

Training in Schools Work

Opportunities to Support Local Schools

Voluntary helpers: variety of different tasks and responsibilities – class support, trips, swimming, teacher assistant, library, setting up displays etc.

Clubs: variety of different timings and purposes – after school, lunch time, breakfast clubs, homework clubs, extra curriculum groups – sports clubs, drama groups etc – all add breadth to the school community.

Parent-teacher Associations or ‘Friends of the School’: attending meetings helps you find out more about the needs of the school. Get to know people and listen to how they are feeling. Vital link between parents and school and they need volunteers.

Mentors: schools are now being encouraged to link with individuals in the community to provide learning mentors for their students. Churches are ideally placed to provide good role models and adults who are prepared to listen to children and young people.

Staff: need support and often feel stressed. Pray for them, listen to them, offer practical help, send a card of appreciation, good wishes (eg for Ofsted etc) Make or buy a cake for staff room, give a gift so staff can go out for a drink at end of term etc.

Raising funds: schools are often stretched for resources. Find out funding targets and help to achieve this with the usual variety of events and activities.

Gifts: a specific gift based within the development of a long-term relationship between the church and school. This could be equipment, books, resources, money etc.

Church buildings: these are a useful resource in themselves – for class visits, concerts, services, festivals, lessons etc. Can demystify the church building or can just be a useful space to use for an after-school club etc.

School events: go along to the school fairs, concerts, school plays etc and offer your help if you can. Churches are full of people who have appropriate skills that can be used in such events – publicity, music, art, drama, administration, electrician, stage management etc

Parents: (like teachers!) need support and often feel stressed. Pray for them, listen to them, offer practical help (eg. if they need support at a school meeting/interview etc), highlight school parents’ evenings on your notice sheet, offer parenting skills courses etc.

School governors: an excellent opportunity to get involved in the school community. Governors are involved in appointing staff, deciding policy, governing areas of the curriculum, and overseeing budgets and buildings.

Prayer: often underestimated but hugely important. Listen to God’s agenda! Adopt a school to pray for. Set up a schools’ prayer support group. Join the Schools Prayer Network. Have a regular schools prayer slot in services.

Lessons: get involved in lessons – not only RE and PSHE but use the skills of members of the church to offer an added dimension to a variety of lessons eg be interviewed about the perspective of a Christian doctor/nurse, an artist, a politician, a social worker, a soldier etc.

Local schools workers: – work together! Support each other, share information, offer encouragement, prayer and practical support.

Collective worship: – the vast majority of schools struggle with assemblies and providing good quality and interesting collective worship is incredibly valuable.

Gardens: these can dramatically improve the schools environment and developing a garden fits in well with the curriculum but is one of the many things that gets side-lined by busy staff. But if a church offered to organise it in partnership with students and helped fund it too...!

Holiday clubs: parents are looking for safe activities for their children during the holidays – and these can reach a broad spectrum of the community.

Christian groups: (e.g. the Christian Union etc). If you don't support them, who will? It is sometimes the only distinctly Christian activity in schools and there will be opportunities within this group that your church will never have.

Excluded students: or 'at risk' students. This is an increasing problem in many areas and these are the students who tend to fall through the cracks of the system and are not likely to be reached through any of the activities above. Set up a project to help support these young people, to cut down on exclusion and truancy and to offer motivation, self-respect and hope.

Sixth form conferences: providing input into the RE curriculum in the sixth form by offering speakers and presentations on a given theme eg suffering, sex and relationships, creation/evolution.

Training days: offering a workshop environment for training groups of students for a specific purpose eg leadership training for prefects.

Personal development: working with specific students on a particular issue such as self-esteem or bullying.

Detached work: building relationships by 'hanging out' in the playground, cafeteria, common room and staff room to chat, listen and get to know individuals and groups within the school community.

Chaplaincy or Pastoral care support: a variety of ways of supporting the existing pastoral care system including providing or supporting a chaplain, counsellors, adult and peer mentors or simply someone to listen.