

KNOWN BY NAME

A Chaplain's Role



*I was a stranger and you
welcomed me*

Matthew 25:35

A resource pack to support chaplains as they
welcome new students into the school community

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WHAT DOES THIS PACK INCLUDE?

The background

Induction, belonging, and being known

Spiritual belonging and the role of the chaplain

What do we mean by spirituality and spiritual flourishing?

Resource ideas

Additional considerations





THE BACKGROUND

This resource pack emerges from findings unfolding from NICER's research project, 'Consolation and hope in a time of crisis: bringing chaplains together to cultivate human flourishing and spiritual resilience in response to covid-related losses for year 7 pupils', funded by the Sir Halley Stewart Trust.

For more information and further resources related to the project, please visit <https://nicer.org.uk/spiritual-resilience>

This project investigated how chaplains from the Church of England and Catholic education sectors could help nurture a sense of hope and spiritual flourishing amongst year 7 induction students during the pandemic crisis.

Although the school transition and induction phase of life can be exciting; for many young people and their families, it can be a time of high anxiety. When this rite of passage is faced with the added tension of a crisis situation, like that caused by the COVID – 19 pandemic disruption, it can give rise to a plethora of consequences.

Experiencing a smooth transition and induction process establishes firm foundations for young people to flourish in their new surroundings. Therefore, with the help of our participant chaplains and consultants, we are delighted to produce this resource. Many of the ideas you may already do, but hopefully they will offer some new ways of ensuring students develop a deep sense of belonging and feel known within the school community. We are very grateful to all the chaplains who have freely given their time and expertise in developing this resource.

BELONGING & BEING KNOWN

The process of induction provokes a journey of welcome, belonging and becoming known. There are various levels involved with this process, all of which are integral to the procedure.

The initial level is practical in nature, where crucial data about students is transferred and communication between primary and secondary transition leads take place. Through this process, new students are known about by the secondary school.

The second level, often characterised by transition days and summer schools, invites students to belong collectively. This time often focuses on team building and getting to know one another.

The third level brings students into a personal sense of belonging, where they are known by name; where they feel valued and respected for the unique person they are. This stage is ongoing, and a deepening of being personally known. It engenders Buber's understanding of the I-thou relationship - a mutually, transparent, and authentic relationship with other.

Within a Christian context, this sense of being known is underpinned by Biblical tradition and awareness, as indicated in the diagram (p.7). Having this deep awareness of belonging and being known can provide a crucial anchor and foundation for personal growth and flourishing and it is at this level of induction that we believe chaplains particularly can play a significant role.

Practical Induction

- Transfer of data from primary to secondary school
- Link visits between primary and secondary school educators

KNOWING
ABOUT

Invitational Belonging

- Transition days, meeting new friends and teachers, getting a sense of the new school environment
- Summer schools, team working with staff and peers. Starting to build relationships

COLLECTIVE
KNOWING

Personal Relational Belonging

- Individually known by name, valued and respected
- Accepted for who you are
- A mutual, authentic, transparent relationship of I with other (Martin Buber's I-thou relationship)

KNOWN
BY NAME

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are mine.

Isaiah 43:1

Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1 Corinthians
13:12

You have searched me Lord, and you know me.

Psalm 139:1

SPIRITUAL BELONGING AND THE ROLE OF THE CHAPLAIN

- Inviting someone to belong is synonymous with being welcomed and accepted.
- Offering a sense of belonging can provide a pathway to connection with others, but it doesn't always establish a deep relational sentiment of being known.
- Sometimes the term belonging can act as a facade for the desire to fit in and feel accepted rather than truly being part of something.
- Spiritual belonging is rooted in Biblical tradition proclaiming that primarily we belong to God. In the beginning, humanity was created to be in perfect harmony with God, and belong to Him, for we are His creation (Genesis 1:26).
- The Bible speaks of the intimacy of belonging to God and of being loved. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Moreover, as God has loved us, so we should love each other and welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us, (John 13:34 & Romans 15:7).
- The chaplain's role involves walking alongside others in the highs and lows of life. Creating and fostering an environment where a climate of hope exists and positive relationships can develop, underpins a chaplain's role.
- Chaplains are rooted in the wisdom of faith and spirituality and can call upon this rich heritage to support and invite young people to belong to their new school by being known. They can accompany students and provide opportunities for them to connect with their faith, community, and school traditions.

In Christ, we can find true belonging, for true belonging is being simultaneously fully known and fully loved.

(Linneman, J. 2019)¹

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SPIRITUALITY AND SPIRITUAL FLOURISHING?

At the core of every individual is the spiritual that kindles our sense of awe, wonder and the transcendent. We all have a natural need for making sense of our world; for curiosity; for questioning; for purpose; for belonging; to be hopeful. Consequently, every person lives a spirituality (Ryan, 1997, pp. 8–9)².

