed **Members"**);
(3) at least seven but not more than eight members elected by the **Diocesan Synod** who are worshipping members of the Church of England but need not themselves be members of the **Diocesan Synod** ("elected **Members"**), of whom: (a) at least three members shall be elected from each of the two archdeaconries of the **Diocese**, being people who work, worship or reside in the archdeaconry from which they are appointed, and
(b) at least one member shall be a clerk in holy orders beneficed or licensed in the **Diocese**;
(4) at least two but not more than four members co-opted by the **Board** who shall be persons with experience of church schools in the **Diocese (**co-opted **Members)**.

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purpose of company law, and who served during the year and up to the date of signature of the financial statements were:

Ven Dr M Gilbertson (Chair)	
Rev Dr J Arnott	
Rev C Corley (Co-opted)	
Mrs M Cruxton	
Mr P Gibbons	
Dr C Gordon	
Mr D Hermitt	
Mrs S Hudson	
Mrs C Speed (Co-opted)	
Dr D Walter	
Ass Prof D Cumberland	
Mr P I Bostock	(Appointec 19 March 2025)
Ms E M Hemmings	(Appointec 19 March 2025)
Mr I R Gould-Jones	(Appointec 19 March 2025 and resigned 25 March 2026)

Appointment of trustees
As set out in the Articles of Association the Chair of the trustees is the Bishop of Chester except that, if they do not desire to be Chair, the members after consultation with the Bishop, shall appoint some other person (whether or not a member) to be Chair. The Ven Dr M R Gilbertson (Archdeacon of Chester) was appointed as Chair. As described in the Articles of Association, the members of the DBE are also the Trustees of the DBE.

When vacancies occur and at the end of the terms of office for Board members; the roles are advertised across the Diocese and applications invited. This is to support both the fulfilment of equality objectives and to encourage a wide range of backgrounds and experience on the Board.

All board members, trustees and committee members are voluntary roles; the DBE does not use volunteers beyond these roles.

The main Board is supported in undertaking more detailed scrutiny through two committees, Finance and Estates (F and E) and Distinctiveness, Standards and Governance (DSG). These are made up of members of the Board with additional co-opted members. Two working parties have also been established on academisation and Decarbonisation, made up of Board members and additional persons invited to attend because of their experience.

Trustee induction and training
New trustees are briefed on their legal obligations under charity and company law, the content of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the committee and decision-making processes, the business plan and recent financial performance of the charity. Trustees also meet key employees and are encouraged to attend appropriate external training events where these will facilitate the undertaking of their role.

Trustees' statement on public benefit
Chester Diocesan Board of Education is a public benefit entity. The trustees confirm that they have complied with the duty in the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission in determining the activities undertaken by the charity.

In accordance with the company objectives as set out in the Diocesan Board of Education Measure 2021, the Board of Education exists:

- to promote or assist in the promotion of education in the Diocese that is consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England;
- to promote or assist in the promotion of religious education and religious worship in schools in the Diocese;
- to promote or assist in the promotion of church schools in the Diocese;
- to promote co-operation between itself and other persons concerned with education in the Diocese.

The public benefit of our work is seen in the support and flourishing of church schools that provide education for all within a Christian ethos. The Board of Education also supports schools in developing links with their local communities to improve and unify these communities. Our support for schools also ensures the provision of buildings which can be used by parishes and outside bodies for the benefit of all.

Qualifying third party indemnity provisions

Charity Governance Code

The Board follows the Charity Governance Code and contirues to review best practice as it aims to continually improve. The Board manages effective governance of the charity in the following ways:

Organisational Purpose – The Board ensures its work is in line with its charitable objectives and also its vision of being deeply Christian and for the common good; and that its schools will be communities which are loving in relationships, ambitious in aspiration and bold in action. This vision continues to be developed and is used as a basis for the work of the Board and its officers. The wider diocesan vision is currently being implemented and will impact further development of the Board of Education vision.

Leadership – Two committees give a strong oversight of the work of the DBE, through detailed scrutiny and recommendations to the Board. Additional working parties help challenge and support executive officers as they support the development of DBE strategy in areas such as academisation and decarbonisation.

Integrity - The Bishop of Chester nominates the chair of the DBE to ensure the Board operates within the vision and values of the Diocese of Chester and the Church of England. The majority of the Board is appointed by Diocesan Synod to ensure the Board is independent in its decision making. A small number of members are co-opted based on the skills that they offer. Committees also have spaces for co-opted members which help bring a further perspective to its work. The Board is required to report back to the Diocesan Synod to share its progress in furthering its purposes.

Decision Making, Risk and Control - The risk register is regularly updated to ensure the Board is aware of, and managing its current risks. Each committee identifies risks and possible mitigation. These are then brought to the full Board. The Distinctiveness, Standards and Governance and Finance and Estates committees continue to support the Boarc in taking control of, and responsibility for, the decision-making process of the charity.

