

PRAY FOR SCHOOLS

Pray for Schools Resource

Ideas to help you pray for local schools

Updated for September 2023
from the Go Team



DIOCESE OF
Bath & Wells

Living the story. Telling the story.

Introduction

'Every school in the UK, a prayed-for school'. That's the vision of [Pray for Schools](#), a collective of Christian organisations seeking to mobilise Christians to support their school communities through prayer.

As a diocese, we're equally keen to encourage churches to regularly pray for their local schools and colleges. Whilst many churches seek to maintain this throughout the year in a variety of ways, it can be helpful to use particular times such as September, when the new academic year begins, to make our school communities a particular focus for our prayers.

Some churches mark Education Sunday on the second Sunday in September or 'Back to School with God' Sunday on a Sunday at the beginning of the autumn term. In recent years Youthscape and PAIS have also established a National Day of Prayer for Schools later in September. More information on this year's dates [here](#).

To help churches, small groups and households get involved, we have compiled some tried and tested ideas that focus on three specific areas: praying for schools on a Sunday; praying for schools in creative ways; and linking with local schools as we pray.

For further help and support do contact your archdeaconry Go Team Adviser, and do share your own experiences of praying for and with the schools in your area. We'd love to hear your stories! Follow us on X and Instagram @GoTeamAdvisers and sign up to our newsletter at www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people

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Praying for schools on a Sunday

As the academic year begins, we are encouraging churches to include special prayers for schools and colleges in their usual services on one of the Sundays in September. Education Sunday usually falls on the second Sunday in September whilst some churches use the week before as 'Back to School with God' Sunday with an emphasis on praying for children, young people, school staff and governors in the congregation. Below are some ideas you could use as part of a service in September. For further resources produced for this year's Education Sunday visit cte.org.uk/education-sunday

Interview the insiders

If you have children and young people of school age or adults who work in a school or education in your congregation then as part of your service consider inviting them to give a short talk or do a brief interview with them about their experience of life at school.

If you have children of various ages then choose some from different schools/key stages and give them a bit of notice to think about their responses. Ask the young people questions like:

- Which school do you go to?
- Describe school in 3 words?
- What's your favourite subject/thing about school?
- What do you find most difficult about school?
- How could we pray for you and your school?

This could produce some interesting and insightful responses and help the church as they remember students in their prayers.

If you have a teacher, school governor or other member of staff in the congregation then you could include them in a similar interview. A short conversation with them in advance might make the most of them sharing their experience and perhaps their sense of calling to work in education.

One way of following this could be to invite members of the congregation to gather around the young people/staff and pray for their local schools, inspired by what they've heard.

If you haven't got 'insiders' in your congregation but have a good relationship with a teacher or Headteacher who isn't part of your church, perhaps you could invite them to come and share in the service in some way?

Open The Book

If you have a local [Open the Book](#) team that visits Primary Schools as part of Collective Worship, why not invite them to perform one of their Bible stories as part of your service? It would not only give a great opportunity for the congregation to see first-hand what an Open The Book assembly looks like but will be a creative addition to the service.

Someone from the team could then briefly speak about the privilege it is to visit the school in this way. Remember to include the Open The Book team in the prayers that are said.

Alternatively, you could invite a member of clergy or youth & children's worker who regularly visits a school to tell a Bible story or share their experience of visiting a school on behalf of the church.



Praying for schools on a Sunday (continued)

Liturgical Prayer (adapted from a Transforming Lives resource)

Almighty God, we thank you for every teacher who works in our schools.
Please strengthen them as they invest so much in the children and young people they teach.

All respond

**Fill them afresh with your Spirit
and inspire them to walk in your ways.**

Loving Shepherd, we thank you for the many people who enable our local schools
to run smoothly and provide a nurturing environment for children.
Please encourage them that they may be aware of the value of all they do
and help them to enjoy their work.

