

The English Parish Church Primary Schools Pack

Preparing a school visit to a church



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Schools Pack developed by Chris Hudson for the
Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture



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In planning a church visit, you may find the following websites helpful:

www.localchurchlocalschool.org.uk

This is a website (and book) created by BRF that is full of good advice for anyone wanting to make a link with a local church.

www.divine-inspiration.org.uk/resources/toolkit

This is a useful place for churches (and schools) to pick up ideas for making the most creative use of visits.

<http://pow.reonline.org.uk>

This is REonline's website, also designed to help with teacher planning.

<http://lotc.oculusweb.com>

This is the government's 'Learning Outside the Classroom' website which also has useful tips.

www.achurchnearyou.com

This is a Church of England website which will help you find contact details and other information about your local Anglican parish church.

www.educhurch.org.uk

This is a website that allows primary pupils to explore several places of worship of different denominations online – an excellent child-friendly preparation!

<http://www.nottsopenchurches.org.uk/education-primary.html>

A link to a Schools Pack developed for the Southwell and Nottingham Open Churches Project



Preparing your own school/ church visit

When planning a class visit to a church, consider taking the following steps:

- 1. Discuss** it with your **school management team and RE subject leader**. (They might have useful prior experience of school visits to that church, and know some useful contacts). Use this discussion to refine your objectives, learning outcomes, and any key areas of knowledge and experience that you want to provide for your pupils.
- 2. Discuss** your interest with the **local church minister**, and arrange to visit the building yourself. Ask permission to take a few photos around the building to use in lessons, and to show the children what to expect. Try to obtain:
 - **A published guide** to the building and its history – not every church will have one, but see what there is.
 - A guide to what the church is doing nowadays: **a parish magazine or newsletter** can be highly informative.
 - **An order of service** for a normal act of worship on a Sunday.

- **Contact details** for everyone who might be involved on the proposed visit.
- Use the discussion to establish:



- 1. Which date** you want to come on, and practical timings for the day, allowing for travel to and from the church. Ensure these details are written down and shared with everyone involved on both sides.
- Ideas for **an interesting range of pupil activities** (not a simple guided tour). Aim for a mix of learning styles and activities which utilise different skills, such as drawing, writing, listening, measuring.
- Whether the church might be able to offer **volunteer helpers** (who have had appropriate safety checks) for the visit? If so, this could allow you to create a 'carousel' of activities, as

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children move in groups from one activity to another on a timetabled basis.

4. The **location of the nearest toilets**: if the church does not have any, what are the access arrangements?
5. The whereabouts of **any unsafe areas and sensitive places**, such as contemporary areas of a graveyard.
6. Lunchtime arrangements and refreshments, if you are staying for the whole day. (If so, keep the lunchtime short – half an hour?)
7. Appropriate expectations of pupil behaviour.
8. Who would be 'hosting' the visit? If it is the minister, would they offer a simple, appropriate act of worship for the children to participate in? If not, think how you will finish off the visit appropriately.
9. If planning an **outdoor activity** (eg studying old gravestones) consider.
 - a. what alternative activities might be available if it rains?
 - b. what instructions you will need to give regarding behaviour and safety – gravestones can become unstable and churchyards can be very uneven (and are

often home to a range of wildlife).



3. After your discussion, **plan the visit in detail**, putting it into the school diary, sorting out permission slips, pupil groupings and parent helpers. Clarify what you expect each child to gain from the visit, and prepare a list of useful activities and experiences for the trip. Prepare what equipment or supplies you will need for the activities. Consider what preparation your pupils need to make the most of it, and what they can creatively do in class with the experience afterwards.
4. A week beforehand, **check with your hosts** that all is well, and that all the permission slips are 'in'.

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5. **Prepare your class** for the visit by discussing what it means to show care and respect for something, such as a school pet or a precious object. Explain that a church building is a place of worship for Christians, and it is a very special place for them. When we make our visit, we should be careful to appreciate the place and the people we meet, by treating them with care, respect – and by using the time to ask lots of interesting questions.

hosts, and share your follow-up work with them, perhaps putting on a display of pupil responses in the church for a week.

6. Afterwards, get your class to **write thank-you letters** to their



Acknowledgments and further information

The **English Parish Church Primary Schools Pack** has been created for the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture at the University of York by **Chris Hudson** (Barnabas for Children team member, Bible Reading Fellowship). Chris is an experienced primary teacher, subject leader and educational author.

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The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture:

The Centre was founded in 1999 to support teaching and research through books and international conferences, and the provision of cultural tools to help students engage with literature, history, art, architecture and music significantly influenced by Christian thought and spirituality.

The Centre has produced a range of resources, including two CD-ROMS ('Images of Salvation: the Story of the Bible through Medieval Art' and 'Pilgrims and Pilgrimage: journey, spirituality and daily life through the centuries') as well as 'The English Parish Church through the Centuries: daily life & spirituality, art & architecture, literature & music'. Grant funding means that these resources can be made available at very affordable prices. The books and interactive resources created by Christianity and Culture are now used worldwide in universities and schools and by a general audience.

Christianity and Culture also works with important historic churches to bring recent research to life through interpretation schemes which will help people of all ages and backgrounds understand and enjoy these remarkable buildings and the stories which they hold.

We welcome your feedback on this Schools Pack and would like to create a forum where teaching approaches, experiences and projects can be shared online.

THE CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

Visit us at <http://www.christianityandculture.org.uk>

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Barnabas for Children exists to support teaching and learning about Christianity, Spirituality and the Bible in primary schools, and to support children's work both in the Church and the home.

www.barnabasinchurches.org

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