

“At the heart of the Church of England’s vision for education is the message given in Jesus of ‘life in all its fullness’. The Archbishops’ Young Leaders Award is already enabling hundreds of schools to educate for wisdom, hope, community and respect, and I’m delighted that the Awards are reaching out with Good News to some of the most vulnerable in our society”.

**The Revd Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer for the Church of England**

## Introduction

The Archbishops’ Young Leaders Award (AYLA) supports the Church of England Vision for Education by offering a programme that is rooted in our vision to enable young people to flourish and to live life in all its fullness. The Awards focus on developing the whole child; heart, soul and mind, providing opportunities for all pupils to discover their potential as young leaders; build habits of servant-hearted leadership; and to become agents of change in their communities.

Educating for wisdom, hope, community and dignity is central to the Awards; providing opportunities for pupils to understand, explore and serve the common good. Pupils investigate what it means to follow the example of Jesus and be servant hearted leaders in the world around them. They evaluate and develop their own leadership skills and character virtues; examine social issues that affect their communities; and take part in practical action projects to ‘*be the change they want to see*’.

As outlined in the SIAMS Self Evaluation Form (SEF) there are three key questions for schools to consider as they articulate their Christian vision: Who are we?, What are we doing here? and How then shall we live? The AYLA contributes in particular to the last two questions, supporting schools as they apply their distinctive Christian vision and associated values to help pupils flourish.

## **IQ1: How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision enable pupils and adults to flourish?**

The decision by leaders to run the AYLA shows that a school seeks to develop and embed distinctive Christian values. The AYLA embodies values such as service, compassion, humility, endurance, justice, wisdom and hope; helping pupils to explore, reflect on and apply these values to their lives. Through the lesson content of the Award pupils creatively and imaginatively investigate these values and what it means to apply the Christian principle of serving others. At KS2, pupils learn about a variety of Christian leaders and how their faith has inspired and influenced them to take action and bring positive change to others.

The Award helps schools to facilitate pupil led action, as they plan and implement social action projects to meet needs both within the school community and in their communities on a local, national and global scale. The Award materials support teachers to act as facilitators enabling pupils to take the lead and to follow their own ideas and passions as they seek to bring positive change to their communities. The transformative nature of the Award is measured through critical thinking and reflection following pupils' involvement in action projects. Through this learning process pupils identify their own personal development in leadership and character and how their actions have enabled flourishing, both for themselves as individuals and the communities they have served.

The AYLA provides opportunities for schools to enhance their relationships with their local church and community by creating partnerships through the pupils' action projects. Many of our schools work together with their local parish church, community groups and charities to break down barriers, build community and bring hope to those in need. Schools are able to reflect their Christian vision and associated values, through which the learning of both pupils and those they serve is enhanced.

### **Case Study**

Young Leaders in a North Yorkshire Primary school built on their relationship with their local church by jointly supporting a local charity working with refugees and asylum seekers. The pupils wrote to their school families asking for donations of nappies and baby wipes to give to the charity for the families they support, then created a 'nappy wall' to show what they had collected. The local vicar forged the link between the school and the charity and continues to actively engage the school and church with the work of this particular charity.

*Ask your parish church how it serves the local community and see how your Young Leaders can get involved.*

## IQ2: How does the curriculum reflect the school's theologically rooted Christian vision?

The Award is an engaging and creative addition to a school's curriculum, designed to support the Church of England's vision to educate for wisdom, knowledge and the skills and habits needed to be effective servant leaders. Opportunities are provided for pupils to consider their place in the world as unique individuals and to evaluate their leadership and character strengths and areas to improve. Through participating in acts of service they grow in confidence and emotional intelligence and use their creativity and leadership skills to impact others. The flexibility of the resources allows teachers to follow their pupils' curiosity and ideas, enabling more meaningful discussion, learning and action.

The lesson materials support pupils' spiritual development, actively enabling them to reflect and explore spiritual and ethical issues including prejudice and injustice, poverty, isolation and loneliness, respect and tolerance from a Christian perspective. Enquiry-based activities allow pupils to think critically and creatively, ask deeper questions and respond in meaningful ways to problems facing society. Many of these activities are pupil-led and encourage responsibility, a growth mindset and a belief that they can affect change.

The vision of the AYLA is for all pupils, regardless of background or ability, to be equipped and empowered through the Award to *'be the change they want to see'*. The Awards have been designed to enable different levels of progress so that all pupils can flourish. Lessons focus on enabling a growth mindset and belief that there is no limit to achievement. Through taking part in social action pupils have increased self-belief and aspirations about the positive impact and difference they can make to themselves and others.

*\*Additional information to support this strand can be found in the Curriculum Links documents.*

### Award Content

At KS1 and KS2 *'Big Questions'*, enquiry-based activities and ongoing reflection form part of each topic to spark and facilitate discussion. For example:

- Practical problem solving and teamwork activities.
- Pupil reflections following each topic, challenge or social action project.
- Story stimulus about issues including kindness, injustice, loneliness and community.
- Exploring the work of national and global charities.
- Investigating and meeting needs in the local community.

### **IQ3: How is collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually?**

Many of our church schools running the Award choose to incorporate the skills, themes and values of the AYLA into their collective worship. There can also be opportunities for pupils to take an active lead in sharing their knowledge, experience and reflections from the Award with the school community.

