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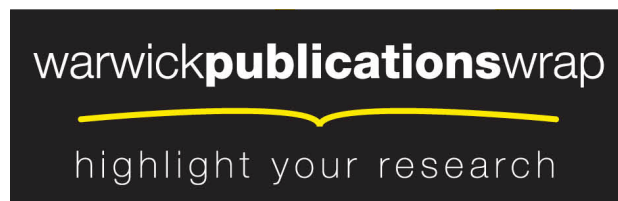
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Cathedral engagement with young people: Learning from Church of England cathedral websites in rural dioceses

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Cathedral engagement with young people: Learning from Church of England cathedral websites in rural dioceses

ABSTRACT

The Archbishop's Commission on Cathedrals (1994) identified education as among the crucial purposes of cathedrals. This study analyses the websites of eight cathedrals within the most rural dioceses of the Church of England in order to ascertain the variety of ways in which cathedrals are advancing the educational work of the Church in rural areas. The analysis distinguishes between three primary areas of activity, characterised concerning school-related education, faith-related education, and visitor-related education. Each of these three areas is illustrated by a case study profiling exemplary practice.

INTRODUCTION

For over a thousand years, the cathedral churches of England and Wales have been centres of worship and learning (Lehmberg, 2005; Bowers, 1994; and in terms of the role of cathedrals in the preparation of candidates for ordination, Lepine, 1999). Many cathedrals began as monastic foundations, in the great libraries of which were deposited the remnants of collected human wisdom. Until the Middle Ages cathedrals remained as one of the few places where learning was located, and later, when the first cathedral schools were founded, a long and illustrious relationship between cathedral foundations and formal education was created. These first schools were highly exclusive and rigorous, being reserved for the most intelligent sons of the nobility, and designed primarily to prepare pupils for a life in the service of the Church. Some schools provided cathedrals with boy trebles for the choir, and many cathedrals today maintain this tradition. Since the last century, though, there have been major shifts in emphasis and expressions relating to cathedrals' education provision, with particular reference to the emergence of a broader and more inclusive portfolio of activity.

Although a number of reasons may be cited as contributing factors in an understanding of why these shifts occurred, two basic developments are of particular note: first, the emergence of increasingly mobile populations alongside the associated growth in tourism; and secondly, the standardisation of the school curriculum which resulted from the Education Reform Act 1988 and the implementation of the National Curriculum. In the former case, cathedrals were presented with an opportunity to respond from an educational perspective to an externally driven impetus arising from increasing numbers of members of the public visiting cathedrals. In the latter case, cathedrals were able to initiate and to develop closer links with schools, in part supported by a confidence that they were in a position to develop activities and programmes which could meet specific common curriculum requirements. As a result of these developments, it is useful to interpret cathedrals' current education provision to young people fairly broadly and to make reference to: the local cathedral/ diocesan community (related to church life and to faith development); schools (related to curriculum religious education); and visitors (related to a broader religious and spiritual quest).

The increased breadth in the education provision now offered by cathedrals has brought with it issues relating to the great variety of expectations and needs reflected among those accessing the cathedrals. Young people on school visits to cathedrals will come from a wide range of backgrounds and visitor expectations and experience will be diverse as a number of

empirical studies indicate (Williams, Francis, Robbins & Annis, 2007; Francis, Williams, Annis & Robbins, 2008; Francis, Mansfield, Williams & Village, 2010; Francis, Mansfield, Williams & Village, 2010). This broader context presents new challenges to cathedrals when they seek to integrate their provision of education with their understanding of Christian mission.

A survey of the reports commissioned by the Church of England relating to Anglican cathedrals in England demonstrates a growing recognition of education as a significant part of the role and ministry of cathedrals, as well as a clearer articulation of the relationship between education as a valued part of the activity of cathedrals and the primary mission of cathedrals. For example, the Cathedrals' Commission Report (1927) described the primary purpose of the cathedral thus: 'to give continuous witness to the things unseen and eternal, and to offer continuous and reverent worship to Almighty God' and to that purpose all else was to be viewed as secondary. It was only later in the same section of the report that the contribution of cathedrals to religious art and 'religious learning' was referred to explicitly. However, in the most recent comprehensive review of Anglican cathedrals in England conducted in 1994 by a Commission appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, education is given a much more prominent position. The task assigned to the Commission was to examine 'the future role in the Church and nation of Cathedrals of the Church of England and to make recommendations as to how best that role could be fulfilled' (Archbishops' Commission on Cathedrals, 1994, p.1). Among the 'crucial purposes' of cathedrals are their concerns with 'education, and with service which attends to social need; they are centres of evangelism, presenting the gospel to many who would not otherwise recognise it, and they are places where witness to the presence of God in the world achieve great spiritual beauty' (Archbishops' Commission on Cathedrals, 1994 p. 3). When this statement is related to the basic purpose of the cathedral described in the Report, some relationship may be construed:

