

Faith and Society Files: Church and School - Praying for Schools

Prayer is one of the greatest gifts that God has given us to transform situations. This File shares some ideas from Pray for Schools to help you support your school and make a real difference in the lives of those who work in and for them.



Supporting schools through prayer

What do you do when your local school is vandalised?

Or you hear that one of the teachers has been diagnosed with cancer?

Or new education policies are implemented?

Do you feel worried?

Or wonder what can be done?

Or do you pray?

Prayer is surely one of the greatest gifts that God has given to us to transform situations and it is so encouraging to see how Christians – young and old – are being increasingly excited about its powerful effects. **Pray for Schools** is a network of people who have set up prayer groups for their local schools - and it's growing fast! Meeting in churches, homes, school buildings and coffee shops thousands of parents, teachers and other staff, pupils, friends and family are regularly praying about real situations in their local schools and seeing specific answers.

It is encouraging that many Baptist churches are already praying regularly for their local school, but wouldn't it be wonderful if every single one of the 30,000 schools in the UK was being supported by regular Christian prayer?

This File shares some ideas from Pray for Schools to help you to support your local school and make a real difference in the lives of those who work in and for them.

Pray for Schools encourages prayer for schools in three ways:

- By encouraging churches to pray for and support their local schools, through the churches charter.
- By maintaining a record of all schools in the UK who are supported by prayer groups or praying individuals at any time. Those who pray for any school are asked to register with Pray for Schools.
- By promoting larger prayer events for schools in an area, organised around Education Sunday, Pray for Schools Fortnight, Back to School Sunday and Pray Day for Schools.



The vision for Pray for Schools is 'for every school to be a prayed-for school' across the UK and we would love to encourage anyone who would like to join this movement to find out more and consider registering with us. Perhaps there is a school near you that you and a friend could begin to pray for. Who knows what the outcome might be!



Celia Bowring
Prayer Co-ordinator
for CARE

Visit **www.prayforschools.org** or write to Celia Bowring at PFS, CARE, 53 Romney Street, SW1P 3RF

Pray for Schools has grown out of the work of the Schools Prayer Network and is an partnership between CARE, Youth for Christ, Scripture Union, New Generation, Association of Christian Teachers and Churches Together England.

Aims of Prayer Groups

To Support:

- All that is good in the life of the school
'Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.' Philippians 4:8
- The Headteacher, leadership team and staff.

To Encourage:

- Christian staff members, pupils, parents and others attached to the school.
- Any Christian fellowship groups, and those from outside the school giving Christian input.

To Pray For:

- Opportunities for the pupils to hear and respond to the Gospel.
- Biblical values to be honoured and upheld in all areas of school life.
- Practical issues affecting the school.
- Needs of those working within the school and families connected to it.
- Wider education issues.

Getting Started

- Begin praying, however few you are, in a home or even over the phone.
- Ask God to draw together those who have a heart of prayer for the school – pray people into the group rather than cajole them! Have a definite leader of the group who is responsible for the overall running of it.
- Be aware that Christian schools' workers and clergy may be involved in the life of the school. Consider how you can support them in prayer.
- Establish a regular time, frequency and place for the prayer meetings – eg once or twice a term, monthly ...



**Every school ...
... a prayed for school**

That's the vision of *Pray for Schools*, an exciting partnership between The Association of Christian Teachers, CARE, Churches Together England, New Generation, Scripture Union and YFC across England.

Join us as we seek to turn the vision into a reality by:

- Praying for a school
- Starting a group to pray regularly for one or more local schools
- Hosting a prayer event in your area
- Encouraging churches to support schools through prayer and practical involvement.

The Pray for Schools website www.prayforschools.org has a host of resources to get you started.

Register online and keep in touch with what's happening across the country. You can also discover who else is praying near you.

To find out more go to:
www.prayforschools.org or
email england@prayforschools.org

Progressing

Consider and pray about how to seek the support and co-operation of the Headteacher and the minister in church schools. If you are unsure of his/her enthusiasm about the prayer group it may be wise to pray together for a while first so that you can present a positive case for having a prayer group and give reassurance that you are acting in the best interests of the school – bearing in mind the Head's responsibility for pastoral care. In some schools Heads and staff provide prayer points for each prayer group meeting.

Try to hold the prayer meeting at the school if the Head is agreeable (some groups meet in the staff room) but don't put yourselves in a position where you are told you can't meet.

Discuss appropriate ways of making the prayer group known to staff and parents, eg via the school newsletter, staff bulletin, letters to all staff.

Consider forming a prayer chain for use in situations needing urgent prayer but be very strict about confidentiality and do not name people.

Register¹ your prayer group with the **Schools Prayer Network** and pray for other schools to be covered by prayer too as God puts this on the hearts of Christians involved.

¹ www.prayforschools.org/groups/register-a-group/

Content of a Prayer Meeting

Start with a few verses from the Bible and a brief comment to focus thoughts on the Lord, followed by the Lord's Prayer/praise/confession/asking guidance of the Holy Spirit.

