

Why don't children just come to church ?

Children's work is often thought of as being something that happens on Sunday. That has been the pattern for over 200 years. During that time, and especially in the last 30 years, society has altered beyond recognition. A child's life is changing rapidly. The Church needs to respond to this by reaching children where they are, respecting their culture and their vulnerability.

Jesus' main ministry was in the streets and the countryside. He met people where they were and served their needs. We should do the same. The Church is the people of God, being Christ in the community. You are doing that already by thinking about working with children in some way during the week.

Why start a club?

from "Not just Sunday" by Margaret Withers

1. Sunday has become a day for visits to grandparents, and second parents in cases of split families, Shopping, sports and schools activities are increasingly taking place on Sunday. A midweek club could provide Christian nurture and worship that cater especially for children who cannot come on Sunday.
2. An after school club could provide a safe environment, with games and teaching, for children who would otherwise have nowhere to go.
3. Parents with young families will welcome a couple of hours when their children can enjoy activities at little or no cost to the family budget.
6. Some churches have few facilities and the main services do not cater for children. A midweek club with activities and a short service allows children to explore the gospel and worship God in a style that is appropriate for their age and culture.

Schools need you

Information taken from Barnabas website BRF

<http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk/pages/5040.htm>

If you are able to start or help with a Christian club, it can be explicitly Christian if it is a voluntary activity for pupils who choose to attend. The headteacher would need to give their support and permission, and you must always be sensitive to the needs of the school. Activities should be appropriate for the age and family backgrounds of the pupils. For example, a club run in a village church primary school would probably be very different from a club run in a multi-faith inner-city community secondary school. There are a number of sources of support for running Christian clubs in schools. For example: Scripture Union, Youth for Christ, Youth Alpha, Arise Ministries.

In addition, schools are now expected to offer 'out-of-hours' provision from 8.00am to 6pm each day. They can arrange to do this on their own site and manage it themselves, or they can work in collaboration with other schools or with outside agencies which provide such a service. This is part of the previous government's 'Every Child Matters' strategy and is

aimed at providing better child care possibilities, activities for the community, ultimately improving standards in schools.

This might mean that the school provides a breakfast club and before-school activities, homework clubs and after-school clubs which children can join.

If the school is managing this themselves, they are usually glad of offers of help from church groups at either end of the day. Suitably qualified and CRB checked church volunteers can staff the breakfast club, help with after-school activities or offer to run clubs after-school as part of the 'out-of-hours' provision.

The opportunities for the church to be involved in these initiatives are immense. In order to deliver the 'out-of-hours' provision, schools need to work with the voluntary sector (and this of course includes the church). It also provides the opportunity for a church with well thought-out plans and proposals for community involvement to get involved at the very heart of the community.

As part of the extended services offered by a school, OfSTED will inspect what happens 'out-of-hours' and there is a requirement that pupils' spiritual development should be included within these activities to some degree. By getting involved with such activities, churches can help schools deliver an additional spiritual dimension to what they offer.

Insight from Tell Us!

TellUs4 is a national survey of over 250,000 children in the UK, asking a whole range of questions about their lives. One of the statistics shows that 37% of Year 6 children indicated that they had taken part in a religious, faith or community group in the previous four weeks. Maybe that's an incentive to increase the mid-week provision churches have for children!

The best hour of the week!

by Rona Orme Peterborough Diocese Children's Missioner

Inspired by a new book with the same title, I have been wondering what it would take to make the Sunday club, all-age service, after-school or midweek club or parish event that we provide for children 'the best hour of their week'?

What can we provide that will lead children to look forward to that hour, as 'the best'?

