

## HOW CAN YOU SERVE AND ENGAGE WITH SCHOOLS IN YOUR PARISH?

Here are a few ideas and are by no means a comprehensive list but one of which may be a good starting point for you.

- Prayer - are schools included in your public prayers? Do the schools know when they are being prayed for?
- Special services e.g. Education Sunday, commissioning/welcome service for new headteacher.
- Clubs and extra-curricular activities
- Parenting classes
- Encourage people to become school governors
- Acts of kindness - paint a classroom, dig over a flower bed
- Holiday clubs
- Affirmation of those called to teach
- Provide a welcoming and rich church visit for pupils as part of their Religious Education.
- Support assembly
- Chaplaincy

All the above need careful planning and are not to be taken on lightly.

Only in conversation with the headteacher and staff can you find out the best way to serve your school.

## WHEN CHURCHES WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO GROW

Younger congregations are more likely to see numerical growth.

Shrinking churches lose children faster than adults.

Growing churches gain children faster than adults.

A church that is interested in children and young people by catering for their needs on a Sunday will also be a place that looks for connection with the children in their place of work, that is, their school.



### FURTHER READING

Grove Education Series:

Churches Linking with Schools, Howard Worsley

Church Schools: a Mission-Shaped Vision

Local church, local school, Margaret Withers, BRF

Churches Serving Schools, David Lankshear, Church House Publishing,

Generation to Generation, Scripture Union

[www.cris.org.uk](http://www.cris.org.uk)



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# SCHOOLS

## AND THE CHURCH'S MISSION



### THE CHALLENGE

**'The Church, at national, diocesan and parochial level, is called to work towards every child and young person having a life-enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ'**

*Going for Growth - Transformation for children, young people and the church. The Archbishop's Council, 2010*

## WHAT IS MISSION TO SCHOOLS?

Two models explored by Howard Worsley

### 1. Centripetal (working in a 'sacred' space')

This is congregational based and works on the idea of in-drag, pulling the school into the church's life. The aim is that the church will grow in numbers and have an immediate impact in relation to the school.

### 2. Centrifugal (working in a 'secular' space)

This mainly working on the idea of universal influence, offering gifts to the school and to the wider world. The aim is that the church will be a resource to the school whilst grace unravels.

In practice both models of mission are necessary offering impact and grace.



#### AUDIT YOUR CONTACT

How many people in your congregation are involved in education? Teachers, pupils, lecturers, lunch time supervisors, administrators, dinner staff, learning mentors, students, parents, grandparents, inspectors, governors...

'If ever a church wonders at its strategic relevance or capacity to have impact, it need only consider how many people will connect



## Case study - Growing Church through School Partnership

A struggling rural church in the beautiful but small village of Osmaston. With weekly attendance regularly falling below six, perhaps this wasn't the most likely setting for a new Sunday School but, perhaps stereotypically, the church desperately needed to reconnect with young families. When the idea of a Sunday school was put to the PCC, the response was amusement, pointing out the lack of physical space, the lack of people able to help, the lack of cash and the lack of children to attend it. Apart from that, they thought it was a great idea!

The community had voted with their feet, they didn't want traditional services but what they did want was far from clear.

Following the lead from our Archbishop, to find out where God is at work and join in, the success story of the village was its oversubscribed church primary school. Sitting and talking with the headteacher, showed there was plenty of opportunity for the church to be involved in the life of the school. At that time, they were looking for after school clubs to form part of their wrap around care.

Not feeling gifted as a children's worker, I clung to the skills of my previous career, tentatively offering a weekly IT club. We decided to ditch my attendance at short weekly assemblies in favour of a longer monthly school church service, looking for a much greater involvement from the children themselves. In fact, we decided to use the weekly IT club to prepare resources for the monthly service. Mostly this focused on the production of videos and powerpoint through which the children would explain their understanding of a Christian theme. The club grew quickly and seemed to generate a

disproportionate amount of good will in the community. The end of each club session would bring a flurry of opportunities to chat with the parents.

As relationships built with staff, children and parents, it seemed natural to offer them involvement in the life of the church. In fact the staff offered to get involved. As in many villages, the tradition of celebrating harvest had fallen from being a high point, bringing together the community, to a poorly attended service attracting only a couple of dozen folk.

That year, the school offered to get involved. The children were offered parts in the service, they prepared resources in the IT club, they also brought produce to be auctioned and some of them were trained as auctioneers. The result? The church was so full that we had a good number of folk standing in the aisles.

As the relationship with the school grew, we broached the idea of the Sunday School. The school offered free use of their hall and was more than happy for us to advertise the launch. As we prayed, helpers came forward. The result? A small but viable and growing Sunday school was formed and relationships with the parents started to grow. **Andy Larkin**

Today we have two, possibly three generations of people who know little, if anything, about the Christian faith.

92% of children do not go to church but  
99% do go to school.