Board Effectiveness - Board directors bring a wide and diverse range of skills to The Board and continually monitor the work of the DBE and its executive officers; scrutinising operational activities through reporting processes and review of actions. Financial scrutiny and decision making is managed through clear financial policies and procedures.
Diversity - The Board of directors is appointed by the Diocesan Synod and as far as possible, members are nominated to include a wide range of knowledge, skills and perspectives. When vacancies occur, or at the end of the term for the Board, the roles are advertised across the Diocese in order to encourage this breadth. However, the DBE intends to take a more proactive approach to encourage applications for appointment from a more diverse group, in particular with regards to age, gender and ethnicity. The DBE is committed to widening its diversity as it moves forward.

Openness and Accountability - The charity is accountable to and makes regular reports to Diocesan Synod and various other Diocesan committees to ensure that the Board is transparent in how it operates.

Organisation

The Board of trustees administers the charity. The Board meets regularly together with the Secretary (the Diocesan Director of Education) who manages the day-to-day operations of the charity. The Board manages its business through its two committees, Finance and Estates and Distinctiveness, Standards and Governance. These are attended by members of the executive team. To facilitate effective operations, the Secretary has delegated authority, within terms of delegation approved by the trustees, for operational matters including finance, employment and school related activities.

Related parties

The charity has a close relationship with Chester Diocesan Board of Finance (a company limited by guarantee registered in England (no. 7826) and a registered charity (no. 248968)) which provides office accommodation and payroll.

The charity has a close relationship with Chester Diocesan Academies Trust (CDAT) (a company limited by guarantee registered in England (no. 8451787) and an exempt charity) which is established as a multi-academy trust in the Diocese.

The charity has established a close relationship with Chester Diocesan Learning Trust (CDLT) (a company limited by guarantee registered in England (no. 16546319) and an exempt charity) which from 1st October 2025 was established as a multi-academy trust in the Diocese.

The charity jointly owns DBE Services Ltd (a company limited by shares registered in England and Wales (no. 5531123) with Blackburn Diocesan Board of Education, Carlisle Diocesan Board of Finance, Liverpool Diocesan Board of Finance, Manchester Diocesan Board of Education and York Diocesan Board of Finance. This company undertakes support work across the six dioceses and gift-aids any profit back to the six Boards.

Funds held as custodian trustee

The charity acts as custodian trustee in respect of funds held on behalf of local trustees and such specific purpose funds are held in segregated accounts, separately accounted for, and do not appear in the financial statements. They are shown in note 25 to the accounts.

The company also acts as custodian trustee in respect of funds arising out of the sale of school properties where the funds are held pending the issue of an Order or other determination.

The Devolved Formula Capital for aided schools is held by the charity as part of these funds.

Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The trustees, who are also the directors of Chester Diocesan Board of Education for the purpose of company law, are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that year.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;

- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP;

- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements; and

- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditor

In accordance with the company's articles, a resolution proposing that Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited be reappointed as auditor of the company will be put at a General Meeting.

Disclosure of information to auditor

Each of the trustees has confirmed that there is no information of which they are aware which is relevant to the audit, but of which the auditor is unaware. They have further confirmed that they have taken appropriate steps to identify such relevant information and to establish that the auditor is aware of such information.

The trustees' report was approved by the Board of Trustees.

Ven Dr M Gilbertson (Chair)
Chair

17 July 2026

CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Chester Diocesan Board of Education (the 'charity') for the year ended 31 December 2025 which comprise the statement of financial activities, the balance sheet, the statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 *The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK* (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements* section of our report. We are independent of the charity in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charity's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of our audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charity and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the trustees' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the statement of trustees' responsibilities, the trustees, who are also the directors of the charity for the purpose of company law, are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error. In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that inc udes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is detailed below.

Extent to which the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

We identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and then design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, including obtaining audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Identifying and assessing potential risks related to irregularities
In identifying and assessing risks of material misstatement in respect of irregularities, including fraud and non-compliance with laws and regulations, we considered the following:

- the nature of the industry and sector, control environment and business performance;
- the charitable company's own assessment of the risks that irregularities may occur either as a result of fraud or error;
- the results of our enquiries of management and trustees of their own identification and assessment of the risks of irregularities;
- any matters we identified having obtained and reviewed the charity's documentation of their policies and procedures relating to:
- identifying, evaluating and complying with laws and regulations and whether they were aware of any instances of non-compliance;
- detecting and responding to the risks of fraud and whether they have knowledge of any actual, suspected or alleged fraud; and
- the internal controls established to mitigate risks of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations; and
- the matters discussed among the audit engagement team regarding how and where fraud might occur in the financial statements and any potential indicators of fraud.

