

How Might The Role, Relationship,
and Impact of the School Chaplain
In a CE Primary School
be Understood and Developed to
Facilitate Faith Exploration
and Growth Opportunities With Children?

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How might the role, relationship, and impact of the school chaplain in a CE primary school be understood and developed to facilitate faith exploration and growth opportunities with children?



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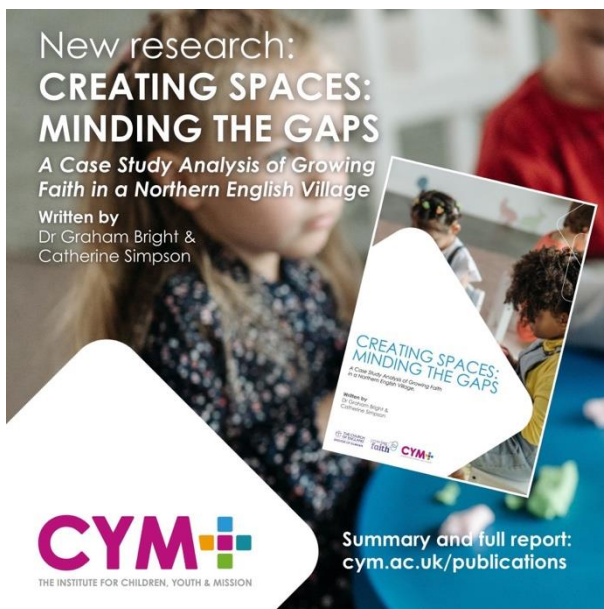
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ABSTRACT

I intended to build on the main findings of a previous research project - 'Creating Spaces: Minding the Gaps,' and follow this through via an action research process and methodology.

CSMG was a deep-dive case study exploring how Faith may be grown between school, home and Church. The project was focused on listening to the voices of children and young people as we joined them as fellow pilgrims on a journey of learning and discovery.



FIGURES 1 AND 2 IMAGES FROM CREATING SPACES: MINDING THE GAPS

Some key learning points came from the children, which formed the focus of the next phase of this research, which is particularly focused on the role of the school chaplain in this process.

Relationships matter and make a difference.

Time for our questions is important.

Listen to the things that matter to us.

We want to be part of a church where we can get involved and be more active.

We want to live out our Faith and make a difference in the world.

It is with these statements in mind I set out to prepare appropriate flexible materials for a group of children in a different primary school to have the opportunity to explore Faith in a way that was meaningful for them in a safe space with time to wonder and grow together without any pre-planned outcomes choosing to take an 'active accompaniment approach.' (Williams, 2018)

INTERPRATIVE SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTERS

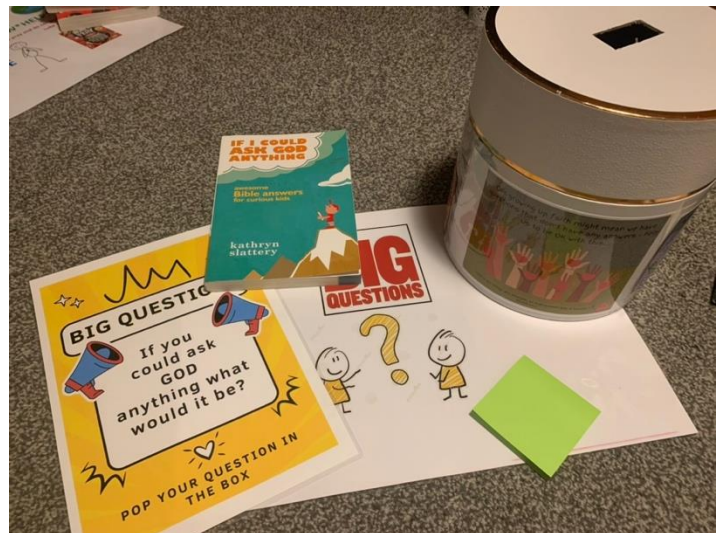
Plan and Evaluation

SESSION OUTLINE: NATURE OF ENCOUNTER

OBSERVATIONS PARTICIPATION LEVEL

TIME & SPACE FOR SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION

POTENTIAL IMPACT



FIGURES 3 AND 4 IMAGES OF PLANNING FOR AFTER SCHOOL CLUB

Most of the activities with the children were undertaken with an opt-in and did not form part of the usual curriculum. This was important in upholding ethical principles and giving the children ownership of a process they could opt out of at any time. I also recorded my observations from collective worship, sought feedback from the children, and engaged with key school staff. To broaden the scope of the research, I also spoke to one other primary school chaplain for her views on the initial findings of CSMG and how she might

build on those insights. I also recorded conversations with the Head Teacher and Deputy Head, who hold the Christian ethos remit. The incumbent made some notes for me with her thoughts on the questions asked along with her husband, who is the Youth Advisor for the Diocese and the chair of Governors at the school.

This study built on those findings and explored how the school chaplain's specific role, relationship, and impact in a CE primary school could be understood and developed to facilitate faith exploration and growth opportunities with children.

THE CONTEXT FOR THE ACTION RESEARCH

This post consists of a one-day-a-week chaplaincy position and is jointly funded by the school and the local Anglican Church, seeking to follow a Growing Faith model and encourage partnership working. "Growing Faith is the movement that exists to put children, young people and families instinctively at the heart of all the mission and ministry of the Church by changing the culture of the Church of England." (The Church of England, n.d.)



FIGURE 5 CHURCH OF ENGLAND GROWING FAITH LOGO

In discussing the possibilities of what this role might look like, it was important to me to take on a position where I could build on the previous research findings. This meant that I wanted to protect the time and space for the children to explore genuine questions around their understanding and experience of Faith and develop opportunities for them to explore their journey further. I wanted to resist the pressure to engage in a busy timetable and to perform but to be able to explore and encourage genuine participation. "Keeping space for this ministry of presence is a continual battle in a busy school." (Caperon, 2015 p58)

I was very mindful of the different context in which I am now working compared to the initial case study and have drawn on additional appropriate literature to recognise the implications of these distinctions. Relationships and connections remain foundational to this work and a recognition that it takes time to understand and be embedded in a new school and tight-knit community context. Bowyer talks about this in terms of having an

unconditional commitment to stay involved in the community (Bowyer, 2007 xiii). I have endeavoured to begin to build relationships with parents and carers and link in with other agency workers who support the local community.

St XXXXXX is a single-form entry school popular in the local community and oversubscribed. There are substantially more pupils with special educational needs or those eligible for pupil premium funding than the national averages.¹ "Attendance is in line with national averages, and exclusions are low. The vast majority of pupils are of White British origin." (John's Church, 2018) According to the latest government guidelines, two thirds of the school is classed as vulnerable.² Issues around domestic violence, drug use and extreme financial poverty are especially prevalent.

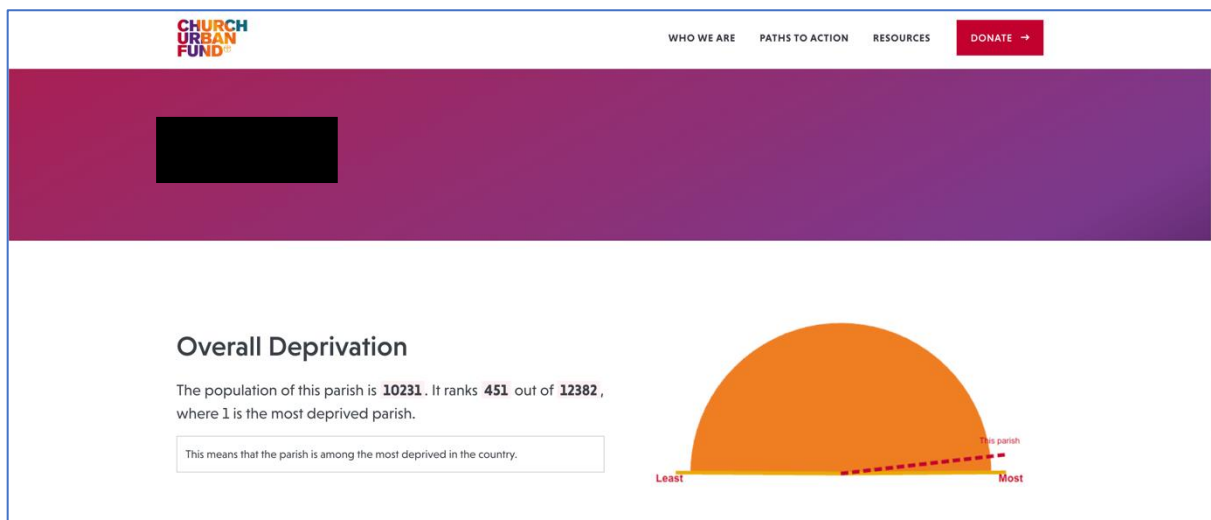


FIGURE 6 CHURCH URBAN FUND

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium>.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

The population of this parish is 10231 and it ranks 451 out of 12382, where 1 is the most deprived parish. This means that the parish is among the most deprived in the country.

³This is in direct contrast to the case study used in the initial study.

However, as with the first study, historically, the school has had a very positive relationship with their local Church. This has been built up over several years with church community members serving the school on the governing body. Therefore, although the role of the school Chaplain was a new position on the school staff, which I took up in September 2023, it has been built on established foundations. The school holds the employment and line management responsibilities for the post, and the Church offers regular prayer support and reviews.

My research explores the school chaplain's potential role in facilitating faith exploration and opportunities for spiritual growth while carefully considering the unique context. I have recognised my own bias, having worked in numerous roles over many years in various primary and secondary schools. I tried to set aside any assumptions based on these previous experiences to attempt to understand what God was already doing in this unique context and to do my utmost to join in in a way that was empowering and with integrity.

³ <https://cuf.org.uk/lookup-tool>

THE INTENTION OF THE RESEARCH:

I have explored a range of literature about the school chaplain's role, alongside considering some of the ethical challenges of holding such a position, particularly when working with younger children in a primary setting. "With young children, one has to be aware children will say yes to something for a whole variety of reasons. Ethical approaches to evangelism need to be mindful of how easily led children can be." (Dalpra, 2024)

A challenge I have identified in my practice as a school chaplain but also in my broader role working for the Diocese, which is to develop school chaplaincy, has included the lack of a universal understanding or definition for the role of the Chaplain in a VA or VC Church of England school. In my experience, I have found that this vagueness can lead to extreme perceptions. At one end is the idea of 'radical evangelist in disguise', and at the other end is the idea that being a chaplain is just hanging around being nice! While Chaplaincy needs to remain flexible and contextualised, some common elements and underpinning theology make it what it is. I have attempted to outline these fundamentals and suggest a practical theology.

I have gathered a range of data to critically explore my practice and engaged with another chaplain in a primary setting to test out thoughts and findings that may influence practice. I have genuinely sought feedback from the children I have engaged with and key staff and clergy in my context. I have endeavoured to evaluate my potential influence and to own the extent to which I have lived out my values during the duration of this project. I have made every effort to ensure that my conclusions are fair and accurate through appropriate supervision throughout this project and conversations with critical friends. I have also participated in another chaplaincy research project as a chaplain and in my

development role and been part of a chaplaincy critical friends gathering with the Growing Faith Foundation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THEME ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL CHAPLAIN:

O'Malley takes the roots of chaplaincy back to the story of Martin in 337 CE a young soldier in the Roman army who chose to help a beggar who was close to death. Martin took his sword and sliced his cloak in half so he could give one half away. Later than night Martin had a dream and he saw a vision of Christ himself wearing the half cloak. He was so affected by the dream he left the army and went on to work for the poor and increased awareness of the presence of God in ordinary people. (O'Malley, 2019)

From this story chaplaincy not only takes its name but O'Malley also identifies five dimensions that he uses to define chaplaincy: listening and serving, recognising an individual's dignity, a form of service that challenges, safeguarding and celebrating the spiritual and a ministry rooted in prayer and reflection on Jesus and the Gospel. (O'Malley, 2019 viii)

While Chaplaincy can be notoriously difficult to define, Williams suggests that it cannot be seen in isolation from the broader work of the Church and, indeed, "because of its ability to face both church and world, chaplaincy can offer the church a new way of looking at its mission." (Rowan Clare Williams, 2018 p27) I think this holistic, joined-up view of Chaplaincy as an extension of church ministry is a vital starting point. I understand that the Chaplain's role echoes the role of the Church and, as such, the commitment to the five marks of mission (Wright, 2016). "Chaplaincy is a practical and innovative way to extend the tradition of the Church into contemporary culture." (O'Malley, 2019 p3)

5 Marks of Mission



(Distinct Reflections, 2021)

FIGURE 7 5 MARKS OF MISSION IMAGE

A chaplain is a minister in the school context – called to offer a public proclamation of the Gospel within the school community (albeit with guidance that must be adhered to). They are there as an educator (not necessarily in formal education) but by sharing through personal example, conversations, liturgy and project work. I believe that the lay chaplain is also called to be a ‘sacramental chaplain’ not necessarily in the sense of serving communion but in the sense that “the chaplain working in school is called to recognise and reverence the signs of God’s presence in the school community.” (O’Malley, 2019 p8) The role of the chaplain is to see and identify God in the ordinary as well as the sacred.

Slater talks about Chaplaincy in terms of meeting and ministering to people where they are amid their daily lives and describes it not as a separate ministry to the Church but a genre of ministry within the Church. Her description is one of Guest theology – can I come to you and be part of what you do (Slater, 2015 p11) rather than more traditional Host theology – come to Church. We are called to "go" (Matthew 28). I would share her belief that the Church needs to "focus on revealing the presence of God in the everyday and ordinary..." p17. In describing the role of the Chaplain to my children in school, I talk about chaplains' being sent from churches to work in places such as schools, hospitals and prisons to show people and teach people about the love of God and following the way of Jesus in ordinary everyday life.

Chaplains in schools need to be theologically grounded but contextually shaped. Slater has written extensively about the importance of theological and professional integrity in the way that Chaplains are called and sent (Slater, 2015 p88). She develops this further, stating that a chaplain should have a strong ministerial identity, and this 'ministry' should be publicly acknowledged and accountable. It is also important to recognise that they are responsible to their host organisation and their faith community. Every school is different, every church is different and as such every school chaplaincy needs to be different built on the unique pattern of the context.

I believe the school chaplain's role must have the recognition, support, understanding and backing of the local Church if it is to be an authentic expression of ministry. Chaplaincy can end up being a stand-alone position, as I have found through my own experiences, but this is never the most fruitful way to work. Watson describes the mission of Chaplaincy as holistic in approach, providing opportunities for mission and encountering Faith without compulsion; it values the individual and encourages human flourishing for all, regardless of Faith." (Watson, 2020 p18)

There is currently a national debate within the Church of England around redefining Chaplaincy in education and what it means to be a 'missional chaplain' and, indeed, if this is even the most appropriate language to use in an educational setting, as it could potentially trigger unease in some people. Dalpra's research suggests this could be a potential challenge. "At first glance, the term is an unusual one in most schools, and, for some, 'mission' is associated with an agenda and uncomfortable theological and cultural baggage." (Dalpra, 2024) I certainly understand the difficulty that the language of Church versus the language of school/education can sometimes present, and it very much depends on the individual context and leadership.

A chaplain does have a missional role; otherwise, I would question if it were indeed the ministry of Chaplaincy. Without the holistic missional element, it is another type of pastoral support in school and, as such, valuable but not necessarily the ministry of

Chaplaincy. Being a chaplain is about an integrated approach that includes the spiritual. It is not just about doing a job of work but about responding to a calling to the ministry and partnering with God, and, therefore, it is missional in its very nature. How this is undertaken is the more important question. Slater discusses it in terms of "chaplaincy (being) not just about responsiveness but about a theologically and professionally informed and skilled responsiveness designed to build some recognised value." (Slater, 2015 p99) School Chaplains must have a clear theological framework and every opportunity for reflection and development in their ministry and a move towards professional standards for chaplains working in schools is a positive one to safeguard everyone and to protect the integrity of the role itself.

I believe a significant appeal towards school chaplaincy is the reality of the declining number of children and young people connected to our churches. They are not in Church, but they are in school.

