



Our Parish, Our School

Ideas for incumbents and parishioners
for working with your local schools



Foreword

The aim of this booklet is to draw the local church family and school community closer through mutual support, with ideas for development and partnership. Those who work in our Diocese with young people have provided suggestions, examples and opportunities to enrich the relationships between your church, your school and your community; and I am grateful to them.



It is appreciated that many of you will have established sound relationships with your schools and are already putting into practice several of these ideas and some of your own. New incumbents may still be in the early stages of making relationships with their schools, but we hope that this booklet offers something for everyone. Perhaps it may provide a new stimulus to change or improve still further what is taking place already.

Of course all children are a part of your benefice or parish, regardless of whether they are from a community or church school. The Diocese celebrates this link.

I hope you find this a practical and thought-provoking tool. Above all, I pray that incumbents and parishioners can all work together in the ministry and service of the school and in helping to further God's kingdom in the place where you live, attend school and worship together.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Graham James". The signature is written in a cursive style.

**The Rt Revd Graham James
Bishop of Norwich**



Useful quotes from clergy for clergy about new relationships with schools

Look at what has been done in the past with the church; what is good and what is not working or happening

Book an appointment, smile, be friendly and find out what they do and how you can help

Open up your church to children and their families

Find out what they do in assembly/collective worship and how you can be involved

Listen to headteachers and ask for feedback on your assembly/collective worship

Be well prepared when you deliver assembly/collective worship and collaborate with the headteacher so he/she knows what you are doing and how it fits in with the school's values

Invest your time with schools and work with their timetable

Offer to use the church for collective worship as well as for special services

Remember it is their school and as a visitor, you fit in with the way they do things

It is a privilege to be a governor, but beware of becoming a Chair as it can take a lot of your time and energy!

Building relationships in school will pay dividends during bad times

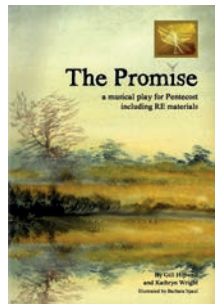
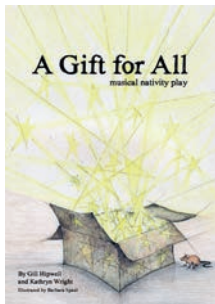
You may need to quietly persist to make a relationship!

Become the familiar friendly face in school!

Offer yourself in a pastoral role to staff and children

Useful links regarding parish and school partnerships:

The Diocese has produced several useful books which may inspire and help you.



Copies of all these publications can be downloaded and/or ordered via the Diocese of Norwich website: www.dioceseofnorwich.org




The Diocese of Norwich RE Adviser has also been involved in creating a booklet with Scripture Union aimed at helping pupils make the most of a visit to a local church. Copies of all these publications can be downloaded and/or ordered via the Scripture Union website: www.scriptureunion.org.uk/YourChurch/ItsYourChurch/3597664.id

On the following pages are ideas, used by churches and schools in the Diocese, which may inspire you and your church family.

Welcome and welcomers

Welcome and leaving cards for children in school

Many schools offer cards to new children and leavers as part of their special collective worship. Incumbents are often invited to present these. There is now a template available from the Diocese of Norwich website that can be downloaded and adapted for your own use. www.dioceseofnorwich.org/schools/publications




Presented to:

as you join your new school

We welcome you warmly and hope you will be very happy here

From your Headteacher <NAME HERE>
<DATE HERE>



Presented to:

on the occasion of your departure

We wish you every success in your new journey in your new school

From your Headteacher <NAME HERE>
<DATE HERE>

Welcoming children into your church

Does your church feel welcoming when children arrive? Is yours a child friendly church? What experience of God will the children take away from your church?

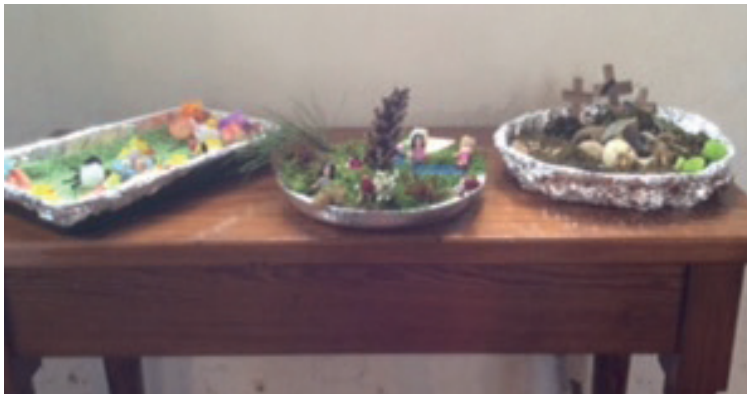
Check out your church. Is it:

- Warm, bright and hospitable or cold, dark and unwelcoming?
- Accessible or locked?
- An interesting place to explore for all?
- Full of information about its activities?
- Clearly involved in the whole community?
- A place to be quiet and a place to celebrate?
- A place where you can only whisper, full of things you mustn't touch?

