



## Engage with your local school/s

Many of the parishes in our diocese have, primary, secondary, Church of England, community, independent and private schools. How well do you know your local schools and how well do they know you?

Some parishes already have positive working relationships with those schools; some may have found it more of a challenge. This guide aims to provoke your thinking and give ideas on how to begin and how to develop your relationships further.

### **Prayer:**

The first thing we would encourage all of our parishes to do, is to regularly **pray** for your local school/s. Try to include your school/s in your prayers of intercession, as well as encourage your congregation/s to keep schools and education in their personal prayers. Some benefices and parishes have set up 'Pray for Schools' groups who meet regularly to pray for their local schools. If you are praying for your local schools, don't forget to tell them. You could ask your local school/s if there is anything specific you can pray about – you may be amazed at the response you get from them! Read their newsletter to keep up to date with what is happening and to inform your prayers (newsletters are nearly always freely downloadable from the school website).

**Below you will find a whole range of ways to engage with your local schools, but please ask your local schools how you can best serve them, you may be surprised at what they come up with.**

### **Baking and Blessing:**

Consider ways in which you can bless the staff in your local school/s. Once a term, get your congregation to bake cakes for the staff room. Try to listen out for when the school is being inspected and send something in before or after the inspection, thanking the staff for their hard work. A thank you card every now and again will be greatly appreciated by those in your local school/s and will make them realise that you are recognising them, praying for them and valuing them.

### **Volunteering:**

Often we think that Collective Worship/Assemblies are the main thing a church can do for its local school/s, with the responsibility often falling to the church leadership. This is great and of huge value, but there are other ways that you can serve your local school/s. What skills do you have? Could you offer to listen to children read? Could you offer to do some gardening or support a subject area that you have experience in? Maybe you could volunteer to support a school trip? Obviously it is essential that you adhere to school procedures, completing a DBS check and you will often need to attend a short school safeguarding session.

### **Visiting Schools:**

There are a few key things to keep in mind when visiting schools

- Be on time!
- Do what you say you will do (avoid hidden agendas).
- Always look to build relationships.
- Set high standards (schools aim to!).
- Make sure there is good communication.
- Be polite and have a positive attitude.
- Sign in and out of schools unless otherwise directed.
- Think about appropriate attire (if not sure ask the school).
- Remember we are visitors to the school, even if we have been there before!
- Remember to switch mobile phones off.

*(Taken from GenR8.org)*

### **Partner:**

Are there projects that the church or school could partner on in your community? Could you consider doing a joint summer fete? A community harvest service or carol service? Is there a special anniversary or significant event that happened in your community that you could mark together? Or maybe there is a national event taking place which provides you with an opportunity to partner together? Think outside the box and look for new opportunities to do things together.

### **Buildings:**

Our church buildings can be a real gift to schools. For some schools, space is at a premium, if your church or church hall are located near to the school, could you serve your school by offering them the use of your buildings? Schools often like to use their local church. Sometimes that may be for services to mark the big Christian festivals and at other times, it maybe as part of the children's learning. Inspired Classrooms offers some amazing resources to help you work with the school in making those visits as meaningful as possible:

<https://www.inspiredclassrooms.org/>

We often think about how schools can use our buildings, but what about the opposite? How could you use the school site? Have you ever considered holding a service in the school? What about Messy Church or holiday clubs? Schools have great facilities that are child friendly, why not explore the possibility of using school buildings from time to time.

### **Initiatives:**

- Open the Book (for primary or first schools): many people across the Diocese of Bath and Wells are already involved in Open the Book teams, but if you are not, this is a wonderful way to share Bible Stories with your local school/s. It involves a team of people from the Church visiting a school on a weekly basis telling a Bible story using the Open the Book resources. Find out more here:  
<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book/>
- Prayer Spaces in Schools (for all schools): 'A prayer space is usually a classroom size area that has been transformed for a few days or a week with a range of creative activities that encourage personal reflection on issues such as forgiveness, injustice, thankfulness, big questions, identity and stillness.' For more information, go to:  
<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/>
- Experience Days (for primary schools): there are some great resources that enable you to serve your school by providing an 'Experience Day' that allows children to explore one of the key Christian Festivals. Contact your Go Team Adviser for more information or visit

<https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/welcome-2/schools/jumping-fish-publications/>

- Collective Worship/Assemblies: only offer this if you are comfortable delivering engaging content to larger groups of children and young people. Work with the school on the themes they would like you to deliver. Remember it is school, not church – so do not assume belief or familiarity with Christianity or Biblical stories. Remember to avoid Christian jargon.
- Transforming Lives for Good: TLG are committed to reaching out to some of the most vulnerable children in the UK. With expertise in school exclusions, emotional wellbeing and holiday hunger, TLG is one of the UK's fastest growing children's charities. They train people in churches to become mentors to vulnerable children and young people. For more information, visit <https://www.tlg.org.uk/>

#### **Become a Governor:**

All of our church schools need Foundation Governors. They have a special responsibility:

- To ensure that the guiding principles of the founding church are incorporated into all aspects of the governance of the school.
- That the terms of the trust deed governing the school are adhered to.

School governors work as part of a team responsible for the strategic leadership and running of the school. Church school governors come from all walks of life. They bring different skills to help our children and our communities thrive, and develop more along the way. It is a hugely fulfilling role and one in which you may consider being involved. For more information, visit:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-children/school-organisation/school-governance/>

#### **Chaplaincy:**

Chaplaincy in schools and further education colleges presents the Church with the opportunity to be a positive Christian presence in both word and action.

If this is something that you would like to explore further, contact our Chaplaincy Development Adviser, Revd Mike Haslam – [Mike.Haslam@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:Mike.Haslam@bathwells.anglican.org)

There are many other ways in which you can link with your local school/s, but we hope this guide will inspire you to engage creativity.

For any further advice or help, contact your Archdeaconry based Go Team Adviser:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/>