



Prayer Spaces in Schools

Research Project, 2017
Research findings presentation

Notes for presenters

Before you start...

You will need some copies of the summary report booklet to hand out.

Look through the slideshow and read these notes. There may be places where you could add a story from your own experience that matches the findings and the pupil quotes from the report. But do this sparingly or it will extend this presentation.

Slide 1 "Findings from a ..."

Start here.

Show copies of the Research Summary booklet (A5, 8 page) but don't hand them out until the end.

Mention that the full research findings and a pdf of the summary booklet can be downloaded from the Prayer Spaces in Schools web site (url shown on this slide).

Slides 2 to 9

These are intended for audiences that are not familiar with prayer spaces in schools or have not seen one running in a school. For these audiences it is important that they grasp the key values of prayer spaces in schools and have some idea of what they look like before they consider the findings of the research.

If your audience is made up of people that are already familiar with running prayer spaces and you are short of time you can skip to Slide 10.

Slide 2 "Prayer spaces enable ..."

This highlights the core purpose of prayer spaces in schools.

Read the statement out and emphasise these points:

"... all faiths and none ..." Prayer spaces are created to be inclusive of all pupils, whatever they do or do not believe.

"... explore spirituality, faith and life's big questions ..." The emphasis is on spiritual development but with the opportunity to learn more about the experience of prayer for people of faith.

"... safe, creative and interactive ..." One of the special features of prayer spaces is the way pupils can engage individually with the activities and learn for themselves.

Slide 3 "Prayer Spaces in Schools equips ..."

Make the point that prayer spaces are a way to serve and support a local school.

Slides 4 to 9

Move quickly through these slides. They are intended to give an overview of what prayer spaces look like. If you change any of the photos make sure you still end up with a mix of primary and secondary spaces.

Slide 4 – Secondary school photo

Slide 5 – Secondary school hall

Slide 6 – School library

Slide 7 – College concourse

Slide 8 – Primary school

Slide 9 – Primary school

Slide 10 – "Aim - to research ..."

Read out the research aim. Schools are required to show that their pupils are developing spiritually, and we wanted to evidence the contribution that prayer spaces make to this. Try to avoid implying that prayer spaces 'tick a box' when it comes to spiritual development and schools. The language of 'box ticking' is neither helpful nor accurate when it comes to evaluating this aspect of pupil development.

Slide 11 "Research tools ..."

The first phase of the research involved asking pupils to complete a questionnaire after having taken part in a prayer space. Parental consent was obtained before we could use pupil's answers.

Slide 12 “Research tools ...”

In the second phase some pupils and staff were interviewed by the researchers.

Slide 13 “The schools”

Data was gathered from primary and secondary schools, both community and faith foundation, and from the north and south of England.

Slide 14 “Spirituality as ...”

In evaluating the contribution to spiritual development, the approach to spirituality was one described as ‘relational’, connected to the work of David Hay on ‘relational consciousness’ (Hay 2007 and Hay with Nye 2006) and to the advice given by various UK-based curriculum and inspection bodies.

This approach is summarised in a working definition of spiritual development as helping to enhance relationships with (a) the self, (b) with other people, (c) with the world (in constituent parts or as a whole), and (d) with the sacred and divine.

Slides 15 to 29

You may wish to give additional examples from your own experience of running prayer spaces of pupil’s responses that match those of the research findings. If you do, make sure that any story clearly illustrates the findings of each of these sections.

Please keep the pupil quotes that are already on the slides as these come from the research interviews.

If you change any of the photos, make sure that they still show a prayer space activity that links with the pupil quotes.

Slide 27 “Other findings – Agency”

This refers to the way prayer spaces allow pupils to engage with the activities in their own way with the freedom to take part and to respond for themselves. Some teachers spoke of the freedom and autonomy that prayer spaces afford. They allow pupils to engage with and encounter prayer in their own way and on their own terms.

Slide 28 “Other findings – physicality”

Prayer spaces are very ‘hands on’ in their approach. Something that pupils often find engaging and helpful. You might have a story of a young person who normally struggles with their attention in class but who was very focused and engaged when in the prayer space.

Slide 29 “Other findings – neutrality”

This refers to the value of having people from outside the school running the prayer space as it separates the space from pupil’s relationships with their teachers. This links helpfully with the value of prayer spaces enabling local Christians to serve and support their local school.

Slide 30 Conclusion

The conclusion of the report authors, Professor Julian Stern and Rachael Shillitoe.

Hand out copies of the summary report and direct people to the page on the Prayer Spaces in Schools web site.

“We can report that the evidence suggests that prayer space activities do indeed contribute to the spiritual development of children and young people.” Authors

Prayer Spaces in Schools is a resource hub for the growing network of practitioners running prayer spaces in their local schools. It is overseen by a small team who manage the website, encourage the sharing of resources and good practice and support training workshops and local networks.

Contact us:

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Find out more about our research project here:
www.prayerspacesinschools.com/research2017