



DIOCESE OF  
**Bath & Wells**

Living and telling the story of Jesus

# Pupil chaplaincy

## A guide for schools and churches

## Contents

- 4 What is chaplaincy?
- 5 What might pupil chaplains offer to a school?
- 6 Core principles
- 7 A story of sharing hope and joy
- 8 Identifying pupils to become chaplains
- 8 Identifying a pupil chaplaincy leader
- 9 Relationship of school and pupil chaplaincy lead
- 10 Key things to note
- 11 Frequently asked questions



# What is pupil chaplaincy?

Pupil chaplains exist to facilitate the flourishing of the whole school community.

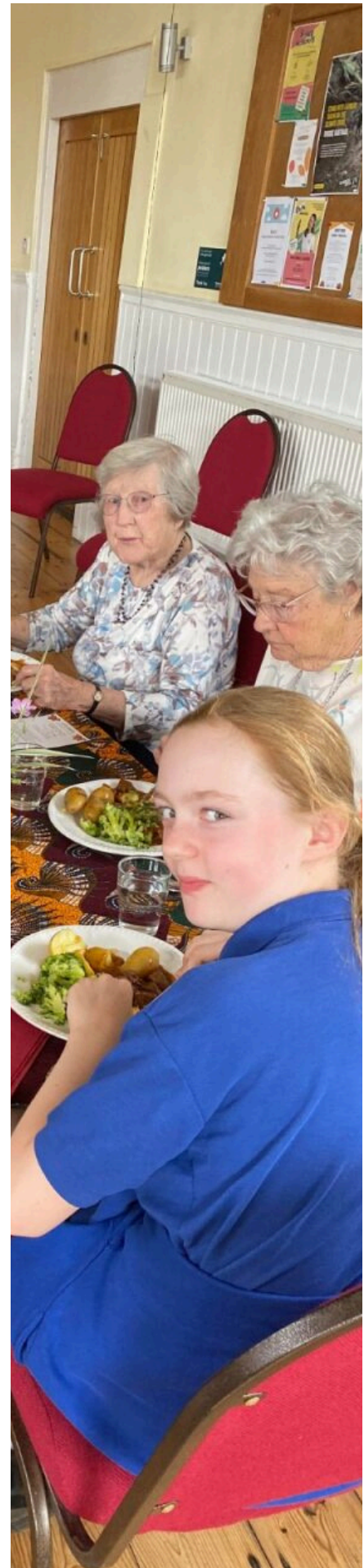
Pupil chaplaincy is a ministry offered by and for children, young people and staff in and to their schools or colleges. Chaplaincy is being with people, sharing what you have and bringing hope as you journey together. Pupil chaplaincy is inspired by the person of Jesus and the many stories of the people he encountered from all walks of life and the way he spent time with them; being, listening, caring and engaging in transformative conversations. Jesus said, 'I have come that they might have life and have it to the full.' John 10:10. This vision from Jesus of human beings flourishing, living life in all its fullness, is the heartbeat of school chaplaincy.

## Why is it important to be a pupil chaplain?

"Pupil chaplains can help with the community, for example when we went to church to run the tea party we were representing the school and helping the elderly."

**Pupil chaplain, St John's Church of England School, Wellington**

Across the Diocese of Bath and Wells we have a desire to see people of all ages not only share in leadership and ministry but also be supported and nurtured in it. Pupil chaplains can be almost any age: in primary schools, secondary schools or FE colleges. This type of role is also relevant for universities. Pupil chaplaincy teams can be supported by school chaplains, school leaders and/or church leaders.



# What might pupil chaplains offer to a school?

## Listening and care



Listening to their peers and offering emotional and spiritual support, within the context of the school/college structures and policies. They could take on roles such as playground buddies or peer mentors.

## Community outreach



Serving the local community, for instance, raising awareness and fundraising for a local cause, leading an arts project or an environment project.

## Worship and spirituality



They might be responsible for designing, developing and promoting the reflective areas in classrooms. They could help to plan and lead collective worship and class worship, festival services in church or prayer spaces.

## Welcoming presence



Within a school community through offering encouragement, noticing, celebrating successes and bringing hope, pupil chaplains can change the atmosphere whether that's in a 1:1 moment with a or through sharing a good news moment with a member of school staff.

## Ethos and vision



Contributing to the development of the school's ethos and vision and sharing in the work of embedding it within the life of the school.



# Core principles

Pupil chaplaincy is based on five core principles:

## Contextual



Pupil chaplaincy should be held within, and sympathetic to, the rhythms, practices and structures of the education setting so it can most effectively serve that context.

