

# Praying for schools

Ideas to help your church pray for local schools

Compiled by the Go Team

Updated for 2026

[www.bathandwells.org.uk/children-young-people](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/children-young-people)



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## Introduction

As a diocese, we're keen to encourage churches to commit to regularly praying 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.

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.

Some churches mark Education Sunday (usually the second Sunday in September) or 'Back to School Sunday' at the beginning of the autumn term. In recent years Youthscape and PAIS have also established a National Day of Prayer for Schools at the end of September. Additional resources connected to all three of these initiatives can be found online.

For further help and support, 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!

You can follow us on Facebook and Instagram @GoTeamAdvisers and sign up to our newsletter at [www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people](http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people)

# Praying for schools on a Sunday

Many churches include special prayers for schools and colleges in their services on a Sunday in September. Education Sunday usually falls on the second Sunday in September, others use the week before as 'Back to School Sunday'. Here are some ideas you could use and adapt.

## Interview the insiders!

If you have children and young people of school age, or adults who work in education in your congregation, you could consider inviting them to take part in a brief interview about their experience of life at school, as part of your church service:

If you have children of various ages, choose some from different schools/key stages and give them a bit of notice to think about their responses. Here are some ideas of questions you could use:

- 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 children and young people in their prayers.

If you have a teacher, school governor, chaplain 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.

You could follow this by inviting members of the congregation to gather around the young people/adults 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 chaplain who isn't part of your church, perhaps you could invite them to come and share in the service?

## Open The Book

If you have a local Open the Book team that visits Primary Schools for 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.

A member of the team could then briefly share what it's like to visit the school in this way.

Alternatively, you could invite a someone from your congregation who regularly visits a school to tell a Bible story and share their experience of visiting on behalf of the church.



## Praying for schools on a Sunday (continued)

Here is a suggestion of a liturgical prayer you could use [all respond with words in **bold**]

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

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

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

**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 in making wise decisions, to know when to affirm and when to ask questions.

**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 the nurseries, schools and colleges in our local area. Please inspire and energise them to make the most of the opportunities they have, and may they know they are loved by you.

**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 school staff, both now and in the past. Help us to support those who work in education however we can, to appreciate their important job of shaping young lives and to remember them in our prayers.

**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.**

For more ideas and resources for services try:

- [Back to School Sunday service plan from LICC](https://www.licc.org.uk/resources/run-a-back-to-school-sunday-in-your-church)  
licc.org.uk/resources/run-a-back-to-school-sunday-in-your-church
- [Education Sunday resources from Churches Together in England](https://www.cte.org.uk/education-sunday)  
cte.org.uk/education-sunday
- [Guide to praying for students and teachers from 24-7 Prayer](https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/pray-for-students-and-teachers)  
https://www.24-7prayer.com/resource/pray-for-students-and-teachers

# Praying for schools in creative ways

As well as prayers for schools at services, some churches have set up schools-focused prayer stations in their building for a specific event or by having it open throughout a week, inviting members of the parish and 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, school prospectus or a simple profile of each school (e.g. number of pupils, age range, Headteacher's name). Think about secondary schools and colleges as well as primary and pre-schools. There may also be a specialist SEN school in your area that you could include in your prayers.

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 prayer stations that you could use to get people of all ages praying.

## Cardboard school

Turn a large cardboard box into a model school (see picture below) and invite people to write prayers for your local school on post-it notes and add them to the 'cardboard school'. Prayers could include children and young people, teachers and support staff, governors and local church links, parents and the many families represented in your school community.

## 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 (or pebbles) 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 school staff

Gather together Duplo or Megablocks and some large sticky labels or masking tape. 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. Thank God for these important and inspirational people and pray for peace and joy amidst the many challenges they face in their work.



### Praying for different aspects of school life

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 (PE/sport), a coffee mug (teachers feeling the pressure), a book, pencil case, 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.