- 1 A warm space to meet in, with furniture that is both comfortable and the right size
- 2 Teaching material that builds on the child's growing understanding of life and the world
- 3 An opportunity to worship with every part of the child's being
- 4 Teaching and activities that encourage children to progress in their understanding and discipleship
- 5 A range of activities that address the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic preferences of individual children, as well as their need for noise, silence, celebration, contemplation, movement, stillness, doing and discussion
- 6 Great refreshments, with an eye on healthy options
- 7 Content that excites, and helps children discover the glory of GOD
- 8 Warm, accepting relationships where children feel valued as individuals
- 9 Freedom to withdraw from the main activity to a reflection corner

- 10 A mixture between the comfort of the familiar and the challenge of the unexpected
11 A place to get to know GOD, rather than just learn *about* GOD

What do you think?

Where do we start?

by K Lyddon, Adviser in Children's Ministry, Exeter Diocese

Main things to consider before starting:

1. Pray and listen to God.
2. Start listening to the school, the children and their parents to find out the needs in the community. There is no point in putting on something that someone else is already doing or something that no one needs.
3. Decide on what type of club best meets these needs whilst achieving your vision for why you're running a club in the first place. What you decide to offer will depend on availability of volunteers, the skills they bring and the finances available. It could be a Toddler group, breakfast club, homework club, after school club, Saturday morning club or holiday club.
4. Consider the most appropriate venue to hold the club.
5. Consider the appropriate age range, timing, resources and Christian content.
6. Consider visiting a similar project that is already running.
7. Involve your PCC and congregation in catching the vision and resourcing the project. You will need a lot of prayer partners, so get everyone praying as well as giving their time and money where applicable.
8. Take advice from the local authority and make sure legal matters, health and safety, safeguarding issues and thoroughly addressed.
9. Start recruiting volunteers following 'safe recruitment' guidelines and complete CRB checks.
10. Plan a budget and work out where to fund it from.
11. Use quality advertising: posters, leaflets and personal invitations to each child at the school. If possible, advertise in an assembly 3 weeks before it starts.

Useful books and resources

Not Just Sunday: Setting Up and Running Mid-week

ISBN 9780715149829, £3.67

The National Society's "Getting a Grip" series take a practical, hands-on approach to an aspect of the church's work with children. "Not Just Sunday" is the first in this series and is written in response to the demand from churches for basic information about setting up

and organizing mid-week clubs for children.;This book takes you through the first steps of planning and setting up mid-week children's activities. It gives advice on involving your church, your local authority and the people who will be working with you. It also gives general information about legal matters, funding and training, as well as tips on running a session.

ISBN 9780715149829, £3.67

Reaching Unchurched Children

ISBN 9781844271276, £2.99

A guide for anyone reaching out to unchurched children, with ideas for communicating the gospel in this context. It explores biblical principles on evangelism and looks at building relationships with children outside the church. Giving practical tips on the language to use and how to talk about God to children who know nothing about him.

ISBN 9781844271276, £2.99

Rural Sunrise

Specializes in work with small and rural churches. The children's coordinator advises on strategic planning, fun days, holiday and after school clubs.

<http://www.ruralmissionsolutions.org.uk/children-s-department/>

Children's Work Handbook

Monica Cook is an expert when it comes to putting together programmes for children that suit smaller churches but with plenty of variety. A real store house of ideas.

Children and Prayer

Yes, children can learn to pray in a way that deepens their relationship with God. Monica Cook has run many special prayer events with children and draws on that experience within this book. This is intended to be the first in a series focusing on different aspects of ministry to and with children. £5.00

Scripture Union

Runs Christian Clubs in schools and the wider community. It has local field workers and will provide training, advice and resources. On their website they have information on SUPA clubs – clubs run in schools, including outlines and resources of meetings.

<http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk/SupaClubs/2908.id>

Streetwise

Streetwise is especially designed for use with unchurched children aged 5-11 in a midweek club or Saturday special event. The children take a trip down Luke Street to meet

Clubs beyond Sundays

Jesus and the people he met. 8 easy-to-use sessions which require very little preparation; good news for busy leaders. There's extra material to help enable leaders to talk about Jesus to unchurched children in a small group setting, plus help on how to run these clubs. Streetwise is now also available in DVD format and complements the Streetwise sessions.

