

THE FREE CHURCH COUNCIL OF WALES

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**LINKING CHURCHES
AND SCHOOLS**

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Revised by Vaughan Salisbury: 2022

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LINKING CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS

This booklet is designed to encourage links between churches and local schools in Wales: to encourage churches who are not involved with schools to begin on this exciting venture and to encourage others to continue and even extend their involvement.

Whilst the focus is on building bridges with community schools, the ideas and actions are also relevant to all faith schools and independent/private schools.

WHY GET INVOLVED?

- Churches as organisations and their members as individuals have always seen involvement in public education as important. It is part of our role in society and a means of bringing Christian values to bear on the provision, nature and conduct of education. Through education, both formal and informal, children, young people and adults develop and grow in body, mind, and spirit and each should have the opportunity and encouragement to develop to the full the potential God has given them. It is therefore to share in God's work that Christians become involved in schools, not to proselytise but by being concerned for our neighbour's whole well-being.
- Involvement with schools is part of our Christian calling, following the example of Christ as seen in Jesus' concern for children (Matthew 19:13; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17,20b), in Jesus' challenge to Peter to "Feed my Lambs" (John 21:15-19) and in Jesus' call to serve others (Matthew 25:31-40).
- Both churches and schools have a common concern - they want the best for all young people. Churches and schools are part of the local community and work for the good of that community; churches become involved with schools as good neighbours, sharing concern for the young and the vulnerable. In serving others, Christians are following the example of Christ; and so, in serving schools and the children and adults in them, Christians are offering service to their Lord.
- The Curriculum for Wales (2022) requires schools to ensure that learners develop an authentic sense of 'cynefin'. Cynefin is the place where we feel we belong, where the people and the landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable. It allows learners to develop a strong sense of individual identity and understanding how this is connected to and shaped by wider influences. Churches and chapels are, of course, an integral part of this cynefin, and this opens up opportunities for local churches (like other local organizations) to deepen their links with their local schools. By doing so churches contribute to designing a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, and mental development of pupils, preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

1. ARE YOU ALREADY INVOLVED INFORMALLY?

You probably already have school links through the people who make up your church:

- Teachers
- Governors
- Headteachers
- Lunch time supervisors
- Dinner ladies
- School nurses
- School secretaries
- School caretakers
- Classroom assistants
- School crossing wardens
- School librarians
- Cleaners
- Parents
- Grandparents
- Pupils
- Learner mentors
- Advisors
- Inspectors
- SAC members (Standing Advisory Council)
- Local Education Authority staff
- School Christian workers
- Parent Teacher Association members
- Collective Worship teams
- or perhaps your minister takes school Collective Worship.

This is not an exhaustive list!

2. TURNING THE INFORMAL INTO THE FORMAL

Before contacting a school, you need to find out what skills, availability, and degree of inclination there is in the church. This could be done by arranging a meeting for all those who already have some school link but opening it to all who are interested in schools. You may be surprised at hidden talents - don't forget to ask children and young people in your church. Use the meeting as an opportunity to brainstorm ideas and discuss which local school would be best to contact first. Before you do so first check whether any other church or Christian group already has links with the school. It may be you can work together, or it may be appropriate to select another school. Don't forget special schools and independent/private schools too.

At the end of your meeting, you need to decide on some specific areas of support you could offer to a school, who would be involved and whether they need training. Taking or leading acts of Collective Worship and visiting church buildings are what schools will expect but there are other opportunities, as you will see later.

Once you have one or two offers of support and decided which school to approach, then the contact with the head of the school needs to be done formally, preferably by the church minister or leader. If you have chosen a school with which you have informal links through a teacher or governor, they may like to let the

headteacher know that the approach will be made.

In the meeting with the headteacher remember that the business of schools is education and that headteachers are busy. Use the meeting to introduce the church and its willingness to be of assistance to the school. Find out what ways the school would like to work with you as well as sharing the ideas that you previously discussed in your church.

Be prayerful, be prepared, be patient and courteous and expect to develop a positive link with the school which can begin small and then grow as knowledge and trust develop on both sides. Go for it!

3. WHAT CAN WE DO?

Remember that the relationship between a school and a church can be a long one. Therefore, do not rush into the project too quickly or try to do too much too soon.