All respond

**Fill them afresh with your Spirit
and inspire them to walk in your ways.**

Lord of all understanding and knowledge, we thank you for school governors
and the role they have in the life of each school.
Please guide them to make wise decisions, to know when to affirm and when to ask questions.

All respond

**Fill them afresh with your Spirit
and inspire them to walk in your ways.**

Heavenly Father, we thank you for every child and young person
attending nurseries, primary and secondary schools, academies, colleges
and any other educational institutions in our neighbourhoods.
Please inspire and energise them to make the most of the opportunities that they have
to be diligent students, to play creatively and to know that you delight in them
as they seek to follow you.

All respond

**Fill them afresh with your Spirit
and inspire them to walk in your ways.**

God our Creator, we thank you for the education and encouragement we ourselves
have received from teachers and others in years gone by and in the present.
Please help us to support those who work in education however we can,
To appreciate their important job of shaping the future and to remember them in our prayers.

All respond

**Fill us afresh with your Spirit
and inspire us to walk in your ways.
We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.
Amen.**

Praying for schools in creative ways

As well as prayers for schools at services, some churches have set up a schools-focused prayer space in their building for a specific event or by having it open throughout a week, inviting members of the parish/neighbouring parishes to come and pray. You could also invite staff, governors and families from local schools to visit.

Consider all the schools in your benefice or locality and see if you can collect items that represent them. This may include a school jumper, a photograph of the school site and a school prospectus. You may like to invite schools to give you three things related to their school that you can pray for during these days. Display their prayer requests for visitors to see and engage in.

Below are some examples of tried and tested prayer stations that you could use. For further ideas and resources visit prayforschools.org

1. Praying for children and young people

Design a prayer space using a deck of playing cards. Turn over a playing card and pray according to the suit you reveal:



Pray for a young person whose heart is bitter and hard. Pray that the Holy Spirit would fill them.



Pray for a young person who is in a 'hole': struggling with a particular issue, difficulty or problem.



Give thanks for friendship. Pray for those who feel isolated and lonely at school, and who struggle



Pray for a young person in the context of their family: for good relationships with parents and



2. Praying for those with additional needs

Children with additional learning needs can often find accessing education and school incredibly challenging. Label 3 jars 'child', 'parent' and 'teacher' and have lots of marbles available. Ask participants to take a moment to think about those who find school hard. Pick up a marble. Think of this as symbolising a heavy weight, a burden, anxiety, care. Pray for either a child with additional needs, a PARENT worried about their child, or a teacher or learning support assistant who works with various needs in a class situation. Once you have said your prayer, drop the marble into the relevant jar.

Praying for schools in creative ways (continued...)

3. Praying for school staff

Teachers lead very busy lives but try their very best to look after the children in their care. They spend lots of time planning lessons and completing multiple admin tasks to track progress and monitor the children in their care. There are many different members of staff playing their part in a school, they are all valuable members of a school community. Gather together Duplo or Megablocks and some large sticky labels. Encourage participants to write the name of someone they know who works in a school or who has a role in education. Encourage them to put the stickers onto the blocks to start forming a tower representing all the people/building blocks that make a school. Whilst doing that, thank God for these important and inspirational people.



4. Education in the news

Gather together a selection of newspaper articles that have featured in the press recently, display them and encourage people to pray over current and important issues being faced in education. The BBC News website and 'Family & Education' pages are a good place to start.

5. Pray for education around the world

Using a world map, provide an opportunity for people to think more broadly about education. Using post-it notes or similar, invite people to write their own prayers for people they know who are teaching around the world or for individual countries where they feel there is a specific educational need or prayer to be offered to God.



Praying for schools in creative ways (continued...)

6. Pray for your local school

Make a model school from a cardboard box. Challenge people to think about the following:

Our schools are precious places.