As a result of these procedures, we considered the opportunities and incentives that may exist within the organisation for fraud and identified the greatest potential for fraud in the following areas:

(i) The presentation of the charity's Statement of Financial Activities, (ii) revenue recognition (iii) the overstatement of salary and other costs and the movements for the year. In common with all audits under ISAs (UK), we are also required to perform specific procedures to respond to the risk of management override.

We also obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework that the charity operates in, focusing on provisions of those laws and regulations that had a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The key laws and regulations we considered in this context included the UK Companies Act, the Statement of Recommended Practice - 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities'.

In addition, we considered provisions of other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the financial statements but compliance with which may be fundamental to the academy's ability to operate or to avoid a material penalty. This includes regulations concerning Data Protection.

Audit response to risks identified
As a result of performing the above, we identified income recognition, override of controls and adherence to laws and regulations as the key audit matters related to the potential risk of fraud.

Our procedures to respond to risks identified included the following:

- reviewing the financial statement disclosures and testing to supporting documentation to assess compliance with relevant laws and regulations described above as having a direct effect on the financial statements;
- enquiring of management and trustees concerning actual and potential litigation and claims;
- performing analytical procedures to identify any unusual or unexpected relationships that may indicate risks of material misstatement due to fraud;
- in addressing the risk of fraud through management override of controls, testing the appropriateness of journal entries and other adjustments; assessing whether the judgements made in making accounting estimates are indicative of a potential bias; and evaluating the business rationale of any significant transactions that are unusual or outside the normal course of business.

We also communicated relevant identified laws and regulations and potential fraud risks to all engagement team members and remained alert to any indications of fraud or non-compliance with laws and regulations throughout the audit.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Robert Hall (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Mitchell Charlesworth (Audit) Limited, Statutory Auditor
Accountants
Maple House
Park West
Sealand Road
Chester
CH1 4RN
17 July 2026

CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Endowment funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Endowment funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Income from:									
Donations and legacies	**3**	41,665	-	1,774,361	1,816,026	16,769	-	1,843,577	1,860,346
Charitable activities	**4**	98,336	-	-	98,336	106,465	-	-	106,465
Investments	**5**	172,031	-	318,547	490,578	168,725	-	313,006	481,731
Total income		312,032	-	2,092,908	2,404,940	291,959	-	2,156,583	2,448,542
Expenditure on:									
Charitable activities	**6**	273,490	-	2,356,209	2,629,699	226,668	-	2,502,175	2,728,843
Total expenditure		273,490	-	2,356,209	2,629,699	226,668	-	2,502,175	2,728,843
Net gains/(losses) on investments	**12**	(61,609)	(3,929)	(363,363)	(428,901)	34,562	23,571	243,701	301,834
Net income/(expenditure) and movement in funds		(23,067)	(3,929)	(626,664)	(653,660)	99,853	23,571	(101,891)	21,533

CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)
INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted funds	Endowment funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Endowment funds	Restricted funds	Total
		2025	2025	2025	2025	2024	2024	2024	2024
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Reconciliation of funds:									
Fund balances at 1 January 2025		1,951,577	1,202,209	10,908,122	14,061,908	1,851,724	1,178,638	11,010,013	14,040,375
Fund balances at 31 December 2025		1,928,510	1,198,280	10,281,458	13,408,248	1,951,577	1,202,209	10,908,122	14,061,908

The statemert of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	2025		2024	
		£	£	£	£
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**14**		4,441		4,034
Investment property	**15**		1,198,280		1,202,209
Investments	**16**		10,700,614		11,125,586
			11,903,335		12,331,829
Current assets					
Debtors	**17**	140,291		148,900	
Cash at bank and in hand		2,742,189		3,014,027	
		2,882,480		3,162,927	
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**18**	(1,377,567)		(1,432,848)	
Net current assets			1,504,913		1,730,079
Total assets less current liabilities			13,408,248		14,061,908
The funds of the charity					
Endowment funds - Endowment funds	**21**		1,198,280		1,202,209
Restricted income funds	**20**		10,281,458		10,908,122
Unrestricted funds	**22**		1,928,510		1,951,577
			13,408,248		14,061,908

The financial statements were approved by the trustees on 17 July 2026

Ven Dr M Gilbertson (Chair)
Chair

CHESTER DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	Notes	2025		2024	
		£	£	£	£
Cash flows from operating activities					
Cash absorbed by operations	**26**		(760,758)		(784,639)
Investing activities					
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(1,658)		(471)	
Investment income received		490,578		481,731	
Net cash generated from investing activities			488,920		481,260
Net cash generated from financing activities			-		-
Net decrease in cash and cash equivalents			(271,838)		(303,379)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year			3,014,027		3,317,406
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year			2,742,189		3,014,027

1 **Accounting policies**

Charity information

Chester Diocesan Board of Education is a private company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. The registered office is Church House, 5500 Daresbury Park, Daresbury, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 4GE.

