

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA
TASK TEAM ON DISCRIMINATION IN SCHOOLS
REPORT TO SYNOD, 24 January 2022**

Background

At the Provincial Standing Committee of 22 – 25 September 2020, Resolution (10.2.4) was passed which established a Provincial task team to work with the different Anglican Schools to make recommendations on how best the ACSA can address discrimination issues at our Diocesan schools and give feedback at the 2021 Provincial sitting. The Task Team was established at the end of November 2020 and provided interim reports to the Synods of February and November 2021.

The team begun its work with an internal collective and rigorous learning journey in relation to the complex and often unrecognized or ‘invisible’ features of discrimination experienced by members of school communities. We believed that this was a necessary preparation to develop the recommendations requested, and to prepare for engagement with schools. Our approach to schools was outlined in the November 2021 report:

The recommendations must be the outcome of processes undertaken with schools, and which recommendations schools own. Recommendations made which are not the outcome of authentic engagement and which have not been enriched by the experiences of those who must adopt the recommendations will exist on ‘paper’ and will not be incorporated into the essence of the life of schools.

Engagement with schools in 2021

This first step in the process of engagement with schools took place in September and October 2021. The purposes of this first conversation were to establish relationships of trust where schools could share their learning with each other in a supportive community, and where the Task Team could listen to the schools and build a basis for subsequent engagements. All the meetings took place on a virtual platform. The executive leadership of the schools and the chaplains were invited because the leadership of the executive head is fundamental in the leadership required to build inclusive processes, and in executing intentions developed in these processes.

The issuing of invitations was led by the bishops and supported by the Anglican Board of Education. Across the four sessions, there were more than 70 participants from 40 schools across 10 dioceses. In the consultation sessions, a video clip was played of a message to schools from the Archbishop. This message gave the background to the establishment of the Task Team, and the purpose of the consultation sessions.

Responses of schools to the conversations and the journey ahead

Generally, it was clear that the sessions were deeply valued as they gave a strong sense of solidarity and of not feeling alone in the challenges faced. The anonymous poll conducted on-line at the end of the session provided some objective confirmation of this observation. Nearly all of the participants found it useful to reflect on the experience of their schools with colleagues and felt that their views were listened to in the session. Strong support was expressed for the

work of the Task Team, with 94% of participants indicating that they believe that the recommendations that the Task Team will make will assist their schools; and that they would like to participate in the process of developing the recommendations.

Nearly all the participants indicated that they need external support, and from among the alternatives presented, 36% of schools wished to receive support from Diocesan Education structures and 26% of schools wished to receive support from their Bishop. It is the view of the Task Team that this underlines the key leadership role of ACSA going forward both in the work of the team and in subsequent processes.

Report on engagement with schools

A comprehensive report of the engagements was circulated to all participants for comments before finalising the report which was been sent (week of 24th January) to:

- All Bishops
- All school chaplains
- All school Principals
- All Chairpersons of all Governing Bodies

It is assumed that all Bishops now have the report, and the detail of the discussion will not be captured here.

The report sought to capture the richness of the discussions in the voices of the participants themselves, without analysis and was drawn from the summary reports prepared by Task Team members which were shared with the groups of which they were part for comment before being finalized. Appendices to the report included reflections on the essence of Anglican schooling, and proposed elements of a framework for change; and a document developed by the team which was the outcome of its internal process of reflection on discrimination as a societal challenge, and how this impacts on Anglican Schools.

This report on the consultations with schools is necessary so that together with the schools, the Task Team can:

- Reflect on learnings from the interactions
- Consider next steps in the process to maintain and extend participation and to continue the individual and collective institutional reflection - and the interaction between these in the learning journey
- Build institutional mechanisms for ongoing learning and adoption of change in this area. These mechanisms will be critical to sustain and extend the learning that has begun
- Agree on the process for 'finalizing the recommendations to Synod on how schools and the dioceses of which they are a part can best address discrimination in our schools'

The role of the church and of chaplains emerged as a key issue. In particular: how the Leadership Role of ACSA is experienced as schools grapple with combating discrimination, the specific role of Chaplains; and what does it mean to be a School with both an Anglican, and an inclusive, identity.

The process of formulating guidelines to school provides an opportunity to consider the leadership role of the Church in Anglican Church schools - and an important dimension of this is a reflection on the way church views its role and

the roles of chaplains in schools. This is a complex role, and one of the recommendations made is that chaplains should develop a set of principles and guidelines for how this role is executed in respect of infusing Anglican principles of social justice into school processes. This is an extract from the document from the Task Team document in Appendix 1 of the report:

Anglican Church Schools offer each member of the community an opportunity to flourish in a diverse community of inclusivity, respect, and courage. In particular, an Anglican church school seeks to nurture a space for the emergence of new generations of young people, who are able to navigate and embrace the unique challenges facing contemporary South Africa and who are brave enough to envision and act for a different and better world.