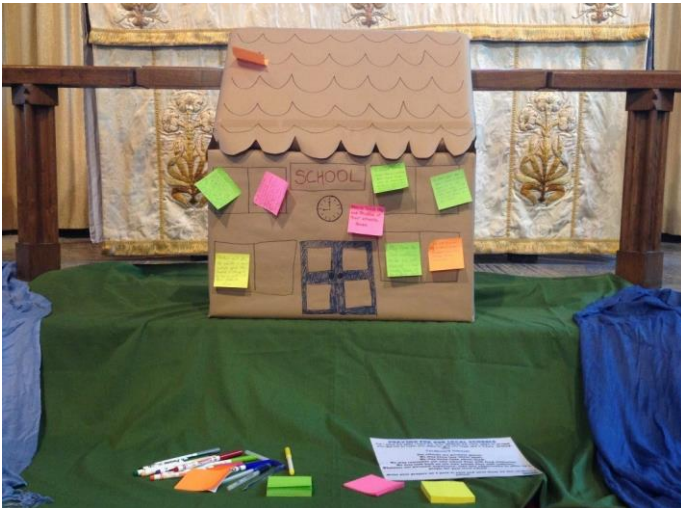
We may know lots about them. We may know little about them.

We may remember our own school days with fond memories.

We may look back on our own school days with sadness.

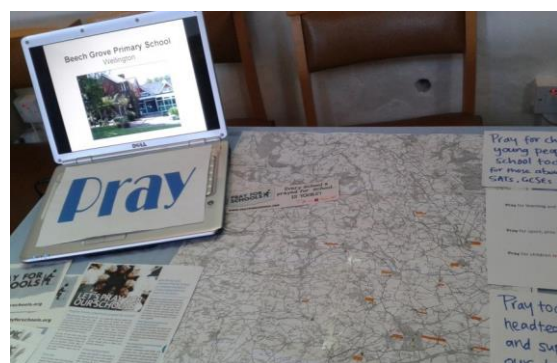
Whatever our personal experience, take this opportunity to offer up a prayer for your local school.

Write your prayers on a post-it note and stick them on the cardboard school.



Extra prayer space or exhibition ideas

- ◆ Pictures of local schools (usually available from school websites) which could be used on a PowerPoint presentation or simply printed out and displayed.
- ◆ Provide information or updates about Christian involvement in local schools (CU groups, clergy, youth workers and others who visit) as well as national initiatives like Prayer Spaces in Schools, Good News for Everyone (formerly Gideons UK) and Open the Book.
- ◆ Always provide plenty of pens and paper for prayers to be expressed in various ways, plus space to put them up or a “washing line” to peg them on to.
- ◆ Set up a table with a selection of items relating to schools that would inspire people to pray for different aspects of school life. This could include a cycle helmet (safe journeys to and from school), a pair of football boots (sports/play/exercise but not everyone’s favourite subject!), a coffee mug (pray for teachers feeling the pressure), a book, pencil case, a school tie or sweatshirt with a logo, a lunchbox, a test paper... you get the idea! Invite people to look at the table of items and either pray out loud or quietly as they are inspired or add post-it notes to the items as they pray.



Linking with your local schools as you pray

A focus on praying for schools in September provides a perfect opportunity to share with them that you are praying and consider other ways in which you can bless the school community.

Below are some practical ways in which you can do this during September, although you may choose to spread them out across the year.

1. Write to the Head Teacher at your local school to let them know that the church is praying for them as the new term starts. You could ask them if there is anything particular that you could pray for and give a contact number or email address for them to let you know. You could also include details of when you are planning to pray. Be sure to say that you're doing this because you care about local schools, children, young people and teachers.
2. Bake some cakes, buy a tin of biscuits or box of chocolates for the school staff room. Deliver them to the school with a card from the church, thanking them for all they do for the local children and letting them know that the church is praying for them.
3. Ask if a small group from your church can do a prayer walk around the school premises—this will require you to be sensitive to safeguarding, so it may have to take place when children are not on site, but a dialogue with the Head Teacher should enable you to sort logistics.
4. Offer to provide lunch or breakfast for the staff in your local school. This doesn't have to be complicated. Bacon butties for breakfast or a soup and bread roll lunch.
5. Offer to put together a task force team who can visit the local school to do any practical maintenance jobs that may need doing such as painting fences, clearing overgrown bushes or any other job that the school may value practical support in. Be sure to tell them that you are praying for them and offering this on behalf of the church because you care and want to serve and honour them for the valuable job they do with local children and young people.
6. Open discussions with your local school on starting a prayer group that meets regularly. This could involve people from the local church, staff, parents and/or governors. A new academic year offers the perfect opportunity to launch something like this.



