



YOU'RE NOT ALONE

A guide for the Christian
family in education

evangelical alliance 
better together



WHY THIS, AND WHY NOW?

E ducation is a good thing – and God is very much interested in it. Teaching and learning help us to develop our character and our knowledge about the world that God has created for us. Education can help us to grow into the people that God wants us to be. So, it's perfectly normal and legitimate for Christian parents to want their children to be encouraged in their faith and have an experience of Jesus that will direct their lives.

Across the world many struggle to access good education, but in the UK it's a hard-won privilege and a statutory right. And there's an expectation that we should all have the opportunity not only to learn the three Rs, but also to be able to discern and develop our gifts and talents – for our own benefit and for the good of all. All parents want this kind of fruitfulness for their children. All want their children to acquire the values and skills that are needed for independent living and for making a positive contribution to society.


However, the schooling system in the UK is not straightforward. It is vast, diverse and deeply political – seemingly forever subject to a bewildering, incessant flow of ideas, strategies and initiatives to deliver, improve and measure our children's education.

It is into this often confusing and fluid context that our children get their schooling. So if as a Christian parent you feel disorientated, confused or even slightly alarmed, you're certainly not alone.

But you're also not alone in terms of advice and support. With a particular emphasis on the role of parents and the local church in education, this resource aims to equip you to be more effectively involved in your child's education. Importantly, from an exploration of the biblical basis for education, it helps to address the question of who has authority. Affirming the primary role of parents, the supporting role of the Church, and the potential role of the state, it commends a positive and proactive engagement within education.

This resource (and the more detailed website) exists to affirm the rights and responsibilities of Christian parents and the broader Church community in education during a time of rapid social change. It's essential that Christian parents and church communities are prepared for the challenges such cultural changes can bring, and can meet them in a confident, positive and fruitful way. And as we better understand how education is a good thing and a God-thing, it is also essential that we realise that we are not alone.

We cover a lot of ground in this resource: there's information about choosing the right school; a review of the key issues and options for parents and children in pre-school, primary and secondary education, and with regard to Special Educational Needs and Disability; case studies of real life situations; and a brief Frequently Asked

Questions section covering some of the presenting issues and scenarios that arise in schools today. With so much to cover, we've only been able to scratch the surface of a lot of the topics, so we've also developed a website where you can find more detail. When you see this symbol  go to www.education.eauk.org to read more.

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Note: Although there are differences in the education systems of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the key principles of this report apply to them all. The resources section at the end includes links to agencies that work in each nation.

Disclaimer: As far as we are aware, the contents in this resource are accurate at the time of publication (March 2016). The Evangelical Alliance takes no responsibility for any errors or omissions. The information contained is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, and should be seen as general guidance and not construed as legal advice.

In the event of questions and issues relating to statutory regulations and their application it is recommended that expert legal advice should always be sought.



WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT EDUCATION?

The Bible educates – because God is a Father with a heart to teach and impart wisdom to His children. The book of Proverbs implores us to get wisdom and gain knowledge, and 2 Timothy 3.16 states that “All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

Among many other things, scripture as a whole teaches us about The Lord, His creation, His love and His redemptive power through Jesus Christ. Engaging with God’s Word forms a human basis for this teaching and learning, both intellectually and experientially. And it is character that God is most interested in – for stewardship of His world and for demonstrating the signs of His coming kingdom. Therefore, the primary purpose of this life of learning and discipleship is to grow in the knowledge and likeness of Christ – to become more like Jesus.

We are all made in God’s image, and because children are a blessing and “a heritage from the Lord” (Psalm 127.3), Christian parents have a special privilege and responsibility of co-educating them with God – and within the community of God’s people.

From the earliest days of your child’s life, you are teaching him or her about the things, attitudes and practices you value through the activities you do together, the behaviours you praise and the way you interact with others. As a Christian you will also be teaching and modelling Christian virtues and commandments, as instructed in the book of Deuteronomy: “These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (Deuteronomy 6.6-7). Parents are instructed to “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22.6).





WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR EDUCATION?



Parents

You are! The Bible teaches that parents are above all responsible for their children's education. Parents are the primary nurturers, role models, socialisers and source of morals for their children. It is the parents whom God has invested with the highest authority for the wellbeing and education of their children.

With the notable exception of some authoritarian states, governments across the world accept the primacy of parental authority in the home and in education. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises this responsibility, stating that: "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." This right is acknowledged in UK law.

Church



The Bible does not propose that parents should ever exercise their responsibility in isolation from a responsible community. Consequently, as the broader Christian family, the Church has an important collective role to play in education.

The Bible does distinguish between the roles of parents and the Christian community. However, inasmuch as the Church represents one body, there is also a clear responsibility for the Church to support Christian parents and children in educa-

tion because: "In Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Romans 12.5). Alongside this connectedness in Christ, the role of the Church to support parents can also be seen in relation to biblical principles such as: the duty of leadership; the imperative for discipleship; and the responsibility of the whole Church as a learning community in which we are called to:

Let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly, teaching and admonishing one another in

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all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [our] hearts to God (Colossians 3.16).

As such, church communities are called to encourage and support, both practically and prayerfully, Christian parents as teachers and Christian children as learners. Given the diverse nature of public and private education in the UK, it is clear that this responsibility also extends to being interested and involved in the local schools.

Alongside the obvious responsibilities of youth workers, this support can take a variety of forms such as: praying for and with school staff and/or students; pastoral support; being involved in assemblies, ceremonies and celebrations; missional outreach; conflict resolution; pre/after/extra-school activities; governance; and financially supporting the work of the school. One thing is clear for churches: opting out is not an option. As the African proverb says: "It takes a whole village to raise a child."



State

It is the role of the state to serve parents by providing and maintaining education for their children, which is paid for by taxation, though some parents opt to send their children to independent schools or educate them at home.

Additionally, your local council must provide education for children who cannot go to school because they have been excluded, are ill, or have been injured. This could be at a hospital school, a pupil-referral unit, a further education college, or a work experience placement.

The framework for state schools varies considerably between the different countries of the United Kingdom:

In England state-maintained schools must use the National Curriculum which

sets out what most children should be taught. However, academies, though state-funded, have significant freedoms in what they teach and do not have to follow the National Curriculum.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects and regulates education services to ensure that standards are maintained. Ofsted operates in all English state-maintained schools and some independent schools. Most independent schools are monitored by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).

In Wales and Northern Ireland schools follow amended versions of the National Curriculum. In Northern Ireland, schools are inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), part of

the Northern Ireland Department of Education. In Wales inspection is by Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales.

In Scotland all schools follow Curriculum for Excellence guidelines which emphasise the development of character as well as


knowledge, understanding and skills. Curriculum for Excellence gives individual schools considerable flexibility to meet local needs. Scottish schools are inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) who are part of Education Scotland, a government agency which advises and supports all Scottish schools.

WORKING TOGETHER

Contrary to popular belief, teachers rarely finish work at 3.30pm. After many hours on their feet in front of classes, most teachers stay in the school for several hours each day evaluating, tidying, planning and trying to stay on top of record-keeping. And most continue to work at home in their evenings and during weekends. This means that a 60-hour week is quite normal, and the pressure from parents, school leaders and inspection agencies can make a busy job so stressful that even the long holidays are little compensation.

One way in which churches and Christian parents can make a big difference is to develop positive, supportive and

encouraging relationships with teachers and other school staff. It is easy, particularly when children reach secondary school age and start being taught by different people for different subjects, to think of teachers as anonymous agents of the state, or at least as faceless 'service providers', of whom we can make demands and from whom we expect to receive a neat finished product on exam results day. Remembering that they are human beings, made in the image of God, can transform the way we interact with them.

