

# Prayer spaces in schools



**Tim Abbott, a founder member and GB Team Leader of Prayer Spaces in Schools, describes what they do and how they might help you.**



After an introduction and explanation of the various prayer activities, now it was time for the students to explore the prayer space for themselves. In a scene repeated in hundreds of schools across the UK, each young person embarked on their own journey of discovery, the activities connecting with their lived experience and giving them a way to explore prayer for themselves through personal reflection on issues such as forgiveness, injustice, thankfulness, big questions, identity and stillness.

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**It showed me that if I pray I can feel peace with God.**

**It has convinced me to pray more.**

**As a Christian, I think it actually really helped me and has encouraged me.**

**I think maybe if things get too stressful for me, I should just take a break and pray once in a while.**

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Prayer spaces are a regular feature of many schools, primary and secondary, and not just those of a religious character. The story and quotes above are from one state secondary school; they make a very welcome and valuable contribution to pupil wellbeing and to the spiritual life of schools as well as supporting the teaching of RE. For churches that have a relationship with their local school, running a prayer space is a great way to deliver a project that makes a real difference and enhances the connection between church and school.

A prayer space in school can take several forms. Many happen in a classroom-sized space, or sometimes outdoors, having about 10 prayer activities with classes visiting for their RE lesson. A more simple variation is a pop-up space with a single focus, such as remembrance, hopes for a new year, harvest thankfulness or prayer for a specific event. Usually set up in a public area for a day or so, these spaces create a burst of spiritual life for the

whole school community. Some schools have a space set aside as a permanent prayer area, maybe in the corner of the hall or a designated part of the school library. Anyone in school is able to take time in the space to pause, to reflect or pray. This type of prayer space works best when the resources in it are updated regularly, often by local Christians, to bring fresh themes linking with the school or calendar year, occasions or celebrations.

Prayer spaces are learning experiences that engage the natural God-given spiritual curiosity of children. Rebecca Nye writes, ‘Children’s spirituality is an initially natural capacity for awareness of the sacred quality to life experiences. In childhood, spirituality is especially about being attracted towards ‘being in relation’, responding to a call to relate to more than ‘just me’ – to others, to God, to creation or to a deeper sense of self.’ (R Nye, *Children’s spirituality*, CHP, 2011)

What is fascinating is the way so many pupils find a deeper connection with prayer and an awareness of God. Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised. Jesus challenges us that ‘...it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’ (Luke 18:16b,17)

Prayer Spaces in Schools, which is part of 24-7 Prayer, has a website full of stories, guidance and resources which is freely available ([prayerspacesinschools.com](http://prayerspacesinschools.com)). Once you’ve had a look at a few of the prayer activities we offer, you will probably find that some of the prayer ideas from Roots could be adapted for use in school too, especially if you’re looking after a permanent prayer space or running a lunchtime group.

If you’re thinking of running a prayer space in your local school we’re here to help you. Do look out for our training events or send us an email. The difference your prayer space can make could be life changing.

As one Year 4 student put it, ‘This should be in every school because it’s a place where you can pray silently and peacefully and just be yourself really.’