

Schoolswork Competencies

18 key competencies for Christian schoolworkers, initial draft, August 2008

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1. Child and Youth Development	
Personal development	I can articulate and apply the principles of young people's development to my work
Spirituality and young people	I can articulate and apply the principles of young people's spiritual development to my work
Learning styles and differentiation	I can adapt my work to the appropriate learning style and cultural context
2. Good Practice	
Child protection and health and safety	I can implement health and safety and child protection requirements
Strategic planning and evaluation	I can develop and implement a strategy and evaluate my work
Inclusion and context	I can work with others who have different values, cultures and traditions.
3. Curriculum Focused Work	
Contributing to the curriculum	I can prepare and deliver appropriate content within the curriculum
School structure and management	I can work within the professional context of education
Teaching skills	I can teach in a way that enables effective learning to take place
4. Extra-Curricula Focused Work	
Student support and guidance	I can offer appropriate support and guidance to young people
Working informally in schools	I can work effectively with young people in an informal setting
Working with small groups and clubs	I can work effectively with young people in small groups and clubs
5. People Skills	
Behaviour management	I can manage challenging behaviour
Working with staff and others	I can work collaboratively and as part of a team
Working with young people	I can develop and maintain appropriate relationships with young people
6. Theological Reflection	
Christology and mission	I can articulate and apply the person and work of Christ to my work
The gospel and education	I can articulate and apply a theological construct to my work in school
Growing faith in education	I can create a context for young people to explore and grow in faith

Child and Youth Development

1. Personal development

I can articulate and apply the principles of children and young people's development to my work

An understanding of how children and young people develop cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically is a crucial component to any children's or youthwork, including schoolwork. It will impact the content of lessons and assemblies, shape your approach to pastoral care and inform many other aspects of your role.

For example, a child or young person's ability to understand abstract ideas and concepts is known to develop relatively late in childhood and might impact how you present Christian beliefs in an RE lesson. Knowledge of physical development, like puberty, may also be relevant to any work you do within the pastoral care programme in a school. An understanding of how young people develop socially will also be important in many areas of your work like leading small groups or running clubs.

You will be able to describe:

- A basic outline of major child development theories.
- The key stages in the cognitive development of children and young people.
- The key stages in the social development of children and young people.
- The key stages in the emotional development of children and young people.
- The key stages in the physical development of children and young people.

You will know how to:

- Apply this knowledge to the content of your work, including curriculum input and pastoral care.

Example topics:

- Supporting students pastorally.
- Planning lesson and assembly content to accommodate cognitive skills.
- Planning and leading small group activities to accommodate social skills.

Key reading:

'The Nature of Adolescence', Coleman and Hendry, 1999.

'Understanding Children's Development', Smith and Cowie, 1988.

Child and Youth Development

2. Spirituality and young people

I can articulate and apply the principles of young people's spiritual development to my work

As a schoolworker you will almost certainly be involved in engaging children and young people in thinking about the Christian faith. As a result it is vital to have a clear understanding of how children and young people understand and explore belief, faith and spirituality. This includes the development of vocabulary, personal experience and current or past engagement with a religion or faith group.

Schools not only have an obligation to enable spiritual development in students, they have a series of publications and documents from government departments to define and explain what is meant by 'spirituality'. You will need to have a good knowledge of these documents and their definitions, as well as being able to explore how these fit with your own understanding of spirituality.

You will be able to describe:

- A range of theories about how children and young people develop and express spirituality.
- Current developments in understanding spiritual literacy in young people.
- Educational definitions of spirituality and spiritual development.
- Current policies and practice in schools to promote spiritual development.
- How your Christian understanding of spirituality contrasts with educational definitions and the implications of any differences.

You will know how to:

- Apply this knowledge to the content of your work, including curriculum input and pastoral care.

Example topics:

- Preparing and delivering content for assemblies.
- Preparing and delivering content for RE lessons.
- Developing a theological understanding of schoolwork.

Key reading:

'Spiritual and Moral Development', SCAA, 1995.

'Cross-curricular Spiritual and Moral Development', David Smith, 1999.

'Making Sense of Spiritual Development', David Smith, 1999

'Buried Spirituality', Phil Rankin, 2005.

'Making Sense of Generation Y: The World View of 15- to 25-year-olds', Bob Mayo et al, 2006.

