

What does Voluntary-Aided (VA) mean?

St Peter's is a Voluntary-Aided (VA) school. Voluntary-Aided schools are local authority maintained schools which often, but not always, have a religious character and where the body which set up the school owns the land and buildings.

St Peter's was founded by the Church of England in the middle of the 19th century, before there were any state schools. In the 1940s Church schools like St Peter's were merged with the state system when the government, through Local Education Authorities, accepted financial responsibility for their day to day running. In Voluntary-Aided Schools, the trustees, or "governors", still retain certain rights and responsibilities. For example, at St Peter's the Church appoints the majority of our governors, who are known as 'Foundation Governors', and our Christian ethos is based on the teachings of the Anglican church. The governors also appoint the staff and set the admissions criteria.

Although Voluntary-Aided schools tend to be mainly religious, or 'faith', schools, anyone can apply for a place according to the admissions criteria of the school and this is the case here at St Peter's. We are first and foremost a school for the local community but if there are more applicants than places available in any particular year the governors have the right to admit pupils according to particular criteria. High amongst these criteria is church membership. You can read more about the admissions policy on our website under the Parents' Information section.

Our VA status is especially important in the spiritual and moral life of the school and many of our staff attend their own local churches. We have close links with the churches in the Parish of Droitwich Spa and particularly St Peter's Church. The children attend regular services in the Church led by one of the parish ministers and we welcome visitors from all of the Droitwich churches to lead our assemblies. The Church is used to help deliver the RE curriculum, when visiting a church and looking at religious artifacts is part of the lesson. We teach our children about a variety of world religions, however, we actively promote the beliefs and values of the Christian faith through our RE Lessons and our daily assemblies. In addition to Ofsted inspections we are subject to regular statutory inspections of Church schools.

At St Peter's our aim is to enable all children to fulfill their potential in a caring setting where Christian values underpin all that we do. We foster the values of respect and tolerance, love and kindness, honesty and justice and we work with all members of the school community to make a positive contribution to all aspects of our life and to make the world a better place.

Having VA status therefore carries with it many freedoms and advantages and this is part of what distinguishes our school from other schools and contributes to making it such a special place, but being a VA school also carries with it certain responsibilities. The land and buildings of a VA school (except for the playing fields which are usually

owned by the local authority) are normally owned by a charitable foundation: in our case this is the Church of England, in particular, the Diocese of Worcester. The governing body of the school has to contribute to any building and maintenance costs (see below).

In all other respects VA schools are run in the same way as other state schools.

What is the VA Fund?

As stated above, responsibility for work to the school premises is shared between the governing body and the local authority. In simple terms, the local authority has responsibility for the playing fields and the governing body is liable for all other capital expenditure.

We are eligible for capital funding by grant from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). We are paid on a similar basis to other categories of school, but the governing body must pay at least 10% of the costs of any capital work.

The **VA Fund** is the fund the school maintains to enable us to contribute to the cost of works where a 10% contribution is required. We ask that all families contribute to the VA Fund in the sum of at least £10 per family per term. Of course, if families are able to, we would appreciate as much as they are able to offer. But, if all families contributed £10 per term we would be able to fulfill our financial obligations as regards any refurbishment, building work and grounds improvement that we wish to carry out.

We are always looking to the future and ways in which we can improve the facilities at St Peter's to create the best environment for our children. Without the support of parents, carers and friends we will be at a disadvantage compared to other schools in the area in terms of the projects we can carry out.

Thank you for your continuing support of our special VA school!

Justine Cosson
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