**Guidelines for a conversation with your local headteacher**

First impression matters, and what happens in the very beginning is likely to have a big effect on your chaplaincy role in years to come.

The relationship with your local headteacher is crucial for the role to be fully utilized and for the school to gain as much from having a chaplain as possible.

The role will benefit from the two of you having worked through matters such as defining an overarching vision for the chaplaincy in your school, developing a formal role description and drawing up clear lines of communication.

It is also important that you have a close relationship with the wider Church. Chaplains need the support and training from their church to develop skills and confidence, and the school will also benefit from practical advise from the church on how to structure, recruit and evaluate chaplaincies.

This is a preparation sheet for the initial conversation with your local headteacher which covers some of the most important things you should address early on.

We also advise that you have a three-way conversation with both headteacher and priest/incumbent in the beginning to set out the course of the chaplaincy role at your school.

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| **Guideline for a conversation with your local headteacher** |
| WHY a chaplain? | Prepare for your first conversation!Map your community and school. Read Ofstead reports and policy documents. Ask yourself questions such as:Who lives there, what happens there, when and where does it happen, what specific needs are there, what social factors should you bear in mind?What is the existing relationship between church and school? Are there any conflicts/tension? Is there good communication and cooperation?You should be able to answer:HOW is chaplaincy going to benefit this school?HOW does it link with/help the church?WHAT are you offering? |
| VISION: What are we aiming for? | What is the headteacher's view on the overarching vision for ministry in this school setting?The vision should underpin all ministry activities in the school. |
| WHAT will the chaplain do? | Have a closer look at the role specification for lay chaplaincy in schools. It is unlikely that your role will contain all the activities described, but some will be essential. What are the specific needs of your school?Where is a chaplain needed most?What are your strongest personal skills and qualifications? |
| Getting access | How will information about the chaplaincy role reach pupils, parents and staff?What will be your most effective “way in” to the school community to start building relationships?Examples:Write a notice in the school newspaper and a presentation to go on the school webpagePut up a poster on the school noticeboardsMake your way into the staff room early onTake part in the various day-to-day activities in the school; observe, listen and ask questions. |
| Resources | Will there be a physical place in the school available for the chaplain?What other resources are available?Is the school involved with any projects or working with any people who might be of relevance/useful to the school chaplain? |
| Time allocation | 2 hours a week? Two half days? How will students, parents and staff know when you are there and how to contact you? |
| Communication | Will there be regular meetings with the headteacher and a representative from the local church? How often?Will there be regular meetings with the incumbent and/or the ministry team? How often?Will you be part of the ministry team in your church?Do you have a supervisor/confident in your church with whom you can discuss various issues relating to your chaplaincy?How do you report what you do back to the church? How do you make sure your work fits into the church's mission action plan? Do you need support in any way? |
| Job description | A formal job description will define the role, time allocation and lines of reporting/communication.A good job description will be a useful document against which to have the chaplaincy role regularly reviewed and, if need be, adjusted. |