## Connected



Pupil chaplaincy is most transformational when it is well connected to, and supported by, leaders in the education setting and the local church and has a named pupil chaplaincy lead.

## Participation



Children and young people's voices, from across the education setting, should be central to the set-up, decision-making, implementation and direction of the chaplaincy.

## Faithful



Pupil chaplaincy should enable children and young people to notice, name and be curious about God. The ministry of care for those in their community is rooted in their understanding of God, with clear opportunities to develop their faith.

## Diverse



Pupil chaplaincy should be intentionally accessible to children and young people with a wide diversity of backgrounds and giftings, modelling welcome to all.

Pupil or student chaplains do not need to be committed Christians, instead we ask that they have a desire and curiosity to learn more about the Christian faith. Pupil chaplains will meet regularly with those who support them to learn more about faith and to plan and reflect on their role.





## A story of sharing joy and hope

In July 2025, on a suggestion from the head teacher, the pupil chaplains (year 5) hosted a 'Joy and Hope' day for reception class, years 1 and 2 in the church, reflecting the school vision 'Sharing joy and hope in the community'. Each class visited for an hour, enjoying activities focusing on the joy of the past year and hope for the year to come, specially devised, prepared and delivered by the pupil chaplains and the school chaplain. These included singing, a Bible story, group discussions, bubble prayers, a picture treasure hunt and craft. The visitors had a great time and the pupil chaplains enjoyed the challenge and responsibility.

St John's Church of England School, Wellington



# Identifying pupils to become chaplains

Pupil Chaplaincy can be transformative for schools as well as to the pupil chaplains themselves. Pupil chaplains should aspire to:

- Become role models for loving, accepting and welcoming all
- Be open to the possibility of God and learning more about God
- Be keen to listen and offer support to people in their school community and beyond

## Identifying a pupil chaplaincy leader

The role of the leader is pivotal to Pupil Chaplaincy working for the pupil chaplains, the school community and the local church/churches. The leader must be an adult, either from the church community or from the school community but it is essential that they are acceptable to both.

Key qualities:

- Role models for loving, accepting and welcoming all.
- A Christian faith, open to learning more about God and able to support children and young people in exploring and articulating faith.
- Keen to listen and offer support to people in their school community and beyond. Empathetic about the pressures faced by others and able to work with that.
- Committed to operating within the policies, procedures, practices and structures of the school/college community.
- Committed to good safeguarding practice as a moral responsibility not just as a procedural necessity.
- A gifted communicator, able to speak with a variety of people and ages, and able to find stories that will help to form and strengthen connections between school, church and community.
- Someone for whom prayer is natural and is able to encourage and enable others in prayer.
- A co-creator committed to drawing on and building the gifts of others, including able to work in ways that build the sustainability of pupil chaplaincy.



# Relationship of school and pupil chaplaincy lead

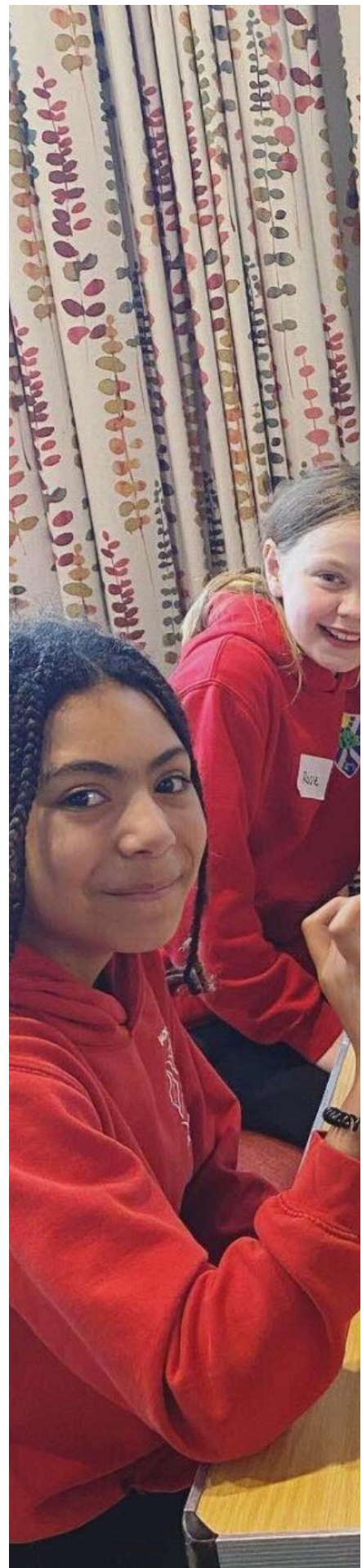
The relationship between the school and the pupil chaplaincy is at its best when there is a shared understanding about the roles and responsibilities of all involved. Communication is key to ensuring that the chaplaincy is both completely embedded and able to flourish. Some of the things that you might like to consider are:

