



## DEVELOPING PARISHES COMMUNITIES

Please note this document is for your information only. A copy has been sent to the Headteachers of your associated schools and the parish priest. As a team please work to find new ways to improve links between the schools and your parish using these 7 steps for ideas and as a framework.



### STEP 1

*This step is designed enable schools to have a close contact with their parish even though they may be geographically at a distance.*

The Chaplaincy team and or school contacts the parish office each Friday to obtain the following names who might like to know they are in the thoughts and prayers of the school

**The sick** – a personal prayer card is prepared and sent in a stamped envelope to the parish office for addressing and posting (data protection needs to be observed) Each week this list is checked and only newly sick parishioners then receive a card.

**People preparing for Baptism** – A special “Welcome to our Family” card is prepared and sent to the family concerned via the parish office or school office if the Parish Priest feels it is appropriate. The new babies and parents can also be invited to a special celebration of thanksgiving in the school led by the Chaplains or appropriate group of students. This can then be followed by a tea time together.

**First Holy Communion candidates** – A card is prepared for each one telling them that they are praying with them for this very special occasion. This is easier to obtain names via the primary school. In the case of candidates not in the local Catholic school, then the Catechists in the parish will be best placed to deliver the personalised cards.

**Marriage preparation candidates** – Those undergoing marriage preparation would also be encouraged by a prayer card from the school. Candidates can receive cards via their catechists or Parish Priest.

**RCIA candidates** would be greatly encourage by students sending them a card saying that they are praying for them.

**Vocations-** If there is anyone considering the Priesthood or religious life the Parish Priest will be able to pass on a prayer card to them.

**New people to the Parish** – How would you feel if you were new to the parish and no one spoke to you? A prayer card welcoming those who are new to the parish would help and make them feel special and most importantly, welcomed to the parish community.



## STEP 2

The appropriate activities of Step 1 can continue. In this step the pupils take a **more active role in the life of the parish community** by becoming one or more of the following;

Welcomers who greet people as they enter the Church and hand them the necessary hymn books and Mass sheets. They greet each one and tell them anything special about the theme of the Mass or feast day.

If the parish has refreshments after Mass, could the Children/young people help with the hospitality?

At one Mass each Sunday, the young people do as much as they can by one or more of the following:

Introduce the theme of the Mass before Mass begins

Act as ushers

Take part in the choir or help with music

Readings/Prayers

Assist with the Offertory and collection

Give out the notices.



## STEP 3

This steps aims to help the young people get **to know and understand the structure of the parish** and how it works. A good starting place can be to research the parish and find out all you can about the different roles and areas of responsibility by asking the Parish Priest or someone from the parish office who has a good working knowledge of who does what. Is there a display with this on? If not, the school can then mount an exhibition at the back of the Church or in the parish Centre where refreshments are served entitled **“Celebrating the gifts and talents of our Parish”**

This could develop into a social occasion where each area, activity or group speaks about what they do and what help they need. The students can act as facilitators of the event.

The young people can also have a stall about their school and how show what they are doing for the local community as well as show casing how they would like to see the parish develop.

If there is a difficulty in mounting an exhibition then this might be done in paper form with the young people speaking about it at the end of Mass.



## STEP 4

This step looks at ways in which the **pupils might lead aspects of the liturgical life of the parish.**

At each key time there is the possibility of mounting special Stations – waiting places for encounter or reflection. Examples would be;

*Stations of Advent/Christmas*

*Stations of the Cross*

*Stations of Easter*

*Stations of Pentecost*

*Stations of Mary*

Here the pupils interpret each of scripture stories in their own way or in a contemporary setting. As an example the traditional Stations of the Cross are depicted as if it were happening today – Who are the falsely accused, persecuted etc.

All the other ideas are based around scripture references or stories. They are then place around the Church and either at the end of Mass or at a separate time the pupils lead the devotions.



## STEP 5

This step focuses on the pupils leading and facilitating **new initiatives in the prayer life of the parish** by leading or setting up one or more of the following;

The school/pupils arrange for speakers to come and speak about prayer and how to pray. This can be located in either the school or the parish.

Mount an exhibition in the parish to demonstrate the many traditions of prayer in the Church and how to pray using them.

Rosary group in school but open to the parish.

Creating a 21<sup>st</sup> century parish prayer book by inviting parishioners to send in prayers they love and in particular prayers they have made up for our world today. This can be illustrated and printed off to be sold in the parish.

Parish/school prayer group before or after school for the needs of the parish and the school open to all.

Lectio Divina in the school but open to the parish, or if possible once a month in the parish.

Pupils keep the parish focused on the Pope's monthly prayer intentions and ensure they are published in the newsletter.



## STEP 6

This step looks at fostering **the growth of young people in the parish by inviting them to be part of the Parish Council** with the specific role of developing ideas that their research has shown would interest young people.

This would also necessitate the pupils and young people being high profile in their school as a prefect, member of the Chaplaincy team or a Caritas Ambassador so that they are already well known and able to coordinate ideas and suggestions.

At this stage pupils are well placed to join activities like their local Minnie Vinney's or Justice and Peace Groups. This would link well with the Caritas work in the Caritas in Action resources.



## STEP 7

Joining the **“Hope in the Future”** parish team (along with a parent) This step calls for a high level of commitment and willingness to be active in the local parish and school.

Many of the ideas in Steps 1-6 would easily fit with the **“Hope in the Future”** initiative.

This initiative is all about growing our parishes so that they meet the need of 21<sup>st</sup> century parishioners. It is not about recreating the past. But renewing and going forward together taking the best with us. What that will look like is hard to define, but our schools are well placed to help form the parishes of today as we move together on our journey of building the Kingdom