

13. School Eucharists in the Diocese of Guildford

This guidance is for those wishing to hold an Anglican Eucharist in a school context including schools in the independent sector.

The Communion Service is at the heart of Anglican worship. It celebrates Jesus' command to his disciples at the Last Supper 'Do this in remembrance of me' and in many churches is the main service on a Sunday. It is known by different names that reflect the tradition of the church concerned: Eucharist (from the Greek word meaning 'thanksgiving'); Holy Communion; The Lord's Supper; and Mass.

There are several reasons why schools may be keen to give pupils an experience of taking part in a Eucharist:

- The school is part of the local parish, therefore it provides an opportunity for pupils to share in this key act of worship with the local community
- It provides an occasion for the school to worship in the context of the most important service of the church
- The first-hand experience of being present at a Eucharist can give pupils a sense of belonging and participation which demonstrates the church's open invitation to all
- Learning about the Communion Service in Religious Education lessons is brought to life by taking part in one

It is not a requirement of the Church of England, or the Diocese of Guildford that schools celebrate the Eucharist. There is no expectation in the SIAMS framework that schools should hold a Eucharist. The decision about holding a school a Eucharist must be made in conjunction with the vicar and reflect the practice of the parish in which the school is located. Consideration should be given to the faith background of the pupils in the school at the time.

A Eucharist celebrates belonging to a Christian community. Where some pupils and staff are unable to receive the bread and wine it can have the opposite effect. Where this is the case a Eucharist may not be appropriate but another form of service such as an Agape Meal may be more suitable.

Any school Eucharists that take place are part of the worship of the parish, and should therefore be led by the vicar or (in case of a vacancy) by another Church of England minister'. The Eucharist would be recorded in the parish service register. Suitable members of the parish may be invited to attend or assist. For example where a large number of pupils request a blessing the youth and children's worker or church wardens may be able to assist.

The decision to hold a school Eucharist must be carefully considered by the Headteacher and the vicar. Governors, staff, parents and pupils should be consulted before the first Eucharist and their feedback gathered afterwards to enable improvements to be made. For the pupils to gain the most from the Eucharist careful preparation is needed and adequate time should be allocated for this before the service.

Some school Eucharists are for the staff, offered before or after school or during an inset day. In secondary schools some Eucharists are optional for pupils held during form time or lunch break. In schools fortunate enough to have a chaplain they are likely to know the pupils who choose to attend if the pupil is able to receive bread and wine.

There are different approaches to remembering Jesus' sharing of bread and wine with pupils. Not all are a Eucharist.

Agape

This is based on the agape meals shared by the early Christians. In a school context there would be a simple liturgy and prayers and some food and or drink would be shared. This food, often bread or grapes, has not been consecrated.

Re-enactment of the Last Supper

This is an acting out of the events of the Last supper by adults or children. All present may share some bread and or grape juice during it. The bread and grape juice has not been consecrated. It will may have been blessed in the course of the re-enactment but not using a Eucharistic prayer.

A demonstration of what happens in an Anglican Communion Service to be observed by pupils

This is a Eucharist at which adults who have been confirmed receive the bread and wine. The priest may stop and explain what they are doing to the pupils as they go through the service.

A Eucharist in which everyone can join in at some level with clear explanations of why some may receive and some not

This is a Eucharist in which all pupils are involved in aspects such as they singing, prayers and readings. Only those pupils who have been admitted to communion or confirmed will receive

the bread and wine. However all are made to feel part of the worship.

Who can receive the consecrated bread and wine?

- Adults who have been confirmed in the Church of England or the equivalent rite of membership in another Christian denomination.
- Pupils who have been confirmed in the Church of England.
- Pupils who have been admitted to communion before confirmation in the parish in which the school is located, or in their home parish if this is different.

Parental Permission

- Parental permission must be given for a pupil to receive communion.
- There needs to be discussion with parents or carers where a pupil attends a church of another Christian denomination in which they receive communion

What is meant by admission to communion before confirmation?

Information for parishes in the Diocese of Guildford on the Admission of Baptized Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation can be found [here](#).

Under Church of England policy, only children who have been admitted to communion before confirmation may receive the elements. Parishes apply to the Bishop for the permission to admit children to communion in their parish. Schools should be aware that not all parishes in the Diocese of Guildford have applied for or received this permission.

There is no minimum age recommendation at which children can be admitted to communion. The age at which a child can receive communion is left to the vicar's discretion. The guidance is clear that some understanding of the significance of what they are doing is required for children to receive communion.

Under Church of England policy this admission to communion must follow a period of preparation, usually undertaken in the parish.

Communion preparation should usually take place with one of the child's parents present. The preparation consists of an age appropriate course about communion, which includes information about confirmation.

At the end of the preparation course the children will be admitted to communion, and take their first communion, in their parish church. This often includes the presentation of a certificate and sometimes a Bible.

The parish keeps a register of children admitted to communion before confirmation.

Where admission to communion is within a school context this can only happen in parishes where the Bishop's permission to admit children has been applied for and received.

In the event that preparation for communion is carried out in the school setting, for example in an after school group, the pupils would be expected to be admitted to communion in the parish before receiving communion during a school Eucharist.

When a group of children from a school are being prepared to receive communion before confirmation, it should be made clear that they are part of a wider (Anglican) church community. Children at a school may be from several different parishes, so communication between parish priests around the admission of children to communion is essential.

In deanery schools, which are linked to more than one parish, communication between all of the parish priests and the headteacher is essential.

Resources

The Bishop of Guildford's guidance on the Admission of Baptized Children to Holy Communion before Confirmation can be found on the Diocese of Guildford Website [here](#).
www.cofeguildford.org.uk/young-people/ministry/children-and-communion

Church of England Guidance on Celebrating the Eucharist with Children [here](#)

This gives guidance on Eucharists with large numbers of children present, specifically mentions school Eucharists. There are two additional Eucharistic Prayers for use with schools.

Exploring Holy Communion in Primary Schools by Shahne Vickery Jumping Fish Publications, found on the Going4growth website

[Pdf here](#)

This gives ideas of how each year group can be involved in creating part of the communion service. It has been used in several of our schools who have found it helpful.

Our School Eucharist – A look at how one primary school prepared and celebrated their Eucharist for the very first time. £15 plus postage [Order here](#)

The Diocesan Resources Centre holds various materials for parishes to use when preparing children to be admitted to communion. This is the responsibility of the parish not the school, although it may be done together.