The Task Team noted that the conversation with schools focused almost exclusively on racial discrimination, and that other urgent issues related to discrimination -such as gender identity and sexuality - were not raised and need to be deliberately surfaced. The ongoing journey will need to include the tasks of identifying and combating discrimination in these areas - noting that these maybe more complex and contested matters within both religious communities and society.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS IN THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF 2022

The next steps are based on:

- The suggestions made by participants in the September/ October 2021 conversations
- The principle that the recommendations made will only be successfully adopted (and monitored and improved over time) if they are an outcome of a process in which those responsible for implementation have been fully engaged as co-creators, and the recommendations have been enriched by the experience and wisdom of those who are at the chalk face of implementation and learning
- Our view that responsibility must reside with those who will have the responsibility to sustain the journey after the work of the Task Team is complete

THE ROLE OF BISHOPS

The Task Team proposes that the way forward outlined below provides an opportunity for bishops, and the education structures they have established, to exercise leadership in supporting the activities driven from the level of schools in their diocese. ***These pastoral relationships need to be strengthened and the Task Team would strongly encourage the active participation and support of the Diocese as the schools prepare their reports for submission to the Task Team on 27th February.***

Session of Chaplains

The Task Team will convene a session of School Chaplains (including lay chaplains) on 5th February with the purpose of the chaplains starting the process of developing a set of principles and guidelines for how their role can be taken forward in respect of infusing Anglican principles of social justice into school processes, and what support chaplains can provide to each other in this process going forward. It is also proposed that the School Chaplains consider how Ash Wednesday, and the Lenten period, may be used within Schools or across schools as a self-reflection in schools to deepen thinking together by focusing on

systemic transformation in historical contexts. Appendix 3 is the preamble to the Constitution and is an example of a resource that might be used to reflect on the journey of schools.

Using the report as a contribution to internal school consultation in developing a way forward

The Task Team understand that schools have had different experiences of grappling with issues of discrimination and are on different stages of this journey. It is also understood that all schools have committed themselves to an intentional and continually deepening journey of learning and changing, and many have already embarked on conscious processes of stakeholder engagement.

Questions to which the task team would like a response from schools

Each school, under the leadership of the Executive Head, has been asked to assist the Task Team by responding to the following questions by 27th February:

1. What are the areas your school suggests should be included in the recommendations from the Task Team to Synod on how best the ACSA can address discrimination issues at Diocesan schools?
2. What supportive role does the school consider could be played by Diocesan Education Structures, the Bishops of the Diocese, and by ABESA?
3. How can learning best be shared across schools?
4. What are the views of the following stakeholders regarding the *WAY FORWARD* at your school?
 - 4.1. The staff
 - 4.2. The governing body
 - 4.3. The parent community
 - 4.4. The student body (past and present)
5. What are the next steps the school is planning on this journey?
6. Which stakeholder constituencies your school would like to be invited to the next consultative sessions with the Task Team (proposed date Saturday 12th March). The broad content of this session will be to share the responses from schools to the above five questions and to deliberate on the way forward.

We have requested school heads and chairs of governing bodies to assist the Task Team by ensuring that the processes going forward are inclusive, and that a culture of listening is deepened.

Summarised timeline for the actions in the recommendations

ACTION	DATE
Report sent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Bishops • All school chaplains • All school Principals • Chairpersons of all governing bodies 	Before 28 th January
Session with school chaplains	5 th February
School internal consultations with Staff and Stakeholders	Between 28 January and 25 Feb
Schools to submit their reports to the Task Team on the six questions above	February 27 th
Ash Wednesday Reflection	2 nd March
Proposed session of Task team with schools with expanded participation as suggested by Schools	12 th March

Work of the Task Team subsequent to the meeting of 12th March

This will be shaped by the outcomes of the school reports, and the deliberations of the meeting planned for 12th March. The team intends that the work of supporting these change processes will increasingly be incorporated into those structures which will have the responsibility going forward for sustaining processes of critical reflection and sharing learning.

Ms. Mary Metcalfe (Chair)

Bishop Allan Kannemeyer

Bishop Peter Lee

Dr Mathakga Botha (Dr Botha passed away on 2nd January 2022. The Task Team is grateful for her contribution to this process)

Revd. Roger Cameron

Ms. Tholoana Maku

Mr. Lebogang Montjane

The Revd. Delani Mthembu

Ms. Thandile Ntshwanti

Revd. Jaques Pretorius

Mrs. Sue Redelinghuys

Ven Douglas Torr