

## Brief History of Church of England Schools

The Church has been involved in education for many centuries. Some Church schools in this Diocese are older than the Diocese itself.

However, most Church schools came about through the drive to provide mass provision of Christian education for the poor in the early and middle years of the 19th century. 'The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church,' now known as The National Society (Church of England) for Promoting Religious Education (or more often simply the National Society) was created in 1811 with the mission of founding a Church school in every parish in England and Wales. In this Diocese an organisation was established shortly afterwards with a similar objective.

By the time of the national census of 1851, forty years later, the Church had established 17,000 schools. State provision for public education came with the 1870 Education Act by supplementing the churches' provision. This Act demonstrated the partnership between the state and the churches in education, which has continued to the present day. At the beginning of the 20th century there were over 14,000 voluntary schools of which rather more than 1,000 were Roman Catholic, and a similar number provided by the Wesleyans and others and the majority of the rest were Church of England.

At the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, after seventy years of state provision, the churches were still providing schools for nearly a third of the children of school age. The Church was facing difficulty maintaining the quality of premises and equipment of these schools, but they were needed by the State to maintain provision across the country.

The 1944 Education Act gave Church schools the option of increased State funding and control as 'Voluntary Controlled schools' or lesser State support and greater independence as 'Voluntary Aided schools'. This Act also required all schools to have a daily act of collective worship and religious instruction. By the 1950s and 1960s the Roman Catholic Church expanded its school provision vigorously, especially at the secondary level. By comparison, the expansion in Anglican secondary schools was modest and the number of its primary schools declined.

Source - Diocese of Chester [http://www.chester.anglican.org/page\\_schools.asp?Page=60](http://www.chester.anglican.org/page_schools.asp?Page=60)