 Read some 'day in the life of' case studies from teachers on our website: www.education.eauk.org



Four ways to support your children's teachers:

1. Pray



Teaching can be stressful. Praying as a family for teachers, school friends and other parents is powerful, and can also instil a sense of responsibility in your child for the life of the school. Visit www.prayforschools.org for ideas and resources.

2. Be positive and encouraging



Express respect for the valuable work the teachers do. Teachers often receive complaints from parents, so saying 'thank you' or sending a card or a gift can be simple ways to bless them in their work. Christians are the bearers of the Good News. You are much more likely to influence the school if you and your church are known as people offering positive help and ideas.

3. Be practical



Take opportunities to offer your skills. This could be with music, art, sport, going on school trips or simply listening to children reading. Or you or your friends may have a different cultural background or interesting experiences that you could share about. See our resources section for links to websites with more ideas of how you (or your church) can serve your local school.

4. Be a school governor



Join the Parent-Teacher Association at your children's school — and show up to the meetings. Or become a governor. From shaping the ethos of the school to holding the headteacher to account, governors have a vital role to play. Learn what's involved and how to become a school governor on our website www.education.eauk.org In Scotland, Parent Councils fulfil broadly the same role. To find out how to join a Parent Council visit www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone/gettinginvolved/parentcouncils

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Christian parents should be the ones that teachers look forward to interacting with, not the ones they dread. Education is a partnership, and one that works best when the partners appreciate and respect each other.



WHICH SCHOOL?

STATE SCHOOL

FAITH-ETHOS SCHOOL

CHURCH SCHOOL

ACADEMY

FREE SCHOOL

SPECIAL SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

HOME EDUCATION

SINGLE-SEX SCHOOL

As your child approaches school age, you will need to choose a school or consider home education.

Education provision across the UK is diverse, and when choosing a school for your child it is important to first make enquiries with parents of other Christian children to establish the ethos of the schools they are familiar with and the nature of the teaching and learning communities. If a school has a formal connection with a local church, it may also be helpful to contact the church leader to enquire about the depth of involvement in the life of the school.

It is also important to review the information provided on school websites. This will help you to understand the ethos of the school, the values it promotes, the virtues it seeks to cultivate, the depth of home-school relationships, and the attainment levels of pupils.

Home-schooling, or home education – the education of children inside the home – is

CASE STUDY

The local option

There were a number of reasons why we chose a local comprehensive school for our boys (now aged 23, 20 and 15). We wanted them to make friends locally and we liked the fact that they would be mixing with a great variety of people. Also, we felt that our local schools needed the support of church families.

It has not always been an easy ride, but overall we have been very pleased with the choice we made and our boys would say they have benefitted from the experience. In fact, our middle son moved to a Bromley school after his GCSEs but lasted only a week before returning to his old school – he missed the racial and social diversity of Lewisham! Along the way, they learned to defend their faith in often hostile contexts, and I am glad to say they are all still going on with God.

Deb, Lewisham

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also a legal option for parents in the UK. It takes place either within a single family unit or with children from a few different families, and is usually conducted by a parent or tutor. Visit our resources page for some websites that can help you think through whether this is the right course for your family.

Making your choice

When deciding when – or whether – to send your child to schooling outside the home, there will be many factors at play, to do with location, cultural expectations, financial need, philosophical stance and simple personality and preferences.

Whether you have the luxury of being able to choose your children's schooling provision or not, you might want to think about which of the following matter most to you.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

SPORTING PROWESS

CREATIVITY/ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

SOCIALISATION

OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE AND EXPRESS THEIR FAITH

CROSS-CULTURAL FRIENDSHIPS

EXPOSURE TO OTHER WORLDVIEWS

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GODLY CHARACTER

Are these things that the school should offer? Or do you think that you should be providing them outside of the school day? Understanding these expectations you

have will help you choose and evaluate schools and guide your children through the challenges. With all of this in mind, three helpful questions to ask yourself are:

- 1 What are the school's real values?
- 2 How will the school shape my child's spiritual development?
- 3 What Christian support is available?