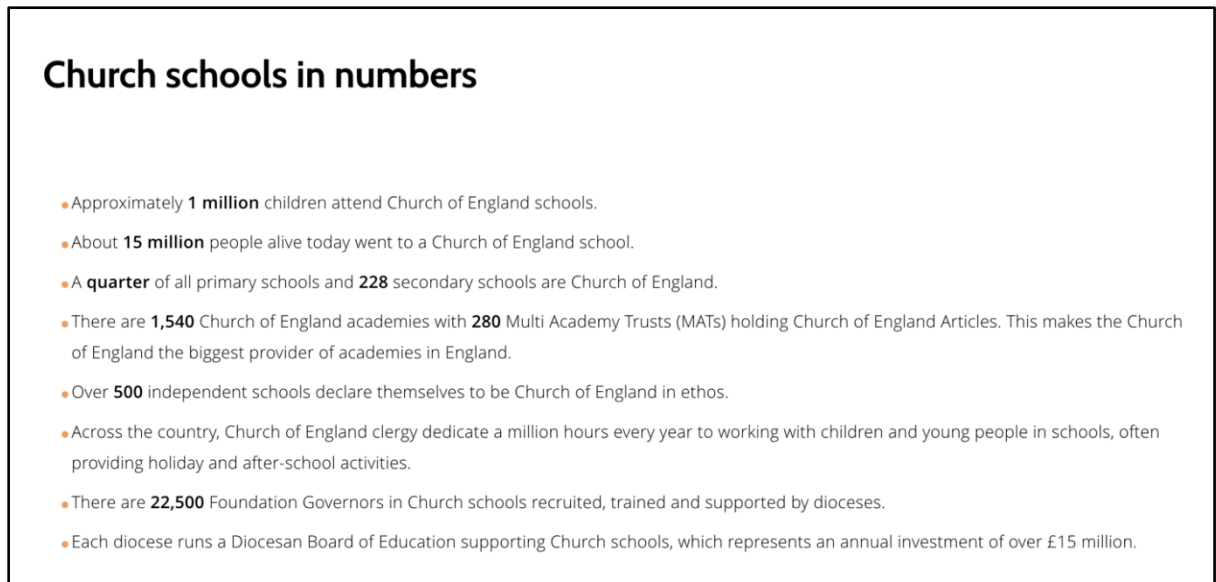


FIGURE 8 (THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, N.D.).

The most important ethical area for me in discussing the role of the chaplain is not necessarily what they do but how they do it. Providing an environment for 'facilitating rather than forcing Faith is critical, and the "multi-faceted ministry of chaplaincy" in school can create such opportunities for exploration and engagement. (Tregale, 2011 p8). Chaplaincy is not one-size-fits-all and must be contextual to the school and the spiritual temperature if it is to flourish with varying emphasis on the different roles and responsibilities but what it must always be is invitational, respectful and without strings attached to love and care for all. In this way it should echo the ministry of Jesus himself.



FIGURE 9 AND 10 IMAGES SCHOOL ALTAR & CHURCH LIFE EXHIBITION

Crucially, "The chaplain will promote spiritual development and facilitate the encounter with the transcendent for those within the institution as appropriate to context." Core Standard 5 (Roberts, Nash and Nash, 2019) "Christian chaplains in secular settings are not there to force Christian views or values on the unwilling, but to represent and embody a living faith in an attractive, accessible and convincing way." (Rowan Clare Williams, 2018 p6)

We need to be very clear, though, as Cox implores us: "Far from church schools attempting to 'brainwash' children about Faith, they should encourage the exploration of

what Faith is and what it is about, bringing to it the critical tools of reason as well as wonder and belief." (Cox, 2011 p71) This surely makes our schools the ideal place to encourage faith investigation.

A significant strand of the latest national Church of England's vision is about a mixed ecology being the norm and about the Church becoming younger and more diverse.⁴ While there has been extensive research on looking at church attendance, this vision needs to be more than simply focusing on traditional Sunday Church and looking for the perfect formula to resolve the declining numbers.⁵

"What a church school education does not do is impose or expect Christian belief." (James, 2023 p18) However, it can create significant opportunities to make this vision for a younger and more diverse church a reality. The Church of England vision for education states that "We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and the Christian faith and practice in a way that enhance their lives." (Church of England Vision for Education Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good, 2016 p13)

We need to be very clear that our intention is not about 'using' the school as a mission field to bring children and families into our church building and social club but rather to see a commitment to human flourishing for all as the purpose of God. "The theological integrity of chaplaincy can be found in its missional, incarnational and dominical character, which focuses on the service of the *Missio Dei*." (Slater, 2015 p91) She explains that this approach is based on respectful listening, beginning with the fundamental theological assumption that God is present and active in the whole of creation. The modern mission of the Church is surely as it has always been to seek God's kingdom to

⁴ <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/vision-and-strategy>

⁵ www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/rooted-in-the-church-summary-report.pdf

come and his will to be done in the whole of life and society while committing to the elements that the early Church taught were essential to encourage discipleship. (Acts 4)

The Church of England will launch a new initiative in Autumn 2024—The Flourish Network—seeking to establish new worshipping communities in our schools and colleges. "This vision requires a paradigm shift—seeking to build worshipping communities in schools/colleges rather than seeing them as education settings as a potential gateway to encourage people to move solely towards Sunday attendance." ⁶ This will undoubtedly affect the school chaplain's role and how it is played out in each school or college context.

This is potentially an exciting project with huge possibilities; however, there are hurdles to overcome in terms of language and intention, clarity, recruitment, training, and ongoing support and supervision. Again, I believe this initiative's success must be founded on genuine partnerships between schools and churches, a profound understanding of the different contexts, primary roles, and integrity to genuinely seek to serve the local community without a hidden agenda. Schools "are places of service, of growth and development, of social and personal maturing in which young people are seen to be of far greater worth than simply potential pew fillers." (Cox, 2011, p35)

Opposition to Flourish is strong from Humanists UK, amongst others: "In what should be a space for inclusive, unbiased education, this is a clear statement of intent to use state-funded schools as a means to convert school children to Christianity. It runs contrary to the principles of a pluralistic society. An education system should uphold the values of neutrality, diversity, and the promotion of critical thinking, enabling children to make informed decisions about their own beliefs." (Thompson, 2023)

I would argue with anyone who wants to use school as an opportunity to 'convert' children in some under-hand or coercive way, but I do not believe that this is in any way

⁶ <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/education-and-schools/vision-education>

the heart of chaplaincy or indeed those who are seeking to set up the network. Once again it is about providing invitational opportunities for children and their families to travel on their own journey of faith in a place that is familiar and safe with people of integrity who will love and care for them.

While doubts of intention may be strong from some quarters, support is also strong: "We talk about teaching them English, teaching them to read, teaching them history, we need to teach them about the love of God, and I think if we can do that through what we do in primary school, then we've done a really good job." Headteacher

THEME TWO: UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUALITY/FAITH DEVELOPMENT:

A working definition and understanding of child spirituality, child faith development, and religious care are vital for the Chaplain working in education since this often appears to be the role's essence. In simple terms, Nye describes spirituality as "God's way of being with children and children's ways of being with God." (Nye, 2017 p5)

Spiritual development as defined in the Ofsted School Inspection Handbook November 2019: The spiritual development of pupils is shown by their:

- *ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life*
- *knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values*
- *sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them*
- *use of imagination and creativity in their learning*
- *willingness to reflect on their experiences. (SMSC, n.d.)*

In many respects, "By attempting to define it, these constraints of definition can exclude elements, thereby failing to capture its inherent richness and depth. (Adams, Bull and Maynes, 2015 p2). Spirituality, by its very nature, is difficult to define because "we are talking about something which is beyond words." (Helme and Wetherall, 2020 p10)

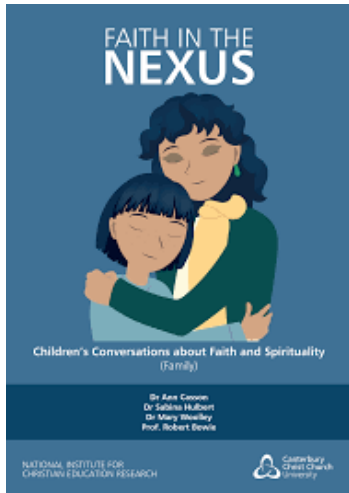


FIGURE 13 (NICER.ORG.UK)

Principles and practices of spiritual care for sick children

- 1. Participation, empowerment and autonomy*** are core underpinning values.
- 2. We need to create spaces for spiritual care to occur*
- 3. Spiritual care occurs within the context of relationship*
- 4. Spiritual care happens in the context of family ; often family is present*
- 5. We need to connect and build on existing spirituality and if appropriate faith*
- 6. Developmental and learning context*** is important to understand in choosing activities, resources and language
- 7. Metaphor*** is a significant tool for spiritual care
- 8. Spiritual care occurs within and by a community and can offer windows of normalization*
- 9. Meaning making*** helps children and young people articulate, identify and understand their spiritual needs
- 10. Identity*** may have a heightened significance in sickness
- 11. Concrete and visible expressions*** and reminders of spiritual care important
- 12. Offering “episodes of spiritual care”* reflects the often ***integrated nature of assessment and intervention***

FIGURE 14 (NASH, NASH AND DARBY, 2015)

Just as healthcare chaplains are available to patients of all faiths and none so it is with the Chaplain's role in school. Likewise, the principles and practices of spiritual care for sick children that have been produced can be translated into an educational context.

"For a child spirituality and faith are likely to be a complex mixture where it is difficult to be clear about where one thing ends and the other begins." (Nash, Nash and Darby, 2015 p23)

These guidelines, alongside the 'core standards of Christian Chaplaincy with children and young people' developed more generally for Chaplaincy with children and young people, which I will refer to, form a useful framework for ethical practice and theological underpinning. (Nash, Nash and Roberts, 2020)

Understanding our theological starting point clearly is vital when working with children. Grappling with bounded versus centred set theology has helped me form a crucial part of this paper. If we are to be able to measure the impact of the role, we must believe in where we are beginning from and, as such, what our end goal may look like.

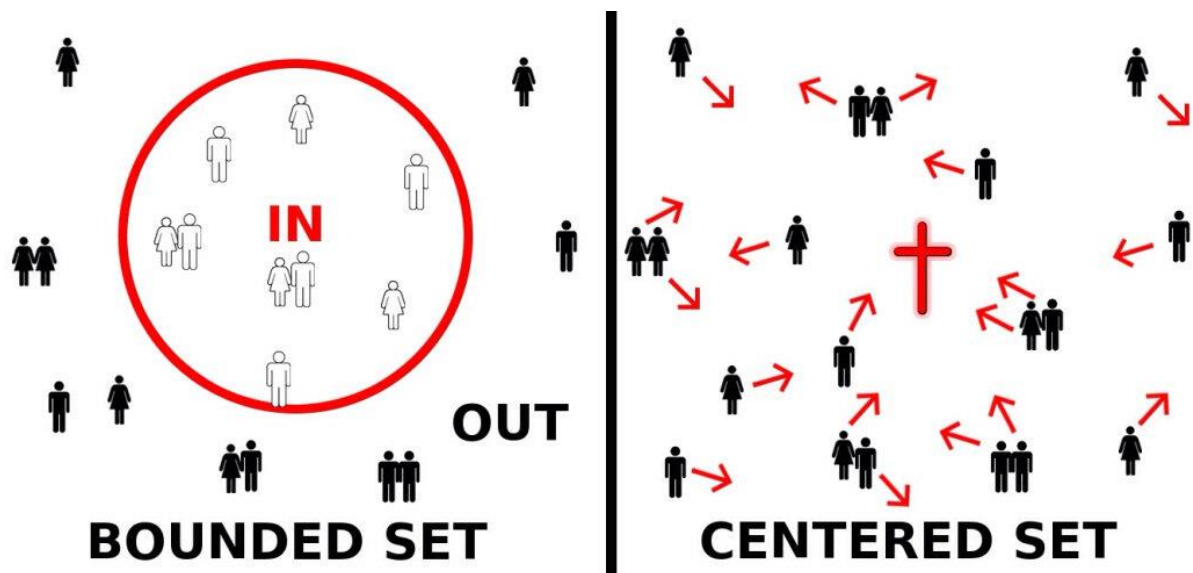


FIGURE 15 (THE HAPPY PASTOR, 2015)

My personal conclusion is that we are born belonging to God and that the many factors that shape our lives can either draw us away from this starting point or nurture us to stay close. We belong to God from the moment of conception (Psalm 139). He holds us in the palm of his hand (Isaiah 49v46), and his plan for us is good (Jeremiah 29v11). If this is the foundation we are building on, then we may approach our ministry in a vastly different way. We are not selling something that we want people to buy into, but we are acknowledging that God is already working in our schools and the lives of the children and young people – Missio Dei.

We are aiming to nurture and protect something that is inherent, even if it cannot be named. Spiritual literacy is an area where chaplains can support children and young people and identify what is already going on. As children grow and develop in maturity, they gradually become more able to wrestle in their own faith journey and make choices and decisions accordingly, but again I would argue that the issue is not as black and white as being in or out but about understanding what draws us closer to God and what takes us further away, remembering that we all have much to learn all along the way. Repentance is a daily decision to turn around and draw near to God, a case of being born again daily.

The role of the Chaplain is to facilitate opportunities to explore, nurture, and protect Faith in a purely invitational and noncoercive way. "For me, the role of a chaplain in our setting cannot be measured because it is immeasurable. You know, I feel now it is so crucial to everything that we're doing that I know I wouldn't want to be without it." Head Teacher

How the impact of school chaplaincy can be measured in numbers still poses a challenge. Expectations around the new initiatives being explored by the national Church need to be realistic and clear. Qualitative feedback will be vital.

An awareness and understanding of children's ability for transcendence is a common feature of the literature. A child's ability to "go beyond and to be able to move through

limits and obstacles" searching for meaning. (Adams, Bull and Maynes, 2015 p8). This was demonstrated to me during a busy playtime session with some of the younger children. Despite the space and time constraints, they could talk about their spiritual experiences naturally and openly in a busy classroom. (See appendix) Recognising these opportunities when they occur can be an integral part of the unique role of the school chaplain. Listening and responding, not forcing something.

Psychology identifies distinct stages in children's cognitive, emotional, social and moral development. It is useful to use this recognised development while simultaneously realising that some faith development models can present a graded way of thinking that can be in danger of limiting or diminishing the strengths of childhood faith and what we can learn as adults from this. We need to hear the challenge in the words of Jesus:

"He called a little child to him and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me".
Matthew 12

Faith in an adult does not necessarily mean it is a superior faith. "Some features of the earliest childhood stages also reappear in the highest stages" of Fowler's faith development ideas. (Fowler, 1981 p15)

Perhaps the gateway into a true relationship with God narrows as we grow older and develop in the physical world. In my work at the primary level, I have experienced such an openness from the children to spirituality. Finding ways to keep this gateway open is part of the role of the Chaplain as children develop in their physical selves and cognitive abilities so that at times of transition, God is not lost, or Faith thrown out but rather deconstructed appropriately and re-constructed so that it can become a growing up faith.

"Children's ministry isn't merely providing cognitive input about that one moral or theological point each story or lesson was meant to teach. It is not about helping children to fall in love with the "dreamy Jesus" portrayed in their Sunday school workbooks. It's about helping them live as committed disciples of the radical way of life Jesus calls us to." (Csinos, 2020 p38) Again I would be clear that in our schools it is about creating invitational opportunities for children to explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Life is challenging in this context for many reasons. Faith needs to be real and robust. We must not shield our children from the real Jesus when we talk about him, the challenge of following him, and the reality of his presence in the darkest of times. We must have Faith in this growing-up faith process itself, where tough questions are asked often without answers, and be brave enough to let go, be challenged and trust that God is working in these uncertain spaces. Having a "generous view" (Nash, Nash and Darby, 2015 p30) about what spirituality and childhood entail can be helpful in these evolving times. We need to trust God in the process and not try to hold on to his job for him. Csinos describes this as children's ministry being less about providing children with absolute answers and more about them living faithfully with questions and doubts that arise on the journey of discipleship. (Csinos, 2013 p38)

I think there is a question to answer around appropriate boundaries that perhaps need to be in place when we are facilitating deeper faith exploration and more developed discipleship programmes in our schools and the wisdom and experience of organisations like Scripture Union can be so helpful in navigating these areas so that programmes are used fittingly and with integrity. "We believe the good news of the Bible is that God loves everyone! Every man, woman and child. And that every individual should be given the opportunity to explore who God is and the difference that he can make in their lives." (content.scriptureunion.org.uk, n.d.) Scripture Union's 'Revealing Jesus' framework and the concept of Faith Guides could be a useful framework for chaplains to work with. In

working with children parental choices must always be respected. (Durham, Tyneside and Sacres, 2016)

The work of Hay and Nye on mapping the natural spiritual strengths of children also highlight how naturally spirituality can arise in childhood and to its tendency to fade over time if not nourished. (Hay, Nye and Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2011) This is another reason to place high value on our children's spiritual experiences, learn from them, and not dismiss their views and expressions of their Faith and spirituality. Perhaps it is our children who can see clearly, and it is our spiritual eyesight that deteriorates over time as our cognitive functioning takes precedence. Miller argues that we are biologically wired as spiritual beings from birth, and it is our environment that fosters or suppresses spirituality. (Miller, 2022)

THEME THREE: THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHAPLAIN IN A SCHOOL - A PARTNERSHIP OF PROPHETIC PARTICIPATION.