1.1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the charity's Charities Act 2011, the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK" ("FRS 102") and the Charities SORP "Accounting and Reporting by Charit es: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019). The charity is a Public Benefit Entity as defined by FRS 102.

The financial statements are prepared in sterling, which is the functional currency of the charity. Monetary amounts in these financial statements are rounded to the nearest £.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, modified to include the revaluation of freehold properties and to include investment properties and certain financial instruments at fair value. The principal accounting policies adopted are set out below.

1.2 Going concern

At the time of approving the financial statements, the trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. Thus the trustees continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting in preparing the financial statements.

1.3 Charitable funds

Unrestricted funds are available for use at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of their charitable objectives.

Restricted funds are subject to specific conditions by donors or grantors as to how they may be used. The purposes and uses of the restricted funds are set out in the notes to the financial statements.

1.4 Income

Income is recognised when the charity is legally entitled to it after any performance conditions have been met, the amounts can be measured reliably, and it is probable that income will be received.

Cash conations are recognised on receipt. Other donations are recognised once the charity has been notified of the donation, unless performance conditions require deferral of the amount. Income tax recoverable in relation to donations received under Gift Aid or deeds of covenant is recognised at the time of the donation.

Legacies are recognised on receipt or otherwise if the charity has been notified of an impending distribution, the amount is known, and receipt is expected. If the amount is not known, the legacy is treated as a contingent asset.

Gift aided distribution from DBE Services Ltd - the charity has an investment in DBE Services Ltd which provides services to church schools including inspections, teaching and curriculum support, administrative services, building work, equipment and construction support. The charity receives gift aided distributions on the profits. The distribution is recognised on receipt.

Grants are included in the statement of financial activities on a receivable basis. The balance of income received for specific purposes but not expended during the period is shown in the relevant funds on the balance sheet. Where income is received in advance of meeting any performance-related conditions there is not unconditional entitlement to the income and its recognition is deferred and included in creditors as deferred income until the performance-related conditions are met. Where entitlement occurs before income is received, the income is accrued.

1 **Accounting policies** **(Continued)**

The charity operates a support package under the name "Chester Diocesan Family of Schools" referred to elsewhere in the annual report and accounts, and receives subscription income as a result which is recognised on an accruals basis in the accounts.

Conference income is derived from training events delivered to staff at Church of England Schools and is recognised on an accruals basis.

The charity receives dividends and interest on a range of investments, all holdings in Church of England funds operated by CCLA Investment Management Ltd which are recognised on receipt.

The charity also receives rental income from four former schools which is recognised on an accruals basis.

1.5 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised once there is a legal or constructive obligation to transfer economic benefit to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement, and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure is classified by activity. The costs of each activity are made up of the total of direct costs and shared costs, including support costs involved in undertaking each activity. Direct costs attributable to a single activity are allocated directly to that activity. Shared costs which contribute to more than one activity and support costs which are not attributable to a single activity are apportioned between those activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources. Central staff costs are allocated on the basis of time spent, and depreciation charges are allocated on the portion of the asset's use.

Charitable activity costs also include the cost of administering grant claims in respect of building and maintenance work carried out on school properties, the cost of administering grants payable and providing support to the other charitable activities of the company.

Grants

Grants payable included within charitable activities represent discretionary grants to Governors or Schools for financial assistance towards to the cost of specific, approved school projects. Grants payable are included in the Statement of Financial Activities on the accruals basis, to the extent that conditions for payment have been met.

Allocation of support costs

As explained in the annual report, the charity supports the Church of England schools in the Diocese in a wide range of ways including assisting with building projects, supporting and training governors, and promoting religious education more widely. The allocation between activates fluctuates as necessary.

1.6 Tangible fixed assets

Tangible fixed assets are initially measured at cost and subsequently measured at cost or valuation, net of depreciation and any impairment losses.

Depreciation is recognised so as to write off the cost or valuation of assets less their residual values over their useful lives on the following bases:

Computers and office equipment	25% Reducing Balance

The gain or loss arising on the disposal of an asset is determined as the difference between the sale proceeds and the carrying value of the asset, and is recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1 **Accounting policies** **(Continued)**

1.7 Investment property

Investment property, which is property held to earn rentals and/or for capital appreciation, is initially recognised at cost, which includes the purchase cost and any directly attributable expenditure. Subsequently it is measured at fair value at the reporting end date. The surplus or deficit on revaluation is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Proceeds from the sale of former school properties are normally held by the charity as custodian trustee (in specific purpose funds) until a relevant Educational Endowment Order or determination is issued.

The financial statements up to 31st December 1996 did not include any value for former school properties held in the name of the charity which had not yet been sold, but these properties are classified as investment properties, and have been included in subsequent accounts.

