Of the many ministries pioneered in the Diocese of Lincoln, we are especially proud of our Bishop’s Visitors. While the bishops themselves try to visit as many schools as possible during the year, we cannot get to them all and so it is gratifying for us to know that our Visitors are there for us on a regular and reliable basis.

When I met the team of Bishop’s Visitors last year I was deeply impressed by the sense of vocation and commitment the Visitors brought to their work, and when I go to schools the headteachers and staff I meet are keen to stress how valuable their Bishop’s Visitor is.

But, of course, Bishop’s Visitors are primarily there for the schools themselves. Pupils, Staff and Governors express appreciation for the ways in which they feel supported and encouraged by this ministry, and I am enormously grateful to all Visitors for the role they play.

Now the time has come to strengthen the partnership between our schools and their local parishes. In some places this relationship is good and strong, but there are others where the potential for mutual benefit remains to be realised. Bishop’s Visitors have a crucial part to play in building positive interaction between Church and School now and in the future.

This Handbook will prove to be an invaluable resource for Visitors, and a vital guide to good practice, as only the best will do for our schools and all who learn and teach in them.

+Christopher Lincoln
One of the great strengths in Church School education in the Diocese of Lincoln is its Bishop’s Visitors.

They are a visible sign of God’s presence in our schools, a witness to the possibilities of faith allowing pupils to see faith in action and to consider their responses to it, a sign of the church’s willingness to serve God by meeting the needs of His schools and communities. A high calling indeed!

With the role of our clergy changing to that of leading multiple parishes, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to fulfill the role of providing the weekly visits and support that we have been used to; Bishop’s Visitors are now more than ever a crucial part of maintaining that church connection, that sense of church and school in a relationship that is at the heart of every successful church school.

Bishop’s Visitors come to schools as individuals with their own set of skills, experiences and enthusiasms. This enables them to work out in partnership with the school their unique role and relationship in that context.

I hope that this booklet will encourage schools and individuals to embark on this exciting journey together to develop something of substance, something with the potential to change perceptions, relationships and lives; another strand in the tapestry of our schools that enables every child to be all that God intended.

God bless.

Jackie Waters-Dewhurst
Having been a school leader within a Church school in the Diocese and encountering the privilege of a Bishop’s Visitor walking alongside the school on its journey, it seems the most natural thing in the world to be at the heart of promoting and co-ordinating this unique voluntary role of ‘being a Christian presence in a school’ on behalf of our Bishop, Christopher, and the Diocesan Education team. I am absolutely committed to Education in a Christian context and passionate about our Church School family in the Diocese of Lincoln.

The many benefits our valued Christian friend gave the school included engaging in conversation with staff and governors, listening to readers, using her card making skills as she worked with groups of children to celebrate the major Christian Festivals, face painting at the numerous fundraising events, leading collective worship or sharing in the children’s worship. She was always interested in our ‘highs and lows’, listened without making judgments and was there for us on a regular mutually arranged schedule, often with a cake or tin of biscuits.

If you find yourself with some hours to spare and would be willing to share yourself, just as you are, with your individual interests and talents, with a Church school close to you, then why not get in touch? Your school needs you to celebrate and contribute to its distinctive Christian character, to pray with it and for it.

Judith Dickin
WHAT IS A BISHOP’S VISITOR?

- A friend to the school and a listening ear
- A link between the Bishop of Lincoln, the Diocesan Education Team and the school
- A Christian presence supporting and enhancing the distinctive nature of the school through:
  - Sharing the Bishop’s letter each term with the whole school community
  - Attending and supporting worship in school or church
  - Offering individual skills and talents to enrich the life of the school

Each visitor has individual strengths and skills through which, in close cooperation with the school, they will develop their own valued contribution to school life.

As a Bishop’s Visitor you will recognise that building a successful and valued relationship with a school takes time, commitment and negotiation.

Approaching the school as a new Bishop’s Visitor
Remember schools are busy places, so always telephone and make an appointment. Take a diary to arrange future visits.

Bishop’s Visitors should aim to visit their schools at least twice a term. Many develop a pattern of visits that is far more frequent.

In your role as Bishop’s Visitor be aware that being a Headteacher is sometimes a lonely job; you may be the only person the Headteacher can talk to and confidence must be respected at all times.
Developing your role
Collective Worship is of central importance to the daily life of the school. You can make a significant contribution through:

- attending Worship as a visitor, participant, leader
- saying a prayer
- reading the Bishop’s letter
- bringing in an artefact to share
- sharing your faith
- leading the whole act of worship

Please raise awareness in your school of the diocesan website and courses. You may also be able to suggest other Christian links and information, for example, the National Society website, Values 4 Schools, www.prayforschools.org, www.prayerspacesinschools.com.

You can be instrumental in developing links with the local church and clergy and strengthening further the school’s links with the community.

If you would like to apply for courses, you should book through your school. If a school is unable to pay for your training costs and you are willing to cover these expenses yourself, it would be helpful if you could still arrange for the school to make the booking on your behalf. The school will then receive the invoice and you can make your own arrangement to settle this payment with the school.
Each year begins with a conference with contributions from the Bishop of Lincoln and the Diocesan Director of Education. The conference provides a training opportunity, a time to share experiences and time for spiritual reflection.

Additionally, three regional meetings are held within the Diocese in the spring term to which you are warmly invited to contribute. These meetings are shared with the Diocesan Director of Education, members of the Diocesan Education Centre team and the coordinator for Bishop’s Visitors. This is a time to get to know each other better and share both your expertise and experiences.

In the summer a further training and social event is arranged; this event is at the individual visitor’s expense.

