

Prayer spaces in School 24th – 26th June 2014

St Matthews, Smethwick

Following Prayer Spaces in Schools training earlier in the year the school Worship and RE Co-ordinator, Joan Amphlett liaised with Amy Allen the Schools Co-ordinator from Smethwick Church Action Network to organise a 3 day Prayer Spaces in School event.

Objective:

- To provide pupils, staff and parents with an opportunity to access a range of prayer activities, whilst ensuring that they could respond individually according to their own faith, beliefs or cultural backgrounds.
- To provide Prayer Spaces to inspire a sense of awe and wonder in children about how they perceive themselves, how they relate with others, how they engage with the world around them and God.

Activities provided:

- Fizzy Forgiveness – to deal with feelings of hurt and unforgiveness.
- Be Still – where children were encouraged sit in a still place and to 'Just be.'
- Gethsemane Help – children were encouraged to think how Jesus asked for help at a time of deep concern and worry and how they could do the same by planting a seed and writing their concern on the plant marker.
- Thankful Box – Children were encouraged to explore a creation box and thank God for his wonderful creation.
- Prayer Wall – Children were invited to write a prayer and attach it to the prayer wall. Children knew that these prayers would be taken to the church and that someone would be praying their prayer too.
- Mirrors – Children would be encouraged to recognise positive aspects about themselves and to recognise that they are unique and beautiful in God's sight.
- Cardboard home – Children were encouraged to empathise with street children by lying inside cardboard boxes and writing prayers on them.
- Family Tree - Children were encouraged to think about connections between each other and connections with God.
- Hope blossoms – Children were encouraged to think about hopes and dreams.
- Big Questions – Children were invited to write questions that they would like to ask God.
- Leaving an impression – Children were encouraged to reflect on the impression that others have had on them and the impression they want to leave on the world.



Outcome and Impact

- The school worked collaboratively with volunteers from a local church and Smethwick CAN. Activities and resources were provided by the church volunteers and school staff worked with volunteers to set up a range of attractive and creative activities to create a motivating and inspirational environment. Activities provided reflected the values and teaching of the Christian faith, but were inclusive to all people of faith and no faith.
- A rota of church volunteers supported Joan and Amy to staff the Prayer Spaces.
- A range of different spaces were set up within the outdoor area where pupils were encouraged to interact in their own way within an environment of prayer. Opportunities were provided to experience stillness and to express their thanks, hopes, dreams, questions and fears, as they explored a range of activities.
- All staff were invited to explore the Prayer Spaces before school on the first day. This enabled staff to know what was being provided and how best to support pupils if required.
- All staff engaged in Prayer Spaces with their class for the allocated one hour session across the three days.
- Parents were invited to visit the Prayer Spaces via the weekly newsletter, and pupils were encouraged to bring their parents at the end of the day to share their experiences with them. Some parents visited after school but a different way of encouraging their involvement needs to be identified if the school chose to provide Prayer Spaces again to ensure greater involvement.
- Prayer spaces provide an opportunity for children and adults to stop, think and ask questions about their lives, their experiences, their beliefs, and their relationships, and to learn from this reflection. Teachers identified that they got to know individual pupils more thoroughly because of Prayers Spaces and the time it allowed to share experiences, worries, fears.
- Pupils were able to share, pray and proactively address their worries and concerns (e.g. through the Garden of Gethsemane activity).
- Children were able to take time out of the usual curriculum; they were excited to come and see what was going on and asked if it could be there all of the time.

Next Steps:

- To express thanks and appreciation to Smethwick CAN and volunteers.
- To discuss repeating the event using different activities to ensure the Prayer Spaces continue to be exciting and stimulating.