Whilst spirituality need not be expressed through religious belief, for some young people, their spiritual core is expressed through their faith in God.

Providing opportunities for students to engage with the worshipping community and encounter the power of the Gospel is crucial for fostering intimate connections with self, others, and God.

This understanding of Spiritual flourishing is linked to the Hebrew concept of shalom and denotes a right relationship with God, with others, with creation and self. It is about living life to the full.

(John 10:10)

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- 1 Linneman, J. (2019) What our search for belonging reveals: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/search-belonging/>
 - 2 Rev. Stephen Ryan, OSM Chaplains Are More than What Chaplains Do in Vision, January 1997 (Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 8–9).

BEFORE THE STUDENTS ARRIVE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

How can these ideas help students encountering a crisis situation?

Having a person in school who can act as a point of contact, that is a friendly face, who has been met in the primary context, can give a sense of confidence and security when starting a new school.

Prayer can be a source of comfort in times of trouble.

GETTING TO KNOW THE CHAPLAIN

How many primary school children know what a chaplain is and what they do?

- A welcome card or video from the chaplain, or a social media link with your name and something about you helps you to become known.
- A schedule of weekly chaplaincy activities sent in the induction welcome pack encourages new students to engage.
- The school prayer together with a welcome message from the chaplain could be sent out to feeder schools.



CALENDARISE KEY TOUCH POINTS FOR YEAR 6 FEEDER SCHOOLS

- Send a message to year 6 classes at Easter and Christmas time.
- Let primary school pupils know -I'm praying for you as you sit your SATs.
- A candle gifted from the chaplain to key feeder schools for year 6 to use in prayer time at key moments in the year.
- Send a well-done card on receiving confirmation of your new secondary school.

MEETING WITH THE CHAPLAIN AND CHAPLAINCY STUDENT TEAM

Is it possible for key staff, including the chaplain, from the secondary school to meet the primary school children?

- Could the chaplain visit key feeder schools to lead assemblies? If a school has a number of feeder schools, could virtual assemblies be carried out by the chaplain?
- Could the student chaplaincy team visit KS2 children and engage with younger students?

PRAYER REQUESTS FROM NEW STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

As part of the online transition information on your school website, include a section where prayers can be added from families and students preparing to join the school.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Secondary schools that manage to bridge the gap well between primary and secondary phases set up their students for a life times successful learning.

(Leaton et al, 2021)

We talk a lot of making sure that year 6 children are 'secondary-ready.' But what if we have got that all wrong, or at least partly wrong? What if we actually need to make secondary school, primary-child-ready?

(Severs, 2021)

Forging trusted links with parents and guardians of young people can further cement the power of attachment relationships.

(Masten, 2014)

LISTENING TO CHAPLAINS

“ Each time the school magazine goes out, I have a two-page spread in it. One of these magazines is sent out with the prospectus for new students so my work is fairly visible.

“ Academisation helps because then you've got your primaries within your MATs, then you've got a tighter transition, because you're closer connected.

“ If the school have good platforms to be able to promote yourself, I think you as a chaplain in a school, you have to find those opportunities to get yourself in there.

“ If the big school has come to them and they're recognising faces and the chaplain is talking to them, there's already that relationship. So, it is the secondary perhaps going to primary.

SCHOOL VISIT DAYS

MEET AND GREET

- A chaplain presence at the school gates at the beginning and end of the school day helps welcome new students into the school. If there is a school chaplaincy team, include these students. Maybe they could walk into the meeting area with the new students.
- Could the new students be given a card with the school prayer, mission or vision statement on it as a welcome?

HOW DO I CONTRIBUTE TO THE MISSION OR VISION OF MY NEW SCHOOL?

As part of the transition day visit, students could have a session with the chaplain looking at the school mission or vision statement, unpacking what it means and what it looks like in practice.

- They could be given 'spot the mission in practice' cards to fill out during their day and feedback in the afternoon.
- They could make their own promise cards of how they are going to live the mission or vision statement when they arrive.

Some may want to read these out at the end of the day during their welcome service.



KNOWN BY NAME

Engage in some getting to know you activities.

- Name bingo encourages students to go and find someone who knows something, has something etc. that is listed on their bingo card.
- Students could be encouraged to talk to the person next to them for 2 mins and then introduce each other to the rest of the class.

HOW CAN THESE IDEAS HELP STUDENTS ENCOUNTERING A CRISIS SITUATION?

Being known by name is a way of demonstrating that an individual is valued, important and respected. Having a personal welcome demonstrates care, and considering ways in which their character, talents and thoughts can contribute positively to the school community offers a sense of personally belonging.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

... a sense of belonging has a positive impact on achievement and how well a child transitions.

