

# A friendly face

## Diocesan Friends Scheme

Part of the diocese's commitment to its schools is to provide a team of voluntary school visitors/friends to schools who are interested. The diocesan friends will:

- 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

Usually, the role develops 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 schools. There is no 'reporting back' element, unless of course the headteacher wishes to bring some matter to the attention of the diocese. Schools currently involved with the scheme tell us that the diocesan friend/school relationship can become a strong, supportive and mutually valued link. Headteachers 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 but are keen to offer this scheme as one means of support. It can be tailored to the individual needs of each school. We are conscious that headship can be a lonely experience. If you think you might be interested in knowing more, please don't hesitate to contact me for further information.

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