That purpose [of the cathedral] has to do with the organisation of the mission of the Church to the world. For the cathedral, in the words used in the first section of the Care of Cathedrals Measure 1990 – which we would emphatically endorse – is 'the seat of the bishop and a centre of worship and mission'. (Archbishops' Commission on Cathedrals, 1994 pp 2-4.)

This relationship is expressed in more practical terms through two of the Report's main recommendations in the area of education: first, that cathedrals should be concerned with

their contribution to ‘Christian reflection about the whole process and direction of education’; and secondly, that they should further enhance their work in ‘developing links with schools and in relating other areas of education to the Christian faith’.

Research agenda

The provision of education was recognised as playing a significant role within the broader articulation of the cathedral’s mission in the Archbishops’ Commission on Cathedrals (1994), *Heritage and Renewal*, as well as an area for development both in terms of Christian reflection on the educational process and the practical resources and links required for effective delivery. The present study seeks to identify the breadth and type of education provision offered to young people accessing rural cathedrals in 2011 from three different backgrounds (school related, faith related, and visitor related) as it is presented in the public domain through the medium of the cathedrals’ websites.

METHOD

Procedure

The ‘rural’ cathedrals for this study were selected using Lankshear’s (2001, p101) model for identifying rural dioceses in England, which divided dioceses into five categories (rural, mixed/rural, mixed, mixed/urban, and urban) with each category located on a rural/urban continuum according to the extent to which it reflected empirically verifiable characteristics. These characteristics were drawn from indicators developed by Francis (1985), and included: population per square mile; population per parish; Sunday attendance as a percentage of population; average Sunday attendance per church; infant baptisms as a percentage of live births; Easter communicants as a percentage of the parish population over fifteen years of age; electoral roll membership as a percentage of population; average electoral roll per parish; and average Sunday attendance per church. Employing this model, Lankshear identified eight rural dioceses: Hereford, Norwich, Lincoln, Carlisle, St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, Salisbury, Gloucester, and Truro. It was the cathedrals of these eight rural dioceses that were selected for the study. The cathedrals differed according to size, financial resource, popularity with tourists and visitors, historical significance, and whether or not the cathedral was also a parish church.

Analysis

With the aim of discerning the scope and form of educational provision for young people as presented on the websites of the eight cathedrals in rural dioceses identified by Lankshear (2001), the analysis focused on four main areas: mission statements; school-related education; faith-related education; and visitor-related education. Mission statements included the cathedrals' general mission statements (usually located on the 'homepage' or signposted) and the education-specific mission statements (usually located within an education-related section of the website). School-related education included differentiation in educational provision (according to age and special needs); availability of resources; types of activities; engagement with music; and connection to the wider school curriculum. Faith-related education included provision for young people in terms of educational provision available to the cathedral community; special services and events; choirs; and provision for groups outside the cathedral and school communities. Visitor-related education focused primarily on tours and trails provided for visitors outside a school context. In addition, three case studies exemplify provision as portrayed on the websites, with case study one concerned with school-related education, case study two concerned with faith-related education, and case study three concerned with visitors-related education.

RESULTS

Mission statements

Four of the eight cathedral websites identified education explicitly in their general mission statements, positioning it as an integral part of their mission. In each of these cases, a separate education mission statement located in the education section of the website was linked clearly to the general mission statement. One further cathedral included education in its 'Vision and Strategy' statement which was published online, and described education as both a priority and part of the Cathedral's mission 'to promote the educational mission of the Cathedral, encouraging lifelong exploration of faith', although the education aspect of the cathedral's mission was not explicitly articulated in these broad terms elsewhere on the website. Three of these five cathedrals linked the prominent position of education with their founders and their historic mission, and to the cathedrals' continuation and development of that work today.

