

## Prayer Spaces In Schools

Milwards Primary School & Nursery

16 & 18 October 2012



### INTRODUCTION

Harlow's first Prayer Space in Schools event was held in Milwards School on 16<sup>th</sup> October with each Key Stage 2 class (Years 3-6) having a one hour experience and a voluntary opportunity to return again during mid-morning break and lunch time on the 18<sup>th</sup> October.

### BACKGROUND

The main team organising the Milwards Prayer Space were Brian Spencer and Mauricio Colussi from Gateway Freedom Church and Philip Gray (Team Leader) and Jo Hargrave from Great Open Door. Brian and Mauricio had experience running prayer spaces in church settings and Phil and Jo work in many primary schools. All the team attended a Prayer Spaces in Schools training event in either 2011 or 2012 which fully equipped the team to organise this event.

### AIMS & FORMAT OF THE DAY

The team met with the Head teacher and RE co-ordinator and with their active support developed a suitable programme and ironed out any practical issues.

The hour lesson with each KS 2 class consisted of:

10 minute introduction to prayer in the classroom

20 minutes craft in classroom or

20 minutes in prayer space, then these two groups swapped so everyone completed both

10 minute plenary back in class.

### PRAYER SPACE

There were 5 manned prayer stations; each was equipped so that three children could engage with the activity at the same time. This allowed for each child to spend up to 4 minutes at each station.

### PRAYER STATIONS:

- (1) Connecting with God Zone – This area had a black backdrop and a single plasma ball. The children were asked to consider how the plasma ball reflects God connecting with us.
- (2) Sorry Zone – postcards clipped to strings

- (3) Comments left were mainly about bad behaviour to family members and friends (shouting, fighting, not listening, not tidying room when asked, lying).
- (4) Chill Out Zone. This area was surrounded with voiles and contained lots of cushions, a bubble tube and post-it notes. The children could write their prayers on the post-its and place them on the tube and think about them going up to God as the bubbles travelled up the tube. Comments left included... “I’m worried my parents might split up” and “Thank you for loving me”
- (5) Fizzy Forgiveness Zone. The children were asked to consider how letting go and forgiving people can help us. They sat in front of a large vase of water and could drop a piece of an effervescent vitamin tablet into the water, representing letting go of hurts and anger, and watch how the tablet slowly disappeared as it bubbled away into the water.
- (6) What do people say about me. Here sand trays were used and children wrote in the sand what others say about them, what they say about themselves and what they choose to believe.

To ensure children were engaged all the time we had two “extra” activities which they could do at any point should they wish to move on from their current prayer station before the allotted time:

- *Private prayer box* – These prayers remained private with the contents burnt at the end of the day.
- *The Big Question* – A large piece of paper was fixed to the wall and the children could write whatever burning issues or questions they had for God.....comments left included “Are we meant to be sorry when someone dies?” and “How posh are you God?”

## PRAYER CRAFT

Half the class at a time considered what sort of things we might pray to God about whilst making a prayer plate. The children thought about Please, Sorry, Thank You and WOW! prayers using pre-scored paper plates and these printed headings.

## OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

A feedback form was handed to the children and teaching staff so that an evaluation of the whole experience could be made. The feedback was very positive and included:

### Q What was your favourite Prayer Station and why?

- The tablets because it made me really think about how to forgive. (Year 6 pupil)
- Fizzy forgiveness because I was able to get rid of my worries and they're not churning inside me (year 6 pupil)
- The plasma ball because it showed me that God doesn't like to let go of us. (Year 5 pupil)

### Q What did you learn about prayer?

- You have to forgive or you feel worse. (Year 4)
- It's powerful and it works (Year 5)
- It isn't just about you (Year 6)

**Q Overall what did you think of the prayer space and craft session?**

- It was calm and peaceful (Year 5)
- It was excellent and I would want to do it again (Year 6)
- It was the best thing ever (Year 5)

Our first Prayer Space was very successful. We learnt that Prayer Spaces works well with KS 2 pupils, particularly the older children. The staff all requested that Prayer Spaces is added to the RE Scheme of Work for KS 2.

Lessons Learnt: The sessions felt rushed. More than 1 hour is needed, as least 1 hour 15 min and preferably 1 hour 30 minutes, allowing more time for teaching in class.

So many children wanted to return at lunchtime on the second day that a system of managing numbers for the return visit to the Prayer Space is needed.

All in all a great start to introducing Prayer Spaces into Harlow's schools. We would like to thank Milwards for giving us the opportunity to pioneer Prayer Spaces in Harlow.

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