



Growing Partnerships

School and Parish Church



LEARNING WITH MEANING AND PURPOSE
TO KNOW GOD AND SHAPE THE WORLD



This covenant is designed to establish and grow a foundation for both schools and church communities to grow in partnership to fulfil God's mission. We are looking to grow a shared sense of belonging within both bodies.

Key Aims

1. We seek to nurture a love of learning and a desire for God. Our schools will provide an education that is "deeply Christian, with the promise by Jesus of life in all its fullness" that will enable all to have a clear understanding of Christian values in their journey through life
2. Our schools and church communities will demonstrate a desire to "serve the common good" and be role models for how Christians should live a life based on love and care for others
3. Our schools and church communities will support each other using a common language to support families to a "life enhancing encounter with the Christian faith and the person of Jesus Christ" (Going for Growth 2010)
4. To develop a sense of mutual belonging in both church community and school. We want our families to have access to the joy of being part of the church family through their experience in school

How will these be achieved?

Church of England Schools are not "faith schools" in so far as they do not exist solely to benefit their own congregations. Church schools are for families of the Christian faith, families of other faiths and families of no faith. We are here to serve our communities because of our faith. We give in response to the grace of God and as an act of service sharing the gift of our schools in faith, hope and love. We believe this is what enables all to live life in all its fullness.

A Church school and its partner church community will share the key teachings of the Christian faith and show those values in the way they live. This is offered as an invitation for all to engage and understand; whilst some may not choose to participate the opportunities remain and the experience is gained.

The need for training for both clergy and school leaders is crucial. Church and school partnership work should also be an aspect that is core to the recruitment processes of both organisations.

How do we measure success?

Quantifiable success is not easy to measure and this is not our top priority.

The most formal measure for success comes from using the SIAMS Inspection Framework which sets clear expectations of how a school is to develop a coherent and bible-based school vision that will impact positively on the lives of our children. The school's partnership with the church is central in achieving this.

We also desire that children receive a deeper and regular experience of worship that offers a strong foundation for further, future spiritual growth. Their experience of faith should come through exposure to a living and distinctively school-based tradition. In so many ways school and church are united and not separate. Church happens within the school context as worshipping communities within the "household of faith".

Informal measures such as positive pupil and parental engagement, stakeholder surveys, increased church attendance, increased participation and opportunities for initiation into the Church of England through baptism, preparation for first Holy Communion and Confirmation can also be useful indicators.

A Covenant between a School and its Parish

In order to maximise the opportunity that schools give us to fulfil God's mission for the church, this Covenant between local churches and our schools represents the level of commitment required for a genuine partnership to have impact. In the case of secondary schools and schools linked to several parishes, it might be valuable to identify a "lead church community" to initiate the actions from this agreement.

1. A commitment to regular engagement, at least on a weekly basis, is required from both parties
2. The school will lead on safeguarding and the control of access to their pupils and the parish must comply with this
3. The church community will offer pastoral support in the form of (locally agreed) and any other urgent requests
4. The church community will willingly offer support in the worshipping life of the school and the school will identify opportunities to include the parish at appropriate points
5. The church community will explore all ways of practical support for the school
6. The school and the church community will engage together in at least one agreed campaign to serve the common good each year
7. The church community will support in school Governance as required
8. The school and church community will devise a shared plan to outline and develop their partnership work and review it annually
9. The governors of the school and the PCC will endeavour to achieve a strong understanding of the ownership and trustee responsibilities of all land and trusts related to the school
10. The church and school relationship will be highlighted in the parish profile during the recruitment process of a new priest. The parish priest will be expected to be an active part of the recruitment process for a new Headteacher

Signed

(on behalf of)

Signed

(on behalf of)

Date

Both partners can demonstrate their commitment by agreeing such a Covenant which is renewed when the Headteacher or the clergy changes and is reviewed annually.

Additional Information on how Schools and Churches Can Work Together more effectively

Strong partnerships between schools and their church communities are empowering. Schools can benefit greatly from the input and leadership that a church can provide, and the church can benefit from the engagement with the family and with young people.

Within this relationship, the church community has to acknowledge that the authority in relation to both access to the children and to school premises lies completely with the school and all activities are carried out within the prescribed guidelines that the Headteacher lays down, in accordance with stringent adherence to safeguarding guidance and Keeping Children Safe in Education. If there is a dispute in this it is strongly suggested this is referred to the Education Team at Diocesan Church House where advice is readily available.

We also acknowledge that many churches have developed strong relationships with community schools. Whilst the extent of partnership work may not look the same, it can be very meaningful and have significant impact. We hope that the sections below will assist, guide and inspire this type of work further.

We believe the following suggestions for building bridges help lead to an effective partnership between parish and school. For some they will see no barrier between the shared aims of both parish and school but for others their journey will be at an earlier stage.

We would recommend that the covenant document is signed annually by both school and parish. This could be part of an act of worship.

The Church community can:

1. Pray for the school regularly
2. Offer spiritual guidance and leadership
3. Provide pastoral support to the children, families, staff, leadership and friends of the school when invited
4. Take on school Foundation Governor roles when available
5. Guide in the establishment of a distinctively Christian ethos within the Anglican tradition
6. Help to lead collective worship as appropriate
7. Create a warm and hospitable environment that encourages the children to belong
8. Develop a deeper sense of the church's global mission and family through interaction with the parish's overseas support projects
9. Ensure the church building is accessible, safe and used by the school on an agreed regular basis
10. Join the school when they come to church to worship
11. Ensure that engagement with the school is a regular agenda item at PCC Meetings and hold one PCC meeting each year in the school to build a stronger sense of focus on the partnership

12. Partner with the school on local or global issues of social justice such as foodbanks and appeals
13. Explore all ways of practical support for the school including financial (i.e. helping to meet the cost of the Partnership Agreement with the Diocese of Chichester Education Team)
14. Use resources within the church congregation to get involved with listening to readers schemes, after school clubs and key initiatives such as Open the Book. (Safeguarding guidance will need to be given)
15. Provide congregation members for discussion sessions in classes i.e. interesting professions, cross generational history or PHSE projects or testimonies on how faith impacts on work and life sessions
16. Devise a shared plan on an annual basis to outline and develop partnership work
17. Involve the school in creating the parish profile
18. Ensure all the congregation know about the covenant

The School can:

1. Pray for the church community regularly
2. Offer support to church leaders
3. Partner with the church on local or global issues of social justice such as foodbanks and appeals
4. Invite suitable members of the congregation to lead and participate in collective worship and offer clear and supportive guidance regarding the expectations of the school to those who lead or attend school worship
5. Encourage the church to join in identified acts of worship in the school
6. Offer parents easy and friendly access to church
7. Through regular engagement the clergy and Foundation Governors need to be made to feel an intrinsic part of the school community
8. Share news regularly so the parish feels involved
9. Be actively involved with the drawing up of the parish profile
10. Visit the church building for worship as and when it is appropriate
11. Visit the church for RE education projects
12. Invite youth workers to share church-based events and run events in school
13. Report to Governors on the church/school links
14. Devise a shared plan on an annual basis to outline and develop partnership work
15. The school can help, host and resource holiday clubs run by the church or partner organisations.
16. Ensure all staff know about the covenant

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