The case studies below and above are written by parents whose ethos and values led them to make very different decisions about how they wanted their children to be educated. You can find stories from parents who chose different routes on our website

 www.education.eauk.org

CASE STUDY

Home education

I first thought of home educating when I was pregnant with my first daughter. A second daughter followed, and after a few years in school I decided that home rather than the classroom was the perfect environment to learn.

Thus a wonderful, challenging and at times frustrating chapter of our lives began. My girls discovered my weaknesses all too soon (maths!) but the adventure taught us more than any text book ever could. We regularly joined with other home educators in the area, both Christian and secular. We did sports together, and visited farms, mines, a worm farm, a bakery; the list is endless.

Their grades are of no consequence to me. I am proud of their achievements, but I am prouder still of the young ladies they have become.

Trish, Carlisle



IF YOU DON'T GET THE CHOICE

Of course, with limited places available at each school, you may find that your child didn't get a place at your first or second, or even third choice of school. If this happens – don't panic!

First, call the school/s you hoped to get into and ask to be put on the waiting list. There is conflicting advice on whether you should accept the place you've been offered or not – some say yes, because then at least you've got somewhere, some say no, because local authorities will then take you off all other LA waiting lists (though this doesn't apply to free schools, academies or voluntary-aided schools).

You can appeal, but appeals have a low success rate and can be long and stressful. Make sure you have strong grounds for the appeal, and check your Local Authority's website to find out how to go about it.

As Christians, we also have the assurance of the sovereignty of God to rely on. We can come to Him in prayer for a favourable outcome, asking for his peace with whatever decision is made, and for His guidance for how to help and equip our children to make the most of a less-than-ideal situation. What is His purpose for you as a family, for your children and for the school community in putting you in this situation? This kind of perspective can be very helpful in dealing with difficult situations throughout the school career and beyond.

In Scotland, your child has an automatic right to attend the state school (non-denominational or Roman Catholic) within the catchment area where you live. You can also make a “placing request” for your child to attend a school further away. This will normally be granted if the school has spare capacity.





INFO, ISSUES AND OPTIONS

Children must receive education from the start of the term after their fifth birthday, though many start earlier.

In England and Wales, Primary schools admit children from the ages of four (in Reception classes) through to 11. Key Stage 1 (the infant age range) is from age five to seven; and Key Stage 2 (the junior age range) is from age seven to 11. Secondary schools admit children from the ages of 11 through to 16. This is known as Key Stages 3 and 4.

Pupils in Wales can leave school on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they are 16. In England, they must continue in education until their 18th birthday. This can include apprenticeships or part-time education while working.

Education in Northern Ireland is similar to the structure set up in England, with a few key differences. For instance, the age of a child on 1 July determines when they need to start school, whereas in England and Wales it is 1 September.

Also, all Northern Irish schools follow the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Primary school students do not take Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 National Curriculum Tests (Standard Attainment Tests, or SATs).

Children in Scotland complete seven years of primary school, starting in P1 (the equivalent of Year 1 classes in England), going up to P7. After this, they do six years of secondary school from S1 to S6 (equivalent to Y8 to Y13 in England). Secondary schools in Scotland are also known as high schools or academies. In place of the National Curriculum, Scotland follows the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

Scottish children do not take SATs, but Scotland's First Minister announced in August 2015 that new national, standardised assessments are to be introduced for pupils in P1, P4, P7 and S3. The new assessments will start in 2017, after being piloted in 2016, and will focus on literacy and numeracy.





PRE-SCHOOL

The period from birth to five years is known as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and covers pre-school, kindergarten, nursery and early years education, including school Reception classes.

There is no legal obligation for children to attend nurseries or school until they reach the age of five, but working parents often find that nurseries provide an ideal combination of care and education. Often children attend nursery for just one or two days a week at first, before attending for longer periods once they have settled in.

