



What makes for an effective church/school partnership in the role of supporting the spiritual development of children?

growing
faith 

Diocese of
Guildford 
Transforming **Church**
Transforming **Lives**

Key Findings

The greater the involvement from the church in the school, both in terms of the number of people involved and in the frequency of contact, the greater the contribution to the spiritual development of the children.

Engaging with staff helps the spiritual development of the children.

Being in church buildings seems to be important to the spiritual development of children.

Providing children with time, space and encouragement to be quiet, to reflect and to pray helps them feel close to God.

Collective worship, and in particular Open the Book, seems to be effective in encouraging the spiritual development of children.

Effective collective worship is welcoming and inclusive, creates safe spaces where children can explore big thoughts and questions and enables children to be involved.

Collective worship helps children's spiritual development because it encourages the children to think differently and do something new rather than change the way they behave or act.

Involvement in leadership is helpful for the spiritual development of children.



Key Recommendations

For churches

1. Give time to cultivating a good relationship with the local school leader(s).
2. Safely recruit teams to engage with your local school(s).
3. Be as involved as possible in the life of your local school. Talk with the school, ask where the church can help and think creatively around what can be offered.
4. Be generous in enabling and inviting other churches, denominations and Christian organisations to be involved with the school.
5. Regularly offer school services held in church and make your building available for curriculum and other use.
6. Engage with staff as well as the children.
7. Look for ways to extend the relationships with the school community to engage with parents/carers and households.
8. Create opportunities for children to be quiet, to reflect and to pray.
9. Look for creative ways to bring prayers from the children at school into church.
10. Aim to lead effective collective worship which does not focus on behaviour or moral lessons but rather encourages children to deep thinking and inspires them to grow and challenge themselves in new ways; consider using Open the Book.

For schools

1. The relationship between a church and a school begins with a good relationship between the church and the school leader. School governors should value this relationship and encourage/release the Headteacher to invest time in this.
2. Following conversation with the incumbent, schools could invite a wider group of members of the local Christian community of all denominations into the school.
3. Make use of the church building and church members to support the living out of the school vision and support the local community. This will encompass the spiritual life of the school, the curriculum, families of the children and possibly joint courageous advocacy projects.
4. Look for opportunities for the pupils to experience worship and reflection in the church building.
5. Consider how best to facilitate pastoral support from the church for staff.
6. Consider how to involve pupils in planning, leading and evaluating worship. The church may be able to help with this.

About this research



Growing Faith is about schools, churches and homes working together to give young people and children the best possible chance to have life in all its fullness - to enjoy safe spaces to explore their spirituality and to grow in faith. The Growing Faith Foundation has been created to support dioceses and parishes to do this even more effectively than they do at present. It's part of the Church of England.

In order to ensure this work is rooted in good theology and good practice in the fast-changing world of the 21st century, to raise the quality and profile of ministry in the intersections between home, school and church, and to ensure as many children and young people as possible benefit from the Growing Faith movement, the Foundation has commissioned research into aspects of the intersections between churches, households and schools.

The diocese of Guildford was commissioned to conduct this research into what an effective church/school partnership looks like and the role the church has to play in supporting the spiritual development of children in school. The research was carried out by Emma Coy (Mission Enabler - Children and Families) and Jane Whittington (Schools Officer) in Spring 2023.

www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/growing-faith-foundation

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