It is important to offer help which the school needs and which you know that as a church, collectively or as individuals, you can deliver. Remember some options need a long-term, regular commitment, whilst others may be only once a year.

Opportunities for the church to offer to the school include:

- Visits to the chapel/church buildings as part of a Religion, Values and Ethics syllabus. Since September 2022, RE in Wales is now called Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE).
- Use of the church premises for school Carol Service, Nativity Play, Harvest Festival, Leavers' Service or just use of the premises for other school activities. Many schools are short of space and many church buildings are not fully used during the daytime.
- Take acts of Collective Worship at school, including special services at Christian festivals, Remembrance Day, Education Sunday and Climate Sunday. Why not invite members of the school - headteacher, teachers, pupils - to take part in special services at the church?
- Provide resources for the school: Bibles for class use.
 - Christian books for the library and for the curriculum – e.g. It's Your Move from Scripture Union.
 - DVDs – e.g. The Miracle Maker, The Prince of Egypt, The Star.
 - Websites for Collective Worship.
 - See Resource Section for more resource links.
 - Members of the church as individuals or groups of individuals working through the church could help the school in a voluntary capacity. Age is no barrier - you could even be an honorary grandparent! Again, many of these activities require a long-term commitment.

Volunteers could:

- Listen to children read.
- Provide extra pairs of hands for school excursions, clubs, sport, music, drama, visiting the local library, open days and special events.
- Offer practical help with gardens, maintenance or in the office - work parties to repair and decorate the school or create a school garden.

- Offer a regular time during the week to be a classroom volunteer under the supervision of the class teacher.
- Be interviewed by children as “living examples” of people with a Christian faith.
- Be interviewed about the past and visions of the future!
- Join the Parent Teacher Association.
- Become a school governor.

**DBS clearance might be needed to fulfil some of the above activities.
It is important to liaise with schools regarding this provision.**

And perhaps, most importantly, encourage Christians to consider becoming full time teachers. Schools need teachers - Christian teachers.

There are opportunities for schools to help and work together with churches:

- Churches may know of suitable recipients of school Harvest Festival gifts, or the school’s harvest gifts could be brought into the church for a joint celebration.
- School choirs could share with the church in worship in homes for the elderly or in special church services.
- School choirs or drama productions could be invited to church activities as part of joint social outreach to the community, e.g., a school Christmas production as part of a special luncheon club event.
- Schools could be invited to share in other church events, e.g., Carol Services, Christian Aid Week and church collections of supplies for various countries in need, or activities to raise money for famine relief, or the Christmas shoebox appeal. These could even be joint activities.
- Schools could be asked if their students/pupils could design posters/ service sheets/ notices for church events, perhaps as a design project. This could be a mutually beneficial activity.
- Churches could advertise school events and display children’s work, perhaps after a class visit to the chapel/church buildings.
- Churches could include news items from the school in the church magazine - a report of activities done or to happen, examples of work pupils have done.

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4. DON'T FORGET THE STAFF

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Send an e-mail or card of support and encouragement when Estyn inspection results or exam results are made known, or when the school makes ‘the news’.

Send an e-mail or card at the start of the school year/Christmas time to wish them well and assure them of the church’s support and prayers.

Above all: pray for the school.

5. CHURCH VISITS

The Curriculum for Wales and Local Agreed Syllabuses for Religion, Values and Ethics encourage pupils to visit local places of worship. This is a ready way in which the church can help the school. Every Christian building says something about the people who meet there; but whatever your chapel/church is like, it is essential to set the visit up properly. These visits can be most helpful in building on-going relationships with the school. A church's commitment to careful preparation and the maintenance of a worshipful atmosphere will make such visits a particularly important part of the pupils' spiritual development.

Before receiving a group of pupils on a visit, you should plan carefully with the school. You need to discover the school's aims for the visit so that you can prepare activities and materials suitable for the age group and the purpose of their visit. It is important for the pupils to appreciate that the church is the people, and the building is where they worship. You need well-briefed members of the church to be available to take part in the visit.