- Identifying a point of contact/line manager within the school's senior leadership.
- A clear structure and timeline for reporting to leadership and governors, for example, termly reports, regular check-ins/line management meetings between pupil chaplaincy lead and senior leadership team (SLT) contact.
- A mechanism for sharing good news stories, for example, newsletters/bulletins/social media/collective worship.
- Clearly defined role description for pupil chaplaincy lead.

## Why did you want to be a pupil chaplain?

"When I was in year 4 I really looked up to the pupil chaplains. Now I am in year 5 I want to be one so that people look up to me too."

"I have seen the year 5 pupil chaplains in the past and how they were able to help people in school and also their faith and I would like to do the same."







## Key things to note

- For those under 18, parental/carer consent for participation in pupil chaplaincy should be sought.
- The selection of pupil chaplains will vary in different contexts although a simple application process is advised. Ultimately, however, the decision is down to the judgment of individual schools.
- Pupil chaplains should undergo training prior to taking up their roles. Although pupil chaplaincy will look different in every context, it is important that pupil chaplains have training in:
  - how to listen well and care for others
  - how to love, welcome and accept all
  - basic safeguarding (when to seek help from staff)

# Frequently asked questions

## How does pupil chaplaincy benefit schools?

- It provides children and young people with meaningful leadership opportunities.
- It gives children and young people the opportunity to develop valuable life skills such as listening, noticing others, leadership and teamwork.
- Training and equipping children and young people to look out for and support their peers can enhance early intervention and prevention of low-level mental health, safeguarding and wellbeing issues amongst children and young people.
- Children and young people often feel more comfortable sharing with a trusted peer; this provides a safe structure within which pupils can talk to one another.

## What about SIAMS and Ofsted inspections?

Through equipping children and young people to serve in their educational context through the lens of the Christian faith, we would hope that they would embody a sense of justice and seek to serve others, calling out and being active in tackling injustices in their education setting, local community and beyond.

Pupil/student chaplaincy encourages children and young people to take responsibility for themselves and to think beyond self to others. From a place of safety and love it is reasonable that pupils would, incrementally and in an age-appropriate manner, be equipped to develop and express an active care for others.

This will help contribute to Inquiry Question 5 in the SIAMS framework which asks: How does the school's theologically rooted Christian vision create an active culture of justice and responsibility?

The Ofsted framework requires all schools to enable pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally (P.44 of the 2025 Schools Inspection Toolkit).



## How can I support my school if it isn't ready to introduce pupil chaplaincy?

Pupil chaplaincy is one of many ways in which a school might like to partner with its local church. It is most effective when the school leadership see it as an integral part of the school community. Without their support and endorsement, the impact is likely to be limited and relationships can be damaged if you don't hear what a school really wants. We would encourage churches to join in with what God is already doing in a school context and wait for the right time to introduce pupil chaplaincy.

If you are part of a church and seeking to serve your local school, we would always encourage you to start by asking the school how you can best serve and support them.

If you would like help in conveying the vision or concept of pupil chaplaincy to the school leadership, please feel free to contact [Cheryl Govier](mailto:cheryl.govier@bathwells.anglican.org) (cheryl.govier@bathwells.anglican.org) or [Richard Kelley](mailto:richard.kelley@bathwells.anglican.org) (richard.kelley@bathwells.anglican.org) who will be able to point you in the direction of stories showing the impact of pupil chaplaincy.

## How might pupil chaplaincy develop when church support is limited?

Please feel free to contact [Cheryl Govier](mailto:cheryl.govier@bathwells.anglican.org) or [Richard Kelley](mailto:richard.kelley@bathwells.anglican.org) who will help you consider how you might approach this and connect you to other places where pupil chaplaincy has been effective.

## What should we do if a pupil makes a safeguarding disclosure to a pupil chaplain?

Prior to starting their roles, pupil chaplains should undergo training to prepare and equip them for their roles. Pupil chaplains will work under the safeguarding policies and procedures of the school, with clear guidance on what a disclosure is, what to share and who to speak to if a disclosure is made. They will also be supported by their adult lead





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