Note **Streetwise** which is part of specific resources for midweek clubs. Material can be backed by 5 minute DVD presentation for each session.

ISBN 9781859997673 £9.50

Target Challenge

Eight sessions for a midweek club or special event for children aged 5 to 11 – a Scripture Union eye level clubs programme. Meet David, the shepherd boy, warrior, songwriter and king in this midweek club programme designed to help children meet with God, in a more reflective way. Children will identify with David, whatever their previous involvement in a Christian community.

- Gripping story-telling
- DVD episodes for the David story (available separately)
- Target practice
- Fun ideas for sharing food
- Reflective Bible reading
- Creative prayer
- Inviting children to get to know God
- Follow-up to the CHAMPION'S CHALLENGE holiday club

- ISBN 9781844273140, £9.50

Awesome!

Awesome! is especially designed for use with unchurched children aged 5-11 in a midweek club or Saturday special event. A flexible programme of 8 easy-to-use sessions in which children follow the signs from the Gospel of John to discover who Jesus is.

Awesome! is based on our much-loved Signposts video, which is now also available in DVD format and complements the Awesome sessions.

Part of the Eyelevel club series. With extra material to help enable leaders to talk about Jesus to unchurched children in a small group setting, plus help on how to run these clubs.

ISBN 9781844271535, £9.50

Rocky Road

A new Eye level resource, aimed at reaching unchurched children. This is a ten-session midweek club programme designed as a follow-up to Pyramid Rock holiday club but which also works well on its own. There is all the fun of a journey through Egypt as children discover they can have a real-life journey with God. Based on the story of Moses, children discover God is with them in the tough times. Fun activities aimed at children aged 5-11 but needing minimal preparation – good news for busy leaders.

ISBN 9781844271832, £9.50

Not Sunday Not School!

by Eleanor Zuercher

Not Sunday, Not School is a programme of two-hour sessions for 3-11s, based around seasonal themes to take you through the year. The material is written by Eleanor Zuercher, who has herself run each of the programmes in the book at her own church.

Eleanor found herself providing a Sunday school for a dwindling number of children across a broad age range. As a response, she began monthly activity sessions on Saturday afternoons for 3-11s. These proved hugely popular, and have brought many more children into contact with the church and the Good News.

The [book](#) is brimming with ideas for themed activity sessions, as well as a holiday club and an alternative to Hallowe'en. There is also a download available with additional content, containing blank workshop plans, registration forms, parental consent forms, ideas to integrate the activity sessions with Sunday worship, a Lent course and lots more! Read a sample chapter of the *Not Sunday Not School book*

<http://www.exeterccyp.org/children/childrens-advice/mid-week-clubs-are-having-an-impact/>

ISBN 9781841015781.£9.49

CURBS

Publishes great material for working with unchurched children. It is developed for urban children but works well in a rural setting too. Cheap and effective!

<http://www.curbsproject.org.uk/downloads.html>

ChristianResources.org.uk

Offers the biggest, most comprehensive listing of resources for working with children and is available at the Christian Resources Project, based in Plymouth.

They describe themselves as: "Not just an ordinary Christian book shop (although we hope we can provide most titles you'd like to order), but a resource centre which specialises in books for children and young people - and those who work with them in schools and churches.

What's more, we also specialise in tracking down high quality remainders to sell at bargain prices – because we know how stretched your budget is.

We are still working to improve and develop the website so if you can't find what you want or you have any questions then do contact us."

www.christianresources.org.uk

www.calvarychapel.org for colouring sheets, wordsearches and puzzles related to 365 Bible readings.

Visit <http://www.childrensscrapstore.co.uk/> to locate your local scrapstore for craft materials.

Clubs beyond Sundays

<http://www.bakerross.co.uk/index.asp> for high-quality ready-to-use craft ideas.

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