It is also helpful to prepare resources which relate to your church and your denomination, e.g., a plan of the chapel/church, activity sheets specifically created for your building, a video, a special service (e.g., baptism, Climate Sunday). If there is to be a talk, then a presentation illustrating different aspects of the church, its history, worship, activities, people, furniture, weddings would help. The church notice board and display tables of literature could also reflect the life and activities of the church and its related organisations, at home and worldwide. Some churches use guided tours to explain various features such as the pulpit, lectern, christening cup/baptism pool. There are many approaches, and your denomination may provide guidelines on receiving school visits, e.g., Salvation Army's The Ultimate Church Visit.

Remember also the practical points: why are they coming; how many pupils and adults; when and for how long; label the toilets; will there be refreshments and where, and who will organise. Give the pupils time to be still and silent to appreciate being in a place of worship.

Do a follow-up with the school and church members to find out what went right/wrong/and what could be improved. Ask if examples of children's work relating to the visit could be displayed at the chapel/church. Thank everyone for participating and say you would look forward to seeing them again sometime.

NB: If your church has a graveyard, then it may also provide the opportunity for school visits relating to local history, nature conservation and ecology.

6. PRAYER

Praying for the success of education in our schools is an important and natural Christian activity. If all the adults working in and for the school feel supported and valued, then the whole school environment can be affected for good, and children will have a positive experience of school. Children and young people in schools will have many and varied needs. God is interested in all of our lives and that includes school and all that happens there.

Remember schools in public and private prayer, at the beginning and end of term, on Education Sunday, St David's Day, at exam time, and when there are special events at the school.

Regular prayer zoom sessions at www.prayforschools.org exists to stimulate and encourage committed

Christian prayer for schools in Wales, and to provide a means of communication and support for those involved. If you are going to set up a prayer group for a school, it would be useful to check with the school if such a group already exists.

7. WORKING TOGETHER

- Churches working together can give a united Christian witness to the local schools and can consider more ambitious ventures than may be possible for a single church. It is helpful to schools if the churches in the area from all different traditions can be seen to be working together. Occasionally schools are reluctant to respond to the overtures of one church because of what they see as church rivalries or a sense that that church is on a “recruitment drive”. Even if churches work individually with schools, it is important to share this information at ministers’/church leaders’ meetings and in local Cytûn groups so that everyone knows what is happening.
- If churches can work together, then much can be achieved. Initially, it would be helpful to share information on what links do exist and so co-ordinate work in a particular school or encourage new work to start in schools where there is no active church involvement. The local authority Religion, Values and Ethics adviser (if available) and the SAC may be useful contacts as to where help is needed in terms of Religion, Values and Ethics provision. The Local Agreed Syllabus is also useful in this regard.
- In some areas the churches involved in school work employ Schools’ Christian workers. Some of these work directly in the schools. In others, the worker is a development officer who although going into schools, has as a prime role the encouragement, nurture and training of volunteers from churches who then go into schools. Contact your own denomination or Cytûn for further information.
- Local Cytûn groups could celebrate all the local links between churches and schools by arranging ecumenical services.

8. EDUCATION SUNDAY

There has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in Wales and England for many years. It is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education. The theme is devised by an ecumenical steering group representing different Christian denominations. It is celebrated on the second Sunday in September to coincide with the start of the school year. Information about each year’s theme is usually available from Cytûn and Church headquarters and websites.

You might like to use Education Sunday as the opportunity to launch your new school-church link.

9. WHAT MORE CAN WE DO?

As churches and schools establish mutual trust, it is possible to consider other ways of working together.

Churches in discussion with the local education authority and local schools have set up breakfast clubs, homework clubs, after-school clubs and computer clubs on chapel/church premises during out of school hours. Such activities need much prior preparation and training. Sources of advice may include denominational headquarters and Cytûn, who may be able to link you up with others who are already experienced in the work, as may the local authority or diocese.

As church links grow with an individual school, personal relationships develop and ministers and others from the church may find themselves taken into the confidence of headteachers or individual teachers as they begin to act as ‘chaplains’ to the staff. This pastoral role takes time to establish and is a position of great trust, but it is time well spent. It is also important to build in a team approach to provide continuity as personnel move.