The many different relationships that the school chaplain might have in their context involve many complex dynamics, including relationships with the children, staff, senior leadership team, parents and carers, governors, other agencies, and Church personnel. However, I believe that the most important relationship to nurture for the Chaplain is their own relationship with God.

I believe being a Christian chaplain is primarily about who you are as a child of God, a disciple and fellow pilgrim walking life's journey with others and a distant second about what we do. We are called first to attend, not necessarily to instruct or fix. Our lives and relationship with God should proclaim him at least as much as our words. Our walk must be paramount if we are to be able to come alongside others "offering gentle, unconditional care for the whole school community." (Caperon, 2015 p88)

It is not about having all the answers but having a depth of discipleship that we can draw on and share our experiences with others. "The emotional and spiritual strength of the chaplain is the ability to embrace our own vulnerabilities, sufferings, losses and bereavements appropriately and see in them the power of God's presence and action." (Hilliard, 2021 p102)

"The chaplain will be seen as a person of God with a commitment to prayer, worship, fellowship and personal study, engaging in theological and professional reflection, and appropriate training to ensure development in their role." (Roberts, Nash and Nash, 2019 Core Standards 1)

The theology of Chaplaincy is often described as accompaniment, a ministry of presence, but what does this look like for our church schools? The tension about our schools' primary intention and role as places of education rather than proselytization is entirely correct.

"There is an onus upon those involved in Chaplaincy to be careful not to misuse or abuse the power inherent in ministry within an educational (or any other) institution. There is a sense that chaplaincy 'clients' are a captive audience. Taking advantage of that fact would be ethically untenable." (Pohlmann, 2004 p39) We must be mindful of this.

"The Church of England's plan to utilise its schools to increase church attendance by converting children is grossly offensive. This behaviour marginalises those children whose families are not religious or of a different faith. It is imperative that children receive an education that enables them to think critically and make their own choices about their beliefs, rather than being subjected to evangelism." (Thompson, 2023) We need to be able to face critical scrutiny with nothing to hide.

Church schools have their historical roots in being set up for the benefit of all in terms of an integrated approach – human flourishing in all its fulness. Hilliard states that "Hospitality and welcome is not a means to an end but a way of being." (Hilliard, 2021 p63) and Swaner and Wolfe stress that "Flourishing is characterised by a sense of inclusion, belonging and togetherness." (Swaner and Wolfe, 2022 p75) This must be genuine, not simply a useful gateway to conversion.

There is a balance to be made between being honest and open about our theological motivation and our genuine commitment to the best for all without conditions being attached. I do think there is a danger in diminishing the provision for our children and young people, and we are not remaining true to the roots of our Church Education if we are not facilitating valuable and relevant invitational opportunities for them to explore spirituality and their place in the world in the light of the Christian Faith. Again, I see the 'how' this is done as crucial. It must be done with transparency and integrity.

In her interview, the headteacher said, when asked if the school was an appropriate place for children to develop their Faith, "In a church school, 100% yes because parents choose to send their child to a church school. I chose to send my child to a church school because

I wanted to know that his Faith would be nurtured, supported, and carried through in decisions made by staff."

It must be acknowledged that parents do not always choose a church school because they are drawn to the faith or religious element but because often Church schools are good schools. Non-religious parents and carers can appreciate the values of a Church school without buying into the beliefs that underpin them (as indeed do many staff working in Church of England schools.) However the overarching vision of the Church of England's Education Department is clearly driven by faith and belief in Jesus.

"Our vision for education is deeply Christian, with Jesus' promise of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart. In line with the Church of England's role as the established Church, our vision is for the common good of the whole community." (Church of England Vision for Education Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good, 2016)

The potential unique role of the school chaplain can bridge the gap between simply teaching about something and seeing it lived out from a personal belief—the incarnational approach. "The chaplain's role is to promote the Christian values that schools try to deliver, but it is also a demonstration of them in action as opposed to just being taught." Deputy Headteacher. I believe this methodology allows teaching staff to work with integrity and transparency for all. The Chaplain's role can be explicit in this way without being coercive.

'Active accompaniment' is a useful model for school chaplains to consider in the sense that their role can be to "run alongside people on their journey, recognise that the journey is theirs to make, and let the story itself do the work of transformation without getting in the way." (Rowan Clare Williams, 2018, p20) Jesus, on the road to Emmaus, walked with the disciples in the direction they were going at their own pace and allowed them to figure things out in their own time – a perfect model of the school chaplain's role. Tregale suggests that: "There is a great opportunity for Christian faith to be presented and lived

out within the context of this community, and enquiring minds and hearts can form a personal response to this." (Tregale, 2011, p21) Watson advocates, "Therefore, the chaplain's presence is the precursor that can enable other aspects of mission to take place." (Watson, 2020, p5)

Fagg offers something he calls 'dialogical evangelism', where discussions about Faith and belief are driven by the desire of young people to have these conversations. "Dialogical evangelism" can be defined as a shared discussion about religious beliefs and values that seeks to communicate one's beliefs and understand others respectfully. It places the freedom and agency of the young person at the centre. (Fagg, 2023)

I have worked in several support roles in both primary and secondary schools as a practising Christian over many years, but until I took on the role of a chaplain, the spiritual element was very often missing from the provision on offer and the role of the Chaplain ensures that this dimension is taken care of too in a very explicit and transparent way. It was not necessarily appropriate or indeed in my professional remit to share a faith perspective in previous roles, but as a chaplain with a clear job description, this is an explicit part of the task. My role in school is specifically nurturing the children as spiritual beings. "They (chaplains) provide authentic witness to the Christian gospel not only by words that are said but by offering the opportunity for active participation in Christian practices within a culture of Christian values by people enacting Christian virtues." (Cocksworth and Wainscot, 2015 p16)

We cannot be naïve when we consider the balance of power in the role of a school chaplain; however, genuine mutual respect and a commitment to learning together can mitigate this. Coming 'alongside' children and young people is essential. "Children and adults walk the path together as equals on a common journey of discipleship." (Csinos, 2013, p61)



FIGURE 16 THE ROAD TO EMMAUS (ARTPAL, N.D.)

This approach can be challenging, especially in a school context where there is often an engrained mentality that adults/teachers have the answers to impart to the learners. The children can often look surprised when I tell them that we are on the journey together, that I certainly do not have all the answers, and that they might have insight that I do not have. Some of the questions they produced for the exercise if you could ask God anything, were so insightful and not necessarily things I would have thought of.

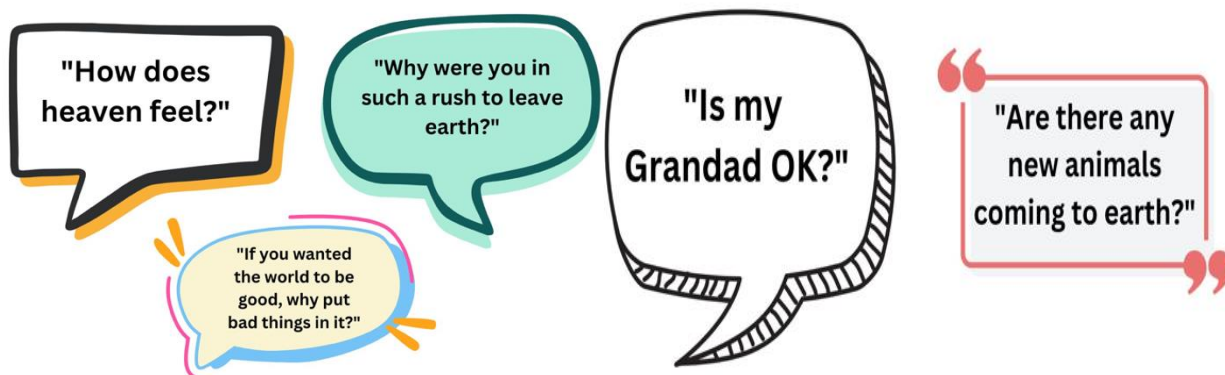


FIGURE 17 QUESTIONS FOR GOD FROM THE CHILDREN

This style can immediately change the power dynamic in the relationship. It can be challenging for other staff members to understand this approach, and it has led to some discussions around relationship dynamics and how I believe the Chaplain's role should be played out. This is again where the transparency, clarity and integrity of the school chaplain's role can be so useful. My role is to "Offer a distinctive Christian presence to the pastoral care of the whole school community – relating with sensitivity to those of other faiths or none." (see full job description in appendix)

Williams makes the important declaration that Christian chaplains in secular settings are not there to force Christian views or values on the unwilling but to represent and embody a living faith in an attractive, accessible and convincing way. She describes chaplains as translators and interpreters, "enabling genuine communication to take place between the concerns of the church and those of the world." (Rowan Clare Williams, 2018 p18) Acts 8 v26-39 and Philip talking to the Ethiopian eunuch give us a useful model to encourage us to respond to the questions that are being asked rather than assuming what they are. Children's questions matter and how we respond to them is very important.

Tregale described Chaplaincy as a "prophetic voice which seeks to build a Christian ethos into the very foundation of the school community." (Tregale, 2011, p16) This is about that ethos running through the entire DNA of the school and not simply sectioned off and

relegated to RE lessons and Collective Worship or the equivalent of one day a week church goer rather than full-time followers – the Chaplain can make these connections and "bring Jesus into the arena of world affairs." It is a faith that connects with the whole of life.

MULTI FAITH CHAPLAINCY

The question of multi faith chaplaincy must also be carefully considered which is more common in our colleges and universities but perhaps will become increasingly so in our schools too. Boyce talks about the principle of hospitality in the way of making space for each other. (Boyce, 2010 p13)

I believe that chaplains can choose to nurture the spirituality of all without compromising Christian faith. I would see this an opportunity to learn and understand from one another and if for example I had a Muslim child in my school who wanted additional spiritual support I would seek the input of a Muslim chaplain or Imam as clearly this would be outside of my knowledge base and Christian ministry. This does not mean that I could not support the individual and make both emotional and physical space for them in their need. It does not mean that we have nothing in common or that we cannot embrace one another and support one another.

Courses such as the Difference course which is currently being adapted to be used in primary schools as well as Secondary settings and Churches are a necessary and valuable resource chaplains can draw on.

"Navigating a divided and complex world can be hard. We encounter this in our relationships, in our communities and in our wider systems and structures". Archbishop Justin Welby has" brought together leading practitioners and thinkers to create DIFFERENCE, equipping you to cross divides, navigate disagreement and pursue a just and flourishing world." ("The Difference Course | The Archbishop of Canterbury") (The Archbishop of Canterbury, n.d.)

The principles that the course is built on are all qualities that we would encourage without reservation in an education setting. “Be Curious: Listening to other’s stories and seeing the world through their eyes. Be Present: Showing up and sticking around, learning to encounter others with authenticity. Reimagine: Finding hope and opportunity in the places where we long to see change.” (“Difference Course - Diocese of Manchester”)

METHODOLOGY

CHILDREN AS FELLOW PILGRIMS – EQUAL, NOT LESS.

When I embarked on action research as my methodology, I was clear that I wanted to start with the children and previous research findings and view those findings through the lens of Chaplaincy.

I began negotiations around my current chaplaincy post in the early Summer of 2023 as I was reflecting on and writing up our findings from Mind the Gap. This meant that I was very mindful of creating opportunities to put some of the learning into practice and had the support of both the Church and the school in shaping the role carefully, allowing time, space and scope for the 'job' to evolve around the real people in real-time. This is evidenced in the job description that was drawn up. This was still challenging for many reasons.

I gathered data in several different ways and evaluated it using Nash's model of providing Interpretative Spiritual Encounters (Nash, Nash, and Darby, 2015) to determine whether I was able to successfully facilitate opportunities for faith exploration and growth and, indeed, whether and how the impact of this could be measured.

I gathered application forms, captured conversations, questionnaires, sound bites, and photographs, compiled two short films and produced a form to record the different aspects of ISEs. (See Appendix)

This was an honest attempt to measure the 'success' of what I was doing against the things that the children in the first study had said were important to them.

It was important to me that children were at the very centre of my methodology. Jesus welcomed the children into the very centre of his ministry – he acknowledged something in them that the adults around them could learn from "unless" (Matthew 18). This passage alone indicates that the adults have something to learn from how the children interacted and instinctively were drawn to and belonged to him. Jesus championed children, and we are called to follow his example (Nash, Nash and Roberts, 2020 Core Standard 6)

We must not underestimate children's contribution to God's mission in the here and now as children, not as simply not-yet adults. Jesus used the provision that came from children with extraordinary supernatural results. Noticeably, the little boy gave what he had to Jesus in feeding the 5000, not knowing the outcome (Matthew 14).

In a recent collection in a school for the local food bank, a little girl responded: "We don't have a lot of food in my house, but I'll ask my Mum and bring in a tin of something if I can." (52% of children on free school meals). Children are involved and active in God's kingdom now as children. I believe school chaplaincy can be a vehicle to seek ways of being a part of Missio Dei – joining in with what God is already doing in our schools through our children, nurturing that inherent Faith that Nye articulates (Nye, 2017) and that he can use them and the gifts that they bring.

In the Old Testament, we also have evidence of God using children exceptionally too. One such example is that of the account of Eli and Samuel found in 1 Samuel 3. It is the child that God is speaking to! Eli recognises what might be happening and steers and facilitates the encounter. Our children have important things to say for the Church to hear. We must also acknowledge our limits and not try to do God's job for him. Plant and sow but only God can grow. There is freedom and confidence in this, too!

**The best school chaplains
are those who show you where to look
but don't tell you what to see.**

As school chaplains, we need to have humility, which means we allow children to take centre stage while we are facilitators, often on the side-lines. Our approach to faith exploration and development must be inclusive, invitational and inspiring (The Church of England, 2021), not coercive in any shape or form. "The best teachers (and I add school chaplains) are those who show you where to look but don't tell you what to see." (unknown source). "The chaplain will be engaged in a holistic approach to pastoral, spiritual and religious care..." (Nash, Nash and Roberts, 2020 Core Standard 4). Again, it is about preparing the best conditions we can to encourage growth, but only God can do it. (1 Corinthians 3v6-11) The Montessori principles of observing the children, following their lead, being nondirective, and simply presenting them with choices or suggestions can be immensely powerful.

The Growing Faith Foundation used the Pixar short movie La Lunar to challenge everyone at the launch of the Growing Faith Adventure about the contribution that children can make right now to the Church, and it may look different to 'our ways' of the past – this calls for courage to hear what God might be saying – "forget the things of the past I am doing a new thing..." (Isaiah 43v19) If the Church of England is genuinely committed to being a younger and more diverse church, are we prepared for disruptive interruptions that have the possibility, yet not the certainty, to bring life in all its fullness? (La Lunar: www.youtube.com)

FINDING A WAY TO COMMUNICATE

We are living in a post-Christian society, and many children (and their families) are no longer 'religious' in the way that previous generations were. They don't have the knowledge and traditions handed down to them through family; however, they are still

very much spiritual beings and recognised in the rights of the child (UNICEF, 1989) there is the need for them "to be stimulated in his or her spiritual development." (Ter Avest and McDougall, 2014 p214)

The Church can no longer engage from what Slater terms a "position of inherited privilege." (Slater, 2015) The Faith in the Nexus research showed us that our children are often more spiritually literate than their parents/carers, and those lead the way in spiritual conversations. This may be a key point for the development of Flourish communities and one that needs further research. "Children are often the dynamic initiators of conversations about faith or spirituality, and the stimulus for these conversations includes activities, curriculum, and worship in school." ("Faith in the Nexus - NICER") (Casson, A., Hulbert, S., Woolley, M. and Bowie, B., 2020)

We must find the language and tools to tap into and relate to this spiritual dimension. In this sense, the Chaplain's role may be about being bilingual and translating more traditional religious language into something more relevant and accessible. One such way is through the power of story and becoming part of a story through wonder and imagination. Allowing different ways to respond to the story is also key.

I have found in my practice that using 'stories', not just biblical stories, can be helpful and can help the children make powerful connections. The language and stories of the bible can feel very alien in some ways to children on first reading; therefore, making the connections in a more familiar story can be transforming. One example is 'Goat's Coat'. I shared this story as part of a wider piece of work in a Collective Worship on compassion. This, in turn, was linked back to the biblical story of the good Samaritan, and the children had an opportunity to respond by joining in with our winter coat campaign – 'Gordon the goat needs your spare coat.'

