

Godly Play - Information for teaching staff

Godly Play is an approach to education that...

- promotes knowledge, skills, empathy, values, spiritual growth
- develops the needs of the whole child: mind, body and spirit
- provides a multisensory approach to learning
- develops language and communication skills
- encourages children to make meaning for themselves
- develops thinking skills
- provides depth and reflection in every session
- gives time for learning
- promotes originality, independent choice and decision making
- uses visual, auditory and kinaesthetic approaches to learning

Great care is taken to create and protect a space where children can feel safe enough to explore deep thoughts. All the adults that are present need to be sensitive to this.

Timings and preparation before the session

Each morning session will start at 9.30am and finish by 11.30am.

Each afternoon session will start at 1.00pm and finish by 2.45pm

Please ensure your class (especially if they are young) have gone to the toilet before you leave school!

There are toilets available in church, but these are limited in number. They are located off the entry vestibule of the church.

Before your visit please could you provide us with a class list of first names, so that we can prepare labels. You may also wish to bring your classroom camera with you. (Please just use the camera to photograph work like the clay or the construction materials that the children can't take back with them - if the children ask you to. It can feel a bit intrusive and may effect how the children respond if photos are taken during the story or if an adult is moving around taking photos during the response time). Any parent helpers who walk with you are welcome to stay in church where refreshments are provided. You may wish to bring some plastic bags in which to take children's creative response work back to school.

Entering the church

When you bring your class to the church, the children will sit in the front rows of chairs in the main body of the church. They will each leave their coat on a chair. At this point your staff can take children to the toilet as necessary. Godly Play staff will greet the children and invite them to get ready. The storyteller will go into the Godly Play room and the doorperson will bring the children to the threshold.

Entering the room

The doorperson greets each child at the door (the 'threshold') and asks 'Are you ready?' This helps each child to remember that they are entering somewhere special. The children are welcomed into the room one at a time which demonstrates that each child is special. This also helps to slow the pace down. The storyteller also helps each child to find a place in the circle of mats on the floor.

The doorperson then takes a seat outside the circle of children. All the other adults then sit outside the circle. Chairs will be provided for this.

The story and wondering

Whilst the story is being told and during the wondering questions **please just watch** what is going on. Please don't feel that it is your responsibility as their teacher to enforce good behaviour - it is the role of the storyteller to deal with the children and any issues. The storyteller has a variety of methods of dealing with any distractions. This is a time for you to observe your pupils as they engage with the story and their responses.

The creative response time

During this time the children are provided with space, time and materials to respond to their experience in their own way. The product is not important.

After the story, the storyteller invites the children in the circle one-by-one to choose a response activity. Materials are laid out in the room. They may choose to use clay or paint, to draw or make a collage, or to build something out of bricks. They could look at a book or work with the story materials of any story they have heard (maximum three children per story). It really is their own choice. (If a child wishes just to lie down on the floor and not 'produce' anything then that is OK too!) Their work is their own response and it may not show an apparent link to the story. At the end they can choose to take it home or to throw it away. Any clay models can be photographed before the clay is re-used.

The storyteller normally stays in the place where the story was told. The doorperson stands by the resources, and helps the children to choose paper or card, as necessary for their response. The doorperson, and other volunteers, are also there if anyone needs help. A child may choose to show what he or she is doing to an adult but it is their choice. In the space of the Godly Play room the child has the opportunity to respond individually, and for themselves. To this end, we support the children practically, but we try not to disturb what the child is doing (e.g. by asking them to explain what they are doing or by judging their work).

At the end of the response time the children are given a five minute warning before being asked to clear up the materials they have worked with.

The feast

The children return to the circle and we enjoy some refreshments together. Again, the storyteller organises the children in the serving of and participation in the feast. This is also an opportunity to introduce children to prayer. During the feast, the storyteller and the children will chat. At the end of the feast time, the children are invited to leave the room, and return to the main body of the church with your staff. This is the time when the children can be taken to the toilet, as necessary, before preparing to return to school.

The Godly Play staff will say goodbye to each child at the church door.

Back at school

It is very important that the children feel that their time in Godly Play is safe... so they can be open and honest about their own spiritual questions in future sessions. So, although you might feel that a 'teaching point' can be drawn out by referring to something that a child did or said it is important that we don't (or the children will feel that actually there are some 'right answers' and some 'good responses' and that they are being judged).

Thank you for your help and please let us know if you have any questions or comments.