

Dear BSC Friends

Happy New Year! We hope you had a lovely Christmas celebrating with friends and family and are looking forward to the year ahead. We are excited about 2023 and thankful for the many ways we have seen connections between churches and schools growing in 2022. Below we share a few headlines of how we've been facilitating these connections in the last few months. But this story is so much bigger than the BSC Consultants and Trustees - it's a wonderful growing network of people who play their part in seeing every school in the Bristol area developing a good connection with their local church. Please use this update to inspire your prayers for the work of BSC – giving thanks for the last year and praying for guidance and provision for all that we do in 2023. Thank you for journeying with us!

With love and thanks
Jane, Liz and the BSC Trustees

Thank you

Thank you for all those of you who support BSC financially and in prayer. Without you, the work of BSC would be impossible. We are so encouraged by your generosity and support of our vision to see every school in the Bristol area in a good relationship with local church.

We need more financial supporters. If you, your church, or someone you know, are interested in becoming a BSC supporter or making a one-off donation, please get in touch, visit our website or use these links:

bristolschoolsconnection.co.uk



BSC is a registered charity no. 1162067

Christmas in a Box



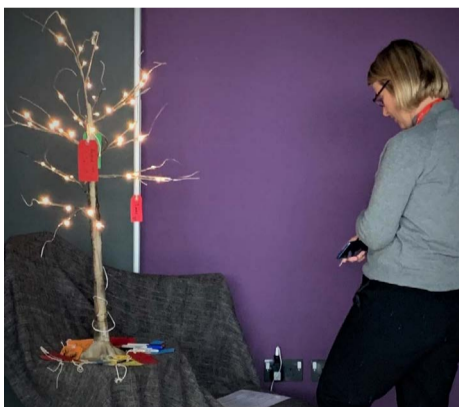
We enjoyed running several 'Christmas in a Box' training sessions throughout the Autumn, both online and in person. We were amazed at how many churches hosted 'Christmas in a Box' in their local schools this year - in Bristol and beyond. Within Bristol we know that **at least 21 churches hosted sessions in 28 schools for over 1600 children. This is 60% more children than in 2021.** There were also 4 churches in the city who hosted Christmas Trails for 900 pupils from 11 schools.



We've enjoyed going into schools with some of the teams hosting 'Christmas in a Box' around the city. It was a great chance to see first-hand the different ways that churches have organised their sessions, in collaboration with schools. Some teams were in their third year of hosting 'Christmas in a Box' and were well into the flow, and others enjoyed trialling it for the first time. **We visited Henleaze Infant School where the entire school staff were trained to deliver 'Christmas in a Box'**, which meant that every child in the school experienced it. The Christian parent prayer group did an amazing job supporting the school to enable this to happen.

"This resource works" and "the children loved it" were the repeated themes of the feedback from church team members and school staff across Bristol.

Prayer Spaces in Schools



We had the opportunity of working with Bristol Diocese to deliver two Prayer Spaces in Schools training sessions in different locations in the Diocese. **Around 25 people attended including church leaders, volunteers and teachers – all of whom are actively planning to run prayer spaces during this academic year.** That's potentially hundreds of children who might get the opportunity to pray and reflect on their spiritual life as part of their school day this academic year. The training sessions focussed on how to run outdoor prayer spaces and we hope to run a live outdoor space in April to which the attendees will all be invited. We are looking forward to hearing some great stories about how these outdoor spaces go in Summer 2023.

Bristol Schools Connection Gathering



An absolute highlight of last term was hosting the gathering in October for BSC friends and supporters at SMRT school. We heard inspiring stories about how churches are connecting with their local schools, celebrated all that God has been doing and prayed together for this precious work. We were amazed at how many people came and delighted by all the connections in the room and the unifying sense of excitement about being part of this network and movement. The delicious Marshfield ice-cream parlour was a treat too!

Chaplaincy Explosion



Across the country, more people are sensing a call to chaplaincy in all sorts of places, including schools. It seems that we are on the brink of a chaplaincy explosion where the church is being envisioned and encouraged to be church out in the community. Many of our friends in our network across the Bristol area work as formal or informal chaplains in their local schools – in both paid and voluntary roles. We are privileged and excited to be encouraging this movement which enables local chaplains to have regular contact with staff and children, supporting and enabling relationships to deepen and providing safe spaces for spiritual dialogue.

"Within the pressures of schools and education, being there regularly gives value to the staff and children. Relationships are made in the encounters through the day...in the classroom, in the staff room and in the playground. People say, 'I feel calm when you are here.'"
(Sally Martin, School Chaplain, Willow Park and Hotwells Primary)

"Going into school once a week with Billy, our Pets as Therapy dog, to listen to readers is a joy. It not only allows children to improve their reading, but it also allows time and space to listen to children and staff about what is going on in their lives."
(Jane Gillis, Volunteer Chaplain)



Looking ahead to Spring 2023 for your prayers:

- **'Easter in a Box – The Movie'** training sessions in Jan/Feb
- **Additional giving and new income sources** – we're currently operating at a deficit
- More **Prayer Spaces in Schools** training with Bristol Diocese in Jan
- **Updating our website** with new stories and resources