All three and four year olds in England can get a number of hours of free early education or childcare per year. Some two year olds are also eligible.

Issues and options:

When choosing a nursery, it's important to look for:

- how patient and caring the staff are;
- how happy, settled and friendly the children are;
- what kind of resources, toys and equipment are available; and
- what condition the building and play area are in.

Where there is a high demand for limited places, it is advisable to register your child

to attend the nursery as soon as possible after birth.

HOW THE CHURCH CAN HELP

Because much of pre-school education is privately run and exists to support working parents, it can be expensive. Many churches have found that establishing a nursery can offer an opportunity to meet the needs of the local community by providing an affordable and caring Christian environment for young children.

Pre-school or early years education can play a key role in a child's development. Generally, it can help children to socialise, learn through play and grow in creativity. However, some children may not be ready for such interaction, and each child should be assessed on whether they will thrive in a formal nursery environment, or whether a less structured playschool-type arrangement may be a helpful transitional step.

Forming bonds of friendship is very important for nursery age children, and it's always helpful to talk to nursery staff and encourage the child to participate in group activities in order to build relationships. If your child is unhappy, you can remove him or her at any time from the pre-school. However, it is wise to first establish the source of the unhappiness before making a decision to remove the child.

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PRIMARY

Issues and options:

With studies becoming more subject-focussed in primary education, pupils are expected to do increasing amounts of homework. As a parent, you should be informed of the amount of homework expected each term, and you will be encouraged to get involved.

Children are assessed for educational progress at primary school. In England and Wales this takes the form of 'SATs' - Standard Assessment Tests. Teacher assessments in English, Maths and Science are set at the end of Year 2, and external tests in the same three subject areas are taken by pupils at the end of Year 6 (Key Stage 2 SATs). The aim of SATs is to assess the child's academic strengths and weaknesses in order to develop a strategy and level for their education. Also 'teacher assessment' looks at the child's performance across the whole subject over a set period of time. Together, these can help parents to understand better the educational progress of the child.

Alongside extra revision 'booster groups' provided for children who may be struggling in a certain area of the curriculum, you can help your children prepare for the SATs by encouraging them in their school-

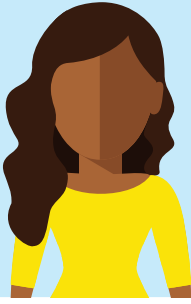
work and homework, and by letting them have time to relax and play as well.

Many children get very anxious about tests, so praying together about them can be really helpful. It is important to help your children understand that testing is in part to help the teachers know what areas their pupils need more help in. Be mindful of the need to avoid putting undue pressure on children facing tests: they also need to know that you love them and are proud of them whatever their academic achievements. Praise effort and application as well as attainment, and support and celebrate their achievements in other areas to avoid seeming to favour knowledge (or the ability to do well in tests, which is not always the same thing!).

HOW THE CHURCH CAN HELP

Primary education offers many opportunities for participating in sport and after-school clubs. Churches can often provide venues or staff to support these activities.

If you have any concerns about any issues at your children's school you should first speak to the child's teacher, followed by the deputy head (or year head) and then the head teacher.



SECONDARY

All secondary schools have induction days at the end of the summer term where new pupils entering Year 7/ Secondary 1 can visit the school, meet the teachers and explore the facilities. Schools also have detailed prospectuses which can be accessed via their websites.

Issues and options:

Starting at a secondary school is always a key moment in a child's education. With most children moving from a primary school of just a few hundred pupils to a secondary school of a thousand or more pupils, the transition can be often be a testing time for children and parents. Going from being among the oldest children in a school to being among the youngest can be quite daunting, and along with finding their way to and around the large new school, your children will also encounter different teachers for different subjects.

As a mark of a passage into adolescence, they will also be expected to take more responsibility for things like planning for each day's timetable; making sure they have the right books and equipment; and doing homework most evenings, which has to fit into their routine alongside other interests. They will also make new friends. All of which means that it may take some

time for your child to settle into a routine in which they can prosper. Prayer, encouragement, conversations, and practical support from family, friends and your church are important at this time.

