



TRANSITION YEARS

MOVING FROM PRIMARY TO SECONDARY



BACKGROUND

THE SITUATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS – MOVING TO TRANSITION

For many years we have had chaplains (mostly lay) in the majority of our diocesan secondary schools and colleges, with named chaplains in only a very a few of our primary schools. This was not to say that there was no 'chaplancy' orientated activity in the primaries – far from it – we know there is already a huge range of different activities being organised and run by staff and pupils working together.

A few years ago we began to explore the development of primary chaplancy, in line with many other dioceses in the country, and to discover what is already happening in our schools and how we can build on and strengthen these activities.

Based on a model developed in the Salford diocese, we offered the idea of 'GIFT TEAMS' (Growing in Faith Together) in primary schools, with the pupils working alongside and assisting RE Coordinators, teachers, and LSA's already involved in organising chaplancy activities in school. The concept has been adopted by many of our schools

There is evidence of outstanding RE/ chaplancy developments in our primaries – giving the pupils and staff opportunities for creativity, discussion, argument, understanding, questioning, investigation – deepening an appreciation of spirituality and faith. There is great cross-curricular work, building up of leadership skills, confidence and maturity. Families are also becoming more involved.



SECONDARY SCHOOLS - TRANSITION



BUT - what happens to all of this in Year 7?

We are concerned that the skills and confidence that the Year 6 pupils have been developing while working in their GIFT teams are being overlooked as they transition to Year 7. They have a huge amount of experience and a host of ideas to bring to chaplaincy in their new secondary school and we want to be able to harness these skills, both for the school and for the pupils themselves. We don't want to waste this opportunity.

The importance of the role of the chaplain in our secondary schools and the teams working with them cannot be overstated. The ideas presented here relating to the transition year are to enable the chaplains, together with their teams, to strengthen and develop the work already being carried out, whilst at the same time harnessing the skills and energy of incoming pupils in Year 7.

In both primary and secondary schools, the GIFT Team is a model of empowerment for both students and staff. It builds on and extends existing activities and, most importantly, gives young people the chance to grow in confidence and capability as they begin to take ownership of the development of spirituality in their own schools. The ideas that the young people coming from the primary schools have are astounding, and the energy with which they carry forward these ideas to be admired.

Whether you already have a chaplaincy team (or teams) or are starting from scratch, the ideas presented here are to assist you in supporting transition year pupils, as well as being an opportunity to strengthen the work of chaplaincy in your school.



FORMING A NEW YEAR 7 GIFT TEAM

Remember – there is no 'right' way to form a GIFT team – and chaplaincy activities will be relevant to your own school. The idea is to build on:

- the already excellent work that you are doing in your school
- the skills that the new Year 7 pupils are bringing from their own experience in their primary schools

Visit feeder primaries

It is very important that the chaplain visits the primary feeder schools in order to find out how the pupils are involved in chaplaincy activities. Many of these pupils will have developed strong leadership skills, as well as confidence, and will have worked on a diverse set of activities – leading prayer groups and writing prayers, planning and leading assemblies, spreading information about chaplaincy activities on a variety of media, working with staff, including NQTs, on inset, planning round the liturgical calendar, charity work .

Start with the Year 5 and 6 pupils. A really good way to get to know these groups in your primary feeder schools is to work on a Deanery basis –you could hold a Deanery day in school, like a mini 'Picnic and Praise', or a Cafod day.

Working with new Year 7 pupils

Whilst some of the new intake will have been directly involved in leading GIFT team work, some will not, but most are likely to have experience of different activities.

So how do you organise your new team?

You can't assume that all the "GIFT team" pupils coming into Year 7 will want to 'continue' as a team member. And how can you involve those who have only experienced the GIFT team activities from 'the outside'?