'Will Our Children Have Faith?', John Westerhoff, 2000.

'Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning', James Fowler, 1989.

Child and Youth Development

3. Learning styles and differentiation

I can adapt my work to suit different learning styles

A great deal of research has been done into how children and young people learn and the different learning styles they use. As a schoolworker, you will need to know a basic outline of these theories and how they apply in the context of a school. You will need to be able to apply this knowledge in many areas of your work: for example, the preparation and delivery of a lesson.

You will be able to describe:

- A range of theories and research on learning styles in children and young people.
- An understanding of emotional literacy and its impact on how children and young people learn and behave.
- How education currently differentiates to take account of student's different learning styles.
- A range of practical approaches to take account of learning styles in curriculum and extra-curriculum contexts.

You will know how to:

- Differentiate your work to account for different learning styles.

Example topics:

- Group work activities in lessons.
- Presentational and teaching styles.
- Layout and contents of worksheets and other handouts.
- Lesson planning to accommodate a range of learning styles.

Good Practice

4. Child protection and health and safety

I can implement health and safety and child protection requirements

Schoolworkers, like anyone working with children and young people, must follow both child protection and health and safety law and practice.

When working in a school, this will usually mean the school policies and practices. However schoolworkers are often also involved in activities outside of the normal school day. For example, an after-school club or a weekend away. You will also need to be clear about the health and safety and child protection requirements in these contexts.

You will be able to describe:

- Key government policies for children and young people including 'Every Child Matters' and 'Safeguarding Children' and their application within education.
- Key national programmes relating to child protection and health and safety for children and young people.
- Common child protection and health and safety practice in schools and where to find detailed information about the requirements for a particular school.
- Parental rights in education and their impact on children and young people's rights including, for example, whether parental consent is required for pastoral work.
- Why risk assessments are used and how they are commonly devised and presented.
- Safe practice principles for working in schools, including pastoral care.
- Signs of abuse or neglect in a child or young person.
- Your own church or organisation's child protection and health and safety policies.

You will know how to:

- Write and implement a risk assessment.
- Assess a child or young person within the Common Assessment Framework.
- Keep records and notes from pastoral work.
- Refer a young person who you believe to be 'at risk' to the appropriate authority.

Example topics:

- ContactPoint.
- Common Assessment Framework.
- Criminal Record Bureau disclosures.
- Planning activities and trips.
- Parental consent for pastoral work.
- Electronic communication with children and young people.

Good Practice

5. Strategic planning and evaluation

I can develop and implement a strategy and evaluate my work

Schoolswork is a term that describes a huge number of very different approaches and styles of work. Whereas some focus on curriculum input, others concentrate on supporting students pastorally. Some are overtly Christian and spiritual, others less so. A schoolsworker will need to be able to think through their own approach and be able to articulate it to themselves and others.

Evaluating the impact of work in schools is also vital and a schoolsworker will need to have clear methods for assessing the value and impact of what they do.

You will be able to describe:

- The meaning of a range of terms used in strategic planning, including vision, aim, outcome and output.
- The importance and benefits of developing a strategy.
- Different strategic approaches used in Christian schoolswork, and your assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.
- How a schoolswork strategy relates to the broader educational aims of a school.
- The importance and benefits of evaluating your work.
- Methods of monitoring your work and collecting data.
- Methods of evaluating your work.

You will know how to:

- Develop a strategy for your work.
- Developing and implement a programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Example topics:

- Beginning work in a school.
- Describing your work in brochures and promotional material.

Key reading:

Discussion papers 1 to 9, free download from the Charities Evaluation Service. (www.ces-vol.org.uk).

First steps in monitoring and evaluation, free download from the Charities Evaluation Service. (www.ces-vol.org.uk).

Good Practice

6. Inclusion and context

I can work with others who have different values, cultures and traditions

Schools, like the communities they serve, include staff and students from a wide variety of cultures, traditions and faiths. As a schoolworker from a Christian context, you will need to be able to articulate your own views and beliefs in a way that is appropriate to this context. You will also need to be aware of vocabulary and anything else that might cause offence or be inappropriate in a pluralistic setting.

You may also find yourself working with others who have very different worldview relating to, for example, education, youthwork, personal morality or religious faith. You will need to be able to work confidently and appropriately in these settings.