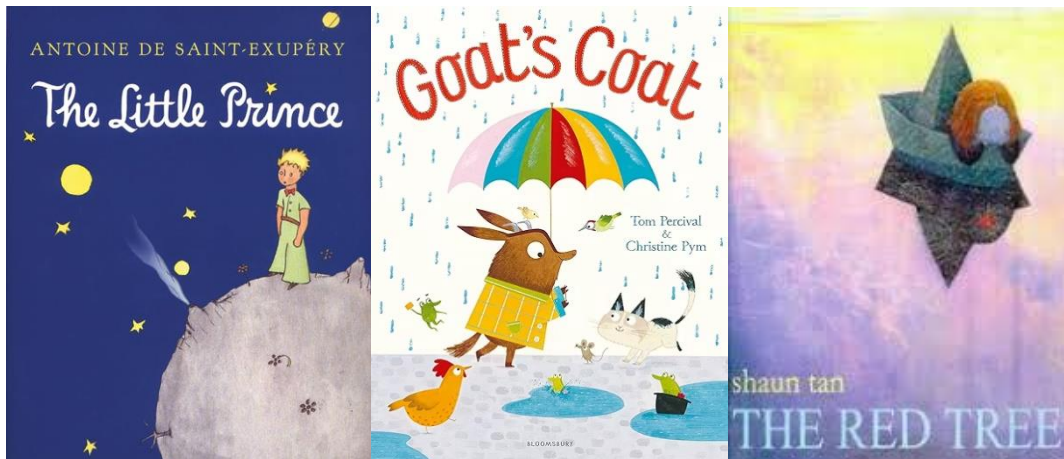


FIGURE 18 EXAMPLES OF CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS USED IN COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Another useful tool I have used is getting children to draw their ideas. "Drawing is the dynamic of thoughts outnumbering what one can express in words." (Ter Avest and McDougall, 2014 p216). We need to be providing ways for our children to respond in ways that are accessible and meaningful to them. "The narrative of the Little Prince – moves them, inspires them to create their own piece of art in which the children show the interrelation between what comes from outside and their inside world; this we take to be potentially the child's expression of an authentic spirituality." (Ter Avest and McDougall, 2014 p217). As I explored the concept of creating opportunities for 'interpretive spiritual encounters', having various tools for encounters was vital, and using creative methods seemed like an obvious choice.



FIGURE 19 A CHILD'S DRAWING OF 'SPIRITUALITY' & SNOWFLAKES MADE TO REPRESENT EVERYONE BEING UNIQUE IN THE AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB

The new Siams framework encourages schools to tell stories of what life in the school is like and the impact they believe the Christian vision-driven work is having. "Value displaces values." (James, 2023) Our story becomes part of God's big story.

Stories and drawings, by very nature, do not have to comply with the same rules and restraints of real life, and again, this is a way for children to wonder and imagine, which I believe are key elements for maintaining an openness to the spiritual realm and part of us nurturing what is inherently there in our children. Play can also be considered another useful tool. "Play is an important and recurring theme in the literature on young children's spirituality." (Adams, Bull and Maynes, 2015, p8) but beyond the scope of this paper.

DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS:

In presenting the main findings of this piece of work I return to my starting point and the voice of the children in our first study who guided me through this journey.



FIGURE 20 A COMIC STRIP I DESIGNED WITH THE MAIN FINDINGS OF CSMG CREATED TO SHARE WITH THE CHILDREN

"RELATIONSHIPS REALLY MATTER AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE."

Relationships take time, and there are rarely any shortcuts. Authenticity is vital, even more so when working with children and young people as they can spot someone who is not genuinely interested in them. My first-term priority was getting to know the people who make up my school community.

"Children require assurance of very safe space, confidentiality and a sense of intimacy in order to share the depths of their spiritual life." (Nash, Nash and Darby, 2015, p33) My chaplaincy clubs were about attempting to create safe spaces to be able to think and talk about spiritual things without embarrassment. An arena to explore life's big questions and connect Faith to the ordinary and the sacred. Creating space in the programmes was important – sometimes this worked, and others didn't. I battled against the performativity pressure of feeling like I had to do something; producing something that could be measured was never far away. Caperon acknowledges that "keeping space for this ministry of presence is a continual battle in a busy school." (Caperon, 2015, p58)

**'Not everything that can be counted counts
and not everything that counts can be counted'**

(attributed to Albert Einstein)

This protection of space looked like 'hanging around' in those early days. I played football with year three boys and learned to hula hoop with a group of year four girls; I visited classrooms and joined in with different activities in the school. I found myself dancing with reception and nursery at their silent disco, chatting with the year six class after Collective Worship about their Robinwood trip, sorting out the Christmas raffle with one of the teaching assistants, taking chocolates in for the staff one Friday after a tough safeguarding week to name but a few. This may seem unconnected to my role in one sense, but this genuine interest and care are imperative in building trust and presence.

"A chaplain's presence in the school community is itself something that opens up the spiritual realm." (Caperon, 2015, p61) Once relationships are established without agenda, opportunities do come up to talk about God, prayer, Church, etc, but in a much more natural way. Watson says, "It is through the presence and social involvement that we earn the right to speak." (Watson, 2020, p5) Jesus cared about people. He didn't just care to

convert them. He continued to love and care even when he was rejected. The account of him healing the ten lepers in Luke's Gospel draws our attention back to this – all were healed but only one returned to give thanks to God.

Most of the staff members are long-term serving members of the school, talk about a sense of call to the specific school, and have a considerable commitment to the children and the wider school and church community. The staff are ambitious for the children in their care and instil a sense of pride in them to aim high despite the odds.

The Head Teacher involved in this research has said, "I know how I want our school to be quite clearly in terms of a beacon of light in the community. That has always been my personal vision. I just want parents, children, everybody to know that they can come here if they need something, and we can be those people that will help."

When the school becomes aware of a need, it does all that it can to meet that need, i.e. providing warm coats, safe spaces and even an occasional clothes-washing service. It works closely with the local food bank, which offers a range of support to families. While I accept that many other schools may offer similar support, the motivation here is from an active Christian faith and a belief in Imago Dei.

The Head Teacher describes the role of the Chaplain: "So, being in the community of *****, we find that a lot of our families lack hope, aspiration, and the understanding that there could be anything better than what they have already got. I think by having the school chaplain, it helps to support staff in their drive to kind of give the children aspiration and hope for a future." One of the key verses for the school is Jeremiah 29:11.

I am 100% committed to supporting the school community and equally bound to being a useful bridge into the wider church family. Both the children and all the staff have truly embraced me as a new staff member, and I am an integral part of the team even after working one day a week for one term. This is a key factor in defining the difference

between Chaplaincy and good schools' work. As a chaplain, I belong to the school, and I am part of the staff, not just a visitor. This can give rise to many opportunities as I am naturally included in so much more of the life of the school. I hope to develop a chaplaincy team approach and involve others from the local Church, but I still have such strength in being a recognised member of the school team.

I have had numerous opportunities to talk about Faith with the children and have had the privilege of staff confiding in me and being able to offer prayer. As 'chaplain', my role is clearly around supporting the spiritual ethos of the school, and I have taken time to explore and explain this in Collective Worship as well as through other means. I am part of a much broader team who love and care for the children and their families in so many incredible ways I am simply an addition with a particular remit for their spiritual wellbeing which is an incredible opportunity.

I am still getting to know everyone, but relationships are already blossoming because I am being available for them. I have made a conscious effort to not simply fill my day up with a rigid timetable but ensure that I have capacity to 'wander with intent!' That intent is not about squeezing Jesus in everywhere but building genuine, supportive, encouraging relationships. I do not believe there are any shortcuts to Chaplaincy with true integrity.

TIME FOR OUR QUESTIONS IS IMPORTANT.

Again, this has been ensuring I am available for conversations and questions and doing it without thinking I have to have all the answers. In the after-school club that I ran for four weeks I produced a loose plan, but I wanted to make sure I left space to go in the direction the children wanted to go in. This was not especially in my comfort zone. I am a meticulous planner and find my confidence in being well prepared. However, this approach meant that I was genuinely asking the children for their ideas and questions rather than trying to make their answers fit my pre-planned programme. I tried not to make assumptions throughout this process, and it really did feel like we were learning

together. I used the comic I had produced for 'Mind the Gap' to lay the foundations of the approach I was trying to take and prepared a big question box.

The benefit of using this model is that it focuses on building trusting relationships. It is not prescriptive in that I had a broad range of activities prepared and planned, but the programme was not carved in stone, and I was able to address the children's questions and interests. This was something that we had learnt in our first study and yet I still found it challenging not to feel the need for a definitive programme that delivered definite outcomes. This approach could also take account of the different stages the children were at in their faith journey, language and Church experience but without it feeling like a tiered approach.

My lunchtime group was especially challenging and a stark reminder of the difficult balance in providing structure and a lead but fostering that collaborative approach with children who had less maturity and were giving up a much-needed opportunity to run around outside in their lunch break! I felt that I was working hard and perhaps forcing things down a spiritual route (which was the purpose of the club) but one that this group were not ready for or not engaging with the activities on offer but without the ability to come up with alternative ways to think about the material.

LISTEN TO THE THINGS THAT MATTER TO US.

We must meet people where they are, not where we want them to be, or where we think they should be, and we must connect and listen even if we think it is an interruption. In my lunchtime group I had one girl who was very needy and craved attention in every session; she struggled with boundaries and would go off on her own tangent, constantly not taking part in what was going on. I was beginning to wonder why she was so keen to keep coming, and then one day, I began to understand her a whole lot more, and we made a connection when she reached out and showed me a colouring book, she carried around that included pictures of her dad who had died during Covid. This was a humbling

moment for me and a reminder of the need to listen, not just to what is being said and easy to hear. Interruptions and tangents can often be where God is trying to lead us.

The children in my school care about their community and the environment, they are enthusiastic about many things, and I am continuing to seek to find genuine ways not only to hear what matters to them but how I can encourage them to be change makers and to be confident as courageous advocates.

“Spiritual care is a non-judgemental, accepting, affirming, attentive activity which requires our full presence and offering of respect and the gaining of on-going consent.” (Nash, Nash and Darby, 2015 p179) It is remembering that my role as chaplain is about creating those opportunities for ‘Interpretive Spiritual Encounters’ – offering the time and space for them to explore safely spiritual needs.” (Nash, Nash and Darby, 2015 p31)

WE WANT TO BE A PART OF A CHURCH WHERE WE CAN GET INVOLVED AND BE MORE ACTIVE.

I invited the children in key stage two in my second week in school to apply to be part of the chaplaincy team. I gave them guidance through a brief job (appendix) and was amazed to receive 50 applications (almost half of the key stage). I recognised that providing them with the specifications led them to this process and gave me a useful insight into their spiritual lives and interests.



FIGURE 21 QUOTES FROM THE CHILDREN ANSWERING WHY THEY WANTED TO BE PART OF THE CHAPLAINCY TEAM

Their enthusiasm, openness, interest in God, and Faith are heartening. Working together as a partnership between the school and church community can promise a rich experience for both sides. At the same time, there is a need to re-imagine the Church for these young people and their families, to remove barriers and resist the temptation to want to bring them into our church world when theirs could potentially look hugely different and yet equally Christ-centred.

They enjoy their visits and interactions with the local Church and see this as a part of their spiritual expression, but most of their opportunities for faith development come from their school experience.

WE WANT TO LIVE OUT OUR FAITH AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD.

The children in my school don't just want to learn about Faith they want to be active in it and this can be evidenced with some of our projects in that first term.

The school, as always, did a collection for Harvest for the local food bank. The Church collects these donations and then distributes them through its attached charity. This year, staff were aware more than ever that many of our parents and carers would rely on the foodbank, so although a collection was made – it was low-key, and the amount donated was much less than normal. To ensure everyone could still participate and give something – I purchased many paper plates and invited the children to decorate them to thank the charity. More than seventy children took part, and the team were over the moon with the gesture, splashing it on their Facebook page and displaying all seventy plates on their wall at the centre. This all tied in with our theme for collective worship of diverse ways to be generous.

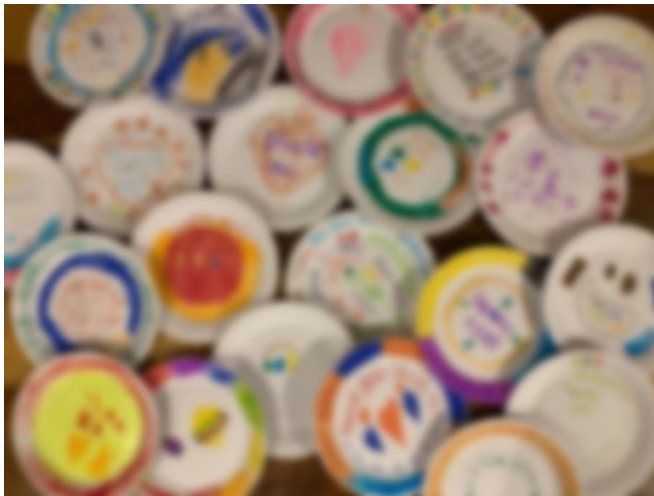


FIGURE 22 PAPER PLATES AND PRAYER LACES

We also made a huge 'Prayer Laces' card for a volunteer who was doing a sponsored walk to raise money for the same charity – again, a way for the children to be actively involved in the project without asking for money.

At the end of the first half term, I bought the school a World Vision Goat as a thank-you gift for making me so welcome. Gordon the goat helped us facilitate further learning and Faith in action with our winter coat campaign when it became apparent that many of the children did not have a winter coat.



FIGURE 23 GORDON THE GOAT SPARE COAT PROJECT

I always aim to offer a practical application from our collective worship that can be translated to action in the playground, classroom, home or wider community. The children respond in amazing ways because they care about each other, their school, their community, and the wider world. They understand this to be an integral part of their Faith and their beliefs. I believe that this gives them opportunities to try beliefs out in the reality of their day-to-day world.

CONCLUSIONS

FROM THE CHILDREN:

In the final session with the children at the after-school club, I encouraged them to fill in some questionnaires. Their least favourite thing was the biscuit rations! Their answers showed a real hunger and interest to learn more about God and Faith while having fun and being creative.



FIGURE 24 QUOTATIONS FROM THE CHILDREN

My single school research echoes the headlines of the larger study carried out by Canterbury Christ Church University: "There was clear evidence that children are the initiators and drivers of their spiritual development, actively seeking out places of reflection, times to pray, and space to talk about faith and encounters with God." (nicer.org.uk, 2023)

Children might be absent from many of our churches on Sunday mornings, but we should not confuse this with a lack of spiritual hunger on their part or a lack of involvement on

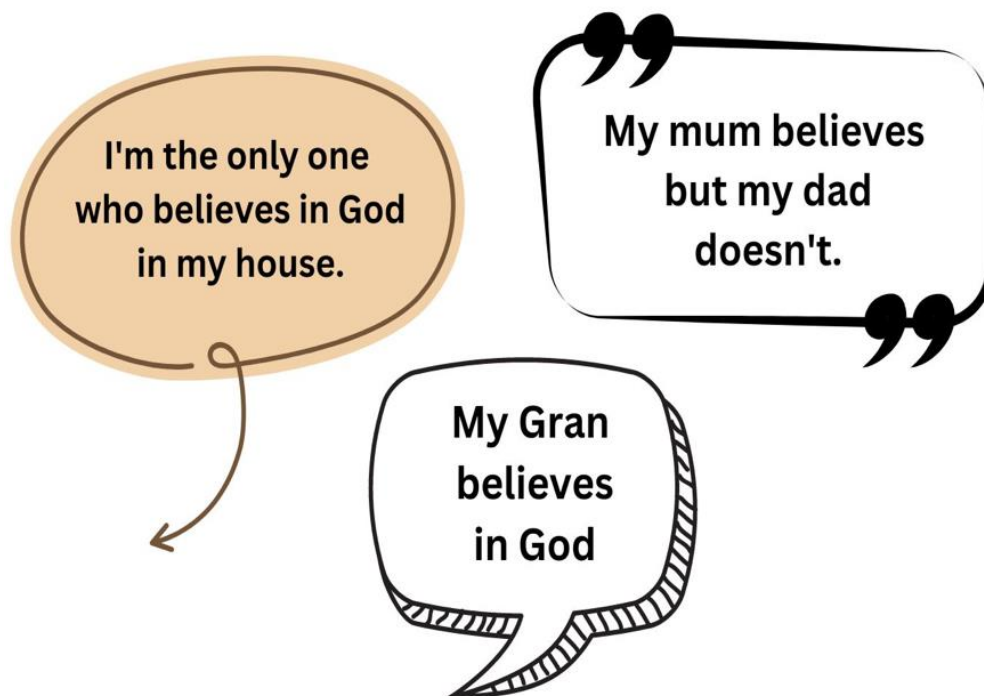
God's part. Children are engaging with Faith in God, and we need to listen, learn from, encourage, and equip them.



