

A friendly face

Diocesan Friends Scheme

For several years the diocese has recruited and supported a team of school visitors/friends who commit voluntarily to:

- Visit a school on a regular basis
- Meet with the headteacher and other school staff
- Build up a relationship with a school over time and become a friend of the school

It is anticipated that the role will develop over time but importantly it will depend on the circumstances and wishes of each headteacher and school. Schools use their diocesan friend in different ways. Examples include:

- To listen, encourage and celebrate success
- Share insights and experiences from their own experience (many of these volunteers have been headteachers in the past, particularly in church schools)
- Suggest points of contact, including the diocese, for help and advice
- Be available in times of need
- Offer confidential pastoral support
- Pray for the school, staff, children and parents
- Take part in collective worship
- Visits to the church for special services
- School celebrations
- Helping in class (e.g. listening to readers)

The volunteers involved in this work do not act as or replace diocesan advisers but rather are an informal means of support for those schools who wish to take part in the scheme. There is no 'reporting back' element, unless of course the headteacher wishes to bring some matter to the attention of the diocese. Past experience has taught us that the diocesan friend/school relationship can become a strong, supportive and mutually valued link. Schools may wish to have either a short term (one year) or an unspecified period of time link. There is no pressure either way. We appreciate that schools are very busy places and time is at a premium. We also understand that times and circumstances change but want to support our church schools in whatever way we can. We are conscious that headship can be a lonely experience and want to offer this scheme as a means of support as it is relevant to the school. Many schools already involved in the scheme tell us that they have found it valuable to be able to have this informal means of support with no strings attached!

If you think you might be interested in being involved in this scheme, please don't hesitate to contact me for further information or to request a diocesan friend.

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