List points for thanksgiving and prayer under such headings as pupils, staff, events, assembly themes, Christian festivals and pray for each section in turn – this structures the prayer time and prevents prolonged discussion instead of prayer.

Ask for other prayer needs from those in the group.

Consider using a flip chart – but make sure it is removed afterwards. Some groups have a book for recording prayer requests and how God answers them.

Confidentiality is essential. Whatever is mentioned for prayer must remain in confidence. Do not circulate anything in writing without the approval of the Headteacher and do not use names without the person's permission, eg refer to a Year 2 pupil, a member of staff, a parent, etc.

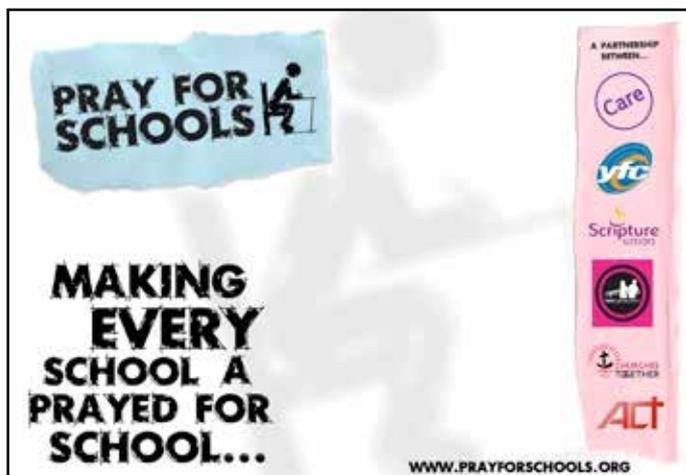
These suggestions are based on the experience of leaders from several existing prayer groups. Every group will be different so let the Lord lead you in what is best for your school and do share your experience with us.

Pray for Schools has produced a number of resources for prayer groups, including inspirational prayers, meeting outlines and prayer workshop materials².

Pray for Schools events

Pray for Schools also encourages Christians to hold events to increase prayer for schools in their area. These are larger events than the weekly, monthly or termly prayer events for individual schools and bring together people from local churches and those involved in education – parents, pupils, teachers, meals supervisors, Governors and anyone else with a heart for young people – to pray strategically for schools in their area and those involved in them. They also encourage ongoing prayer for specific schools.

² www.prayforschools.org/groups/group-resources



When's it happening?

You can plan a Pray for Schools event at any time of the year! However, there are some dates in the year which have already been set aside for prayer for education:

January/February – Education Sunday Sunday 27 January 2013

For well over a hundred years there has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in England and Wales. It is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education on the ninth Sunday before Easter.

Each year resources are developed by an ecumenical steering group representing different Christian denominations and organisations.³

May – Pray for Schools Fortnight 5-19 May 2013

Bringing together anyone in your area who has a heart to pray for schools for an evening of thanksgiving, strategic planning and intercession for local schools and wider education policy. Free resources are available to download⁴ to help you get started, and more will be sent when you register your event.



³ www.cte.org.uk/Group/Group.aspx?id=64495

⁴ www.prayforschools.org/pfs-events/pray-for-schools-fortnight

August/early September – Back to School with God Sunday

Back to School with God is about inviting God to be part of school life, and affirming support for those who are part of the local school community. It is an opportunity for churches to commission their young people and school staff, and to encourage ongoing prayer for local schools throughout the year.

Prayers are available which could be included in a church service near the beginning of term in September⁵. Other ideas include interviewing a teacher or young person about their life at school, or asking them to do a reading as part of the service.

November – European Pray Day for Schools

Tuesday 19 November 2013

The third Tuesday of November every year is Pray Day, when schools across Europe and around the world are the focus of prayer. Materials and further information are available to download.⁶



'As a church we have not approached praying for our local schools as a special cause. Rather, given that we have many children, teachers, and some school governors in the church, we make this a natural part of our life together. So prayers may be in services, small groups, church meetings, prayer meetings, or one-to-one settings.

'This has involved a range of approaches. We pick up needs from our children, such as when they are facing exams or SATs; when they are starting new schools or moving year groups; when they are having tough times through such things as friendship struggles, bullying, or learning difficulties. We also work with a good number of children who don't always attend school or who may have been excluded, and so we pray with and for them and their family circumstances.

'We invite teachers within the church to share their perspectives about the needs of children of different ages and about the needs of themselves and the stresses and strains they bear. We pray with parents of pre-school children as they go through the anxieties of choosing their child's first school. We have occasionally invited a Head Teacher to come to us and share with us the needs and aspirations of their school.

'In our experience everyone involved in the life of our schools appreciates being prayed for!'

Paul Merton

*Pastor of Westgate Baptist Church,
Newcastle upon Tyne*

⁵ www.suscotland.org.uk/pray/back-to-school-with-god-sunday

⁶ <http://www.prayforschools.org/events/pfs-events/pray-day-for-schools/>