FIGURE 25 QUOTATIONS FROM THE CHILDREN

Children value the opportunity for faith exploration. Again, this study echoes the learning from the Faith in the Nexus study and their conclusions around the importance and integrity of providing 'sacred space' both physically but, more importantly, in a way that is in "stark contrast to a culture of busyness, activity focused practices and the idea that children should not be bored." (nicer.org.uk, 2023)

While I made every effort to provide engaging activities and different ways to communicate and learn together, this became less important than simply meeting together and strengthening relationships. This sense of belonging in a safe space was far more important than anything we actually did. The extensive literature suggesting we are born hardwired for spirituality resonates with my experience during this action research project. Many children articulated a personal experience of God and an openness to explore a sense of the spiritual. This has largely been nurtured in the school context, as only a small minority of the children engage with a local church. Some do talk about their faith at home.



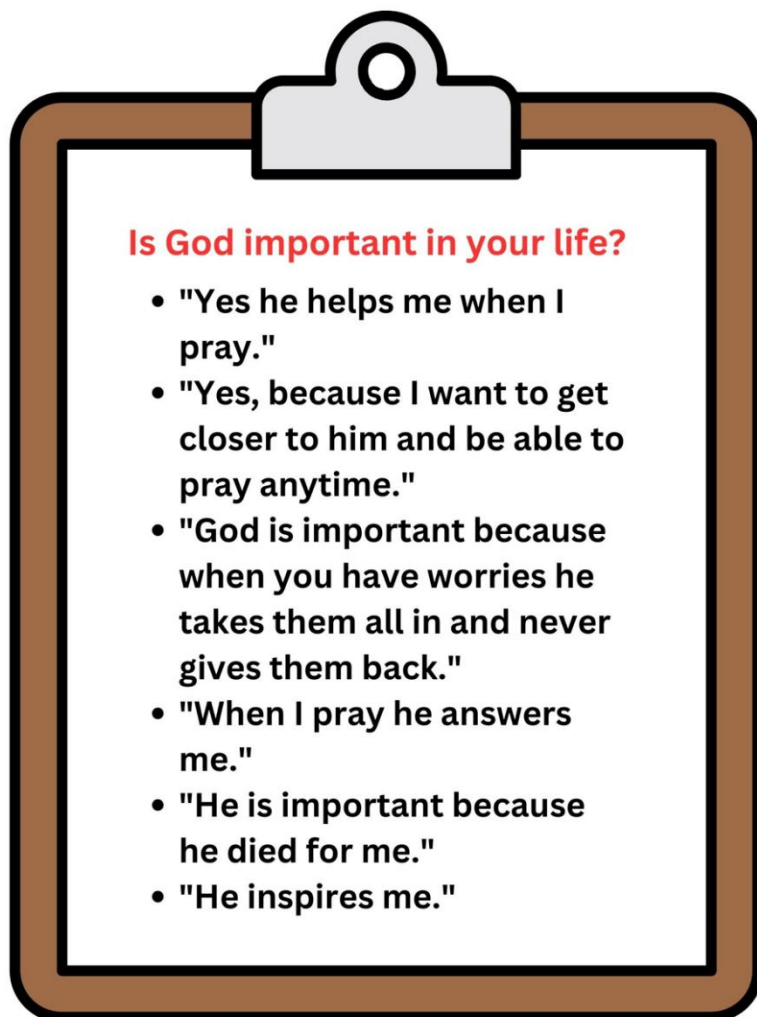


FIGURE 26 IS GOD
IMPORTANT IN YOUR LIFE?
AND THINKING ABOUT
FAITH AT HOME

How do you think the school chaplain can help you grow in your Faith?



"They can help with our questions."

"Helping me with prayer."

"Doing creative things."

"By talking about God."

"They tell me how to be a great Christian."

"They tell us more stuff about the bible."



FIGURE 27 HOW DO YOU THINK THE SCHOOL CHAPLAIN CAN HELP YOU GROW IN YOUR FAITH?

This gives a flavour of some of the work that has taken place. Clearly, having a safe space specifically to discuss things of Faith has been important. One of the things the Headteacher said in our conversation was that the chaplain's role has legitimised talking about faith in a new way. While other practising Christians are in the school, which makes a huge difference to the ethos, the chaplain's role is explicitly there as a 'living example' of what it means to be a Christian. The focus of the Chaplain is the spiritual well-being of the school community, and this role complements all the other provisions that are in place for the academic success and emotional well-being of all. Authentic availability is crucial.

STAFF TIME AND SUPPORT.

The need to invest time, money, and training in school chaplains especially for our church schools is very apparent to me for several reasons, and it is not just about meeting our children's and young people's needs. Post-COVID, the pressure on teachers to get through the ever-increasingly demanding curriculum is immense. Time for specific invitational opportunities for children and young people to explore Faith to be laid on them is just another pressure that is not realistic and not in anyone's best interests. Teachers and support staff need and deserve pastoral and spiritual care just like those they teach and care for. In a church school, this could be facilitated through the specialist role of the Chaplain. In my experience in various schools, SLTs need a safe person to off-load to if they are to continue to uphold their demanding roles. The chaplain can act as a nurturer and a critical friend, ensuring where necessary that the Christian vision is underpinning the day-to-day life of the church school. Williams speaks of this in terms of the Chaplain speaking truth to power. (Rowan Clare Williams, 2018, p16)

The staff team I am so privileged to be a part of is dedicated to the community but often exhausted and under immense pressure. We have an exceptionally large number of high-needs children and equally vulnerable families who all need elevated levels of support. Staff also need emotional and spiritual support.

As well as the packed curriculum, the expectations of SIAMS in a Church school can also be immense. This is a potential added pressure on schools, especially where there may be few staff or indeed no staff who have a personal living faith and yet are expected to embed a theology of this in their school. Again, this is an opportunity for the Church to step in and support their local school by investing in the school chaplain's professional role. This is not an add-on to the RE specialist role (necessarily), recognising that this role needs to be fulfilled by a suitably 'qualified' person or team who are given the investment, time and training to accomplish this. SIAMS clearly distinguishes the role of RE and the Christian ethos in the church school. Tregale talks about Chaplaincy in terms of providing a meaningful and profound partnership between Church and school and having the potential to contextualise the gospel and the church into school communities." (Tregale, 2011, p24)

FEEDBACK FROM SENIOR LEADERSHIP

On having a chaplain - "I think it just kind of makes it come alive to children. And I think it is about having Faith that is real. Where we live, who we are, this is what it is like to be a Christian." Deputy Head

The commitment and enthusiasm of the school's senior leadership team to the role of the chaplain have been amazing. We have worked together to grasp what the role and relationship should look like in our school and have built up a good relationship of trust. I have worked closely with them each week, sharing ideas and insights so that we have shaped the work together. We have had times of prayer together.

"I think when people are feeling so down and low, obviously the way the climate, the economic climate is at the moment, people are searching, and I think for them to have that element of there is something better coming, you know, there is something better for them. I think that is also important because I think the emotional needs of the parents really impact the children. And I think that is something we have picked up in school over the last couple of years, particularly. And since we are officially in a recession, I think it is my part that these children know that there is a greater being that they can kind of have faith in and hope in." Head Teacher

There is a definite sense of us being a team and being on the same page but a recognition that this will not necessarily be the same elsewhere. "It depends on what other schools are looking for, Catherine, because I think they have got to have the same deep-rooted Christian vision. And I think if they do not, then I think they may struggle to kind of understand the role fully." Head Teacher

FROM THE VICAR AND CHAIR OF GOVERNORS

I am incredibly blessed to have the support of an amazing school team and a supportive church family. "The school has never had a chaplain before, and this role only began in September 2023, so it is still in the early stages of development. However, Catherine has already made a significant impact on the school's life. She is held in high regard by the SLT and all the staff, and she is loved by the pupils."

I feel the expectations from Church about how the role may develop are realistic, and the impact that they want to see is a shared vision with the school. The hope is that the impact for the church "will include greater awareness and investment on the part of the worshipping community in the life of the school. While the success criteria of the role is not to increase church attendance, it would be hoped that there would be a stronger mutual relationship between the Church and the school community, including greater engagement with families in the full life of the Church."

The chair of governors has a clear understanding of the expectations around SIAMS and how the role of the Chaplain makes a valuable contribution to this framework: "Within school, the impact will best be measured through pupil voice and the testimony of staff and families. It can also be measured by pupil participation in voluntary activities, such as extracurricular clubs. As part of SIAMS preparation and inspection, Chaplaincy provides much positive evidence of spiritual development and flourishing."

FROM A FELLOW CHAPLAIN

Insights gleaned from my interview with a fellow primary school chaplain were encouraging and challenging. She described her role as evolving but having that ministry of presence "a presence within the school and being a support to the children and to the staff, but also hopefully as well as it grows to the families of those children as well."

Her observations about her supporting staff and being there for them in the very challenging structure of the busy curriculum resonated with my experience too, and she described feeling blessed to have opportunities to pray with and for staff – "for some of the staff who might not necessarily have a faith but feel as though that they can come and ask me to pray for them is really powerful."

The partnership between her role and the local churches is also key in her context. She recognises that both the school and the Church can see her as a bridge between them. This is something that is taking time to develop due to a period of vacancy in her local Church.

In terms of impact, she acknowledges the difference between being embedded in the school through the role of the Chaplain, having previously been a school worker and more of a visitor to her current school. "You become part of the school in a different way."

"Being able to say I am fully with you here, in this moment, you know, with them and just being able to be a part of every day of the school life. With the children, with the staff,

and not just as the Chaplain also being with them to support them in all different aspects, like the learner mentors with families and wellbeing and the children and wellbeing, having those connections in the community to the food banks, as well as to the local Church."

In terms of the pressure of performativity and measures of impact, her experience has been positive. I asked the question: Do you feel under pressure to do certain things to meet so many children or not? "No, in terms of that, honestly, I couldn't feel more supported by the staff and the school, particularly by the head teacher." Her remit is flexible. The Head Teacher told her "I'd love for you to teach children to grow in confidence in learning how to be a worship leader but in whatever way you want to do that. I'd love for you to set up the chapel and invite classes in, do class sessions with them but use your time the way you feel you need to for our school. Whatever you feel your gift is to share – do it that way."

She describes having parameters to work in but with lots of scope and freedom and does not feel the pressure to produce which she describes as "ideal" as "with chaplaincy you are trying to respond to what is going on." She gave me lots of examples of taking opportunities to do all kinds of things as opportunities presented, from supporting RE classes to sitting with a child who was upset to brainstorming with a teacher on prayer spaces. The space means that" it is the element of you knowing you are there to help and support in any way, and I just love that because it is so different every day."

Part of her support to teachers has been building on their Christian values and the language around them and taking them deeper into scripture and the new expectations and complex due to being a joint Anglican and Catholic school that she is a part of. For the children it is sometimes gently correcting their innocent mistakes – The Magi will forever be the Maggie's!

She summed up her thoughts on what a growing up faith might look like in a brilliant analogy of stepping stones on a journey and how sometimes things happen, and the stones can become smaller or uneven when things get tough and it is about negotiating these times "as we kind of get older and as we grow up sometimes those stones become smaller or uneven or not as clear or just not as visible." Transition from year six is hard "you just hope and pray that there's somebody else there that'll help continue them to know God's love." We talked about the importance of allowing the children to ask their questions even when we didn't have the answers and being brave enough to "sit with the discomfort."

"We had a teacher pass away...we had a prayer space in the hall and this one little child, she just sat there in the middle of the hall, and she started sobbing her heart out. She just said to a teacher, she went, Miss, what do you think heaven is like? And the teacher didn't know what to say. And she just looked up at me and I just came and sat with her. We just sat on the floor, and we just sat with our legs crossed. And I just went, what do you think heaven is like? And she went, I don't know. She went, I hope that it is filled with everything that she loved. And I said, what does she love? And she went, McDonald's. And I said, well, hopefully it is filled with all the McDonald's in the world. I said, because that is what heaven is like. Heaven is everything you can think of that she would have loved."

SUMMARY OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

As I analysed the data that I had collected there were definite recurring themes and common ground across all the different people I spoke to. Much of what I heard did compliment the first round of research findings however some things did come out in contrast.

Common themes were around protecting time and space for genuine exploration for children and their families for which there are no short cuts. It is about someone i.e. the chaplain having the dedicated time to making this a focus. It was refreshing to hear from

all parties this time that there wanted to be a deliberate emphasis on this rather than simply producing something. It was encouraging to hear that measurement was of secondary importance to both school and church and a ready acknowledgement that much of the impact of a chaplain is very difficult to quantify.

There was a definite emphasis on relationships at all levels and a commitment from everyone to put children at the very heart of all this work. Crucially there was an emphasis on a personal relationship and experience of God. All I talked to or interviewed could articulate a personal faith and this makes for a very exciting future as we seek God's very best for all those in our care.

Chaplaincy is not driven by head knowledge alone but by a heart that seeks to journey with God and to accompany fellow pilgrims on their own Emmaus Road and there was a lot of heart in the interactions that I had.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

I am encouraged to see the work currently underway in the Church of England to develop a working definition for school chaplaincy. I think this additional clarification will be helpful as Chaplaincy in our C of E primary and secondary schools expands over the coming years. There will never be a simple one-size-fits-all, as individual school and church contexts must always be considered. Still, a greater understanding of the theology and practice of Chaplaincy in our schools can only be a positive move forward. Younger's recent paper on chaplains as ambassadors gives an exciting and fresh approach to consider "as a biblically grounded motif for school chaplaincy." (Younger, 2023, p174)

I would commend the chaplaincy standards (Nash, Nash and Roberts, 2020) as a foundational starting point for all schools and churches partnering together in Chaplaincy children and young people. "The reason for developing occupational standards is to address issues of definition, credibility, measurement, accountability, training, development and audit framework." ("Chaplaincy as a Reframing and Expansion of Youth

Ministry – Initiating and Developing an Occupational Standards Ecumenical Project in the UK for Chaplaincy with Ages 5–25”) These have been developed with experienced practitioners who understand the different worlds of education and the Church and how they might mesh in a safe, professional and mutually respectful and transparent approach.

Accessible initial and ongoing training for chaplains in schools remains vital. The scope and potential of the role are immeasurable moving forward, but it is crucial that these 'positions' are built on solid foundations. While good practice is prevalent in some contexts, poor practice can cause suspicion and tensions that last for years when relationships of trust are broken. Different models of Chaplaincy require different packages of support, but there are some fundamentals that should be in place universally. Just as the Chaplain needs to be bi-lingual in speaking the language of Church and school, the training and support must be a dual package, too. Both contexts must be understood; therefore, training on both should be prioritised in safeguarding and pastoral systems. Line management, supervision and support and some basic initial chaplaincy training for all would provide a useful benchmark for providing legitimacy and professionalism.

Chaplaincy in school needs to be prioritised with time and resources. It is, by definition, a ministry of presence, which means a commitment of time and money. Many incumbents do a fantastic job supporting their local schools. Still, with increasingly more responsibilities at the Parish level for numerous buildings, congregations, etc., there is often a disconnect with the amount they can do in their local school/s. On the other hand, some who certainly do not find themselves at home in our schools or colleges yet lead our churches with the responsibility of the 'cure for all souls'. The answer may be that releasing a specific calling and gifting it to school chaplaincy can be life-enhancing for all.

Moving forward, I believe the ideal model for school chaplaincy is one where the local Church (or churches) are invested. Chaplaincy can occur in isolation, but if the Church is not involved, there is a whole dimension to the role missing. To have the support,

understanding, and prayer of the Church and to work together to form opportunities for lifelong discipleship beyond the school chapter is crucial. Chaplaincy goes beyond the children and reaches out to staff and families, too. It may be about chaplaincy being a bridge from school to the Church and, indeed, the other way around – opening the door for church members to become more involved in the spiritual life of their local school. There is also the wider remit to be involved in the broader community. Resourcing pilot projects and supporting contexts of good practice where learning and experience can be shared more broadly is critical. I have been immensely challenged and encouraged in my practice as I have had networking opportunities with others working in school Chaplaincy. Where there is a genuine partnership between the Church and the local school who also have a shared, understood vision to see their whole communities flourishing, the potential is exciting!

