**Approaching your local school**

**Schools and churches have one very important thing in common - they are both pillars of the local community.**

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| http://www.chester.anglican.org/dev/images/astbury.jpg |       | Schools are required by law to forge strong and sustainable links with their local community and to allow their students to meet and hear from people of faith. Churches want to reach out in service to their community - including their schools. But how to get the two together? |

The first thing to do might be to carry out a Church Audit using a tool such as this one: [Church Audit Tool](http://syls.org.uk/storage/downloads/SYLS-Church-Audit.pdf).

Once you know what you have to offer you could send a letter like this to the Headteacher:

*123 High Street
Anytown
YZ3 9AB

30th February 2013*

*Dear Headteacher, (Please use their name!)****Offer of help!*** *During some discussions recently, our church, St All Saints,  has been  looking at ways to serve the local community and we realise some of  the skills we have between us could be used to help others e.g craft  work, reading, woodwork, knitting, storytelling, cooking, cricket, cross  country and baking to name but a few.

We would like to offer you our services.  I would be very happy to meet with you at a convenient time to discuss how we might be of help to you.

We are aware of all the necessary security checks which would need to be carried out but many of us are already DBS checked and would be happy to undertake any checks you require.

Yours sincerely,

T.A. Muchly (Mrs)*

After praying, a church in our Diocese approached the new Headteacher at one of their local schools where the church and school already had a fledgling relationship like this:

*Dear (Headteacher's name),*

*I am a co-coordinator at (church name) in (village name) for Messy  Church, a very informal style of worship using craft and games and a  meal to explore a bible story.  (Name of Headteacher's school)  have  been linked with our church through school visits and carol concerts  and we have been able to  distribute our messy church  information cards in your book bags four times  each year.  I usually email (school secretary's name) and she suggests which day might be appropriate to leave the cards at the school office in order for them to go into the children’s book bags.*

*I do hope we will be able to continue to do this.  We have some cards ready for a Messy Church on the 28th September and I wonder if I might be able to drop them off at the school this week, if you are happy with that?*

*If you would like to visit the church or the church team to visit you at school we would be very pleased to meet you.  My son attends (a nearby school) and his class are visiting the church as part of their RE and “My Local Area” topic. We will visit year 4 after the half term and talk about harvest for a short while in the afternoon.  If you would like to talk about school visits or just to make contact please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.*

*The Parish Office telephone number is (phone number) and the email is (email address) and I am very happy to receive emails and queries.*

*I look forward to hearing from you regarding the Messy Church cards.*

*Kindest regards and a warm welcome to (name of village).*

*(Writer's name)*

*(Name of church), Messy Church Team.*

The Headteacher wrote back to her:

Dear ............,

Thanks so much for your email.

Yes! I would love to get the school and church more involved.

Firstly, do bring round leaflets whenever is convenient to you, and we will distribute them.

Secondly, how can we make links for events such as harvest? Would you like to come in and do our harvest assembly? I have put it on Monday 7th October, which I know is quite early, but dates seem to get booked up. We are already booked to come to you for the choir service at Christmas.

If you would like to visit any time, just let me know.

Best wishes,

 (*Headteacher's name*)

 Head teacher

The relationship has gone from strength to strength. This was with a local primary school and though secondary schools can appear more daunting, they are usually just as keen to be involved in their community. The person who led the contact said: 

"We have been fortunate that people seem to have come to us and we have been very gentle and just said we are here and would love to make links with you, these are some of the ways assemblies, class talks, visits to church or more general help in school and then we have received contact from the school – some immediate and some slower.   I usually say “yes” to approaches and worry about how to do it later!"

A great website can be found [here.](http://syls.squarespace.com/get-started/) Though it is a Scottish website and a few details are different in England, it has lots of good advice about how to get started in serving your schools.

Do remember that the school is not an appropriate place to evangelise and that the whole time church members are there, they are under the authority of the Headteacher. The safeguarding procedures of the school and of the Diocese must be understood by all volunteers and rigorously applied.

I hope and pray that you will have success in forming a good relationship with your local schools and will be blessed by the work.

For more support or information, please contact me at sue.mayo@chester.anglican.org