1.8 Fixed asset investments

Fixed asset investments are initially measured at transaction price excluding transaction costs, and are subsequently measured at fair value at each reporting date. Changes in fair value are recognised in net income/(expenditure) for the year. Transaction costs are expensed as incurred.

1.9 Impairment of fixed assets

At each reporting end date, the charity reviews the carrying amounts of its tangible assets to determine whether there is any indication that those assets have suffered an impairment loss. If any such indication exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated in order to determine the extent of the impairment loss (if any).

1.10 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

1.11 Financial instruments

The charity has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 'Basic Financial Instruments' and Section 12 'Other Financial Instruments Issues' of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the charity's balance sheet when the charity becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial assets, which include debtors and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial assets classified as receivable within one year are not amortised.

1 **Accounting policies** **(Continued)**

Basic financial liabilities

Basic financial liabilities, including creditors and bank loans are initially recognised at transaction price unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the debt instrument is measured at the present value of the future payments discounted at a market rate of interest. Financial liabilities classified as payable within one year are not amortised.

Debt instruments are subsequently carried at amortised cost, using the effective interest rate method.

Trade creditors are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of operations from suppliers. Amounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less. If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Trade creditors are recognised initially at transaction price and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Derecognition of financial liabilities

Financial liabilities are derecognised when the charity's contractual obligations expire or are discharged or cancelled.

1.12 Employee benefits

The cost of any unused holiday entitlement is recognised in the period in which the employee's services are received.

Termination benefits are recognised immediately as an expense when the charity is demonstrably committed to terminate the employment of an employee or to provide termination benefits.

1.13 Amounts due from school governors in respect of projects

The charity receives funding on behalf of schools from the Department of Education for funding building works and other projects. The charity also makes payments to contractors on behalf of the schools. In the majority of cases the governors make a 10% contribution to the cost of the project; this often leaves and amount payable to the charity by the governors of the school. By concession, the charity allows school governors the time to pay their contribution, dependent on size and duration of the project and other factors. On occasions the governors of the school fund the whole cost of the project, leaving the full amount repayable to the charity.

1.14 Funds held as custodian trustee

The charity acts as custodian trustee in respect of funds held on behalf of local trustees and funds arising out of the sale of school properties where funds are held pending the issue of an Order or determination.

Funds held as custodian trustee do not belong to the charity and so are not a component of the charities assets, income or expenditure in the reporting period.

2 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

3 Income from donations and legacies

	Unrestricted funds 2025 £	Restricted funds 2025 £	Total 2025 £	Unrestricted funds 2024 £	Restricted funds 2024 £	Total 2024 £
Donations and gifts	41,665	-	41,665	16,769	-	16,769
VASCA income	-	1,774,361	1,774,361	-	1,843,577	1,843,577
	41,665	1,774,361	1,816,026	16,769	1,843,577	1,860,346
Donations and gifts						
Gift aided distribution from DBE Services Ltd	41,665	-	41,665	16,769	-	16,769
	41,665	-	41,665	16,769	-	16,769

4 Income from charitable activities

	2025 £	2024 £
Conference income	38,608	51,527
Chester Diocesan family of schools	59,324	53,698
Other income	404	1,240
	98,336	106,465
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	98,336	106,465

5 Income from investments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2025	2025	2025	2024	2024	2024
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Dividends and interest	85,784	318,547	404,331	76,546	313,006	389,552
Rental income	86,247	-	86,247	92,179	-	92,179
	172,031	318,547	490,578	168,725	313,006	481,731

6 Charitable activities

	Charitable activities	Charitable activities
	2025	2024
	£	£
Depreciation and impairment	1,251	1,241
Property costs	27,488	27,743
Salaries and recharges	315,223	340,055
Educational support costs	32,449	38,871
Other expenses	37,420	8,233
Grants (see note 7)	-	1,250
VASCA capital expenditure	2,086,518	2,211,239
	2,500,349	2,628,632
Share of support costs (see note 8)	114,950	84,776
Share of governance costs (see note 8)	14,400	15,435
	2,629,699	2,728,843
Analysis by fund		
Unrestricted funds	273,490	226,668
Restricted funds	2,356,209	2,502,175
	2,629,699	2,728,843

7 Grants payable

Grants were made to the governors of other schools in the year of £nil (2024 - £1,250).

8 Support costs allocated to activities

	Total 2025 £	Total 2024 £
Salaries and recharges	35,025	37,784
Legal and professional fees	14,058	18,069
Accountancy fees	49,408	14,444
Bank charges	1,002	524
Other costs	15,457	13,955
Governance	14,400	15,435
	129,350	100,211

Governance costs comprise:	2025 £	2024 £
Audit fees	14,400	15,435
	14,400	15,435

9 Net movement in funds

	2025 £	2024 £
The net movement in funds is stated after charging/(crediting):		
Fees payable for the audit of the charity's financial statements	14,400	15,435
Depreciation of owned tangible fixed assets	1,251	1,241

10 Trustees

None of the trustees (or any persons connected with them) received any remuneration or benefits from the charity during the year (2024 - £nil).