Protecting time and space for spiritual nurture in our schools can be a challenge, but it is consistently one of the findings that have come out of all recent research into what helps our children and young people to grow and feel safe in their faith. Having a dedicated person/s to focus on this in our schools could significantly impact the individual, the school community and the development of better nexus working. I feel that there is an element of urgency in taking forward what our children and young people have consistently said to us and finding ways to make provisions to be there for them – I believe available, called, committed, trained and supported school chaplains could be crucial in seeing the vision of the Church of England to be younger and more diverse, doubling the number of young people become a reality.

Headteacher – "We have people to teach the children history and English and Maths – we need a dedicated person to teach them about the love of God."

We must take seriously the fact that our children and young people have things to teach us about Faith now. The Church, as we know, is in severe decline, yet faith and spirituality remain vitally important to many, including many children and young people. There is a

recognition that, for many, faith is something they grow out of rather than into, so we need to do something different. Who better lead this 'different approach' than the children and young people? We are all equal, fellow pilgrims on a journey together. We need to be guided by them and dig wells together.

Measuring the impact of school chaplaincy remains challenging in terms of quantifiable data, which can take chaplains away from the ministry of presence and availability to one of performativity and programmes, which are easier to assess; however, I believe it is essential to protect the space around a chaplain as a unique characteristic of the role and trust that God is working in these incalculable gaps. The future of the Church must inevitably look different, and chaplaincy has a key role to play in this time of prophetic imagination. We need to help our children and young people hear the voice of God for themselves and follow his lead into a new season.

"In a school environment that seems even more driven to measure progress and effectiveness, presence ministry is not only counter-cultural, but I hope, prophetic."
(Caperon, 2015 p58)

FUTURE RESEARCH

I am looking forward to being involved with the work of the Flourish Network moving forward and see this as an important part of on-going research into the role of the school chaplain and the broader remit of the Church of England in our schools and colleges.

On-going research involving the voices of our children and young people as chaplaincy develops is also vital so that it does not become something done to them but with them.

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All bible quotes are taken from the NIV version, unless otherwise stated.

CERTIFICATE OF
RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

How might the role, relationship and impact of the school chaplain in a CE primary school be understood and developed in facilitating opportunities for faith exploration and growth with children?

Module: CYM701

This is to certify that this project has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Birmingham Newman University

Student Number: 2104709

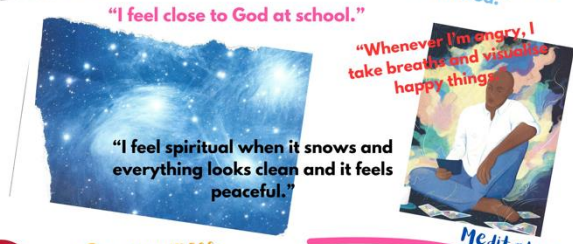


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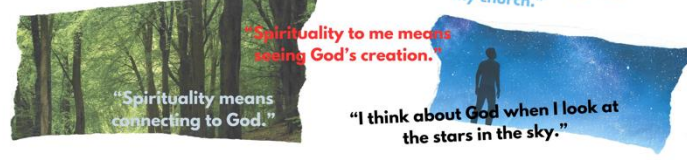
L. A. Wearford

Chair of the Research Ethics Committee

Date: October 31, 2023



Happiness
What is Spirituality?

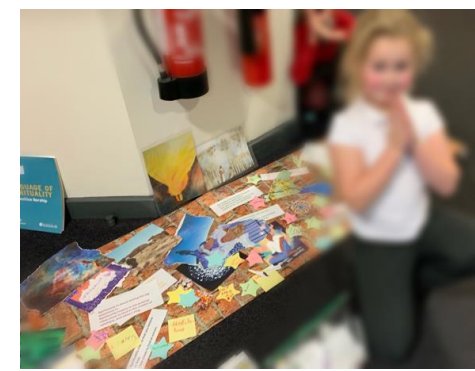
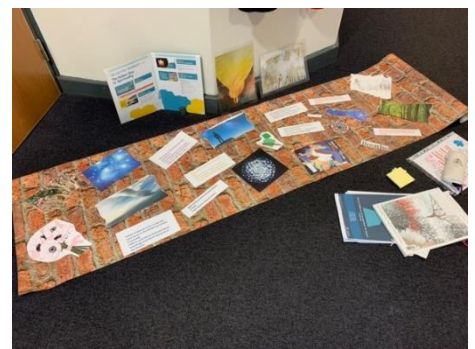


APPENDIX A: SPIRITUALITY BANNER PROJECT

This banner is the culmination of a piece of work I did in school with several children in Key Stage Two from years three to six.



I simply asked them what 'spirituality' meant to them. They could choose magazine pictures to help them articulate their thoughts and ideas.

The Banners are being produced to aid children who attend our year six leavers service in Durham Diocese, in the Cathedral, and in Newcastle.



APPENDIX B EXAMPLES OF COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES

Name: Summe Date: 23.11.23

 **SWITCH** 

A CHANCE TO SWITCH ON TO GOD!

Why did you want to come to the chaplaincy club?

1 I wanted to come a part of this club, I want to be a teacher or a Chaplain.

What is your favourite thing about coming to the club?

2 Being creative and learning.

What is your least favourite thing about coming to the club?

3 Nothing.

Is God important in your life? Why/why not?

4 Yes because I am a christian.



How do you think Catherine and others can help you grow in your faith?

5 Tell me about the bible

If you could ask God any question what would it be?

6 Can you make my brother be more kind?

Name: Elise Date: _____

 **SWITCH** 

A CHANCE TO SWITCH ON TO GOD!

Why did you want to come to the chaplaincy club?

1 I wanted to come because I really want to come closer to God because I didn't really have the time at home.

What is your favourite thing about coming to the club?

2 I love the club because I really like worshipping God at times when I need it and help lets me do it.

What is your least favourite thing about coming to the club?

3 Too noisy and don't listen to each other (at times!!)

Is God important in your life? Why/why not?

4 Yes because when I need someone to talk too, God is there!


How do you think Catherine and others can help you grow in your faith?

5 They can help me because your I go to the chaplaincy thats basically their job.

If you could ask God any question what would it be?


6 Why are you such a good waymaker and miracle maker?

APPENDIX C EXAMPLE OF COMPLETED INTERPRETIVE SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTERS EVIDENCE



 INTERPRATIVE SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTERS



Plan and Evaluation

SESSION OUTLINE: NATURE OF ENCOUNTER 23/11/23.

Playtime Year 3 group. 2 usual children + four new ones. (need a rota.)
 "Cloud" - how God speaks to us?
 when we feel close to God? 

OBSERVATIONS PARTICIPATION LEVEL

Loved the drawing - 2 children drew 2 clouds & then they had the idea to draw around their hands
 Lots of fun & serious chat too. Jokes + riddles
 Loss was a big theme - grandparents, siblings etc. 

TIME & SPACE FOR SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION	POTENTIAL IMPACT
<p>Association with thinking about special people no longer with us & God.</p> <p>Was aware of NOT try to make the meaning for them.</p> <p>They <u>all</u> said they feel God everywhere! </p>	<p>Children felt listened to.</p> <p>Proud of their art work - keen to show it off to others. </p>



Chaplaincy Team

Job Description

●	To meet with Catherine weekly on the day that she is in school (normally a Thursday) to talk about collective worship and to evaluate and plan other aspects of our Christian ethos.
●	To ensure that the classroom prayer area/worship spaces are kept clean, tidy and useable. To support class teachers with classroom worship and to help Catherine organise this.
●	To come up with ideas and plans for the prayer garden/spiritual spaces outside and to help look after these spaces.
●	To take part in Church services and events at St John's Church as needed in accordance with the Church calendar.
●	To assist in the planning and leading of a whole school prayer space day and to help with ideas and looking after other prayer spaces around school.
●	To support Catherine and other staff to organise charity and community events to demonstrate our faith in action.



**TELL CATHERINE WHY YOU WANT
TO BE PART OF THE
CHAPLAINCY TEAM?**

I would like to be on the chaplaincy team because when it comes to RE lessons I am amazing at it and always try my best (I Love RE). When we take part in church (from the job description) I can make up really good prayers.

NAME: Eva

CLASS: 6

**PLEASE READ THE JOB DESCRIPTION
BEFORE YOU FILL IN THIS APPLICATION**

APPENDIX: CONVERSATION WITH HEAD TEACHER AND DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER.



🕒 Thu, 02/15 20:28PM · 23mins

Catherine

Head Teacher

Deputy Head Teacher

So how would you describe the school chaplain's role in your school? Obviously it's quite a new thing and I am that person but how would you, obviously bearing in mind there's lots of connotations around kind of faith being pushed at people in school and school is a place of education.

So in your kind of head how would you describe my role in school?

So being in the community of [REDACTED] we are fine that a lot of our families lack hope, lack aspiration and lack the understanding that there could be anything better than what they've already got.

And I think by having the school chaplain it helps to support staff in their drive to kind of give the children aspiration and hope for a future. It strengthens the already underpinning of the future.

Christian values that school try to deliver but it also kind of sees it in action as opposed to it just being taught. Yeah, would be how I kind of feel about it I think. **It is, it's I mean when we're talking on Tuesday about the Time for Children role.**

Yeah. The links are so similar. A little bit of that but actually the more deeper faith, spiritual side of that as well which Lisa wouldn't cover it and nor should she be because that's not her role.

Yeah. But actually the chaplain's role is part of that development not just emotional, social, mental health but also the spirituality faith side as well. And I

think about it. Think about Christian values and what we try to teach the children.

We do that on the daily but having somebody who has an awareness of that only and that is their focus and they can show them how these Christian values can come to life thinking about some of the projects that we've already run in school.

I think it just, it just kind of makes it come alive to children. **And I think it's about being having faith that's real. Where we live, who we are, this is what it's like to be a Christian. I haven't got two heads.**

I don't talk and use weird, what you do do weird dances. But don't put that in. But it's about having and shown faith as a reality for people in [REDACTED].

Because it's that notion of churches like this and wearing weird costumes and things. And actually it's about being real every day and living out what Jesus did on a daily basis. And that's who we are.

And that's what main role of a chaplain is. To help and support that within adults, within children, within communities, within families and develop on that faith aspect of we can be Christians, we can have faith but we can also be real as well and not be weird.

And I think when people are feeling so down and low, obviously the way the climate, the economic climate is at the moment people are searching and I think for them to have that element of there is something better coming, you know, there is something better for them.

And I think that's also really important because I think the emotional needs of the parents is really impacting on the children. And I think that's something we've picked up on in school over the last couple of years particularly.

And since we're now officially in a recession, I think it's more important than ever that these children know that there is a greater being that they can kind of have faith in and have hope in. **Great. Thank you. Now I know what I'm meant to be doing.**

So that's what I'm supposed to be doing. So thinking about the relationship between the school chaplain and the church. Oh, the church, sorry, I missed that. I was thinking, I just said school chaplain and the school, I thought crazy.

Well, yeah, let's talk it, will you? Sorry, go on. How would you define the relationship between the school, well, between the school chaplain and the school, but also thinking about the church as well, and thinking about, is the school chaplain here just for the children, for the staff?

Do you see it? There's been a family role. Everything. **Everything**. I don't think for one second is just for the children. And I know for me personally, it's really benefited me. Obviously, I know [REDACTED] as deputy has a strong faith, but my faith, it overrules everything that I try and do and everything that I try and be.

And I think having yourself, Catherine, as our chaplain, it just sometimes gives me another dimension that we can talk about, strengthening the relationship that I already have with [REDACTED], that sort of being able to talk about things and what we've often spoken about, our own personal faith and how...

We want things to be and I think having somebody else on that team with those opinions is just a real strength for our board. **And it's been having that openness as well to be able to, because in the past it's sort of, we could talk about things sometimes, but sometimes it wasn't appropriate to.**

Because people who don't have that personal faith, it's difficult, but when we've got us three, there's no stopping us, no, don't write that down. But really, as far as the team goes, and the faith aspect of that, there is no barrier.

I know how I want our school to be quite clearly in terms of a beacon of light in the community. That's always been my personal vision. I just want parents, children, everybody to know that they can come here if they need something, and we can be those people that will help.

I think we do need to shine bright together, you know, or something along those lines. Sorry, just one aside, but just as you were saying that, it is about, I remember, you know, Godfrey, who came on the first inspection, 2004, whatever, he said that you would be a beacon school eventually.

Now, I think he was slightly prophetic, even though it wasn't maybe academic, but I think maybe a beacon as a lighthouse type idea shining in the darkness. One Matthew 21. We are so blessed. But some we can have, and I mean, I know it's a SIAMS phrase here to Church of England phrase, but so all adults and children can flourish.

That's a twee phrase, but actually it's true. That's what you're for. And I think, I mean, for me, it couldn't have happened at a better time. You know, I think as my role changed, you know, and our roles changed really, didn't they?

I feel like there's now no block whereas in the past that might not have been the same it might have had the same fit although we've always been a driving force making faith strong in school I do feel that everybody wasn't always necessarily of the same opinion whereas now the senior leaders in school are and I think that makes a big difference which is huge I think it's quite unique unfortunately as well yeah which is sad to do this but I think you know to help it also helps have a new one board as the chaplain to tighten those relationships with church you know our minister vicar is very busy you know and which doesn't always have time to you know to be here in school all the time with other responsibilities but I think the children know you're going to be here every week they know who you are you're very visible.

And I think that can only serve to strengthen the community church links, you know, as far as I'm concerned, and not just church links, community links as well. And I think communities, as people talk about the church and the community and the church as the school community and the church, and actually it's almost like we have one community together as a Christian community, as a worshipping community, whatever you want to call it.

Church school, [REDACTED] is part of who we are as a church school and everything that we stand for. Yeah, I do think the role of a chaplain is very specialised in terms of personality mind. I do think that makes a difference because I think it's got to be the right person.

And I know, I mean, as a practicing Christianity, I've met ministers who don't know how to speak to people who don't understand people on the same level, who don't have those skills to be able to have those daft conversations with parents.

And I know we joke about kind of winding parents up, but actually that's the sort of inroads that our parents need. They need that more personable level as opposed to us being up here and then they like to know they're on the same level.

And it's the people who accepted and are met where they are in the situations, and the life they live - we accept them for who they are because God accepts us who we are. So we are doing what Jesus did. And I think in terms of my theology of chaplaincy, that's very much where, you know, it's about getting alongside people where they are.

It's not about, you know, and even with the children, I said, I don't have all the answers, but we're on a journey together and we'll figure it out together. And hopefully that kind of openness. I think when [REDACTED] approached us with the appointment of your role, for me personally, not, I mean, this isn't mainly for your dissertation, but for me personally, no one that that was going to be you.

I had no hesitation. If it had been somebody else, I may have been more cautious. And that's because I know you very well, but I also know how you are as a person. And I knew that you could work with the most challenging of staff, as well as, you know, the most challenging of leaders.

No, but like on a serious note, I knew you'd be able to meet everybody and embrace everybody, and I knew everybody would embrace you. And for me, that was crucial. I think it is about, it's about context and it's about right person for right context.

Yeah, at the right time. Yeah. At the right, absolutely. At the right time. Yeah, it is a perfect time. And I mean, we talked about God's time, but it absolutely was. It completely was the right thing at the right time.

I mean, this is just like to have, I know we're having this conversation for me, just to have this conversation in school, with the leadership of the school, it's just incredible, amazing. And so yeah, I just, potential is, yeah, it's huge.

Oh, boundless. So, yeah, speaking of potential though, in the sort of age that we live in, everything has to be measured, everything has to, how do you think the impact of such a role can be measured?

Because I think it is something that I struggle with. I think there's some things that I do that can't be measured, probably a lot of what I do can't be measured. So do you think in terms of other schools looking at chaplaincy and recognising actually what chaplaincy could offer and the impact, how would you answer that?

I think it depends what other schools are looking for, Catherine, because I think they've got to have the same deep -rooted Christian vision. And I think if they don't, then I think they may struggle to kind of understand the role fully.

For me, the role of a chaplain in our setting can't be measured because it's immeasurable. You know, I feel now it's so crucial to everything that we're doing that I know I wouldn't want to be without it.

So with that in mind, I don't know how you could measure it. **It can't be measured.** And when I looked at the question, I couldn't really work it out in my head. **Because it's not a quantitative sort of, I have spoken to or 15 people.**

And you never know that impact of that. Now there's another 10 more children who go to junior church and don't want it to be put like that. It's qualitative. It's what you bring to the role. It's not...

How can you measure emotion? **You can't measure emotion. Spirituality.** Support and family. **You can't measure faith in a zero to 10 scale.** How much better do you have today? Andrew must have bought faith in me because he's a church pastor.