Secondary school is where children become teenagers. Amid increased homework, testing and exams, it's also where issues can arise such as stress and depression; talking about sex; pornography; online safety; talking about and using alcohol and drugs; having a mobile phone; and using social media. Helping your child to develop a strong work ethic, make good friends, communicate well, and resolve tensions and arguments is important at this time.

HOW THE CHURCH CAN HELP

Church has a vital role to play in providing fellowship among young people during the secondary school years, and a youth group leader or other respected adult can be a vital resource during your child's adolescence, providing Christian counsel, teaching and encouragement.

If you have any concerns about any issues at your child's school you should first speak to the child's teacher, and/or the teacher in charge of pastoral care, and then the head teacher.



SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND)

"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalm 139. 13-14).

Parents of children with special educational needs or disabilities need to find the right help and support. Whether this help needs to be temporary or lifelong, alongside disability, there are four areas that define special needs in education:

- thinking and learning;
- social, emotional and mental health;
- communication and interaction;
- physical needs (including seeing and hearing difficulties).

Issues and options:

About two per cent of children in the UK have challenges which require a level of support additional to what the school ordinarily provides, and are given an education, health and care (EHC) plan. EHC plans identify educational, health and social needs and set out the additional support to meet those needs. They are designed to help you make informed decisions about the most appropriate form of schooling, including whether to choose a mainstream school with additional support or a special school.

Although schools are supported to access funding for children with EHC plans, some

children may develop better without being labelled in this way. It is important to gauge whether assessments are necessary for your child. If in doubt, talk to your GP, who has no vested interest in the question.

If your child does not have special educational needs, see our FAQs below for ideas on how to reach out to those who do – and to their parents.

CASE STUDY

A parent's perspective

Our daughter was eight when she was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome. We have been around the merry-go-round of occupational therapy, psychological assessments and counselling. Life became easier once she obtained a Statement of Special Education Needs (now called an EHC Plan) and was given an escort to transport her safely to school. Time and again we have seen the Lord move mountains to get us the provision she required.

God has given her enormous gifts. Through her we have recognised our need for total reliance on Him. Most important of all we have learned to accept her for who she is. She is not a problem to be solved but a person to be loved.

Kathryn, St Albans



HOW CAN THE CHURCH HELP?

What can the church community do to support parents and children in education?

Listen to parents. It's important for the church community to be informed of what's happening in the school community. This can be done either informally, through day-to-day conversations, or more formally, through regular updates before services and at home-group meetings.

Listen to children. Children's groups and youth groups in the church offer ideal opportunities to foster a sense of responsibility and mission about school life. This can be done by providing time to share experiences, study biblical stories related to teaching and learning, and to pray.

Teach. Provide good teaching to help the whole church family navigate the issues that children, teenagers, parents and school staff face.

What can the church community do to support the school community?

Be interested. It is important that church leaders encourage the whole church to take an active interest in the life of the local schools. Tell the teaching staff that the church is praying for the school and ask them what they would like prayer for.

Be involved. The church community can be a great resource to support the extra-curricular activities of the school by providing people and facilities for out-of-school clubs etc. Churches can also be good places to find volunteers to set up one-to-one reading support, mentoring programmes or projects like prayer spaces in schools.

Be investors. Schools are often in need of funds for equipment, facilities or resources, and churches can be great places to raise these funds. So find out what the school needs – and think about how your church can help to meet that need.

CASE STUDY

Bringing God into schools

'Prayer Spaces in Schools', an initiative of 24-7 Prayer, enables children and young people to explore faith and spirituality in a safe, creative and interactive way.

Teachers bring their students for a lesson in the prayer space, reflecting on issues such as forgiveness, injustice, and identity. Students are also invited to visit the prayer space voluntarily, during their breaks.