10. RELIGION, VALUES AND ETHICS (RVE) IN SCHOOLS

Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) provides the opportunity for pupils to learn about religions and non-religious philosophical convictions. It can also contribute to pupils’ moral and spiritual development, to help them develop the ability to make well-informed reasoned judgements about moral issues and to reflect on ultimate questions etc. The RVE statutory guidance can be accessed via the Welsh Government’s Hwb website: <https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/humanities/designing-your-curriculum/#religion,-values-and-ethics-guidance>

RVE is part of the Humanities Area of Learning and Experience of the Curriculum for Wales taught in all schools throughout Wales. In community, foundation, and voluntary schools this will be based on the local agreed syllabus for RVE.

Details on the provision of RVE in the curriculum for all types of schools can be found in the Summary of legislation on Hwb at <https://hwb.gov.wales>

The Local Authority Agreed Syllabus for RVE must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Wales are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions and non-religious philosophical convictions represented in Wales. The Local Agreed Syllabus is prepared by a Conference set up by the local authority consisting of three committees representing a) faith and belief, b) the teachers, and c) the local education authority.

Churches should therefore have a representative of their own denomination at the Conference. That representative should be able to answer questions about the Local Agreed Syllabus and how churches can help schools implement it.

RVE may not be a well-resourced area of the curriculum, even in secondary schools where there are specialist RVE teachers. So, churches, after discussion with the school, may be able to provide resources to help in the teaching of Christianity. In some schools the resources needed are well-qualified RVE teachers: Churches can help by encouraging Christians to consider taking up this career. Further details about RVE and Religious Studies qualifications in Wales can be found on the Welsh Government’s Hwb and WJEC websites.

Churches should also take note of the following legislative changes in Wales which are operational in schools since September 2022:

- There is no parental right to withdraw their children from RVE in the Curriculum for Wales.
- Maintained schools with nursery age children and funded non-maintained nursery settings must provide RVE for all their learners from age 3 from September 2022.
- Post 16 RVE in maintained schools is optional for 6th formers.

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11. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

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Community Schools, Foundation and Voluntary Schools with no religious character are required to provide a daily act of Collective Worship which ‘shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’. This means it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination. In church schools Collective Worship will be within the tradition of that church tradition. Currently (2022) every pupil in every school must attend an act of worship in school every day unless the pupil’s parents exercise their right to withdraw their children under the appropriate conscience clause.

Schools often use the term ‘Assembly’ instead of Collective Worship for this gathering of pupils and pupils are offered opportunities for spiritual and moral development, including contributing to the worship. Church visitors might present ideas and experience from their faith, asking pupils to think about them from their own points of view. In leading prayer, no assumptions should be made about the commitments of the pupils or staff.

It is important for church visitors who are asked to lead Collective Worship to prepare well in advance: ask for the school’s worship policy; talk to the worship coordinator, who may not necessarily be the headteacher; and if possible, ask to visit an equivalent act of worship beforehand. It is also important to check practical issues; where it is held, how long do you have, where do the notices fit in and the pupil age range. In schools, timing is very important and seek to end just before your allotted time - you want to be invited back!

There is a great deal of guidance available for leading Collective Worship, both on different websites and in printed materials. See the Resource list at the end of the document.

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12. WHAT IS A SAC?

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All Local Authorities (LA) have to set up a Standing Advisory Council (SAC) for RVE.

The function of the Standing Advisory Council on RVE is to advise the local authority on such matters connected with the provision of teaching and learning, under the Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021, either in respect of the mandatory element of RVE, or the post-compulsory education in maintained schools of optional RVE which includes:

- methods of teaching.
- the choice of teaching materials.
- the provision of teacher training.

In addition, the SAC may advise on Collective Worship in LA schools and any other matter the LA may refer to the council or as the council may see fit.

The SAC shall in each year publish a report as to the exercise of its functions and actions.

Under the Education Acts, the LA must provide local arrangements for dealing with Complaints. The SAC on RVE may therefore consider unresolved complaints about the provision of or lack of provision of RVE. This arrangement will give parents and others the opportunity to ensure the proper provision of RVE across all schools

The SAC can also require the LA to review its Agreed Syllabus.

The SAC is made up of three committees representing a) faith and belief, b) the teachers, and c) the local education authority.