Some ideas:

- create a team for each tutor or house group – they may be responsible for tutor prayer time, organising tutor group Masses, input into assemblies etc.
- have teams with specific duties – assemblies, Masses, promoting 'chaplaincy' etc
- you might have a 'core team', involved in planning, with outriders or helpers who can be called in to work on specific activities such as publicity, welcoming visitors including clergy, media info, being links with particular staff members including the pastoral team



Of course it is quite likely that some of the Year 7 pupils will quickly become involved in the exciting new things that secondary school has to offer – sports, clubs etc – which may reduce numbers of ‘active’ pupils.

Being involved in a ‘chaplancy’ team in this first year has a lot of advantages for the pupils - it is developing and strengthening existing skills including leadership – and, because it is a familiar experience, it can help them feel a bit more ‘at home’ in the completely new environment.

It is worth remembering that evidence of pupils leading liturgies and chaplancy activities are a key element of the Denominational Inspection (Section 48).

Working with existing chaplancy teams

The team(s) you already work with in school are the ideal trainers for the new Year 7 team(s).

The older pupils need to understand the skills and experience that the Year 7 pupils are bringing to the school. In turn, the Year 7 pupils need to get a picture of the structure of chaplancy and the kind of activities in which they can become involved.



Building a chaplancy team from scratch?

If you do not have a team in your school yet, how might you get started with the new Year 7 pupils?

- Create a chaplancy audit / wish list (Appendix 2)
- Prioritise actions and decide how the pupils would best be involved

At the first session with your team(s) encourage the pupils to come up with their own ideas for what the school chaplancy might look like:

- why do we need a team?
- what will the team aim for and achieve?
- what ideas have you got?

Start with what you already have in school and encourage ideas to make this bigger, better, brighter, more exciting.

You could use the Development Plan (Appendix 3) to set out actions for the term.



Good starters for practical team work

Chapel area

If you have a chapel, the team can look after it, for example changing displays to suit the liturgical calendar.

No chapel? Ask the team for ideas for where there may be space for at least a quiet room / prayer area – even outside!

Prayers

Would the team like to write or find the weekly prayers for the beginning or end of day?

Would they like to find imaginative ways of praying using music, video clips, candles etc?

Would they like to help the class teacher or the children to lead the prayers?

Assemblies

Could the team add things to the assemblies to make them more relevant for the children / parents?

Raising the profile

Ask the team for ideas on how to make the chaplaincy work more prominent in the school :

Would they be able to provide a paragraph on the activities regularly for the school newsletter?

Could they run a 'chaplaincy blog'?

Where would be the best place to display chaplaincy posters, prayers for the season etc?

Developing Youth Leadership

A chaplaincy team is an ideal vehicle for the development of leadership skills in our young people. The Faith in Action scheme is particularly suited to pupils in Years 5 and 6, and may already be used in your feeder primary schools. It marries practical charity work (which fits with young people's strong moral sense) with scriptural reflections, and it is very user-friendly.



APPENDICES

The 3 appendices that follow are simply reference tools, to give an idea of how primary teams are formed and how they operate. The ideas here can be built on for the Year 7 teams.

- 1: PRIMARY GIFT TEAMS – looking at how primary GIFT teams are formed
- 2: CHAPLAINCY AUDIT – recommended to use before deciding on activities
- 3: OUTLINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN – how team activities might be planned – useful for both primary and secondary teams



APPENDIX 1 – PRIMARY GIFT TEAMS

To assist with transition, it might be helpful to look at how primary schools create their teams

Choosing the right children?

- (a) approach children you think would make good candidates
- (b) a more formal method is to advertise the post of 'Chaplaincy Team Member' – ask for letters of application and references from parents – hold interviews

The best candidates?

The best team members are often the least expected – not the high-flyers, the 'holy Joes' or the 'good' children but the 'geezers', the loud mouths, the shy children

How many in the team?

10 -12 is a good number – not too many so that all voices can be heard in discussions etc

Dealing with possible jealousy of the team?

