

GET INTO GEAR FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR

As you, in your local church, seek to reach out into the community, and in particular your school communities, we in Scripture Union Schools can suggest some ways of doing that more effectively. Likewise we believe that YOU have activities and ideas that have worked to pass on!

1. FIRST GEAR - INFORM

Find out what you can about your local schools:

- In your congregation identify:
 - **Teachers and Classroom Assistants.**
 - **Pupils**, especially at key stages (starting school / in final year of Primary or Secondary School).
 - **Others** involved in schools (ancillary / admin staff, school nurse, caterers, lunch-time supervisors, Governors, PTA members).
 - **Visitors** (taking assemblies, lessons, inspections).
- Find out from them HOW IT IS.
- Hold a 'School Around The Corner Sunday' which allows the congregation to reach out to, support and involve local schools.
- Test your knowledge with the School Around the Corner quiz available from SUNI.

2. SECOND GEAR - INTERCEDE

Here are some ways to pray for schools:

- **Church services**
 - Hold a Commissioning service at the start of a new year similar to commissioning youth and children's leaders as the winter programmes get under way.
 - Mark the annual 'Education Sunday' - an opportunity to focus on schools.

- **Home groups and cells**
 - Encourage each group to pray specifically for schools. ADOPT A TEACHER/(S) or ADOPT A SCHOOL and pray for them regularly.

- **Schools prayer groups or a 'Mums' prayer group**
 - This can be a way of bringing people who have a heart for those involved in schools from different churches together to pray regularly.

- **'Focus on Schools' evening**
 - This could have many different emphases: prayer for all the teachers and classroom assistants in your church community, prayer for specific local schools, or prayer for the work of Scripture Union in Schools. This kind of evening offers significant opportunities for creativity and impact amongst members of your congregation who perhaps underestimate their potential role in schools work.

- **Church notices**
 - Have a regular slot in your prayer diary or on your notice board where items for prayer for local schools can be mentioned.

- **Prayer Coordinator or E3 Link Person**
 - All of the above are more likely to happen if someone from the church with a particular interest in this area takes responsibility for keeping people informed of prayer needs.

3. THIRD GEAR – INVITE

Create opportunities for the local school to come to your church:

- Host a Church visit as part of the RE syllabus requirements.
- Offer your facilities for specific events, such as a School concert or special assembly.
- Organise a Community Carol service outside of the normal Christmas programme.
- Invite a special guest to pray with or share something for prayer. This could be a local Christian involved in education, some pupils, a teacher, a local SU Schools worker.
- Invite a school or an SU group to lead the service.

4. FOURTH GEAR – INVEST

As well as **PRAYER** there are other ways of investing:

- **GIVING**
 - Support a Schools Worker (eg. SUNI's E3 Schools project) for your area.
 - Gift RE materials / Assembly Resources / *It's Your Move* books to P7 pupils / Bibles / *The Amazing Journey* presentation to a school.
- **VOLUNTEERING**
 - A team (2/3) from the church to deliver RE lessons. (SUNI have several programmes for Primary RE lessons and are currently piloting Secondary lessons.)
 - Volunteer to run or help run an SU group.
 - Support SU leaders in practical ways - e.g. providing transport or cooking on a weekend.
- **SHARING**

Share the **SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE** of members of your congregation to meet the **NEEDS** of the school. E.g.

games coaching
a pianist
drama classes
careers advice / interview panel

reading support
gardening help
handcraft
war-time experience
costumes

(The school will have its own vetting procedures.)

- **TRAINING**

Run PARENTING / DRUGS AWARENESS / 'LOVE FOR LIFE' seminars for parents in local schools.

5. TOP GEAR – INFLUENCE

We INFLUENCE, not so much by DOING, but by BEING don't we? Here are some of the signs that show the strength of links between the church and the school:

- **A PRESENCE in the school**

- Providing the occasional break-time treats e.g. during a school inspection or at a busy period.
- Giving bookmarks, Christmas cards or a tin of biscuits as a token of appreciation.
- The Church leader is a familiar presence in the school.
- Christians on the PTA or Board of Governors.

- **A SENSE OF COMMUNITY and INTERDEPENDENCE in shaping the community**

- **Good RELATIONSHIPS**

- The principal or teachers come to the local church with suggestions for working together or prayer requests.

At the heart of Scripture Union Schools is a desire to see churches and schools serving each other within their communities. If you would like any further help on implementing these ideas please contact the Schools staff who will identify further resources, provide training and set up contact with other organisations who can help you reach out to schools in your community.

Scripture Union 157 Albertbridge Road BELFAST BT5. Tel: 9045 4806

Email: admin@suni.co.uk