Inviting schools to join in praying

Here are some prayer stations that you could set up and use with Primary School children as they think about and pray for their school and children around the world.

Thank you for my school

If possible, set up tables and chairs for the children to sit around. Give the children a piece of paper each (A5 works well) and felt pens or coloured pencils. Ask them to think about what they'd like to thank God for in their school and then draw a picture of it as a prayer. It might be the school itself or a teacher, a favourite activity at school or a friend. Once they've finished you could display the pictures on a "washing line" in the church or prayer space.



Praying for other people in my school

Have the children sit on the floor in the semi-circle in front of the altar or a cross. Introduce the idea of praying for other people in our school. Invite suggestions of those we could pray for (e.g. teachers, Headteacher, cleaner, dinner lady, a friend who is off sick). Give each child a pipe cleaner (long coloured ones are best) and show them how to bend and twist it to make a simple person. Ask them to think who this person represents, someone in their school that they would like to pray for.



Then explain that we're going to bring our pipe cleaner people to God in prayer, taking it in turns to place our person in front of the altar/cross. You go first then sit back down quietly, then each child places their person in turn. Finish with a short-spoken prayer.

Asking God to help us with things we find hard

Introduce this activity by saying: There are always things that we will find difficult and challenging. The Bible tells us that God is always with us and that we can ask him to help us with things we find hard. In the Old Testament God encouraged Joshua when he was facing a very hard task with these words: "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9).

This activity is about asking God to help us to be brave. Pre-prepare an A-Z set of outlined capital letters (printed onto paper with extras for the most popular letters). Each child takes a letter (their initial) to decorate and write a prayer on it as they reflect on the things they're finding hard. Display all the letter prayers on a display board or large piece of cardboard as pictured.

You could also use the song/video 'You make me brave' by Bethel Music/ Bethel Kids with this activity.

Lighting a candle

A simple activity that will need some extra supervision, tea-light candles, matches, a wax taper and a safe place to light the candles.

Jesus called us the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16). As the children take turns to light a candle invite them to think about how they can be 'light' in their school. Allow space and a certain amount of quiet for each child to pause, think and pray after lighting their candle.



Top tips for serving your local school

Alongside regularly praying for your local schools and colleges, here are some ways your church could be a blessing to your local schools all year round.

1. Ask how you could help.
2. Bake a cake and put it in the staff room with a card thanking staff for their hard work, especially around a school inspection.
3. Support school events, plays and fetes that are open to the public.
4. Read school newsletters so you know what is happening.
5. Volunteer to read with a group or individual, or volunteer to help on a school trip.
6. Offer to pay for transport to the annual Pilgrim Services for Year 4 & Year 6 pupils.
7. Be available to help, pray and support during exam times and on exam results days, or at times of crisis, sadness and bereavement (not just the Vicar).
8. Become a Governor (more info at bathandwells.org.uk/come-on-board/).
9. Once a year hold a joint PCC and School Council meeting to discuss what is really important in developing and maintaining the link.
10. Offer your church buildings as a resource to the school; for an RE related visit or for celebrations through the year. If you have suitable facilities offer them free of charge for training or as a breakout space for staff meetings.
11. Explore the idea of forming a link with a school in Zambia, as part of our Zambia partnership (more info at bathandwells.org.uk/zambia-partnership/schools-links/).



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