(Freud, 2020)

Students value chaplains who are 'approachable'; 'friendly'; 'warm'; 'visible'; 'a presence'; 'available'; 'non-judgemental.'

(Aune et al, 2019)

Attachment relationships beyond the caregiver are sought and formed as young people grow up. Thus, providing opportunities for new students to connect with competent, caring adults can ... enable them to feel secure, freeing them to explore their new environment.

(Masten, 2014)

LISTENING TO CHAPLAINS

“ A student being able to connect with me as a chaplain with simply a high five in the corridor is important.

“ It's important to raise the profile of the chaplain as students are inducted... I wear my chaplain hoodie...and it's really visible.

“ When the parents come to collect their children at the end of transition day, they have an hour with the head of year, and I have a slot in that as well to explain a little bit to parents about the presence of chaplaincy.

“ Why do we concentrate everything in transition season? If we're going to build up this relationship, why don't we start doing events throughout the year and just bring children into the school or us go out to the primary schools?

BECOMING KNOWN

MEET AND GREET

Be a visible presence to students. A ministry of presence can have a positive impact on students. Greet them as they arrive at school in the morning and in the afternoon as they go home. Spend some lunch times sitting amongst them.

PERSONAL INVITATION

Some students are too shy or have low self-esteem to put themselves forward for groups and tasks. A personal invitation to get involved with a student chaplaincy group may be all they need to engage, and even if they don't accept, being invited personally will leave them feeling valued.

YEAR 7 RETREAT

Early in the year arrange an in-school retreat day for each year 7 class or a retreat trip for year 7. Encourage each student to contribute in some way – even if it is designing a poster or something simple so that they feel they have been involved personally.



MEET THE CHAPLAIN IN THE CHAPEL/CHAPLAINCY

Over the course of the first term arrange to take a small group of students out of one of their curriculum classes (on a carousel basis), to spend time with you. This can be organised on a register rota system so that every student has an experience of meeting you and being in the Chaplaincy or Chapel area.

VULNERABLE STUDENT CHAPLAINCY TIME

Some students only feel comfortable in smaller groups. Often the school SENDCo will have groups of children in their area of the school during lunchtimes or break times. Could the chaplain offer a prayer session one lunch time a week especially for students who are vulnerable?

HEARING YEAR 7 VOICES

At the end of the first term in school give year 7 a questionnaire about their perception of belonging to their new school. Ask year 8 to help with the questions you ask. This will help pick up any individuals who are still struggling to belong.

HOW CAN THESE IDEAS HELP STUDENTS ENCOUNTERING A CRISIS SITUATION?

Being known on a 1:1 basis or within a small group setting will help students who feel overwhelmed by larger communities to feel connected and protected. Having personal invites to belong and being given a voice can be an empowering experience for vulnerable students.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

Research reveals that generally when children were asked in the autumn term how they were finding secondary school, most agreed that it was the same or better than expected.

(Leaton et al, 2021)

With physical puberty comes a biologically primed surge in natural spirituality. Teens are propelled like clockwork into an accentuated hunger for transcendence, search for ultimate meaning and purpose, and a desire for unitive connection.

(Miller, 2015)

Failing to nurture the spiritual identity of the child, whether within a religious tradition or outside of it, may in fact be the more damaging course of action. The spiritual nature of the child is shaped by the spiritual nurture it receives.

(Mark, 2016)

Having just one emotionally available adult in the child's life, in an ongoing consistent relationship results in the child's toxic stress calming down to tolerable stress.

(Sunderland, 2021)

LISTENING TO CHAPLAINS

“ I make sure that every morning I do a tour of the whole school so that I can speak to staff at the start of the day and then I'm out every breaktime talking to students around the school, I'm not just in one place.

“ I try to get into the year 7 classes regularly, just to say hello.

“ Our transition season continues for a long time so at the end of the year, in July, our year 7s go on pilgrimage for a week...It's a pilgrimage, it's not just a school trip, it's not just a residential, it's a pilgrimage, and it's part of understanding who we are as the community.

“ It's developing those relationships and they've got to be long term, and not just in a couple of months while this is transition season.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.

As part of the ministry of presence, the chaplain could:

- attend parent's evenings.
- be there for students when they have their school photos taken.
- be with students as they wait for their inoculations.

Consider other opportunities during the school day when the chaplain could be present.

2.

Remember many of the year 7 students have successfully and confidently taken leadership responsibilities during year 6 so build upon this confidence. During the induction process, find out what roles students have had in primary school and develop these skills further.

3.

Chaplains are constantly reaching out to others and can often find themselves pulled in different directions. Make sure that if you offer to meet with individual students or groups of students on a regular basis, only offer what you know you can sustain.

4.

Although this resource has been made with year 7 students in mind, it may be that due to the pandemic disruption, other year groups would benefit from some time given to help them fully connect and belong to their school community.



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