

FOSTERING GREAT CHURCH-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

Golden principles to remember:

1. It is all about relationships not programmes/activities
2. 'What do you need?'/ 'How can we help?' are powerful questions for both church and school to ask each other
3. Think through a pathway to spiritual development together—what can you offer and what can you signpost to?
4. Simply blessing one another is a good place to start

As you look to invest in this partnership, it is worth remembering that churches and schools have very different priorities, though much of their work overlaps. It is helpful to let the Headteacher be in the driving seat—they may be worried that the church is coming in with an agenda to convert everyone and that the church might behave in ways that are inappropriate in a school context. At the moment, schools are particularly hard pressed and struggling. The workforce is depleted and exhausted. A ministry that begins with seeking to bless and to listen, asking how you can help, will build strong partnerships moving forwards. Equally though, the blessing should not run one way. The best partnerships across the nation see schools investing back into the church community.

As part of the conference we saw a video with Headteachers reflecting on how they would like to partner with their churches. Interestingly, having the vicar in to do Collective Worship or RE was not mentioned. Schools were keener for joining forces in ways that fostered relationship. The common themes were:

- Support with creating and running prayer /activities in the school grounds
- Desire for pastoral support of both pupils and staff by the church
- Wanting relationship to be between the school and the church rather than only Headteacher and vicar (e.g. joint projects to visually underscore the relationship between school and church, opportunity for *both* communities to practice hospitality for on another, anything that would bring people from both communities together)
- Opportunity for schools to plan together with local Christian leaders how to build pathways for spiritual development for those from an unchurched background
- Concern for the most vulnerable families. Schools wanting to support their church in offering help.

There is an almost unlimited number of possibilities for how to partner well together. Check out this link for some ideas—or use the matrix below to support a good conversation:

<https://www.salisbury.anglican.org/resources-library/schools1/parish-school-links/strengthening-partnerships-between-parishes-and-schools-feb-2016>

Useful national organisations:

- **School Ventures** (www.schoolventures.org.uk)

Subsidised 2 night residentials for schools and churches to share with one another (aimed at 8-10 yr olds) combining outdoor pursuits, other activities and a teaching programme that gives space for pupils to engage with and respond to Biblical accounts of Jesus' life and teaching.

- **Prayer Spaces in Schools** (www.prayerspacesinschools.com)

Resources and support with starting prayer spaces in the school—works across all age groups.

- **Transforming Lives for Good** (www.tlg.org.uk)

TLG run a range of programmes. Their 'Early Intervention' mentoring scheme is very popular with schools but takes significant volunteer commitment.

- **Open the Book** (www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/open-the-book)

Support for bringing Bible stories to life in school contexts. Resources only available once you register with them.

- **iSingPop** (www.isingpop.org)

Works across home, school and church to try and encourage more engagement with worship. They host events at schools to embed worship singing, creating a performance with the pupils and CDs which are then shared with church, school and home.

- **Centre for Chaplaincy in Education** (www.centreforchaplaincyineducation.co.uk)

Offer training and support for those wishing to learn more about Chaplaincy.

In order to get the most from any of the above, consider:

- Does it enhance the partnership between church and school (rather than the relationship between the school and an external group)?
- Does it promote a school-church relationship (rather than being a Head/Vicar activity)?
- Does it open other opportunities for ongoing spiritual development (or is it a 'one hit wonder')?
- How does this support a pathway to faith?
 - Does it empower or disempower the church community?
 - What about the wider family beyond the child—is there a way to include them?
 - Are church services and activities easy for new children and families to access?



Sometimes a shared activity can stimulate really fruitful discussions. Encourage both school and church leaders to complete the following exercise by jotting down a list of each of your personal responses to each of the four quadrants in the matrix* below. Aim to use pictures, diagrams and as few words as possible. Then meet up to discuss your responses and where this might lead you together.

1. Focusing specifically on the opportunities for the spiritual development of the young people in your community...

What's working?	What's stuck?
Biggest surprise?	Biggest opportunity?

2. What will be your next steps? Agree them below:

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