If you want children to enjoy being in church:

- Provide a Christian welcome!
- Value their contribution.





Easter gardens at St Nicholas' Church, North Lopham
made by children from
St Andrew's Church of England VA Primary School

Messy Church



Messy Church is a template for church services built around key themes of creativity, celebration and hospitality; appealing to families and people of all ages who are disinclined or unable to engage in mainstream church services.

Often messy church is not directly linked to the local school. The following example describes a creative development bringing church and school closer together.

Erpingham VC Primary School

Thinking and learning together through Messy Church

Erpingham Primary is set in a somewhat isolated, rural idyll. It has long enjoyed a tradition for high quality, practical and first hand learning with an additional creative twist. When the concept of Messy Church was introduced to us it seemed like an intriguing but potentially effective means to strengthen the partnership between our very small, vertically grouped primary school and our local church. Father Brian [a staunch supporter] was very much in favour and so with a collective open mind we planned the first session. Our plan was to give our children, parents and members of our community the opportunity to work together collaboratively, to allow time for thought and reflection and active response. The sessions would be inclusive and enjoyable; they would deepen our children's understanding of local and worldwide issues and celebrate our church and school year.

A typical Messy Church session has an initial stimulus such as a story, song, prayer, picture, icon or artefact. This may be led by our Rector, Churchwarden, a child or a member of staff. As the sessions develop they often include 'making and doing' as a response. It has been particularly good to see all our children, regardless of age or ability, working together with parents and friends. In conclusion we will reflect on our thinking and responses. The products created are important for all and definitely give pleasure to the children. However, a more important outcome is the memorable points of reference provided for our children's spiritual development.

Messy Church is now an embedded and established part of our school which takes place at least once in every month. Sometimes the focus is topical for example, November, Remembrance Day or reflecting part of the church year such as 'the story

of Lent'. Messy Church can take place in church or outside, at school or indeed as part of a procession. Whatever the focus, the activities are brilliant led by Helen, our Churchwarden, and her loyal band of helpers. Forethought and a keen understanding of the needs and interests of our children have been key to the success of Messy Church. Our incumbent, Father Paul, continues with enthusiastic support following the retirement of Father Brian.

A recent development has been planning together across the school and church year. This ensures a cohesive link between Collective Worship in school and Messy Church. Messy Church is a bridge that brings together members of our school and church. It is a significant part of our small but extremely healthy and happy church school.

Further information about Messy Church can be found via: www.messychurch.org.uk



Church clubs for different ages in church and school

St Mary's Church, Diss works in very close relationship with their local church school, Diss VC Junior School. On Mondays after school, volunteers run a Church Club for Years 3-5, concentrating on programmes which follow the pattern of the Church's year particularly Advent and Lent. We have fun, refreshments, crafts, stories and prayer.

At the same time, in church, is a youth café for Year 6 and upwards organised by Integrate Youth for Christ in cooperation with St Mary's Church. This is a new project and is working really well with an increasing number of attendees.



Open the Book

The Mission of Open the Book is
“To enable every primary aged child
to hear the story of the Bible.”

Open the Book is a scripted act of collective worship for primary schools. The first year is a chronological overview of the Bible from Creation to the Ascension. The second and third years of the project are modular and can be fitted into particular themes the school might use. The Bible stories are taken from the Bob Hartman Book of Bible stories in the first year. In years two and three of the material there are additional booklets with the Bible stories included.



The idea of Diane Brookes, Val Ralston and other co-founders of Open the Book, was that local people, from local churches could take assemblies into school, as an “Act of Collective Worship.” In the script there is an introduction to the story followed by the story from the Bible. After the story there is a quiet time and an idea for the children to reflect upon. Finally there is a simple prayer. The exciting and colourful part is that members of the teams, who will come from your churches, dress up as the main characters in the story and the children also help to make the picture through drama or using puppets.