It's like nothing to do with that at all. And I do think that's a very challenging question because I think... I don't... I really think... I think it can be measured. **I think I don't think it should be measured either.**

I think positive relationships maybe, developing more positive relationships, more opportunities, more stronger community links. **In community I was going to say that into the link.** Potentially I could say how that could be something that could be measured.

I think for me it's about stories and again that's not really, you can't make a nice graph out of a story but I think that's the only way that you can capture in some shape or form is by talking to parents, talking to children, getting their stories, how's it made a difference, how's it impacted.

And that's it, it's the impact of what you do. And you might not see it. It's like you guys might not see until parents, you know, people's come back years later. Years down the line. Yeah, that conversation we had. Like last week, like ██████ said, you don't realise the impact that we, although it was difficult at the time, but we don't realise the impact that we've had on children over the years. But then when I think about it's almost a thousand children I've taught, there must be somebody who's doing alright.

I've inspired ██████ who wants to learn the piano and ██████ who wanted to wear a shirt and tie like me. So two people out of nearly a thousand have inspired me. There you go. So I think it's very difficult to measure the impact of such a role.

But I think if you've got the right ideas then I think the impact should be visible. And every person who comes to our school, although they don't measure it apart from one person, but generally every person who comes to our school realises and senses the warmth, senses the whole values and vision thing.

Well I've always been said that you can feel the joy. And I think for me that's potentially the measure, you know, the joy that's shared among staff and children. And the love and care and support that we have for each other.

You don't get it at every school. I feel it at other local primary schools and you don't get that same feeling. And yet they're not church schools but then personally I feel all schools should have that feeling of joy.

And is it because we're a church school or is it because we are a staff and that's what we've developed over time and your role is then just to continue and to enhance that? Yeah because I think I'm part of a very strong team here and I think that makes a difference as well.

In that I'm allowed to kind of do my bit in the team because you've got such a good team here. We have, we're very very blessed that we've got such a good team, definitely.

So just touching on question number four, because this can be the kind of the controversial bit I guess is school, can school be an appropriate setting to develop faith with children?

In a church school, 100% yes, because parents choose to send their child to a church school. I chose to send my own child to a church school because I wanted to know that his faith would be nurtured, would be supported, would be carried through in decisions that were made by staff.

And I honestly believe that's why some children are sent here. And I think with that in mind, I would be absolutely delighted if his school had that sort of chaplaincy role that would continue to nurture that.

And I think schools are perfect places because that's where children get their foundations. And it might not lead to children then going and be bums on seats in churches in the future, but it might give them something.

that they can come back to me later life and think actually, yeah, I learned that when I was at school. And I think that's sometimes more important that they've got those foundations there that they can reflect on later and potentially come back to later, you know, and have that faith, know there's something out there, know that God's looking after them, know that they're part of something bigger.

And I think doing that with children personally, I think is absolutely crucial. **We have to have it. There has to be a starting point for faith somewhere. And the faith that a lot of our children are on, yes, it might not carry on, but a lot of them will.**

And it is, and I was thinking of that word foundation as well. It's that building, that foundation of biblical teaching, of thinking about the values that we all do every single day. And actually it will give them a grounding for the future.

And it is about, it absolutely is about developing faith and starting early. And it's not about indoctrination. It's not about you will become a Christian, you will be this, that, or the other. It's about giving people the opportunity to explore faith on their journey and trying to develop and grow into what God has called them to be.

They might not understand it, at the time, but actually there's a calling on all our lives and I didn't know I would be here all of those years ago. Didn't know you would be here, are you? But God did and somehow could cross all together.

God knows there was a plan for us. Absolutely, you heard it here. I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to cross for you and not to hand you. Plans to give you hope. But if you, yeah.

But it, again, it's true though. It absolutely is true that there has to be a beginning point. I think what I found as well. And it's, as I say, it's not about preaching. It's not about batting them on the head with it.


It's about exposing people to the gospel and giving them the opportunity. I know this is something we already do. When I say it's, doing that. I'm not saying this isn't done but it's also given them that opportunity to ask those questions why has this village been flooded in Ghana or you know why is this war happening in Israel and I think we don't have those answers you know and as teachers we don't always have those answers and you don't probably don't have those answers but it kind of gives those children the opportunity to ask those questions that probably a prayer on their mind to somebody who can say look I don't have the answers but I know that God wants this for us and I think that's absolutely invaluable because you know kids do have big questions and I think they just like little sponges and they want to learn and they are so innocent in their faith it's not clouded and I think that innocence really helps them to become really strong firm Christians and like we said it's not about you know indoctrination forcing these children to be a little Christian army, but it is about you know giving them, we talk about teaching them English, teaching them to read, teaching them history, we need to teach them about the love of God and I think if we can do that through what we do in primary school then we've done a really good job.

And I think it's about and it's about belonging as well, belonging to our school, our school community, our church community, the children community but also actually being part of something bigger. Because people in [REDACTED] I think there's only Christians in children, there's only maybe people at [REDACTED] Cathedral or something or that's as far as, but actually we show

our children that we're part of the whole worldwide church, that there are Christians in every single country right around the world, probably not not Korea, but other places, don't put that in.

That's totally getting left in. Other places around the world where believers are and they might not think yes there are believers in China, a communist country or but actually we're a small part of a massive thing but yet God doesn't see us as a small part, he sees us as significant and important because every single one of us is important as God's children.

APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO WITH 'RACHEL' – A FELLOW CHAPLAIN IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL.

 Mon, 02/19 21:12PM · 34mins

So, my first question, how would you describe your school chaplain role? Just a nice little easy one to start with.

I think my role has grown since it started, but defining my role, I think, is kind of being a presence within the school and being a support to the children and to the staff, but also hopefully as well as it grows to the families of those children as well, to be a presence, but also to be known for being that support whenever they need them as well, but also to be able to kind of help them to grow in their faith as well through those different ways of through assemblies, through worship, through all different ways, being able to give them that opportunity to grow in their faith and ask those important questions, but to be a presence and to grow in their faith, I think is my definition from my role in school chaplain.

That's great. You've kind of answered the second one as well, really. No, no, it's fine. Do you consider yourself a chaplain to children, staff and families? And you said that's kind of evolving.

Yeah, so more or less to the children and to the staff, like the children, definitely the staff side of things has grown in the past year. I feel blessed to know that they feel more and more comfortable coming to talk to me about things that are happening with them, things that they would like prayer for, which is like, you know, for some of the staff who might not necessarily a faith but feel as though that they can come and ask me to pray for them is really powerful and I feel really blessed by that.

The families do know of me because obviously you know on the website but also through the children saying there's Rachel you know she comes and teaches about Jesus and things you know but I'd love it to grow more with the families in terms of that link with the church as well which now we have our vicar you know hopefully that'll grow more and more to invite the families along to you know to events you know for the church and for the school and things like that to see their children grow.

Right brilliant and this is like a really difficult question, and I don't know the answer either you've already said there like some of the things that you felt blessed by and that have encouraged you, But how do you, do you think there is a way that we can measure the impact of the role of a chaplain? Like you say, a lot of it is about presence of being there and then also kind of how you measure it, but also how does the school measure it and how does the church measure it if that's relevant as well?

For me, I think having just started at the school just doing the odd kind of, you know, like worship or the odds, you know, prayer space, you know, every term to be in there as a full time, like not a full time, but being there twice a week.

But the measure of that has changed so much from when I first started in that role as a Deanery, like a school's worker, to now being a chaplain for the school because more and more now is kind of the children knowing that I'm there, but also the staff knowing that I'm there and being able to say Rachel's in on the Monday and, you know, being able to know that I am there to be of support to them, not just on those days that I'm in, but any time as well.

And I think it just makes that big difference, the measure and the impact of it more and more because, you know, is that presence being in the school, but also to be able to say, you know, I fully are with you here, you know, in this in this moment, you know, with them and just being able to be, you know, be a part of every of the everyday life of the school as well, you know, with the children, with the staff, you know, not just as the chaplain, but also being with them to support them in all different aspects, like the learner mentors with families and wellbeing and the children and wellbeing, you know, having those connections in the community to the food banks, to the local church, you know.

Well, with the church aspect, I think them seeing me having a relationship with the priest is such a huge aspect of this. impact and measure of that because they see that me and him work together which means that that relationship and showing that how much you know we want to share that love of Jesus with them makes a bigger impact for them as well.

I think it just shows that because it shows that we worked together and that it's like a really important aspect I think of being a school chaplain knowing that people work together.

Yeah definitely I would totally totally agree it's really interesting I think often sort of people say well what's the difference between chaplaincy and good school's work and I think and I think you've just kind of summed it up brilliantly there it's that it's that sense of being a part of something rather than just going in as a visitor and delivering a collective worship or whatever it might be but actually.

I'm not saying like that's wrong because obviously I've loved that part of it I mean but doing it from a different aspect of seeing the measure of it like I go into a school and where I am only in there, you know, like me and the vicar, like we swap alternate between where ships and stuff like that.

But they also invite me into prayer space and things like that. And even that measure and impact is just so much love that they that they know me, I know them and being a presence in the school, but seeing it from a different aspect of being in there twice a week within the foundation of the school just makes it even more, you know, just like seeing it from both sides really does.

You cannot, you can see it. It is, it's lovely.

Yeah, I've seen from both sides, I like that as well. Because I think you do, you become part of the school in a different way. You've kind of, and you can't, like I said, whether it's one day, two days, it's that kind of ownership that the school kind of has of you. It's really good. So how do you think the school kind of measures your impact? Do they measure your impact? Do you feel kind of under pressure to do certain things to meet so many children or not?

No, in terms of that, honestly, I couldn't feel more supported by the staff and by the school, and particularly by the head teacher who I only found yesterday secretly talks about, about not secretly, but doesn't tell me he talks about me very highly, basically, which is really lovely to hear.

And it's just, it just, for me, it's a bit of affirmation to know that I'm still doing a good job. And I know he, I'm sure he would say it to me, but it's when he's, when he's saying it to somebody in his appraisal, and he said, it's this person, he's so proud to show them this chapel.

And the fact that he's got this person two days a week, and it's all about the heart of the school, and it's all about love. And I'm just like, that's it, you know, and it just, it just makes you feel like you're doing, doing a good enough job and knowing that you're making an impact on the school, you know, in so many ways that obviously that he might see that I don't see in myself that I'm doing it, you know, so it's nice to feel that I am making an impact on the school in that way, particularly from the head teacher.

Absolutely yeah definitely and it's so nice to hear you say that you kind of you don't kind of feel under pressure to perform in any way because that was one of the things that kind of I picked up in the research that I did last year that was for the right all the right reasons we can kind of all fall into that trap of wanting to prove ourselves and wanting to perform and wanting to have something to show for it and actually yeah part of the gift of chaplaincy is not having that sort of an agenda.

No he's given me kind of like so when I first met with him when I did when I saw just doing a Monday he said I said to him I said so what is your vision what what you see a chaplain me to be doing and he said for me he said I'd love for you to teach children to grow in confidence in learning how to be a worship leader he said that's what I wanted he said in whatever way you do that is amazing.

Whatever way you feel you want to do that, that's fine. It might be taking groups out to do worships every term. It might be, you know, bring classes in to learn about what a worship leader is. You know, he said, just do it in whatever way you feel.

And then when he added the Friday in, he said, I'd love, you know, for you to set up the chapel, you know, invite classes in, do class, you know, sessions with them. He said, but it's however you feel is right for you.

You know, you make your time the way you, you know, if you've, if you've got like a staff member who really needs your support, that's fine. You know, you, you do whatever you need to do as a chaplain for our school.

But this is kind of what I'd love to see. And what I really want for the vision for these children, you know, to feel excited about worship, but also to gain in confidence to be able to speak in publicly to, you know, to their class or to, you know, in the school, you know, kind of thing, just build on their confidence, because that's what they need.

And I was like, that's fine. You know, so like you say, there's no like, when I read the article, like you said, like, school life is so pressured for every teacher and everybody, but to know that, you know, obviously it was his vision and what he wanted.

So when he asked me, it's Tuesday, two days a week, I was like, gosh, I've got more to offer, you know, so it was just really exciting. So that's just kind of what he said. But he said, whatever you feel, like, whatever your gift is to be able to share that, then do it that way.

So it was kind of like, amazing. Yeah, it really was,

It kind of gives you some parameters to work to. So you kind of, but kind of within that, lots of freedom, and yeah, without the kind of pressure of, oh, I've got to produce this, or I've got to produce that, which I think is, is pretty much the ideal, because I think, I think there's got to be an element of that with chaplaincy, because you're kind of trying to respond to what's going on. You see, you can't plan for it all the time. It's kind of that.

That's the biggest thing I think he was saying is you can't plan for it. if the staff needs support. So I had the staff one of the year two, they've all got assessments before Christmas and she just said to me like we've got these three topics left for Christmas, would you be able to help us do something with them?

So I went with her and I had a little look through and it was like the annunciation, the visitation, you know and the nativity and I just went why don't you, I set up a little prayer space in the chapel and we'll talk about each part of the story and she was like that'll be amazing.

So that was like her, that was like her evidence sent to say that you know and it was also me you know doing that and the head teacher didn't know and he came in and he was like wow and he put it on Twitter and he was like it's amazing like look at all these children in our chapel you know but that's it's like it's the unexpected, it's the like the surprise, it's the awe and

wonder of it, it's the element of like you know let's you know help support them in every way and I just love that because it's so different every day you know to be able to go and you know make that happen for them so it was really nice.

Brilliant. I'm still trying not to be jealous about your chapel, but I'm feeling this roughly. I still need to send your pictures. You do. I went back and told my head teacher, I know I've been talking to this amazing chaplain and they've got this amazing chaplain.

Anyway, I'll make sure before I leave today, I'll send them to you. I will.

So we've talked a little bit about those findings around performativity, the pressure of programme, so we'll kind of move on from that.

What is, in terms of what we found with the kind of the Christian values stuff, I'd be interested to kind of hear what your experience of that is, because I've been in different schools and I would say across the board, people are quite happy to talk about Christian values.

It feels like it's a bit of a comfort zone, but going beyond that, for a lot of staff isn't comfortable because they don't have their own kind of personal faith or they don't think that's what we should be doing in school.

So just again, just your experience of kind of thinking around.

Yeah. So we have a Christian value each term and we focus on that value. And in terms of the worship aspect of it, we, so like collective worship on a Monday, I just choose a story that links to that value that kind of shares with the children.

If it's a special time of year, I try and link it into the time of year, so like Christmas and Christingle and other things. So I try and link that in as well. And also around like remembrance and things like that.

So we do like special services for those. The staff finds it easier to have a Christian value, I think because the way that our school has it is they have the value for that term. And then they then go off kind of like, so they're under, because it's during faith school, they're under scripture more than anything they use quite a lot of scripture. So they use that and next year in the January they're asking me to support them with the scripture and how to kind of

understand it a bit better because some of the staff like you said are fine aren't maybe from a faith background and finds it hard to understand the scripture and so they're asking me to go through each one with the staff in like a staff meeting to try and understand it and make it more accessible to them to understand what the scripture is and how it links to that value and how we can kind of like you know broaden it more so that the children have more opportunities to explore that scripture and in all different ways really and which I find really fascinating actually because this new up it's this new RSC I think for the catholic and joke for like the catholic side of the of the church um is it RSC or sorry, religious education directory, it's called red.

And that's, it's just coming in. And they're just going to start that in the new year to try and work through each year group with it. But it's all about Scripture, and how we explore Scripture. So the staff are really nervous about it.

And I said, if I can be of help with that, I will. But the Christian values are really, really important because so we have the Christian value, and we now have, alongside the Christian value, we have three key words to that value.

And then we also have a Bible verse that links to that value as well. So the staff all have that. And then they explore the value, the key words, and also Scripture. And because it gives especially the key stage one children, they always explore key words when it comes to like all different aspects of their subjects.

So having those three key words for RE for that term is really helpful, because then they understand what because one of our values is compassion. So they understand what compassion means in those three key words.

So that's kind of how our Christian values are built upon really. And they stay the same, they have stayed the same for the past couple of years. But there are other ones that we do explore like in between like those as well.

So yeah. Yeah, [it sounds like it's almost scaffolding around the values to kind of get understand the values through the language and then obviously linking it to the kind of Scripture because I mean, it's a huge ask, I think, you know, it is it's not to be underestimated what we expect from our staff in schools.](#)

And yeah, faith is a bit harder as well because they're solely on the come and see at the minute, but now it's changing to this RED. And it's kind of all Scripture based. And they're just finding it a little bit harder because they're like, how do you explore that, you know, in a different way, you know, and how do you express that and explore that with children and stuff like of different age groups.

So they're gonna like try and look into that because like you say it's in time for Ofsted and stuff but it's just really hard. But yeah.

