



## Church School FAQ's

For some, a church school education is non-negotiable. For other families, considering a church school can bring with its questions. We firmly believe that we are the number 1 choice of nursery and primary school in Sidcup and our church school status is right at the heart of this success. The Church of England Office for Education's motto for church education is "Deeply Christian, Serving The Common Good" and it is our expressed aim at HTL to be the fulfilment of this aspiration. Please refer to the C of E Vision for Education document on our website under Our School / Our Community.

We are deeply Christian in our values and approaches and our purpose is to serve the community in which we find ourselves. We are not here just for Christian families or in order to convert others to Christianity. We are here to be a beacon of excellence in education and a living example of love, courage, and wisdom to and for the benefit of every child who passes through our gates. We have outlined below some of the common questions we are asked by prospective parents which might help you to understand what it means to send your child to a church school.

### **Do I have to be Christian to get a place at HTL?**

Quite simply, no. While some of our families are committed Christians, many are not. Most of the world's major religions are represented within our community and many of our staff and families are of no faith at all. People choose HTL for many different reasons, but we are often told by our families that it is because that as a church school we instil traditional values in our pupils and are focused on more than just academic outcomes. Some of our families of other faiths tell us that they chose a church school because it is a place where faith is valued, even if it is not necessarily their own. As a church school, we are bound together by a belief that education is transformative and builds the futures of children. We believe that an education in love, courage and wisdom is a non-negotiable partner to excellent academic outcomes. It is the case that children who frequently worship are prioritised for admission and this is outlined in our admission policy. This includes all forms of worship including non-Christian. It varies year to year but typically around 10-15% of our admissions are prioritised on a faith criterion with the remainder being allocated to siblings or pupils based on distance from the school.

### **Why choose a church school education?**

At HTL we are inspired by our history as a church school. In the 1840s when HTL was originally founded education was reserved for those who could afford to pay for it. Like many congregations across England at the time the people of Lamorbey decided that this was not good enough. They believed that all the children of the parish deserved an education and set about doing something to right this fundamental wrong. In the 21st century the challenges of society have of course changed but church schools remain committed to standing out and standing up for what is right. We live in a world where children are all too often considered the economic units of prosperity for the future and academic success dominates all. A church school education is about saying that academic success is the basic right of a pupil, but it is

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not enough on its own. Children also need to learn how to be human and how to be part of something bigger than themselves.

### **What is the role of worship at HTL?**

At HTL there is an act of collective Christian worship every day. This is usually in the form of assembly which would include prayers, the singing of hymns, traditional and modern as well as a bible story and a reflection on it. We also say a brief, child friendly prayer of thanks before going to lunch and before going home at the end of the day. Pupils attend Year Group Mass at church approximately once every 6 weeks on a Thursday morning. This is a quiet and reflective service without music. Additionally, we visit the parish church for the major feast days each year such as harvest, Remembrance, Christmas, Easter and at the end of the school year. For younger children this is a shorter and simplified service and for our older children it takes the form of a full parish mass. An important part of our worship is being joined by other members of our community. Parents, families, and the parish community are warmly welcomed into all worship that takes place at the church.

There is a general expectation that children will participate in worship by singing or responding to prayers unless there is a reason why they shouldn't. (typically, that they are of a non-Christian faith although many of our non-Christian children enjoy singing the hymns regardless). At the same time, participation in worship is never forced. We believe that worship should bring the pupil to the brink of an encounter with God and the rest is between him and the pupil!

### **What form does Religious Education take in a church school?**

Religious Education at HTL is just that, an education in religion. It is not religious instruction or an attempt to convert pupils. HTL follows the 'Understanding Christianity' scheme of work, a widely praised program which is essentially theology for primary aged children (see [www.understandingchristianity.org.uk](http://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk)). Pupils study and critically explore core concepts within the faith such as creation, salvation, the Gospels, and the Kingdom of God through big questions. Children are taught higher order skills such as questioning, evaluating, and critically reviewing set in a context of understanding the whole Christian narrative. The scheme is modern, vibrant, highly academic and is widely enjoyed by pupils of all ages. Throughout the years children also learn about all the world's main religions to ensure that they are ready to be members of our diverse society.

### **More questions...**

If you have any questions at all about life at a church school, please do not hesitate to contact the head teacher via the office. You can also discuss the matter with our parish priest the Reverend Mark Blakely who can be contacted at the vicarage on 020 8300 8231. Also, why not visit the church for parish mass at 10am one Sunday to get a feel for our community.

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