Of the remaining three cathedrals, two described their general mission or role as being focussed around worship without reference to education, and had no education mission statement in the education section of the website which was linked to their general mission statement, while the third cathedral did not display a general mission statement or an education-specific statement, although it identified its role as one of ‘welcome’.

School-related education

In respect of school-related education, the websites were analysed to address five questions, concerning differentiation, availability of resources, types of activities, engagement with music, and connection to the wider school curriculum.

Differentiation. Differentiation within the educational provision offered by the cathedrals to young people on school visits refers to the appreciation of the differing educational needs related to age and special needs. Age groups are classified according to the typology used in current school-based educational practice in England, which is also employed by the cathedrals themselves, and includes: Foundation Phase (3- to 5-years old); Key Stage 1 (5- to 7-year olds), Key Stage 2 (8- to 11-year olds); Key Stage 3 (11- to 14-year olds); Key Stage 4 (14- to 16 year olds); and Post-16 (16- to 18-year olds).

Of the eight cathedral websites included in the study, four stated that they offered educational programmes for pupils in the Foundation Phase, six for pupils in Key Stages 1 to 3, five for pupils in Key Stage 4 (with a further cathedral in the process of developing programmes for this age group), and five for pupils in the Post-16 category. Only one cathedral website stated explicitly that there was provision for pupils with special needs, while two cathedrals offered provision for schools from abroad.

The eight cathedral websites were viewed to see whether specific ‘resources’ were provided for teachers and pupils to support their learning experiences in relation to their cathedral visit. Four of the cathedrals had developed resources for teachers, either available to download from the cathedral website, or available to purchase from the cathedral shop or education centre. Two cathedrals had developed resources for pupils: in one case, a multimedia resource was available from the cathedral website, and in the other links were provided to other sections of the website where pupils could explore the cathedral timeline or navigate

around the cathedral using a virtual tour. In the latter case, the resources available were not obviously specifically designed with young people in mind.

Availability of resources. Three of the cathedrals surveyed supplied resources additional to those listed above, where the cathedral education staff offered schools the option of inviting the cathedral into the classroom in a form of educational outreach. Two types of educational outreach were evident. In the first type, the cathedral education team were invited to a school either to prepare for a visit to the cathedral or to follow up a recent visit. In the second type, the cathedral education team visited schools as a resource for those unable to visit the cathedral. These cathedrals aimed to ‘bring the cathedral’ to schools with the support of a variety of visual aids, artefacts, and musical resources which illustrated the life, mission and worship of the cathedral.

Types of activity. The type of activities offered by the cathedrals in their educational programmes included tours and trails, and workshops. Of the eight cathedrals, six provided tours and trails for school visits. These included specialised tours tailored to the needs of the individual school group, animal/safari trails, discovery trails for younger pupils, treasure hunt tours, pilgrim’s tours, and self-guided and cathedral-led tours around the cathedral building. Of the eight cathedrals, six provided workshops for school visits. Some examples of subject areas offered in the workshops included: art (for example, traditional crafts such as stone, tile and brass rubbing, stained-glass window design, bookmaking, working with clay, calligraphy, and illumination); mathematics (for example, sacred geometry through exploring shapes and patterns); science (for example, forces and motion, materials, and senses); history (for example, investigating people and artefacts through pilgrimage/monastic experience role play); and religious education (for example, symbols, religion in art, parables from the bible).

Engagement with music. Engagement with music was explicitly cited as an important part of the cathedral’s education outreach in six of the eight cathedral websites. Examples of music-related outreach to local schools included opportunities to ‘Be a Chorister for a Day’ and to join a junior or youth volunteer choir. Several cathedrals also stated that they were actively participating in national singing schemes and the ‘Singing Together’ initiative, providing for children from around the locale the opportunity to sing together in a cathedral context. The centrality of music to the educational provision of three cathedrals was illustrated by the inclusion of musical outreach under the banner of education on their websites.

Connection to the wider school curriculum. In terms of connection to the wider school curriculum, seven of the eight cathedral websites provided specific information with regard to their provision for the school curriculum in terms of key stage and curriculum area; these had flexible educational programmes and offered tailored programmes to suit the requirements of the visiting school. In addition to the curriculum area of religious education, the following subjects were included according to Key Stage. For Key Stages 1-3: art and design, drama, English, history, mathematics, music, PSHE/citizenship, physical education, science; for Key Stage 4: art and design, business studies, geography, history, leisure and tourism, sociology; for Post-16: specialist subjects including, English literature, history of art, A-level religion and experience/ethics/philosophy, and BTEC/HND travel and tourism.