It would help churches in their work with schools if they contacted their local SAC and their representatives on it. SAC representatives should act as the link between the SAC and local churches presenting concerns about the teaching of RVE and the delivery of Collective Worship in the local schools. SAC meetings, usually once a term, are open meetings which members of the public are free to attend. The LA will have details of times and venues.

13. VOLUNTARY CHRISTIAN GROUPS

Many schools have Christian clubs or meetings at lunchtime or after school which enable pupils to share their faith. They should be clear in their purpose and open in their agenda and invitation for all to participate. They are often run by School Christian Workers, school staff or in secondary schools by older pupils. In many cases, the staff will not be RVE staff but practising Christians who teach other subjects.

Visitors to such groups are participating in the life of the Christian community on school premises and should take the opportunity seriously. Even though the meetings are at lunchtime or after school, the arrangements for visitors to such groups should be made not only with the group, but also with senior staff in the school because the meeting is on school premises.

14. SUPPORTING TEACHERS

The morale of teachers is crucial to the success of education. None of the work undertaken by teachers, headteachers, support staff or governors is easy and it has to be undertaken in a professional and responsible manner. They all need to know that what they are doing is valued by the churches and local community. They need to feel that their schools and their own contribution is supported and upheld in prayer by their local church/es.

Where church members are employed in school or are giving their time as governors, SAC members, or volunteers, churches should take an interest in what they are doing. They should also be protected from being too-overburdened with church-related responsibilities. It may take some restraint to ensure that busy people are not forced to choose between their work in and for schools and their work in the church.

If churches support Schools Christian Workers, the support has to be nurtured by inviting them to visit the church and share their hopes and concerns and activities in person as well as through e-mails/newsletters. This enables the churches to keep the vision alive and offer both prayerful and practical support.

If a church can show how it positively values, encourages and supports teachers, then it could not only build up existing teachers but also encourage others to enter the profession.

Schools need Christian teachers, now and in the future.

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15. LEGAL ISSUES

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The headteacher of a school is responsible for everything that happens in the school, and to school parties out on visits. Anyone visiting a school is there as a guest and is expected to conform to the patterns of professional behaviour set down by the school.

The class teacher is responsible for discipline and the health and safety of the pupils and should always remain with the class when on a visit or when there is a visitor in the classroom. At no time during their visit should a visitor expect to be left alone with an individual child/small group/class. Should any pastoral issues arise during conversation between a school visitor and a pupil in the school, they should be referred to the relevant member of staff at the earliest opportunity.

Anyone who wishes to work with children or young people at church or in school is expected to apply for a basic Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (see www.gov.uk). The Local Authority may well make this a condition of working in a school. Churches should check with their denominational headquarters or their diocese as to the appropriate route to follow for their members to apply for Disclosures.

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16. BEING GUESTS

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Although schools are keen to receive help from the wider community, they are places of education run by professionals. The most effective way to be involved is to support the needs of the school and build up a relationship over time. Never use an invitation to overstep what is acceptable educationally. Respect the aims and standards of the school. Do not proselytize or you will never be invited back!

Once you have built up a relationship with a school, do everything to maintain it. Be punctual, presentable, professional and check with the teachers what is acceptable in their classroom/hall. If you need equipment, ask for it before you get there or take your own.

Remember that schools may include members of different religions and non-religious groups, children from irreligious families, different Christian denominations and sects. Respect therefore their viewpoints as you present and discuss your Christian belief.

17. CHURCH SCHOOLS

For some churches, the link to a local school is already established by the presence of their own church school.

Every church school represents a considerable commitment in time and money by the local church community to enable it to come into being and continue in existence. A church has a financial responsibility towards its school through the governing body and a responsibility to provide some of the governors. The minister/priest is often a member of the governing body, though not necessarily its chair. This allows him or her to fulfil a chaplaincy role which is also a responsibility of the church. The church has a moral responsibility for the spiritual development of the school which, although partly fulfilled by the chaplain and governors, has a wider implication for all church members who should pray for the school and offer help in whatever way is needed. Thus, the ideas and suggestions for creating links between churches and community schools are in many cases equally applicable to churches and their church schools. If churches in an area feel led in this direction, they need to contact their diocese or church headquarters for preliminary advice as well as being aware of local developments and the views of other local churches in the hope that the work can be ecumenical.