"I don't even believe in all that stuff, but I could feel God in there!" Year 9 student.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This little booklet simply isn't big enough to cover all the questions you may have about how you and your children can have the best possible experience of the education system. We have put together a far more detailed FAQs section on our dedicated website, www.education.eauk.org, and will continue to update it as things change and new questions arise.

Here are just a few brief answers to some of the most common questions, though, to give you a taster:

1. I'm concerned about what my child might be taught in certain subjects. What should I do?

Approach the teacher at the beginning of the year. Ask if you can see the topics for the term ahead, the course outline or perhaps the materials for certain modules. If anything is unclear, request another face to face meeting to ask for more detailed information. Remember to approach the teacher/parent relationship as a partnership. If you are uncomfortable about anything, discuss that with the teacher. He or she may be open to introducing other ideas to the class, or to helping different pupils express different viewpoints.

If you still feel, after working with the teacher as far as possible, that your child will be taught views you do not agree with, in a way that you will be unable to counter at home, you do, in some instances, have the legal right to remove your child from certain classes.

Remember:

- Withdrawing your child from a class can open him or her up to teasing or even bullying. He or she is likely to feel singled out and at a disadvantage.
- Your child will come across these views at some point in life. You may wish to take this opportunity to help your child think through the different perspectives and understand why you hold a Christian view. You can find more information on how to take concerns and complaints forward in the FAQs section of our website.

2. What should I do if my child is being bullied?

Talk to the teacher about it. Establish the facts. Develop a plan of action to deal with the issue. If you are still concerned, talk to the head teacher.

3. How can my church support the local school in prayer?

Pray for the children, the parents and the teachers. Pray at key times, such as the beginning of a school term and during exams. Invite the head teacher to talk to the church. Offer to lead an assembly. Schedule regular prayer in the church. Set up an annual dedicated week of prayer for the school or an annual Education Sunday. Preach sermons about acquiring knowledge for a wise life. Hold a parents meeting to discuss values in education. Prayer walk around the school. Engage with prayer ministries for schools (see www.prayforschools.org).

4. How can I as a parent get more closely involved in my child's school?

You can become a school governor (see www.transforminggoverning.org.uk) or join the Parent Council; become a teaching assistant; offer to help with after school activities; raise funds for facilities, resources or activities; join the parent-teacher association; volunteer to help listen to children read.

5. Can I set up a Free School?

Yes! There are growing numbers of free schools in England, though not as yet elsewhere in the UK. There is information on the necessary criteria on this website:

www.gov.uk/set-up-free-school and the charity New Schools Network has lots of help and advice: www.newschoolsnetwork.org.



CASE STUDY

Harmonize Academy

Harmonize started as a project in Liverpool Lighthouse, the UK's first dedicated Urban Gospel Arts Centre, with a vision to use urban gospel arts and music to engage young people at risk of exclusion from mainstream school. It was triggered partly in response to the high levels of truancy we observed around our area. The project initially ran as a pilot with funding from the Learning & Skills Council, and took young people from school for six weeks at a time, involving them in a programme of gospel singing, music, and anger management, addressing their behaviour issues and then returning them to school.

By the end of the first year it had become clear that some of these young people simply could not flourish in mainstream environment. We devised a full time programme and approached the Local Education Authority as well as schools, to refer young people to us. The referrals started coming in and we built up to two groups of 15, one for Year 11 and one for Year 10 and younger.

In 2011 we began the process of applying to become a Free School. It was a very long and difficult season, and we experienced significant opposition from the first project lead and education adviser appointed by the DFE to guide us. However, we were eventually able to get the support we needed, and some additional funding toward refurbishing the school building, and the school opened in April 2013. We were delighted in March 2015 to receive an Outstanding Ofsted grade.