I think it's obviously it's in terms of a living faith it's the application as well isn't it of those values and how they link to kind of you know this is what we believe therefore this is why we live or whatever.

Yeah and also like we link it to like to like our lives quite a lot as well so like we link it to ourselves and like you know kind of compassion within our lives and love within our lives. Like our very last one our very last value is in the summer which is goes along with the school motto believe respect achieve.

So we explore those three those three um three rather than just the one we explore all three of them and what hope means to be. to be believed, respect, achieve. So which is really nice because as they leave school, especially year six, as they leave school, they know that they've been a hope child and that they believe, respect, achieve, you know, within the school, you know, themselves.

So it's just exploring that a little bit more, which is great. Sounds fab. I'm just smiling because I did, I did, I spoke at our Christingle service last week. Was it last week? Yeah, I don't even know what day it is anymore. No, it was this week. It was only Tuesday. Anyway, what day is it? Obviously, I kind of were talking about hope. I did, I got the kids to do a little film in schools, just little sound bites of what they thought Hope was and what it meant to them. Hilarious. I mean, some of it was really sweet, but some of it was like, I've no idea what you're talking about, but I want to be on the camera. Basically, I love it. It's so sweet. And then we showed it in church because lots of parents came.

We had about 90 parents there, which is unheard of. Wow. And the kids were all obviously waiting for themselves to appear on this video. Nothing to do with hope, but, you know, we were there. We were on there.

Oh, yeah. We were talking about hoping together, isn't it? That's it. I love it. We just talked about the nativity and we had in school and they were looking at scripture. And one of them said to me, oh, Rachel, you should have heard it.

It was like, and here come the Maggie's. And I was like, oh, my gosh, that is amazing. I love it. I was like, and here come the, what did they say? It's real lights or something. I can't even remember how they said it, but it was hilarious.

But the Maggie's. I was like, that is amazing. I was like, here comes the Maggie. Well, the Maggie's. I'm like, that might stick now. It might just always be the Maggie's in my head. Always with Maggie's.

Yeah. But it was just, I was like, this is brilliant. They were like, what are the Maggie's? And I'm like, oh, this is just brilliant. I'm like, and then the teacher went, you always get the best jobs, don't you?

But I do. I was like, can I explain it now? Yeah, you do get some laughs. You do get some laughs. I know, you do. So my next question, and my supervisor said, are you going to give them an explanation of this before you ask?

And I haven't. What do you think a growing up faith looks like? And how could this be facilitated in your view? So I guess I'm asking two questions in one. Like, what is a growing up faith? Yeah. And how can we support that?

Do you understand kind of what I'm trying to get at? Do you want me to?

I think so. In the way I, when you say what do you think a growing up faith looks like, to me, I have an image of like stepping stones, like going on a journey kind of thing.

So like, that's how I've done it with people that I've done with young people and things that I always think of like a stepping stone journey. So I always think of it going on a journey. And like, and.

I go okay so here is like you know where you are now and here's like some of the things that you might have done on your journey. Now where do you think you are here? Are you still you know feeling like you're still here or have you gone a bit further along on that journey?

So for me I think a growing up like faith looks like you have all these opportunities to explore what faith is on that journey either through you know different areas like you know learn about it in school or collective worships or things like that.

I think just learning more and more about those values and what they mean to us in our lives and particularly love like compassion you know friendship all those things and how it relates back to us but also having that chance to explore ask those questions but also like even just the awe and wonder of what faith is and how important it is you know and what the bible says about faith you know what bible says about God and Jesus and who these people are you know that we explore through our life of what faith is so I think it's just learning about it on that journey and having those opportunities and experiences to learn about it in different ways like learning about it in different ways for me things drawing things doing exploring like faith in that way you know to be able to offer them you know something to be of support to them.

I love I love the idea of the stepping stones and in my head I'm kind of maybe taking the kind of picture too far but I'm thinking for younger children that the stones are quite big they're quite sort of simple.

Yeah yeah that's what it is in my mind yeah yeah as we kind of get older and as we grow up sometimes those stones become smaller or uneven or not as clear or just not as visible and that's it. I think I mean I don't know about where you are but here we tend to lose and I think it's probably a national picture. I look at the kids now that I've got a year five and six and they are so open and hungry and I mean there was a little one little chap in year six and he held his Christingle and he was singing his little heart out and I'm thinking but this time next year he'll be in year seven and he'll be in a totally different and how do you how do we help them kind

of continue that journey how do we help them kind of put up in it when they start and have the bigger questions and things aren't black and white.

I mean that's probably a whole other dissertation. I always think of all the time I think of them in year six and I think of them like you know all the opportunities they've been given all the you know the things that they've learned you know to want to be loved you know to know what love is and you think like gosh where does that go now when they go into year seven like you know into you know the big wide worlds, like you say, of the rockiness, of like the unsteadiness, of the worry and the fear of what it brings, you know, and you just think, gosh, like you just hope and pray that, you know, there's somebody else there that'll help continue that to know, you know, it's hard.

I think transitions like a massive, isn't it? I think it's a massive idea, and I don't know what the answer is. I mean, here we don't have middle schools, we just kind of literally, they go from their little primary schools into the sink or swim, huge comprehensive system with, you know, seven year 76 form, and it just feels like huge.

Yeah, it is. Yeah, I don't think there's an easy answer there, is there? No. So I think, again, you've probably already answered this in the initial sort of comments at the beginning. How do you think the role of skill chaplain can create genuine spaces for faith, exploration, and development in children that are appropriate in the education setting?

I mean, the thing we've talked about, not having that kind of strict agenda and just making time and space, is there anything else you kind of want to add to that? I think having that opportunity, like one of the things I really want to do in the new year with the school really is have the opportunity to ask those questions because, you know, I've got this book here and it's, if I could ask of anything, I don't know if you've heard of it or seen it, if I could ask I've got anything.

And honestly, like just being able to ask those questions, like, you know, I've done Q and A's with classes, you know, and stuff like that and, you know, but actually and honestly, to be able to ask those questions, I think is a big thing because I think children feel scared that it's like, is it the right or wrong question or should I be able to ask this or, you know, what kind of things?

So I've done it with my young people at church for I've done like grill the vicar, you know, and like, you know, gotten sort of like, if you want to write the name. like they can, but put it into a box, ask a question, you know, and ask me, I had the article, you can come and everything.

I'm like, yeah, come and find, you know, come and find out about me more about, you know, what you want to know or, you know, what you'd like to find out or what they think is their favourite about this, why, you know, all those types of things.

But that's what I want to do more is that have that, that those times where they can just be open and ask questions or, you know, have that time where they can come in and have that awe and wonder moment where they can just come in, like, you know, explore something in a different way.

You know, I've one of the things to me is just teaching them that, you know, prayer isn't just about saying, dear God, you know, or writing things down, we can do it in so many different ways. And, you know, and just offering those opportunities for them to be able to, you know, do it in, in their own time, in their own way, really, to be able to offer whatever it is on their heart, all minds, really.

So that's kind of what I'd say, really. Yeah, brilliant. I think one thing that, that I've kind of probably grown more into it. I think it's the older you get, the more you realise that you know nothing.

Like, when you're okay, you think you know quite a bit. And as you get older, you think, actually, I don't know anything at all. No, yeah. One of the things we found with the children we worked with in the first bit of the research was that it was actually making the time for the questions was the most important thing to them.

It wasn't even about having the answers. Yeah. It was almost sitting with some of those difficult questions. So in my school at the minute, I've got a little girl whose dad died in COVID. I've got a little girl whose dad is in prison.

I've got, and there's no kind of easy answers, is there, to lots of things. And I think that's part of a growing up faith as well. Yeah, yeah. Kind of the pat answers. That's it. Sitting with the discomfort.

Yeah, yeah. One of them, we sadly had, it doesn't happen very often, people said. But we had, I think it was 2020, I think we had in the September time, we had a teacher pass away. And we also had a girl that used to come to the school pass away sadly in Houston, she got knocked down by a car.

But the teacher had cancer and it was really sad. And quite a lot of the children knew her and the staff as well. And we had a prayer space in the hall. And this one little child, she just sat there in the middle of the hall and she started sobbing her heart out.

And she just said to a teacher, she went, Miss, she went to him, what do you think heaven's like? And the teacher didn't know what to say. And she just looked up at me and I just came and sat with him.

We just sat on the floor and we just sat with our legs crossed. And I just went, what do you think heaven's like? And she went, I don't know. She went, I hope that it's filled with everything that she loved.

And I said, what does she love? And she went, McDonald's. And I said, well, hopefully it's filled with all of the McDonald's in the world. I said, because that is what heaven is like. Heaven is everything you can think of that she would have loved.

I said, if she loves McDonald's, there'll be a McDonald's up there for her. If she loves, you know, running around or having animals with her, there'll be that with her too. And she just sat there and it was just her face thinking about it.

And I just, like, began crying because I was just thinking, oh my goodness, like, she's obviously really thinking about this, like, you know. And she went, and then she just, and then she just went, I think she'd be happy.

And then she just walked off and me and Miss just broke down crying. We were like, what is going on? Like, like, how have we just had, but it was literally given at that time. And like, all the other children were just going around, like, doing, you know, in the quietness.

But it was just that moment. And literally, we still remember to this day, we both like talk about it. You know, we just cried. We were like, oh my goodness, like, that awe and wonder, but also that, like, just that question for giving her that time.

I was like, wow, you know, I'm just thinking about what that meant. [You know, that's, that's the stuff that you can't, you can't measure that](#), you can't, that's the stuff that, like, you can't just go, hold on a minute, we've got to do this activity, you know, you know, kind of thing, like, that's the beauty of it, you know.

[Yeah. Well, that's, yeah, that's an amazing, amazing story. It kind of, it feels like that's the right place to just, yeah, yeah.](#) It is hard though, like when you, when you, when I read what you, what the article and that was the research that you've done and when that obviously that the pressure of it, I get that because obviously there is a huge, obviously if that's the only thing that's happening, there is such huge pressure for that.

But, but like I would, like you say, I'd argue, you know, like kind of with that in a sense, because you wouldn't want to miss, so you'd want to show that evidence to say, what are these opportunities, you know, it's so hard, I'd find it really hard.

If that was like my head teacher saying, no, you need to, you know, I would find that really hard. There is such a huge pressure in schools to, to achieve and to do things and to have these things done.

I mean, for me, gosh, I went out, I had my wedding, and I couldn't do some of the workshops and he was like, don't worry, they've been out with you to practice. They've sat with you and you've talked with them for an hour, you've done this, you've done that.

When you come back from the wedding, finished them then and I was like, okay. You know, it was like, well, you stop worrying, go out of your, go out of your wedding. I was like, okay. You know, but it's like, you know, [it is a counter cultural thing though, isn't it?](#)

[And I think not just, I mean, schools are obviously high performing kind of pressure, pressure covers, but I think if we're not careful, church has a tendency with people kind of going down a bit of a line there as well.](#)

I agree with lots of kind of big numbers and I just think we need to protect that counter cultural kind of. I agree. I get that there's a bit of a naivety to that as well in terms of like, we're all looking for funding and we've all got to justify what we're doing, but yeah.

Yeah, it doesn't sit entirely right with me that we've got to kind of... No. In agreement with you on that one, I just find it really hard to think, like, how can people not think more outside of sense rather than thinking about, like you say, like, oh, we've got to find this, you've got to find that, and it's kind of like, well, I think...

I mean, that challenge... Not really. With having that time with you in the hall, sitting cross - legged and just talking about heaven, that will stay into adulthood. It's those sorts of experiences, isn't it, that God kind of drops in and it's only God can do that.

That's it. And it's like, opportunities like that, you know, I've heard of so many other people who've had similar... You know, I've heard so many stories from other people and I'm just sitting, like, listening to them and going, like, wow, like, you know, because you have those stories, but actually, it's real life.

You know, at the end of the day, it's like moments like that, you just... There will be so many other children within the school that will... probably want or feel the same thing or need that opportunity just to be heard or just to sit and just listen or just be quiet and yeah I think you can't miss a moment like that really and I think that's why you know so blessed to be in this job but also to be able to have those opportunities and with the children to that because we're back to kind of where you started about presence and being there and being available and making space and room for those opportunities.

It's so hard for teachers to be able to try and offer that but also for you know for children who are you know like we were talking yesterday about you know quite a lot of our families like you know disadvantaged and don't have you know you know kind of the greatest home life and stuff like that so you know having that safe space in the school where they can feel like they can do that is so important and we were talking about that yesterday really yeah.

Thank you so much I'm going to I'm going to stop the recording that was absolutely brilliant.

1. How would you describe the school chaplain's role in your school/church context?

The school chaplain has a particular role in school, to offer spiritual guidance and support to pupils, staff and families. This could be through collective worship, conversations, appropriate offers of prayer, working with pupil worship leaders, organising prayer activities, lunchtime and after-school clubs. Within a church context, a school chaplain can also help to build bridges between the school and a local church.

████████ School and ████████ Church have a strong and long-established partnership. Catherine is a member of ████████ Church, and she has taken part in several school services in church. In future it is hoped to increase opportunities for pupils and their families to engage in services and other church community activities.

2. How would you define the relationship between the school chaplain and the school/church, thinking about adults and children?

The school has never had a chaplain before, and this role only began in September 2023, so it is still in early stages of development. However, Catherine has already made a significant impact on the life of the school. She is held in high regard by the SLT and all the staff, and she is loved by the pupils. When she asked for volunteers for the chaplaincy team, for instance, she immediately received 50 pupil applications. From this she was able to start age-appropriate chaplaincy groups at break-time, lunchtimes and after-school. With pupils she has organised high-impact projects including collecting and redistributing coats to families and supporting a ██████████ fundraising initiative. She leads collective worship on a weekly basis.

The role is part funded by the church, and the church highly values the role that Catherine has as chaplain in the school. She spoke to the church congregation when she first started the role; progress is reported on at each PCC meeting including watching a film showing examples of chaplaincy in action at school; Catherine also has scheduled termly updates with the vicar to review progress and talk about future hopes and possibilities.

3. How do you think the impact of such a role can be measured?

Within school, impact will best be measured through pupil voice, as well as the testimony of staff and families. It can also be measured by pupil participation in voluntary activities,

for instance the extra-curricular clubs. As part of SIAMS preparation and inspection, chaplaincy will provide much positive evidence of spiritual development and flourishing. Within church, impact will include a greater awareness and investment on the part of the worshipping community in the life of school. While the success criteria of the role is not to increase church attendance, it would be hoped that there would be a stronger mutual relationship between the church and the school community, including greater engagement with families in the full life of the church. As has been stated already, the role is still in early stages of development.

4. Can school be an appropriate setting to develop faith with children?

As long as faith development is invitational and inclusive, schools can provide a whole range of different opportunities for this to happen. This might include collective worship, after-school clubs, prayer spaces, school visits to local places of worship. A school is not a place of worship, and so spiritual development is often a more appropriate term than faith development. This would hopefully happen in RE lessons and across the wider school curriculum.

Job Description – School Chaplain

Chaplaincy Key Responsibilities	Person specification
<p>To help maintain the outstanding distinctiveness and effectiveness of St John's as a Church of England school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help ensure that the shared Christian vision which permeates all areas of the school underpins learners' high achievement and exceptional behaviour • To help to drive the strategic direction of [redacted] as a Church school • To help develop and strengthen the impact of whole school worship • To lead collective worship on a regular basis and to increase the involvement of pupils as worship leaders • To ensure that church seasons are publicly and creatively celebrated within life of the school and closely link with the local Church where possible • To work closely with [redacted] church and the wider Christian community by maintaining existing links and seeking to enhance these opportunities further • To help to run an after-school club for pupils to encourage Christian leadership and service • To link with [redacted] and appropriate personnel (e.g. the children's advisor) and to be aware of opportunities within the Diocese for the school • To help develop the prayer life of the school and to ensure that this is an integral and natural part of school life, including maintaining a central prayer area and the Christian focal points in classrooms • To be available to offer a range of pastoral support to pupils (and their families) and to staff as appropriate and to assist in developing programmes accordingly • To offer a distinctive Christian presence to the pastoral care of the whole school community – relating with sensitivity to those of other faiths or none • To work closely with the RE and the SMSC co-ordinators to ensure the continued high status of RE to enhance the school's Christian distinctiveness • To manage the Chaplain's budget 	<p>The Chaplain should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be a person with an understanding of, and sympathy towards, the Church of England ethos • be confident to make a contribution to both formal and informal worship • have the capacity to encourage pupils to grow in confidence in leading and contributing to worship • relate with confidence to the whole school community: staff, pupils, parents and governors • have experience of working with children, young people and their families • have experience in working in a school environment • be organised, energetic and outgoing • be committed to ongoing professional development