18. ON FROM SCHOOL

This material has concentrated on links between churches and local schools, but many young people move on from school into further and higher education. Free Churches are involved with Colleges of Further Education as was described in Free Churches Group – Engaging in the Public Square, Serving from the Margins: The Free Churches and Further Education, 34 pp, 2016. This is an important publication, but it focuses only on England.

The Free Churches are also present in Colleges of Higher Education and Universities. See Free Churches Group: Hope in Higher Education, The Free Churches and Higher Education: A report and recommendations from the FCG – Higher Education Working Group, 35pp, 2018. This is an important publication, but it focuses only on England.

See also A Free Church Voice on Education, Free Church Education Committee, 2010. This is a booklet focusing on the nature, purpose, and role of a nonconformist Christian voice on education. It has 4 sections on Historical context, Philosophy, Purpose, and Action.

19. WHERE WILL IT END?

- Every church can be involved in supporting a school by one of the ways described here even if there is no-one connected with schools or education in the church at present and even if there are no informal links with children or young people.
- There is a school in the neighbourhood of every church, and we are all called to serve our schools and their pupils.
- All Christians have the privilege of prayer.
- Put these two together and the link between church and school has started - where it will end is in the hand of God.

20. REFERENCE SECTION: WEBSITES

www.gwales.com - details of all books available in English and Welsh through the Welsh Books Council

<https://gov.wales> - the web site of the Welsh Government - follow through to Education and Lifelong Learning for information on education matters.

www.wjec.co.uk - the web site of the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) – GCSE/AS/A level Religious Studies

www.prayforschools.org (with a Wales link) seeks to mobilise Christians to support their school communities through prayer.

www.ysgolsul.com – providing a wide variety of Christian material which can be adapted to community school settings.

<https://hwb.gov.wales> – contains important bilingual links to all aspects of the Curriculum for Wales including the go-to site for teaching resources.

<https://stgilescentre.org> – based in Wrexham. Supports teaching and learning in Wales.

www.cytun.co.uk – Cytûn. Churches together in Wales.

www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/school-assemblies - Christian Aid Collective Worship material. Bilingual material available on <https://christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/wales/cymru>

www.natsoc.org.uk - the Church of England/National Society site for all interested in Church of England schools and Church of England involvement in education, generally, as well as free weekly collective worship resources.

www.catholiceducation.org.uk - for all interested in Roman Catholic schools and Roman Catholic views on education.

www.schoolsprayernetwork.org.uk - to find out about setting up a prayer support group for a school.

www.assemblies.org.uk - assemblies for primary schools including help in preparation, presentation, music and drama, provided by SPCK.

<https://cymru.assemblies.org.uk> – Welsh language material linked to the assemblies.org.uk website

www.cstg.org.uk – ‘our vision is for a broad-based, critical and reflective education in religion and worldviews contributing to a well-informed, respectful and open society’.

www.christianeducation.org.uk - information on books and resources for RE and Collective Worship in England.

<https://www.reonline.org.uk> - provides RE resources from the Culham St. Gabriel’s Trust in England.

www.teachRE.co.uk - promotes the teaching of RE, designed to encourage people to consider teaching RE as a career.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00nkdgx> - BBC School Radio Assemblies

www.spckpublishing.co.uk – major Christian publishing company.

www.spinnaker.org.uk - resources for assemblies in primary schools in England.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk> – resources e.g. Ultimate Church Visit.

<https://biblesociety.org.uk> – Open the book/Agor y llyfr opportunities for church members to deliver Bible stories in schools

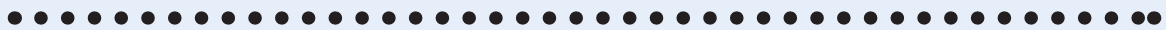
www.retoday.org.uk – a website for RE developments and resources in England.

www.scriptureunion.org.uk – e.g. Get Out and Get Sporty. How can churches today connect with more children and young people with no church background?