11 Employees

The average monthly number of employees during the year was:

	2025 Number	2024 Number
	9	8

11 Employees **(Continued)**

There were 8.75 (2024 - 8.33) full time equivalent employees under joint contracts of employment with Chester Diocesan Board of Finance. Their employment costs are borne by Chester Diocesan Board of Finance and recharged to Chester Diocesan Board of Education.

The trustees have handed much of the day to day management of the charity to a number of key management personnel including the Director of Education. The total cost of employee benefits (including employer's national insurance and employers pension contributions) relating to key management personnel amounted to £153,892 (2024 - £186,662). Of this amount £nil balance was borne by Chester Diocesan Board of Education. The remaining balance was borne by Chester Diocesan Board of Finance and recharged. Of these, the highest paid was Mr Christopher Penn who received £50,053 (2024 - £81,040) excluding employers national insurance, together with pension contributions of £12,484 (2024 - £12,008).

12 Gains and losses on investments

	Unrestricted funds	Endowment funds	Restricted funds	Total	Unrestricted funds	Endowment funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2025	2025	2025	2025	2024	2024	2024	2024
Gains/(losses) arising on:	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Revaluation of investments	(61,609)	-	(363,363)	(424,972)	34,562	-	243,701	278,263
Revaluation of investment properties	-	(3,929)	-	(3,929)	-	23,571	-	23,571
	(61,609)	(3,929)	(363,363)	(428,901)	34,562	23,571	243,701	301,834

13 Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 505 of the Taxes Act 1988 or section 252 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992 to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objects.

14 Tangible fixed assets

	Computers and office equipment
	£
Cost	
At 1 January 2025	6,811
Additions	1,658
At 31 December 2025	8,469
Depreciation and impairment	
At 1 January 2025	2,777
Depreciation charged in the year	1,251
At 31 December 2025	4,028
Carrying amount	
At 31 December 2025	4,441
At 31 December 2024	4,034

15 Investment property

	2025
	£
Fair value	
At 1 January 2025	1,202,209
Net gains or losses through fair value adjustments	(3,929)
At 31 December 2025	1,198,280

The fair value of the investment property has been arrived at on the basis of a valuation carried out at 31st December 2025 by Forge Property Consultants, an independent, professionally qualified surveyor. The valuation was made on an open market value basis by reference to market evidence of transaction prices for similar properties as at the year end date of 31 December 2025.

The properties were provided to the charity at no cost by order of the Secretary of State for Education. The values of the properties at the time of receipt are not known.

15 Investment property **(Continued)**

	2025	2024
	£	£
Freehold	1,198,280	1,202,209
Long leasehold	-	-
Short leasehold	-	-

16 Fixed asset investments

	CCLA Investments	DBE Services Ltd	Total
	£	£	£
Cost or valuation			
At 1 January 2025	11,125,574	12	11,125,586
Valuation changes	(424,973)	-	(424,973)
At 31 December 2025	10,700,601	12	10,700,613
Carrying amount			
At 31 December 2025	10,700,601	12	10,700,613
At 31 December 2024	11,125,574	12	11,125,586

	2025	2024
Investments at fair value comprise:	£	£
CBF Investment Fund	9,008,406	9,383,542
CBF Global Equity Income Fund	1,022,921	1,083,402
CBF Property Fund	620,911	607,836
COIF Charities Investment Fund	48,363	50,794
	10,700,601	11,125,574

17 Debtors

	2025	2024
Amounts falling due within one year:	£	£
Trade debtors	7,255	61,702
Other debtors	124,592	80,412
Prepayments and accrued income	8,444	6,786
	140,291	148,900

18 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Deferred income	19	45,404	39,488
Trade creditors		259,381	273,705
Other DoE and school creditors		44,157	43,819
Other creditors		830,386	931,960
Accruals		198,239	143,876
		1,377,567	1,432,848

19 Deferred income

	2025 £	2024 £
Other deferred income	45,404	39,488

Deferred income is included in the financial statements as follows:

	2025 £	2024 £
Deferred income is included within:		
Current liabilities	45,404	39,488
Movements in the year:		
Deferred income at 1 January 2025	39,488	43,662
Released from previous periods	(39,488)	(43,662)
Resources deferred in the year	45,404	39,488
Deferred income at 31 December 2025	45,404	39,488

20 Restricted funds

The restricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants held on trust subject to specific conditions by donors as to how they may be used.