A headteacher will know and be able to trust the format of the assembly and it will fit into the time allotted for assembly. Generally people attend a training day and they then register with Open the Book, which comes under the umbrella of the Bible Society. You cannot access the materials until you register your church and the school you will go to with Open the Book. There is no cost to register, you just have to buy the handbooks and supplementary booklets. The incumbent can play a supporting role, by attending the assembly or taking part.

The children in the Open the Book primary schools love the assemblies and many say it is their favourite one of the week. The children love to participate in these acts of collective worship. It is fun, builds community links and tells the story.

Irene Nickerson (Open the book trainer)

You have probably had experience of working with an Open the Book team. Irene is a highly experienced and active trainer in the Diocese who may be able to get you going if there is no team in your area. The following example traces the development and success of one school in the Diocese.

Further information regarding Open the Book can be found via: **www.openthebook.net**



Open the Book

St Mary's (Endowed) Church of England VA Primary School (Roughton)

'Open the Book': The coming together of a school and Church community

At St Mary's we are very fortunate to benefit from an Open the Book session every other week. The team of enthusiastic adults arrive at school bright and early on a Monday morning carrying various unusual objects and sometimes dressed in long flowing robes! This team of volunteer story tellers are from Roughton Church.

The sessions take the form of collective worship. We pray and sing together to start the session and then we 'Open the Book'. Each session dramatises a story from the Bible. The children are involved as actors and the audience often has a part to play. They might be the crowd and have something to shout out or perhaps they will be the red sea; required to part as Moses raises his staff. The stories are always engaging and exciting and great fun for everyone involved.

The actors have become more confident and assured over the weeks and months and the children have started to really look forward to these memorable, interactive sessions. The Bible comes alive to the extent that children will talk about the learning and relate back to stories they have seen acted. A Key Stage 1 child could talk about the last supper and how Judas had betrayed Jesus because he had seen it acted out the previous week during an Open the Book session. So now, thanks to Open the Book, children in our school have the opportunity during Collective Worship to discover all the wonder and wisdom that the Bible can offer! I feel that this is such a good example of school and community working together for the good of the children and I am very grateful to this group of volunteers for giving up their time and services.

Godly Play

Godly Play uses imaginative storytelling where children are invited to become still and quiet to enter sacred stories. Based on Montessori principles and developed over 40 years of research and experience, storytellers use carefully worded scripts with simple wooden sets and materials to model the stories, symbols and rituals of Christian worship.



Godly Play values and encourages the process of openness and discovery. The experience within the story circle offers children the opportunity to explore the mystery of God and thoughtfully consider and reflect on their own faith and spirituality through 'wondering' and creative responses.

Godly Play has links to the RE syllabus and can be used as part of delivering the curriculum or for collective worship.

The Diocese of Norwich runs introductory sessions on Godly Play and has a number of Godly Play Facilitators who can present Godly Play to children or provide staff training in schools. For more information please contact anna.walker@dioceseofnorwich.org

Further information regarding Godly Play can be found via: www.godlyplay.uk

Rudham and Weasenham Church of England Academy Federation

Across our federation we use Godly Play to help with the teaching of our RE units. This is an invaluable resource and the children gain so much from the boxes. Godly Play is such a wonderful and powerful resource; as soon as we get the box out the children are absorbed and will listen to the story in complete silence (their choosing!). As a school/federation we love the way Godly Play allows children to go on their own spiritual journey and create their own responses to the story using a range of art materials. We have also used the boxes for collective worship.

Building Relationships with Non-Church Schools

Over the past three years I have found that a good way of building a relationship with the staff and children of my local non-church infant school is to go into the Reception class, and after spending a few weeks simply getting to know the children, introducing Bible stories. Favourites are Zachaeus, the Stilling of the Storm and the Feeding of the Five Thousand. I do this by using the materials usually associated with Godly Play with small groups of four or five children. The children love the stories and a good connection is made with the church which will help build the relationship as the children move through the school and into the junior school, which in our case is a church school.

The Revd Maggie Swayze (OLM Curate, Diss Team Ministry)

Resources are available from the Diocesan Resource Centre.



The Good Shepherd



The Creation

Prayer spaces in church and school

Prayer Spaces are an effective means for supporting spiritual development and facilitating a means for local churches and schools to work together. A designated space in a church or school is transformed to become a sacred space where faith, spirituality and prayer from a broadly Christian perspective can be explored in a safe environment through creative and interactive activities.