Also: It's your move! a useful, colourful, fun-packed book for pupils who are preparing to move from junior to secondary school.

www.freechurches.org.uk - activities of the Free Church Education Group.

www.spiretrust.org.uk - a non-denominational Christian charity, encourages the creation of groups of Christian people who will undertake to build relationships of mutual trust and understanding with the staff of their local secondary school and offer themselves as a resource to the school in the teaching of Christianity and the delivery of Collective Worship.



The author of the original booklet, Gillian Wood was Education Officer for the Free Churches and was involved in education all her working life as a chemistry teacher and then a teacher union official.

CTE at the time gave permission for the Free Church Council of Wales to publish an English and Welsh language version for Wales. In view of the new Education Act for Wales (2021) the FCCW decided it was prudent to revise the 2003 document and are grateful to Vaughan Salisbury (FCCW Education Secretary) for undertaking this work.

This publication is available as an online version only in both Welsh and English and should be available on denominational websites as well as from local SACs and the FCCW link on <https://www.cytun.co.uk>

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21. GUIDANCE FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL VISITS

'Instilling learners with passion and pride in themselves, their communities and their country is central to the four purposes (of the Curriculum for Wales). Learners should be grounded in an understanding of the identities, landscapes and histories that come together to form their 'cynefin' (Cynefin is the place where we feel we belong, where the people and landscape around us are familiar, and the sights and sounds are reassuringly recognisable. Though often translated as 'habitat', cynefin is not just a place in a physical or geographical sense, it is the historic, cultural and social place which has shaped and continues to shape the community which inhabits it). This will not only allow them to develop a strong sense of their own identity and well-being, but to develop an understanding of others' identities and make connections with people, places and histories elsewhere in Wales and across the world.' Curriculum for Wales, *Designing a curriculum in Wales and for Wales*, see www.hwb.gov.wales

Churches and Christians are clearly an important part of this understanding of 'cynefin' and should therefore take full advantage of the opportunities to visit and contribute to a school's curriculum and acts of Collective Worship.

If you intend to visit a school:

- Remember to make an appointment with the Head Teacher, even if you do know another member of staff.
- Remember that you are a person that has been invited to the school.
- Remember to dress appropriately. Ask a member of staff what is acceptable.
- Be clear as to what is expected of you: what time you should arrive, where you should go: how much time has been allocated to you, what are the ages and abilities of the learners that you will be addressing, etc.
- Pray beforehand: you could also ask others to pray while you are at the school.
- Be punctual! Arrive early and do not overstay your welcome. If you do go over the time allocated, you will not be popular with the staff! Rather, try to conclude a few minutes early as a few minutes late could disrupt the school's timetable for the rest of the day.
- Be consistent and dependable. Although teachers will not appreciate a last-minute call telling them that you're cancelling your visit, it is very important that you contact the school if you are unable to take part in a previously arranged activity.
- A member of school staff should always be with you in order to qualify your contribution and also as regards good practice. It is their responsibility to ensure discipline so that you are free to carry on with your own presentation.
- It is as Christians that we present ourselves to the school and it is our own belief and viewpoint that we are there to express: don't assume that learners hold the same viewpoint as you. We should not evangelise in order to avoid accusations of proselytising.
- Ask the Head Teacher if it is necessary for you to sign a declaration concerning Child Safety and be checked through the DBS.
- Our school work is more than leading acts of Collective Worship; it could be more beneficial initially to build a relationship with the school through a variety of activities, e.g. reading with the children, sport, mentoring, contributing to specific class work, participating in the "Open the Book" scheme, etc.
- Remember to plan carefully and liaise with school staff. This will influence the attitude of the staff towards you.
- Be aware of the age range in Collective Worship presentations and the ability range in lessons.
- It is beneficial to ask about particular school themes so you're your work will support the school in its teaching.
- It is quite possible that the pupils themselves will be measuring your performance. Be yourself and always show respect. If you discuss matters with them, remember that they too have a right to their own opinions, just as you have a right to express clearly what you believe.
- There is no need to get into heated discussions or try to score points by winning an argument. Remember you want to be invited back to the school!
- Remember the Head Teacher and teachers are under no obligation to have you back at their school.
- Following your visit: send an e-mail or letter or phone to thank the staff and pupils.

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