#### **Case Study**

"Our Young Leaders visited elderly members of the community and took them hampers. They also visited a local residential care home to spend time with the residents. The children sang to them and did arts and crafts with them. We received letters back from those we had visited, all very appreciative of the gifts and time spent with them as most were over 90 years old and lived alone. The carers told us that some of their residents with Alzheimer's smiled for the first time in days when the children were there. The children learnt about thinking of other people who can often be forgotten and may feel lonely."

**YLA Teacher**

### **IQ4: How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision create a culture in which pupils and adults are treated well?**

The Award supports pupils' social development by providing planned curriculum opportunities for pupils to use a range of social skills including communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, cooperation and negotiation. Within the classroom, pupils often work with people outside their social group which allows the application of these skills.

The Award seeks to develop pupils' emotional intelligence as they consider the prejudices or stereotypes they may have towards particular groups in society. Pupils are encouraged to think about how their behaviour and actions impact others and how disagreements can be overcome. Working together in this

#### **Case Study**

KS2 Young Leaders at a small village school found that the biggest way that they could help their community would be to provide opportunities for older residents to be more social and less isolated. Following this the pupils embarked on what became a wonderful ongoing project to bless their community. They organised monthly 'Generation Teas' inviting older residents to meet for afternoon tea and activities. This project brought the different generations in the village together in a positive way, encouraged new friendships and has left a lasting legacy on an otherwise quite isolated community.

way creates a sense of purpose and belonging, increasing empathy, care and encouragement.

Pupils consider what it means to be a servant leader and through social action projects seek to bring hope, dignity and respect to people who are often marginalised. Through the personal development of pupils, the Award can also develop the school as a hospitable community.

Through community action projects, opportunities arise for pupils to meet and work with people from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. These projects promote reconciliation and living well in community.

## **IQ5: How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision create an active culture of justice and responsibility?**

"Never before has it been so important for our young people regardless of their background or faith to discover the life skills of compassion, patience, self-control, gentleness and leadership. The AYLA is helping to raise a generation motivated by such virtues."

**Dr John Sentamu, Former Archbishop of York & AYLA Founder**

The AYLA takes pupils on a journey of discovery of their character, potential and ability to bring hope to their communities. Lessons encourage pupils to self-reflect and consider their character virtues and how they can use these to *'be the change they want to see'*.

Lessons highlight positive role models as sources of inspiration and aspiration, including people of faith. Pupils explore how they are courageous advocates for change and how charities too play a significant role in transforming lives and communities. These lessons often act as a motivational foundation for what pupils can achieve during the Award and beyond. Pupils are encouraged to challenge injustice, take responsibility and become courageous advocates for issues they have identified and are passionate about. Practical group work tasks form a key aspect of lessons allowing pupils to develop both individually and collectively as they draw on character virtues including perseverance, resilience and patience. Through planning and preparing for social action projects pupils often face challenges which can test these virtues, requiring them to overcome barriers and make positive choices, fostering new learning and growth.

### Personal Challenges

One Y3 Young Leader organised a collection of 70 advent calendars to donate to children living at a local women's refuge centre.

A Y4 pupil after litter picking on the local beach wrote to several large companies about their use of plastic and received replies outlining plans to reduce their plastic use.

Another pupil in Y5 volunteered in their own time with a charity serving food to homeless people in their city. His parents and younger brother also joined in.

The AYLA supports schools to provide curriculum opportunities for all pupils to engage in social action and to look beyond themselves and develop a mindset of helping others at home, in school and in their local communities. Some schools choose to focus their projects on national and global issues too. At all Key Stages, pupils research and investigate the issues affecting their communities and how they can help the lonely, disadvantaged, vulnerable and isolated.

Social action projects may include:

- Intergenerational
- Environmental
- Fundraising for charity
- Tackling loneliness and isolation
- Improving the local area
- Mentoring and coaching
- Community events

For many schools the above projects form the basis of partnerships with external organisations including the local church, charities, businesses and global organisations.

### Case Study

Young Leaders from a West Yorkshire school designed posters to encourage other classes to bring in donations of toiletries. Once collected, the children decorated hampers and filled them to make care packages for women fleeing violence. They were collected by a representative from a local Women's Aid who was completely taken aback by the generosity of the children. Each hamper also contained a handmade card with a message of comfort from the children.

## IQ6: Is the religious education curriculum effective?

In delivering a comprehensive RE syllabus that promotes pupils' understanding of Christianity as a living world faith, many schools have come to value the relevant lessons in the AYLA that explore the link between faith and leadership. For example, pupils learn about inspirational leaders, including people of faith, who have had a significant impact on the lives of people worldwide. There are also opportunities to extend this learning to include examples from other world religions. Pupils explore the work of national and global Christian charities working to help others. Through this they appreciate how faith is expressed in actions. The KS1 Award incorporates biblical texts, which help pupils consider the impact Christian teaching can have on society and the lives of others.

### Award Content

- The KS1 Award includes activities on Bible stories and teachings which allow pupils to listen, wonder, retell, ask questions of and respond to the biblical texts.
- The KS2 Award includes a focus on Jesus' teaching to 'love your neighbour as yourself' with the example of the story of the Good Samaritan. Pupils explore how they can follow this teaching in their own lives.
- Both Primary Awards explore stories of people of faith who changed the world for the better, helping them to further appreciate how faith is expressed in actions.

The Award activities draw out the skills of enquiry, critical analysis and interpretation, posing challenging questions about the meaning and purpose of life and belief, what it means to follow Christian teaching to serve others and issues of right and wrong. Pupils are given a safe space to discuss, debate and critically reflect on these issues.