It makes good sense to choose 'unlikely' children rather than the high achievers – and to stress that, whilst it is an honour to be a team member, it actually means a lot of hard work, giving up break at times etc

It is also a good idea to encourage the team to enrol 'helpers' from their peers when needed – to do tasks like helping with I.T., advertising events around the classes (e.g. Rosary Club at lunchtime, weeding the prayer garden after school.....)

A distinguishing 'mark' for the team members?

Schools have gone for different ties, enamel badges, sweat shirts printed with school logo and 'Chaplaincy Team' – some schools have a Chaplaincy Team group photo in a prominent position. You could choose one of these ideas or you may prefer to simply let the team be known by its work around the school.

Commissioning the team?

The role of team member is really important (the role of chaplain in secondary schools is an appointment made by the Archbishop and the governors) and you may want to commission the teams in a special liturgy, perhaps during an assembly, with the parents present, and inviting your local parish priest, or even the Bishop!

Who is 'in charge' of the Chaplaincy Team?

An adult 'facilitator' is needed to organise and chair meetings, to guide the children through making their ideas become practicalities, to sort out resources etc.

Different schools use LSAs, support staff, RE coordinators – in fact anyone who is keen on working with the children to help develop spirituality within the school. (Some schools have added an increment to a salary for the extra work involved.)

What do we call the team?

Chaplaincy Team might seem a little bland – other names used include 'Faith Mentors', 'Year of Mercy Ambassadors', 'Mini Vinnies' – be creative!



APPENDIX 2 – CHAPLAINCY AUDIT

This looks at the different aspects of chaplaincy and invites schools to think of the creative ways that pupils can be involved in these areas.

WHAT MAY ALREADY EXIST / WISH LIST	HOW CAN THE PUPILS BE INVOLVED?
Existing space resources – chapel, prayer garden - including quiet space for chaplaincy team meetings?	
Existing chaplaincy resources – computer, music player, books etc?	
Priests available for Masses etc – rota?	
Resourcing Form Tutor worship – opportunities for development and support?	
Assemblies – who plans and delivers?	
Prayer life of school outside daily act of worship?	
How is the Gospel proclaimed in school apart from prayers and assemblies - Via displays, support through illness, welcoming new students, multi-cultural awareness, bereavement support?	
Opportunities for staff prayer and staff retreats?	
Liaising with key staff for liturgy – departments who could enhance liturgy through music, drama etc?	
Identifying and dealing with pastoral issues?	



WHAT MAY ALREADY EXIST / WISH LIST	HOW CAN THE PUPILS BE INVOLVED?
Any peer support groups / peer mentoring / “buddies” etc?	
Developing and sustaining closer school - parish links?	
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Any existing student groups in school – CAFOD, YCW, SVP, Justice and Peace, Fair Trade, environmental issues?	
Are students engaged in charities, fund-raising, local campaigns – e.g. carols in local area, Poppy Day?	
Are students engaged in Diocesan / Deanery / SCYS events e.g Youth Service?	
How are students of other faiths accommodated?	
STAFF ISSUES	STAFF MEMBERS
Who would have particular responsibility on the Leadership Team and Governors for the chaplaincy team(s)?	
Who would assist the chaplain with team meetings, resources etc?	



APPENDIX 3 – OUTLINE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CHAPLAINCY TEAM DEVELOPMENT PLAN - SCHOOL :		DATE:				
ACTION	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?	LEAD PERSON (member of staff to help us)	RESOURCES NEEDED (including other pupils to assist)	START DATE (and finishing date if appropriate)	HOW CAN WE MEASURE OUR SUCCESS?	
EXAMPLE: Decide on the structure of our Chaplaincy Team, and how often we have meetings	We need to have regular meetings to discuss what needs to be done each week, & decide what each of us has to do	Mrs Smith – our Deputy Head – we will meet in her office	We need someone to keep notes – Mr Jones our LSA – and to make sure we are doing things correctly and on time	As soon as possible, to continue regularly	We keep on top of everything that needs to be done	



NOTES