	At 1 January 2025	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Gains and losses	At 31 December 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
SCA funds - allocated	386,147	1,751,289	(2,054,653)	-	82,783
SCA funds - unallocated	855,220	-	(31,865)	-	823,355
Investments	9,666,755	341,619	(269,691)	(363,363)	9,375,320
	10,908,122	2,092,908	(2,356,209)	(363,363)	10,281,458

Previous year:	At 1 January 2024	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Gains and losses	At 31 December 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
SCA funds - allocated	586,777	1,843,577	(2,044,207)	-	386,147
SCA funds - unallocated	1,022,252	-	(167,032)	-	855,220
Investments	9,400,984	313,006	(290,936)	243,701	9,666,755
	11,010,013	2,156,583	(2,502,175)	243,701	10,908,122

SCA funds

The charity assists voluntary aided schools with school building projects and the provision of IT equipment. The VASCA (Voluntary-Aided Schools Condition Allocation) system was introduced in April 2020 and superseded the LCVAP (Locally Coordinated Voluntary-Aided Programme). Until April 2020, the charity acted as the agent of school governors in helping to arrange funding through the DfE and Local Authorities and in paying professional fees and building costs on behalf of school governors. The LCVAP income and expenditure was not reflected in the Statement of Financial Activities as the charity had no control over the funds and the transactions were those of the school governors rather than the charity, which acted as agent. The change in funding from April 2020 gives the charity ultimate control over the application of the VASCA grants to specific schools. Therefore, the VASCA grant funding received is recognised in the SOFA along with the related expenditure.

Investment funds

Funds arising out of the sale of school properties were received in the past years under various Educational Endowment Orders and were amalgamated into a uniform statutory trust in 1995 following the provisions of the Education Act 1993. These funds are shown separately as trust funds in the financial statements and their use is restricted to the following: -

- funding for the purchase, or erection of, improvement or enlargement of, relevant school premises in the area,
- funding maintenance costs of any relevant school in the area,
- funding the costs of the administration of the trust and the costs of providing advice, guidance, and resources in connection with any matter related to the management of, or education provided at any relevant school in the area.

21 Endowment funds -

These are endowment funds funds which are material to the charity's activities.

	At 1 January 2025	Gains and losses	At 31 December 2025
	£	£	£
Properties held	1,202,209	(3,929)	1,198,280

Previous year:	At 1 January 2024	Gains and losses	At 31 December 2024
	£	£	£
Properties held	1,178,638	23,571	1,202,209

22 Unrestricted funds

The unrestricted funds of the charity comprise the unexpended balances of donations and grants which are not subject to specific conditions by donors and grantors as to how they may be used. These include designated funds which have been set aside out of unrestricted funds by the trustees for specific purposes.

	At 1 January 2025	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Gains and losses	At 31 December 2025
	£	£	£	£	£
General funds	1,951,577	312,032	(273,490)	(61,609)	1,928,510

Previous year:	At 1 January 2024	Incoming resources	Resources expended	Gains and losses	At 31 December 2024
	£	£	£	£	£
General funds	1,851,724	291,959	(226,668)	34,562	1,951,577

23 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds	Endowment funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2025	2025	2025	2025
	£	£	£	£
At 31 December 2025:				
Tangible assets	4,441	-	-	4,441
Investment properties	-	1,198,280	-	1,198,280
Investments	1,325,294	-	9,375,320	10,700,614
Current assets/(liabilities)	598,775	-	906,138	1,504,913
	1,928,510	1,198,280	10,281,458	13,408,248

	Unrestricted funds	Endowment funds	Restricted funds	Total
	2024	2024	2024	2024
	£	£	£	£
At 31 December 2024:				
Tangible assets	4,034	-	-	4,034
Investment properties	-	1,202,209	-	1,202,209
Investments	1,458,831	-	9,666,755	11,125,586
Current assets/(liabilities)	488,712	-	1,241,367	1,730,079
	1,951,577	1,202,209	10,908,122	14,061,908

24 Capital commitments

	2025	2024
	£	£
Acquisition of property, plant and equipment	467,079	1,506,417

Capital commitments relating to VASCA projects.

25 Related party transactions

25 Related party transactions **(Continued)**

Chester Diocesan Board of Education acts as the education authority for the Church of England in the Diocese of Chester. The charity does not regard the schools in the Diocese to be classified as related parties.

Contribution re joint employment contracts and other recharges payable to The Chester Diocesan Board of Finance, an organisation in which there are a number of trustees on both boards totalled £350,248 (2024 - £377,839). The balance outstanding in creditors at the year end is £nil (2024 - £19,681).

The charity owns 16.67% of the ordinary share capital of DBE Services Ltd. A distribution of £41,665 (2024 - £16,769) was received from DBE Services Ltd during the year and payments of £20,974 (2024 – £0) were paid to DBE Services Ltd in respect of Capital Buildings Support. At the year end £5,243 (2024 - £0) was due to DBE Services Ltd and included in trade creditors.