Faith-related education

In respect of faith-related education, the websites were analysed to address four questions, concerning provision available to the cathedral community, special services and events, choirs, and provision for groups outside the cathedral and school communities.

Provision available to the cathedral community. In terms of provision available to the cathedral community, five of the eight cathedral websites advertised the presence of cathedral Sunday schools. These were usually divided into two age groups: pre-school or the under sevens, and children under the age of either eleven or twelve. One of these cathedrals also provided details about a youth group offered for 11- to 16-year-olds. Of the eight cathedral websites only one offered information about confirmation classes. Another cathedral (which did not mention Sunday schools, youth groups, or confirmation classes on its website) offered a programme of religious education activities for the congregation and community, which included both bible study and prayer groups.

Special services and events. In terms of special services and events, one cathedral held a special service for young families every Friday. Events open to the community and visitors were advertised on five of the cathedral websites, and included summer or holiday family events (discovery days, pilgrimages, art sessions, and drama workshops), pre-school music group, heritage days, exhibitions, and a Celtic spirituality day.

Choirs. The provision of choirs for young people (male, female and mixed) was a prominent feature in six of the eight cathedral websites. Choir members were drawn from cathedral schools, local schools, or the local community.

Provision for groups outside the cathedral and school communities. One cathedral website dedicated a page to its provision for those groups which lay outside the school and cathedral community categories, such as Sunday schools, youth groups, and uniformed organisations, for example. This included specially tailored visits to the cathedral and outreach activity, where cathedral staff would visit the group. On other cathedral websites, use of the cathedral by these types of groups was indicated less directly on their calendars of events.

Visitor-related education

The term ‘visitors’ is understood to mean those visiting a cathedral as individuals, a family group or a tourist group, among which some children and young people would also be present. What was offered to cathedral visitors in these categories had areas of overlap with the facilities provided for schools and the cathedral community; for example, special events and holiday activities, and these have already been included elsewhere. However, the most frequent and prominent type of activity for visitors advertised on the cathedral websites was the ‘tour’.

Seven of the eight cathedral websites offered a variety of tours to visitors (five of these also had virtual tours downloadable from their websites), which could be led by a guide or independent. Four of these highlighted that they had disabled provision. Generally, there was no mention of differentiation in presentation for children and young people, with the exception of one cathedral which offered a colour children’s leaflet, and another which identified trails for children, although the latter appeared to be aimed at schools and other groups visiting the cathedral. One other cathedral drew attention to a specific feature identified as of interest to children, and mentioned that tours could be tailored to meet specific needs. Further information was provided on the cathedral websites, covering art and architecture, the history of the cathedral, maps, key features, and conservation, for example, but these were all written from an adult visitor perspective.

In terms of human resource available to visitors, six cathedral websites emphasised their use of volunteers who acted as welcomers and guides, or who worked in the Education Centre (as

well as Sunday school teachers), in addition to the cathedral staff who were employed as educational officers.

Case study one: school-related education

The website of one cathedral has been chosen to illustrate exemplary practice in the field of school-related education. This cathedral offers an extensive list of educational programmes, and provides an innovative and dynamic collection of resources for teachers and for pupils.

Overview and Resources. The dedicated ‘School Visits’ section of the website provides a fully interactive environment useful for teachers and pupils alike. Teacher resources provide a downloadable booking form and background material on the cathedral, as well as a more in-depth audio-podcast tour which is built around key ‘stations’ in the cathedral building. This online resource can be downloaded directly into the classroom and gives pupils the chance to familiarise themselves with the building prior to their visit. The cathedral also has a number of unique printed resources designed to support learning for a variety of age groups. These resources range from standard guidebooks to more explorative illustrated activity books written purposefully with children in mind. Stories of the lives of people living in the cathedral city from the earliest days to the present time ground the cathedral in its historical and contemporary context and present to children the opportunity to engage with a living place of worship and with its venerable heritage. Large A3-sized posters are available for schools, either as a classroom teaching tool or as a souvenir from a recent visit. Most usefully, the website has a search facility, which allows teachers to browse quickly and easily the educational programmes in order to find one that best serves their needs. The search can be narrowed according to Key Stage, type of programme and location, which aids navigation within the resources. A further interactive resource allows children to scroll through the cathedral timeline from its foundation to the present day.

