

# Inspired Classrooms

Exploring churches as places of creative learning across the curriculum

By Saul Penfold

“I suddenly realised that you can do any lesson in a church. I hadn't thought about it before; we usually only come into the church at Christmas and Easter.” Year 6 Pupil from Buxton Primary School

Inspired Classrooms is a new, highly innovative and free online Toolkit designed to better connect schools to their parish churches. It does this by offering a range of bespoke cross-curricular lesson plans, challenges and supporting resources – in short everything needed in the successful preparation, delivery and follow up of cross-curricular learning within churches.

Inspired Classrooms provides an exciting and accessible way to 'open up' churches as creative classrooms – spaces in which pupils can enjoy cross-curricular learning inspired by their fabulous surroundings. In doing so, it enables pupils to develop a range of key skills including research, teamwork, focus and creativity. It also gives churches the practical tools and resources to better understand, encourage and support the needs of their local schools.

It originated in Norfolk and uses the Aylsham cluster of schools and churches as worked examples, but Inspired Classrooms is generic and so can be used by any church and by any school at any time.

*'I have found the concept of the Toolkit thoroughly inspiring because it allows*

*teachers and children to fully realize the potential of all those beautiful buildings which are so important in our society – their architecture and history link so directly to the communities they sit in.'* Tim Bannister, Acting Assistant Head Teacher, Hevingham and Marsham Primary School Partnership

We have designed Inspired Classrooms to challenge and overturn the widely held belief that churches are places in which only an RE Syllabus can be delivered. The Toolkit explodes this myth by providing hugely creative ways in which schools can deliver English, Science, Maths, Humanities, the Arts and PSHE for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 (5–14-year-olds). Examples of what it contains include:

## Lesson Plans and Challenges



Thirty innovative cross-curricular lesson plans, challenges and supporting resources for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 with a clear filtering system – by Key Stage, Subject, Skills or Keyword – which allows you to easily find the lesson(s) you want.

## QR Code Offline Web App



Our QR Code Offline Web App gives access to a bank of supporting information even in churches with no WiFi connection! All QR codes relate directly to and support the lesson plans and challenges.

## Inspired Gallery



The Gallery is designed to showcase pupil and student responses created during and after their church visits, including artwork, photographs, poems and creative writing.

## Visit Practicalities



Provides all the practical tools to help plan and deliver the perfect day of learning from both the school and church perspective. Resources include a model Risk Assessment, Itinerary, Equipment List, Parents Letter, sample Press Release and more.



## 'This toolkit for teachers is revolutionary'

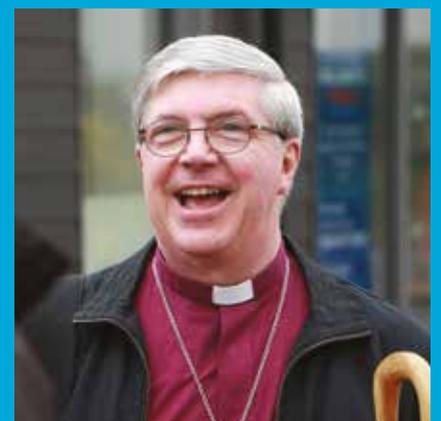
All schools have a rich resource for inspirational and cross-curricular learning nearby – parish churches. There are over 15,000 of them in England. They are under-used in this connection, not through any fault of the schools and their teachers or the churches and their clergy.

It is simply that no-one has provided suitable resources to enable parish churches to be used not simply for religious education but for history, mathematics, art, music and science. This toolkit for teachers is revolutionary. It will offer activities for a full cross-curricular day within a church, and suggestions for learning before and after the event.

Our churches are living buildings and yet many of them have been around for centuries. There is nowhere else quite like them. This project began in the Diocese of Norwich in the Aylsham and District Team Ministry where twelve parishes and eight schools are in frequent contact. Only two of them are church schools but all the schools, primary and secondary are equally enthusiastic about what can be achieved.

Our young people deserve the very best experiential learning. Cathedrals and churches have a "wow" factor for young children. That's good, but we also want to make them places of learning and discovery too. I hope and pray this project will help us all rediscover that our parish churches are inspired classrooms.

**The Rt Revd Graham James**  
Bishop of Norwich



*'It was the best literacy lesson – much better than writing in the classroom.'*  
Year 4 Pupil from Bure Valley School

It has been a great pleasure for me to lead the Inspired Classrooms team over the past two years as we have steadily built this amazing resource. This has included working with a very talented group of teachers from across the Aylsham Cluster, who have developed the Toolkit lessons, challenges and practical resources. Each lesson has been trialled within local churches with the relevant year group and feedback from pupils and teachers has always been sought and incorporated as the lesson plans have developed.

The Aylsham & District Team Ministry continue to be very supportive of the Toolkit and the web design team from Studio Blip have brought it to life. Inspired Classrooms is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, with a significant contribution from the Diocese of Norwich.

No other heritage learning resource has the richness or cross-curricular potential of parish churches. You will find such Inspired Classrooms all over the country and this new online Toolkit will enable you to explore and enjoy them.

“When our teacher said we were going to the church I thought it would be boring, but it hasn't been. It has been great!”

Year 5 pupil from Erpingham Primary School



You will find Inspired Classrooms at [www.inspiredclassrooms.org](http://www.inspiredclassrooms.org)

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