Chester Diocesan Academies Trust
Some of the trustees of Chester Diocesan Board of Education are also trustees of Chester Diocesan Academies Trust. During the year Chester Diocesan Academies Trust received a income of £0 (2024 - £2,925) from Chester Diocesan Board of Education, and paid over £15,432 (2024 - £8,107) for services received. At the year end £2,545 (2024 - £0) was due from Chester Diocesan Academies Trust and included in trade debtors.

Chester Diocesan Learning Trust
Chester Diocesan Board of Education is supporting a new academy trust what was launched on 1 October 2025 and has made available funds of £113,118 (2024 - £55,048) as at 31st December 2025 to assist in the cashflow of the new trust. This balance is showr as a current asset on the balance sheet to be repaid once the trust is fully operational.

Winsford St Chads C of E School
Total income receivable from St Chads C of E School, of which Mrs C Speed was employed, was £530 (2024 - £485)

The Samara Trust
The amount charged for the Family of Schools Subscription to The Samara Trust, of which Dr E Hemmings was a trustee, was £1,251 (2024 - £1,193) and income from conferences of £140 (2024 - £0) was also received.

The Bishops' Blue Coat C of E High School
Income receivable for the Family of Schools Subscription to The Bishops' Blue Coat C of E High School was £1,540 (2024 - £1,620). Course and conference income of £200 (2024 - £120) was also received from the School, of which Dr E Hemmings was a trustee.

Altrincham C of E Primary School
Total income receivable from Altrincham C of E Primary school was £18,064 (2024 - £8,557), of which Mrs C Corley was a Governor. The amount incurred for services received was £16,866 (2024 - £0). At the year end there was a credit balance of £98 due to Altrincham C of E Primary School (2024 - £140 debit).

Funds Held as Custodian Trustee
The charity acts as custodian trustee in respect of funds held on behalf of local trustees and such specific purpose funds are shown separately from the financial statements, and total £219,273 (2024 - £215,436). The charity also acts as custodian trustee in respect of funds arising out of the sale of school properties where the funds are held pending the issue of an Order or other determination.

Woodchurch High School
Total income receivable from Woodchurch High School, of which Revd L Bannon was employed and Dr D Cumberland was a director was £1,640 (2024 - £1,945).

Bowdon C of E School
Income receivable for the Family of Schools Subscription to Bowden C of E School, of which Mrs S Hudson was employed was £0 (2024 - £1,235). Income receivable in relation to conference income was £1,530 (2024 - £1,988).

26	Cash absorbed by operations	2025	2024
		£	£
	(Deficit)/surplus for the year	(653,660)	21,533
	Adjustments for:		
	Investment income recognised in statement of financial activities	(490,578)	(481,731)
	Fair value gains and losses on investment properties	3,929	(23,571)
	Fair value gains and losses on investments	424,972	(278,263)
	Depreciation and impairment of tangible fixed assets	1,251	1,241
	Movements in working capital:		
	Decrease/(increase) in debtors	8,609	(54,692)
	(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(61,197)	35,018
	Increase/(decrease) in deferred income	5,916	(4,174)
	Cash absorbed by operations	(760,758)	(784,639)

27 Analysis of changes in net funds

The charity had no material debt during the year.

28 Sole Trusteeship of Exempt Charities - School Trusts

The below charities are exempt charities of which the Chester Diocesan Board of Education is sole trustee. In accordance with section 19.13 of the Charities SORP (FRS 102) the description and class of assets for all of the below are the school building and lands of the Schools. There is no trading through these exempt charities, their sole purpose is to hold the lands and buildings in the form of School Trusts: -

- Bidston Village Church of England Primary School Trust
- Bromborough Church of England Primary School Trust
- Chelford Church of England Primary School Trust
- Christ Church (Birkenhead) Church of England Primary School Trust
- Delamere Church of England Primary School Trust
- Frodsham, Five Crosses Church of England Primary School Trust
- Goostrey Church of England Primary School Trust
- Great Budworth Church of England Primary School Trust
- Guilden Sutton Church of England Primary School Trust
- Hoole, All Saints Church of England Primary School Trust
- Hoylake Holy Trinity Church of England Primary School Trust
- Huxley Church of England Primary School Trust
- Little Bollington Church of England Primary School Trust
- St John the Evangelist Church of England Primary School Trust
- Mollington St Oswald's Church of England Primary School Trust
- Norley Church of England Primary School Trust
- St Berteline's Church of England Primary School Trust
- The Priory Parish Church of England Primary School Trust
- Saighton Church of England Primary School Trust
- St John's (Sandbach Heath) Church of England Primary School Trust
- Stockport St Thomas' Church of England Primary School Trust
- Tushingham-with-Grindley Church of England Primary School Trust
- Upton Heath Church of England Primary School Trust
- Wharton Church of England Primary School Trust
- Whitegate Church of England Primary School Trust
- Wincle Church of England Primary School Trust
- Woodcocks Well Church of England Primary School Trust
- Worleston St Oswald's Church of England Primary School Trust

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