Teachers' union warns of 'masculinity crisis brewing' in schools

Family & Education · 4 Apr

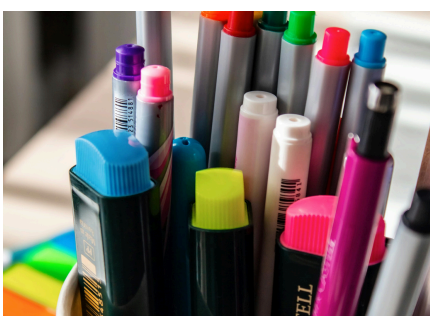
### Education in the news

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. There may also be good news stories about local schools in the local press you could use.



### Praying 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.



### Extra prayer space ideas

- 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 onto.
- Provide information about local church involvement with schools as well as wider initiatives like Prayer Spaces in Schools, Good News for Everyone and Open the Book.

## 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 to 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 Headteacher 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 the schools, children, young people and teachers in your community.
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 group from your church can do a prayer walk around the school premises or meet onsite to pray for the school. This would have to take place out of usual school hours, but a dialogue with the Headteacher could 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 soup and bread rolls for 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.



## Linking with your local schools as you pray

Here are some prayer stations that you could set up in the church 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

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, a friend, a teacher or a favourite activity at school. Once finished display the pictures on a "washing line" in the church.



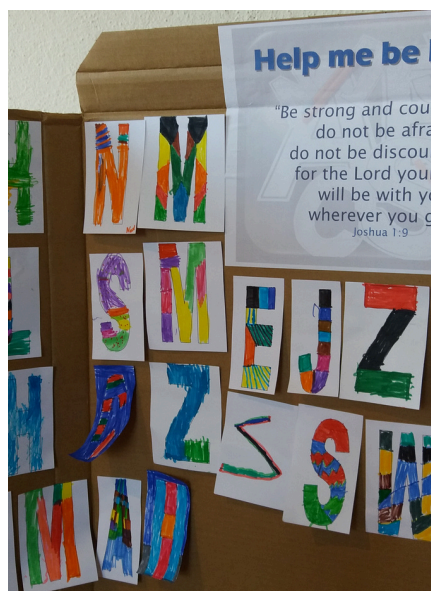
### Praying for other people in my school

Have the children sit in a semi-circle in front of the altar or a cross. Introduce the idea of praying for people in our school. Invite suggestions (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 - someone they would like to pray for in their school. Then invite them to bring their pipe cleaner people to God in prayer, one at a time, placing them 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

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 Bible, God encouraged Joshua saying: "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Josh 1:9). Pre-prepare an A-Z set of outlined capital letters (printed onto paper with extras for the most popular ones). Each child takes the initial letter of their first name to decorate and write a prayer on as they reflect on things they find hard. Display all the letter prayers on a display board asking God to help us to be brave. You could use the song 'You make me brave' by 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 it in 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 them all year round.

- Ask how you could help.
- Bake a cake and put it in the staff room with a card thanking staff for their hard work, especially around a school inspection.
- Support school events, plays and fetes that are open to the public.
- Read school newsletters so you know what is happening.
- Volunteer to read with children or to help on a school trip.
- Offer to pay for transport to the Moving Up Celebrations for Y4/Y6 pupils.
- 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).
- Become a Governor (visit [bathandwells.org.uk/become-a-school-governor](http://bathandwells.org.uk/become-a-school-governor)).
- Once a year hold a joint PCC and School Council meeting to share ideas and listen to what each other think are the most important issues.
- 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.
- Explore the idea of forming a link with a school in Zambia, as part of our Zambia partnership (visit [bathandwells.org.uk/zambia-partnership](http://bathandwells.org.uk/zambia-partnership)).



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For more resources, or to sign up to our regular newsletter for those who work with children, young people and families, visit our website  
<https://bathandwells.org.uk/ministry/children-young-people/>