Dr Modupe Omideyi
CEO, Liverpool Lighthouse





SUMMARY

It's not easy to be a Christian parent today. Feeling a bit isolated? Slightly bewildered? Don't worry. During schooling years this is normal. For a parent (as well as a child) the whole education experience can often seem complex, frustrating and even overwhelming. From choosing the right school, to dealing with the vast range of issues and options children face on the journey of education, it's a challenge for every parent. So, we hope that you've found this booklet a helpful guide.

We produced this resource because we want to inform you of your responsibilities and rights in education; and to encourage you to engage with school life more confidently. The common thread that links the various sections in the booklet is the message that Christian parents play an important role in sustaining the goodness of God across the generations - and churches should help them in this role.

Throughout history, our faith has inspired immense contributions to teaching and learning. Whether it's developing literacy, school systems or universities - the Christian involvement in shaping and providing education is unparalleled. This has happened, and continues to happen across the world today, because our God wants all His children to grow in the knowledge and character of Christ. In understanding education in this way - as an important part of our gospel mandate

to 'disciple the nations' - we hope that this resource encourages you to continue in this illustrious tradition. Practically, our hope is that, as parents are encouraged to support children and be more involved in school life, churches will also be encouraged to support parents. In our schools this link between churches, parents and children is vital for a healthy and happy society. You are an important link in this chain. There's much good you can do.

In the UK we have long-established rights to raise our families in accordance with our beliefs. Such rights are important, but as Christians we should never see rights as our primary or exclusive basis for engagement in education. Followers of Christ simply cannot be seen to operate like the many self-designated victim groups that plague our society. As this resource shows, our principal role must always be to give, to lift up, to bless, to

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

treat others as we want to be treated ourselves, to love our neighbour – and to pray. Our responsibilities to God and to all those made in his image must above all else characterise our engagement in education. Indeed, if we fail to understand or accept our responsibilities, we may well miss the many opportunities that education provides for us to be 'salt and light' by demonstrating the servant-leadership of Christ to a lost world. This booklet reminds us all of our responsibilities to be faithful witnesses to God in this sphere, and to be active in supporting our children and their school communities.

This doesn't mean that our hard-won rights are not important. Given that freedom of religion is a foundation for many other rights and liberties in society, there also is a corresponding responsibility for you to

understand your rights in education, and to exercise them prudently.

You may well have more questions on these and other issues. So, we have also created a web resource with an extensive 'FAQ' section for you. It also contains more detailed information about the things we have covered in the booklet, and provides links to other organisations, information and resources that can help you.

We hope that this booklet has informed and encouraged you. You have rights and responsibilities as a Christian parent, and your potential contribution both to education and to broader society is significant. Amid the complexities and challenges of discipling your children during their school years, more than ever, you need to know that God is with you, that the church is behind you – and that you are not alone.





LINKS & RESOURCES

General:

Youth for Christ: Youth ministry with resources for schools www.yfc.co.uk

Scripture Union: www.scriptureunion.org.uk

Scripture Union Northern Ireland: www.suni.co.uk

Scripture Union Scotland: www.suscotland.org.uk

Ministries in and for schools:

Pray for Schools: www.prayforschools.org

Prayer Spaces in Schools: www.prayerspacesinschools.com

Open the Book: Enabling every child to hear the story of the Bible at school in their primary years. www.biblesociety.org.uk/openthebook

Practical resources:


Transforming Governing: Supporting Christians to be more involved and more effective as School Governors www.transforminggoverning.org.uk

Home education resources: Find help with the issues surrounding home education from the Home Education Advisory Service (www.heas.org.uk) and the Christian Home Education Support Service (CHESS) www.thehomeservice.org

It's Your Move: Scripture Union's resource to help prepare children for the transition to secondary school. www.scriptureunion.org.uk/ItsYourMove

Serve Your Local School: A wealth of practical suggestions for churches and individual Christians to link up with their local school: www.syls.org.uk

Christian Values in Education Scotland: An extensive Christian site for educational resources and advice: www.cve-scotland.org.uk

 Visit www.education.eauk.org for links to more resources and networks.



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