

Hosting a School Carol Service or Christmas Play in your Church

Ten Top Tips for Churches

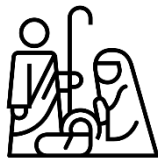


Many schools hold their Carol service or perform their Christmas play in the parish church. Parents and grandparents usually attend in huge numbers, and your church will be packed with people from the local community at these events. This may be the only time in the year that these people ever enter a church. This is a great opportunity to sensitively make people feel welcome and to invite them to join in with your Christmas services and the life of the church.

1. **Be present** – ensure that at least one member of the clergy or staff team is present. In a vacancy it may need to be a wardens or PCC member.
2. **Say something that has some Christian content during the service** - it may be a talk, prayer or a blessing at the end, but don't take over. Agree with the school well advance what you will be doing.
3. **Be a confident host** – welcome pupils, staff and parents to the church at the start of the service. Point out toilets, places for toddlers to go etc. Then the head teacher can do their welcome and introduction.
4. **Invite those who may know the children to attend** – children's and youth leaders, Open the Book Team and others to act as hosts. Make sure they are wearing a name badge ideally with their role on it so that parents and carers and staff know who they are.
5. **Have plenty of publicity available for your Christmas events.** - Stand by the door to offer it to parents and families as they leave. If the pupils are going back to school don't give it to them, it will get lost on the way back.
6. **Make sure your noticeboards are up to date.** Have plenty of copies of your parish magazine or anything that you want people to take.
7. **Offer time for a rehearsal.**
8. **Have the heating on** for both the rehearsal and the service.
9. **Ensure the PA and visual system is working** and that there is an operator who is familiar with it present.
10. **Have at least one regular member of the congregation present** to act as "front of house manager" to cover the health and safety issues that might arise when the church is full.

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Ten Top Tips for Schools



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Many schools hold their carol service, or perform their Christmas play in the local church. The church makes a wonderful venue for Christmas events although there are always challenges when taking so many pupils out of school for events. The use of the church buildings is a good way to enhance the link between the school and local communities

1. **Book your service and rehearsals well in advance** – churches get very booked up for carol services over the Christmas period. Before the summer holiday is not too early in many cases.
2. **Invite the clergy to participate** - it may be a talk, prayer or a blessing at the end, agree with them well advance what they will do and how long they have for their contribution. Check that they are clear about this a week or so before.
3. **Allow the clergy to welcome people to the church at the start of the service or nativity play** – they are the hosts in this building.
4. **Check how the chairs will be laid out when you arrive** – in churches with movable chairs you can arrive to a very different layout to the one you need.
5. **Involve your governors to help move the chairs** – in church schools foundation governors may well know their way around the church
6. **Be creative about the use of the space** – some churches have a stage that you can use, what about sitting in the round, or facing one another?
7. **Check the availability of PA and visual equipment** – who will provide an operator, the school or the church? Some church systems are quite complicated, and they may prefer to operate the system themselves.
8. **If you do not have a pianist, the church organist may be willing to play traditional carols for you.** – It's worth asking.
9. **Help clear up** – Make sure that someone from the school stays to help tidy up the church and return things to their rightful place. Governors can be ideal for this.
10. **Consider how you will involve parents and carers in the service** – not just as an audience but as participants.