Pilgrimage. The website emphasises the cathedral as a place of pilgrimage and worship. This is stated clearly in the background information provided for teachers, and forms the basis of the website’s main interactive resource, the ‘Online Pilgrim’s Tour’. This resource features a colour-coded floor plan of the cathedral building with seven ‘stations’, which are the key areas of interest in the cathedral. Examples are the Font, the Narthex and the Library. Each of the stations is supported by a page of the website, in which the education programmes relevant to that particular part of the building are listed, organized as a series of links

suggesting useful topics for stories, reflection, discussion and themed activities. Also listed are the age groups for which those programmes cater and the units of the local agreed syllabus which those programmes actively support. Examples of stories include well-known events taken from the Bible or from the Church's calendar. Reflections might suggest thinking about certain aspects of that which is being explored, such as questions pertaining why, how, when and who? Discussion topics are broader ranging, and invite pupils to share their own experiences, and to consider the symbolic power of that which is being explored. The activities might recommend the pupils to respond in a specific way, perhaps by drawing a picture, writing a poem, using an aspect of the cathedral website, or re-enacting the life or event being explored. The 'Pilgrim's Tour' lends itself to flexibility, allowing teachers to choose which programmes are right for their particular class.

Key Stages. The cathedral in this case study provides formal education programmes for Key Stages 1, 2, and 3, and the 'Pilgrim's Tour' entirely caters for these age categories with tiered activities appropriate to each age group. A 'Safari Tour' is offered for younger pupils of Foundation Phase age and below. Children participating in this tour take a soft toy of an animal and search for their animal in the carvings, stonework and artwork of the cathedral building. This programme is specifically geared towards helping relationships between children and adults, supporting personal, social and emotional development. Children of this age are actively supported and encouraged to be creative and to learn about a wide-range of topics, from Christianity to the building materials used, and efforts are made to support the development of language and literacy.

Workshops. Workshops designed for school visits can be taken as a stand-alone event or in conjunction with any of the above. Two workshops are listed on the cathedral website: a hands-on workshop where children learn about manuscript production and another where children witness the use of a printing press. Children may also then be taken on a tour of the medieval library to see genuine examples of medieval manuscripts, examine a modern-copy chained to a lectern, and handle pieces of parchment.

Case study two: faith-related education

The website of one cathedral has been chosen to illustrate exemplary practice in the field of faith-related education. This cathedral has a well-resourced and active Education Centre and

an established Sunday school, as well as opportunities for congregational learning, training and education. Ministry to visitors and families also figures prominently in the cathedral's educational activities, and outreach to schools allows children who have not visited the cathedral to experience aspects of the cathedral in an exciting and creative way, as well as help to prepare for a school visit. The website itself is well designed, easy to navigate and colourful.

Overview and Resources. The cathedral has an Education Centre and a dedicated Education Team comprising a Head of Education, a Visits Co-ordinator, a Teaching Officer and a Support Technician. The Head of Education is a full-time employee of the cathedral. The Teaching Officer is part-time. Both are fully qualified teachers. The Education Centre is assisted by a number of volunteers.

Sunday school. The cathedral has a Sunday school which has two classes or 'clubs' for children of different age groups (broadly corresponding to Key Stages 1 and 2). The first is aimed at children under seven-years-old and the second at children aged seven to eleven-years-old. Very young children are also welcome, and parents are encouraged to stay with them. Some parents are involved as Sunday school teachers for the younger age group. A variety of activities are offered, including Godly Play once a month. In addition, there is a children's communion service once in every school term, to which parents are also invited (the cathedral has a policy of admitting children over the age of seven to communion). The cathedral understands the work of the Sunday school within the wider context of the cathedral's worshipping and community life, and this is expressed on the website as the 'aim to help children grow in their faith, and familiarise them with the cycle of worship and prayer as it is offered in the Cathedral'. As such, many activities revolve around the liturgical year, with the most popular times of year being Christmas and Easter, when the children of the Sunday school prepare presentations for family services.

