



THE
JESMOND
CONFERENCE

EDUCATION INTERIM REPORT

February 2017

JESMOND CONFERENCE RESOLUTIONS 2016

In the light of all the deliberations and discussions, the conference agreed the following that:

1. In line with the United Nations declaration of Human Rights, the right of parental choice in education must be recovered in the UK.
2. A clear primary faith culture in schools needs to be recovered, which, following census data, in the great majority of schools should be Christian.
3. Cases of clear discrimination against Christians in schools, Christian schools and proposed Christian schools must be addressed.
4. The vicar of Jesmond should set up a working group that will consider the Jesmond Conference 2016 papers, addresses, group submissions and resolutions, take appropriate action and produce a report for the end of February 2017.

THE WORKING GROUP'S INTERIM REPORT

February 2017

Following last year's conference and its resolutions, a steering group is considering a new Christian educational agenda for furthering Christian Education in the UK. This is work in progress.

Aims:

- To give parents (Christians, but others also) who want it, the option for their children to be educated in a Christian manner.
- To inform parents of the distinctiveness of a Christian approach to education and its benefits.
- To provide children and young people generally in the UK with an education that seeks to present them with truth and avoid leading them astray with falsehoods - education in the way of wisdom. Whilst recognising our own fallibility and need for constant reformation, we also recognise that beliefs and attitudes with little basis in evidence are being promoted in schools which we believe are harmful for some young people and destructive to society and our nation. We also believe that Christian teaching points us towards a truthful approach that will bring human flourishing.
- To develop children's talents so that the great potential of their gifts is more fully realised

- To equip children and young people to contribute positively to community and society, informed by Christian beliefs about right living, thus bringing wider benefits.
- To ensure all children growing up in Britain have a basic understanding of Christian belief and its role in shaping the UK.

To achieve this we need:

- Parents who understand their calling and are equipped to fulfil it.
- Churches which equip parents to fulfil their calling, through teaching, encouragement and counsel.
- Churches which assist schools in general in their duty to educate pupils about Christian belief.
- A legislative framework which respects the role of parents.
- Schools, governors and teachers who respect the role of parents.
- Christian teachers who are intellectually equipped to apply Christian teaching to their professional role and are devoted to doing their jobs to the glory of Jesus Christ and with Christ-like love for the children they teach and their families.
- Christian professional development training for teachers, educational leaders and governors.
- A legislative and regulatory framework nationally and in individual schools' policies which allows Christian teachers to apply their Christian understanding to their calling.
- Freedom for Christian schools to use a Christian approach to their work.
- Christian school founders, leaders and governors with a clear vision and practical ability, with Churches and other Christian organisations in support.

Challenges to be overcome to achieve this:

- Ofsted: anti-Christian or anti-faith prejudice discriminating against Christian schools and creating a climate of fear which inhibits a distinctively Christian contribution to education.
- Department for Education officials and parliamentarians with secular absolutist values – the influence of British Humanist Association.
- Failure of Education Select Committee to hold Ofsted to account.
- Lack of vision in the Church.
- Lack of teaching in the Church on Education.
- Failure of the Church wholeheartedly to engage in controversial areas and to equip Christians to do so in their working lives.
- Failure of some in the churches to take a clear stand in controversial areas, undermining the principled stand of others.

- Use of extremism narrative to bully Christian schools, teachers and parents.
- Parents and churches not preparing Christian young people to understand contemporary British society, allowing secular thinking to fill the vacuum, further weakening their Christian understanding.

Actions needed:

1. Force Ofsted to be transparent – n.b. current action with parliamentary ombudsman. Approaching new chair of Education Select Committee when one is appointed, write to Amanda Spielman. Ofsted need to be forced to be transparent and accountable.
2. Articulate Christian beliefs clearly to parliamentarians and opinion formers - some currently only hear about Christianity from the British Humanist Association.
3. Continue to engage with the Education Select Committee where possible.
4. Articles about Christian education in a range of Christian periodicals.
5. Articles promoting positive engagement in areas of controversy in Christian publications.
6. Expand current school based initial teacher training programmes at Christian Institutions, leading towards Christian higher education institution overseeing Post Graduate Certificate of Education, then BEd/BA(Ed).
7. Founding a Christian Teaching Union, ultimately with head teacher branch to support Christian teachers, particularly in cases where they are asked to act against conscience and the existing unions will not support them.
8. Develop and promote a Christian approach to educating young people about contemporary social issues in a faithful and politically wise manner, producing materials for Church youth leaders.
9. Create an organisation to equip and accredit schools in Christian approaches to education in controversial areas: e.g. bullying, Sex and Relationships Education, British Values.
10. Work with Catholic Education Service and others to present a united front on schools' ability to approach moral issues in a manner compatible with their religious position.