Prayer spaces can be developed around Bible stories or themes, to reflect a particular Christian festival or to explore Christian principles.

For guidance on planning and running a prayer space, as well as lots of fantastic ideas for prayer space activities visit: www.prayerspacesinschools.com



Resources

The Diocesan Resource Centres at Easton and Loddon offer a wide range of resources for loan from Prayer Space Starter Packs, prayer trees, and bubble tubes, to lights, headphones and inflatable domes. (Some hiring costs may apply). More information can be found via: www.dioceseofnorwich.org/prayerspaces



Acts of Worship

Worship in school

The Diocese has produced a booklet of service templates for specific occasions which can be adapted for a school's or academy's particular circumstances.

Guidance and training is available for those who need support in this area.

Copies of the booklet can be downloaded and/or ordered via the Diocese of Norwich website:

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/schools/publications

The Diocese has also produced a DVD focusing on the impact collective worship has on children in our diocesan schools. Copies can be ordered via the Diocese of Norwich website.

Worship in church

Many schools use their local church for end of term services, Christmas and Harvest festivals. Are you making the most of these opportunities?



Norwich Cathedral

The majority of our Norfolk schools make regular educational visits to the cathedral.

This is a great opportunity for incumbents and other parish members to accompany their local schools and participate in the day with staff and pupils. You may wish to further enrich this experience by leading prayers in special parts of the cathedral, such as one of the chapels or the beautiful, atmospheric ambulatory, where candles may be lit or by having a short act of worship.

Please liaise with the Schools & Family Learning Department at the cathedral and the teacher who is booking the visit to arrange this in advance. Visit the website to view a selection of inspiring, themed visit programmes for all key stages, including self-guided options: **www.cathedral.org.uk/visit/school-visits**

On a grander scale, the annual Cathedral Schools Days in October are very popular, with 300 children visiting each day from Monday to Friday. Each child takes part in three Christian themed workshops which are all based around the creative arts, such as dance, music, drama and visual art, as well as a giant prayer space in the south transept. The day ends with a joyful child friendly Anglican style worship in the nave. Many schools welcome their incumbents to this powerful and moving occasion.



The Schools & Family Learning Department is keen to liaise with clergy, children's/youth and uniformed organisation leaders to plan bespoke, 'all age' family pilgrimage days or evening/day workshops & tours. Get in touch with Janet Marshall on 01603 218320 or email: headofschools@cathedral.org.uk

Displays of children's work

Many churches set aside a display area within the building for the local school.

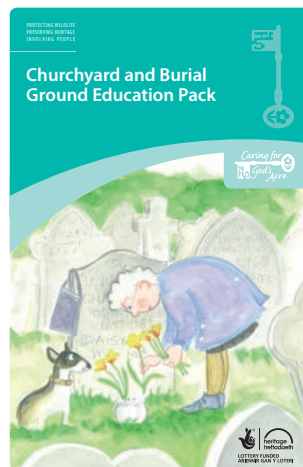
Pictures below show examples of work from the pupils of Erpingham VC Primary School.



Curriculum opportunities in church and churchyard

Caring for God's Acre have produced a churchyard and burial ground education pack which is suitable for use with children up to eleven years.

www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk/index.php/resources-and-publications/churchyard-and-burial-ground-education-pack/teachers-leaders-notes.html



Governors in school

Those who have links with local church schools can seek guidance and advice from the Diocesan Board of Education via: **www.dioceseofnorwich.org/schools/governance**

Those who have links with local church school academies can seek guidance and advice from the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (DNEAT) via **www.dneat.org/governor**

Contact Jill Wakefield, Governance Manager on **jill.wakefield@dneat.org**

Details of training courses for governors can be found via **www.dioceseofnorwich.org/schools/training**

For those working with community schools, advice about becoming a governor can be obtained from: **www.governorhub.com/norfolkgovernorservices**

And don't forget Horstead!

Horstead Centre

Residential Stays and Activity Days

The Horstead Centre on the edge of the Broads offers young people the chance to experience the natural world through a range of adventurous activities. With accommodation for 60, catering facilities, games room and plenty of indoor space for socialising or reflective activities, the site offers the perfect mix for hosting school, church, youth or holiday groups.

The Centre has also organised projects with local schools and a local area radio mission project with a group of young people from local youth groups.

Further information regarding The Horstead Centre can be found via:

www.horsteadcentre.org.uk





01603 882357

www.dioceseofnorwich.org/schools