Special events and visitors. The cathedral offers a series of special events for adults and children. The cathedral runs an 'Art for Adults' course, a popular series of one-off events involving activities such as calligraphy, flower arranging, painting and photography, and stone carving. These activities are described as 'taster-sessions', and the unique cathedral environment is used as inspiration for artistic expression. The cathedral offers two further short courses for adults; the first being a special interest reading group with an illustrated talk and an optional tower tour, the second an introduction to the Gothic architecture of the

cathedral building, with an additional optional tower tour. The cathedral tailors activities and events for a range of visiting groups. Some of the groups that have previously made use of the cathedral are the Women's Institute, U3A (University of the Third Age), church and Sunday school groups, and uniformed organisations. The cathedral also caters for families on holiday. The website indicates that two workshop-style activities are available. The first is a craft workshop entitled 'Young at Art' and is directed towards children of ages seven to eleven. Parents are able to leave their children at the Education Centre for the duration of the workshop, allowing them to explore the cathedral and surrounding areas on their own. The second activity combines craft and creativity with a more traditional cathedral trail. Families are taken on a guided tour of the building, where objects and sights that may be particularly engaging for children are pointed out. These might include green men, mythical creatures, and gargoyles. The trail allows families to discover the cathedral for themselves, and worksheets with clues are distributed, giving the tour an interactive aspect.

Education and outreach. The cathedral has an educational outreach programme for adults and for children. The stated aim of this programme is to 'bring the cathedral to you'. Lectures on the work of the cathedral, as well as on the cathedral's history and architecture, can be arranged with adult interest groups and are tailor made for the group's requirements. A more structured programme of outreach activities for schools is provided on the cathedral's website. These include presentations on the cathedral as a worship space, the wealth of symbolism evident in the cathedral building, explorations of sacred place, prayer, and the festivals of the Christian year. The cathedral also pioneered a 'Singing Together' programme in conjunction with its Cathedral School to encourage singing and sacred music in primary schools in the diocese. The repertoire is not restricted to sacred music; the pupils also sing the blues, jazz and other genres. This is described as a success, which has contributed to the formation of a junior choir for boys and girls from the age of four to eight who meet each Saturday in term-time. This choir sings at special family events and services and has become a 'key part of the musical life of the Cathedral'.

Choirs. In addition to the Junior Choir, two other choirs are promoted on the cathedral's website: the Cathedral Choir and the Cathedral Chamber Choir. The Cathedral Choir is supported and resourced by a Choral Foundation, a trust set up by the Chapter of the cathedral to assist in maintaining its musical heritage. A further aim of the Trust is to 'ensure that the boy and girl choristers enjoy first class musical, academic and religious education free of financial constraint'. The cathedral prides itself on having been the first to include girl

choristers in the daily round of cathedral worship, and now there are equal numbers of boy and girl choristers with weekly worship divided between the two. The Chamber Choir is an adult choir specialising in medieval plainsong and deputizes for the Cathedral Choir on major feast days when that choir is on holiday.

Case study three: visitor-related education

The website of one cathedral has been chosen to illustrate exemplary practice in the field of visitor-related education. The detailed 'visitor information' section is accessed from the cathedral website's home page, providing information, such as directions for those travelling to the cathedral, opening times, details about daily services, future services and special events such as concerts and recitals, exhibitions, tours and trails, the cathedral labyrinth, and accessibility. In terms of education provision, a series of lectures is advertised, presumably for adult learning, and a series of exhibitions. These exhibitions are varied in theme and content, and focus on art and architecture and crafts.

The main area of provision for visitors to the cathedral relates to the offering of a variety of tours and trails. A free general guided-tour is available every hour for 'casual visitors and family groups', which can be accessed by larger and more formal groups provided they book in advance and made their requirements known. The tours are offered in a variety of languages. Three other types of tour are identified on the cathedral website: private tours, school tours, and pilgrimages. Private tours are available at irregular hours provided the visitors book in advance, and that the tour does not interfere with other events in the cathedral. School tours also require advance booking through the Cathedral's Education Department. The Cathedral encourages pilgrimage groups from parishes, deaneries and elsewhere, and highlights the provision of an interactive 'Pilgrim's Trail'. The trail is differentiated from the other trails in its focus on those aspects of the cathedral appropriate to people seeking sacred space. The more generic 'Visitor's Trail' is less focused and more informative. Two further specialised trails include the 'Broderers' Trail', showcasing the various textiles on display in the cathedral, including banners, kneelers, tapestries and vestments, and the 'Children's Discovery Trail'. Few details are provided about this latter trail, but mention is made of a resource available from the Cathedral Gift Shop. The final kind of tour available on the cathedral website is a 'Virtual Tour', which utilised high quality photographs of the Cathedral.