Through three newsletters during the year we will share our news and keep you informed of events in the diocese which you may like to attend.

At any time throughout the year you are welcome to contact the Diocesan team or the Bishop’s Visitor coordinator with any queries or concerns you may have. We look forward to hearing from you.
As a valued Headteacher of a Church School in the Diocese of Lincoln, the Diocesan Board of Education welcomes the opportunity to support you and your school, through the involvement of a Bishop’s Visitor.

A Bishop’s Visitor has an interest in and heart for young people. It is a voluntary role and all Bishop’s Visitors have an enhanced DBS check.

The team at the Diocesan Education Centre will let you know who your Bishop’s Visitor is, and your Bishop’s Visitor will make an initial contact with your school in order to develop a pattern of visits which is entirely negotiable, reflecting the needs of the school and the expertise of your visitor.

Your Bishop’s Visitor will be a person of faith, and will help you celebrate the distinctive nature of your school.

Evidence of good practice can be shared and will, with appropriate permissions, be put on the website.

Your Bishop’s Visitor would welcome information about your events; it might be helpful to let them have a termly diary.

Please invite your Bishop’s Visitor to share with you Acts of Worship in school or in your local Parish Church and encourage them to join in.

Please invite your Bishop’s Visitor to any training sessions organised by the Diocesan Education Centre Team, and please introduce your Bishop’s Visitor to your Governing Body.

There will be an annual opportunity for you to complete a questionnaire letting us know how the partnership is going.

Your Bishop’s Visitor will be able to contribute to the distinctive nature of your Church School in some of the following ways:

**Religious Education**

The Diocesan Education Centre advises its schools to follow the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus to deliver religious education, focussed on “learning about and learning from” religion. Your Bishop’s Visitor may be willing to contribute to the Christianity section of each syllabus. For example, in the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus:
Key Stage 1
Unit 1 Celebrations for Christians.
Unit 3 Visiting a Christian church.
Unit 7 Belonging to a Christian community.
Unit 9 Talking about God.

Key Stage 2
Unit 1 Christian beliefs and lifestyle.
Unit 7 Christian journeys.
Unit 11 Religion in the neighbourhood.
Unit 14 What can we learn from people of faith today?
Unit 17 How do Christians try to live out their beliefs about God?
Unit 18 What do the Easter celebrations mean for Christians?

Key Stage 3 and 4
The Secondary phase has huge areas that a Bishop’s Visitor can support as a practising Christian with a view. Please do not hesitate to contact the Diocesan Education Centre for advice.

Your Bishop’s Visitor may be able to contribute to a greater understanding of world religions, through the sharing of experiences and resources.

Collective Worship
Your Bishop’s Visitor may be willing to actively contribute to Collective Worship.

Church and school community
Your Bishop’s Visitor, with your foundation governors, can help to cement a seamless relationship between Church and school, strengthening the bond between schools, families and the communities they serve.

Church Schools Festival
Each year the Diocese holds festivals celebrating a child’s education in the church school, infant, primary and now secondary. Your Bishop’s Visitor might like to accompany you to the Church Schools Festival.
Your Bishop’s Visitor may be able to make a positive contribution to the Section 48 process.

Some further possibilities for involving your Bishop’s Visitor in the everyday life of the school dependent on the skills and interests of individual Bishop’s Visitors:

- Listening to readers
- Chatting to staff
- Working with small groups
- Gardening
- Arts and craft activities
- Contributing to Collective Worship
- Engaging the whole school community with Bishop Christopher’s termly letter
- After-school / lunchtime class
- Prayer groups

The opportunities are endless, and specific to your school’s relationship with your Bishop’s Visitor.
The Church of England has a long and honourable history of involvement in education and still retains a significant contribution to the education of our young people. The family of Church Schools in the Diocese of Lincoln offers a distinctive opportunity for everyone in the school community to discover the possibility of God.

Each school encapsulates their Christian distinctiveness and values within a Christian ethos statement. The Christian framework of all schools is reflected in the school’s high regard for Spiritual and Moral Development, Collective Worship and Religious Education.

Church schools are one of the tangible expressions of Christian concern for the education of children and young people. They are also a practical expression of the partnership between the Church, the school and the community.

Within the Diocese there are 142 Church Schools, 5 of these are in the secondary phase of education, 21 are academies, 24 are Voluntary Aided schools, and five of our primary schools have a joint Anglican and Methodist foundation.
It may be that you have made initial enquiries about this role, or you may have been approached by your church group or a school where you are already known.

You might feel, after reading this booklet, that you would like to share your faith and talents with one of our Church Schools in the Diocese of Lincoln in the role of Bishop’s Visitor; we welcome your interest in celebrating the possibilities of education in a Christian context and invite you to apply for further information.

An application pack can be requested from the Diocesan Education Centre by contacting Sally Doughty by email: sally.doughty@lincoln.anglican.org or by phone on 01522 50 40 15.

When the process is satisfactorily completed, you will be offered a school, or possibly two schools. It is our intention, where possible, to offer schools in relatively close proximity to your home, to enable links to be facilitated between the school and the local Church community.

We look forward to working with you and welcome you in your role as Bishop’s Visitor in the Diocese of Lincoln.

**Safeguarding**

Ensuring the safety and well-being of every individual in our Church school communities is of the highest priority. In line with current national safeguarding legislation you will be asked to complete an electronic Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. Details of how to do this will be sent on receipt of your application pack. References will be requested and an informal interview arranged with the Bishop’s Visitor Coordinator or a member of the Diocesan Education Team.

*Updated September 2013*