The Cathedral highlights the presence of a labyrinth, which was laid in 2002. The Labyrinth is described as being ‘designed to help you find your way. By encouraging you to walk without having to think about where to go next, it can enable you to be still, to let your mind escape the bustle of everyday life and reflect’. The Cathedral website encourages both adults and children to use this resource, as a spiritual aide and as a way of instilling quietude and stillness. Its usefulness as a point of interest for tourists is also mentioned.

In terms of accessibility, the cathedral website highlighted the availability of special provision for a number of groups, and described special facilities for disabled groups, mothers with babies, the visually impaired, and the hearing impaired.

CONCLUSION

The present study sought to identify the breadth and type of education provision offered to young people accessing rural cathedrals in 2011 with three different contexts (school-related education, faith-related education, and visitor-related education), as it is presented in the public domain through the cathedral websites. The study was placed primarily in the wider context of the Archbishops’ Commission on Cathedrals (1994). It was recognised that the eight cathedrals in rural dioceses included in the study differed according to size, financial resource, popularity with tourists and visitors, and perceived historical significance. Four main conclusions are drawn from the survey of the eight cathedral websites.

First, the study of the eight rural cathedral websites raises questions about the public articulation of the relationship between the cathedral’s ‘activity’ and ‘mission’ in relation to education and young people. Only four of the eight cathedral websites surveyed included education explicitly in their general mission statements and related the ‘education’ section of their website to their general mission statement, although all the websites offered some type of educational provision as part of their ‘activity’ within the categories included in this survey to varying degrees. What is unknown in the present study is whether education has not been fully integrated into the central mission of these cathedrals or whether it has simply not been expressed on their websites. Within the context of cathedrals offering a distinctive educational provision for schools, for the cathedral community and diocese, and for visitors, it would be useful for cathedrals to present clearly their ‘Christian reflection about the whole process and direction of education’, one of the recommendations in the Archbishops’

Commission on Cathedrals (1994, p. 49), which fully integrates the ‘activity’ of education with their conception of cathedral ‘mission’.

Secondly, the educational provision offered to schools was often a well-developed area on the cathedral websites. Many of the websites mapped their provision (to varying extents) onto the requirements of National Curriculum, public examinations, and religious education, and over half also provided some kind of online and downloadable resources to support their programmes. The strength of the cathedrals’ provision in this area was usually reflected by the presence of education officers employed by the cathedral and education centres able to focus on this type of activity. Although this work is valuable because it ensures that schools will make use of cathedrals in order to meet a particular set of learning outcomes, Inge’s (2006, p. 32) observation that cathedrals should be cautious of viewing their role as simply supporting the delivery of the National Curriculum should be taken seriously. Inge emphasises that cathedrals should aim to offer something more than this, such as ‘enabling reflection on the significance and meaning of life itself’. Expressed in slightly different terms, schools may also appreciate cathedrals providing a distinctive and appropriate resource that would help them to meet the statutory requirement of providing opportunities for the more nebulous and challenging spiritual development of every child.

Thirdly, the presence of provision relating to young people within the cathedral community in terms of faith-related education was relatively sparse on the websites overall, compared to the more extensive provision advertised to schools. For example, only five of the eight websites offered some information about Sunday schools for children under 12-years of age and only one of these offered information about youth provision. What is unknown in the present study is whether the extent of this type of faith-related education for young people had been fully represented on the cathedral websites. However, it may be surmised that there would be some kind of relationship between a good online presence providing information about the aims of these groups, about their activities, and about how to become a member and the number of young people (and their parents) being attracted to them. Another feature related to faith-related education was the apparent dearth of online resources available, which was in sharp contrast to the often highly developed online resources developed for schools. Perhaps such resources would not only support the individual cathedral’s work in this area, but also the work of the churches in the diocese.

Fourthly, although it was evident from the websites that most of the cathedrals offered a variety of special events and holiday clubs of relevance to young people, it was often unclear how they responded to the needs of young people who came to the cathedral as ordinary visitors or tourists, often with their families. Tours (both guided and independent) were invariably a dominant feature on the websites, but there was usually very little reference to any other provision outside that shaped for an adult audience. As visitors and tourists are a significant feature in the life of cathedrals today, it may be worth exploring further how the experience of the young person visiting the cathedral can be appropriately enhanced.

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