You will be able to describe:

- Beliefs and traditions held by world religions, including cultural norms about vocabulary, social interaction, art, food and other relevant areas.
- Key religious dates, events and festivals for world religions.
- National and local policies for community cohesion and inclusion.

You will know how to:

- Work with staff who have a different worldview.
- Use appropriate vocabulary in different settings.

Example topics:

- Answering theological questions appropriately and sensitively.
- Lesson and assembly content.
- Dealing with criticism from staff or students.

Curriculum Focused Work

7. Contributing to the curriculum

I can prepare and deliver appropriate content within the curriculum

Many schoolworkers are involved in contributing to the curriculum in a school. This will often mean taking an assembly or teaching in a lesson. You may be asked to contribute an element to one of these curriculum activities or you may be responsible for them entirely. Sometimes you will be following prescribed content, but often you will be responsible not only for delivering the content but also for creating it.

That means you will need to have the skills to take a topic and create relevant and suitable material for students. You will almost certainly need to be able to tell stories, create lesson components like group tasks and speak in front of large groups.

Throughout this process you will need to be aware of the school curriculum, ensuring that your input fits its requirements as well as meeting your own aims.

You will be able to describe:

- The legal requirements relating to an act of worship in schools.
- Where responsibilities lie for the content and oversight of the curriculum nationally and locally.
- Current developments in government policy for the school curriculum.
- Common elements of a Religious Education syllabus.
- Common elements of a PHSE and Citizenship syllabus.
- Basic lesson structure and common types of content.
- Key skills required for communicating effectively in public.
- Key skills required for storytelling.

You will know how to:

- Develop appropriate content for an act of worship (assembly).
- Develop a lesson plan for a given topic.
- Create and develop stories and illustrations.
- Communicate clearly before a class or assembly.

Example topics:

- The role of SACRE's.
- Use of verbal and non-verbal communication in public speaking.

Curriculum Focused Work

8. School structure and management

I can work within the professional context of education

As a schoolworker you will find yourself meeting and working with a wide range of staff within a school. For example, you may find yourself liaising with a Head of Year over an assembly, making a presentation at a Department meeting or talking with an Assistant Head about an exclusion. It's therefore vital that you know how a school is structured and organised.

You will need to be aware of the roles and responsibilities of key staff, including the senior management team and the pastoral system. You will also need to be aware of how the school organises their curriculum and monitors and assesses student progress.

You will be able to describe:

- The principle types of school in the UK and the differences and similarities between them in funding, structure and curriculum.
- The key roles and responsibilities within a school including those for senior management, pastoral care, curriculum, behaviour management and student support.
- The national requirements for students assessment and monitoring, including subject levels, SATS and PANDA reports.
- A basic outline of how an OFSTED inspection operates and reports.
- Current government policy for future development of school structure and management, including changes to the GCSE and A level programme and the introduction of diplomas.

You will know how to:

- Approach the relevant person within a school to deal with a particular issue.

Example topics:

- Academies.
- Mapping responsibilities in a school.

Curriculum Focused Work

9. Teaching skills

I can teach in a way that enables effective learning to take place

Teaching in a way that enables young people to learn effectively is a skill that is learnt over a lifetime. Schoolworkers are not expected to necessarily be at the same standard as a professional teacher but they nevertheless will often find themselves teaching within a lesson.

Schoolworkers will need to have mastered key teaching skills as well as having a basic understanding of teaching and learning theories and current policies and practices in the education system. You will also need to have sufficient knowledge about the material you are teaching.

You will be able to describe:

- The relevant subject matter knowledge.
- A basic outline of key pedagogical theories.
- Different teaching approaches and practices.
- How to personalise learning for students

You will know how to:

- Manage a lesson.
- Adapt and use new technology when teaching.

Example topics:

- Beginning a lesson.
- Setting individual and group tasks.
- Questioning skills.

Extra Curricula Focused Work

10. Student support and guidance

I can offer appropriate support and guidance to young people

The transformation of education over the past decade has included the advent of a wide range of pastoral services far beyond the general support offered by a Form Teacher in years gone by. Counselling, anger management programmes, youthwork, mental health support and teenage pregnancy advice are all part of the broad range of services that may be on hand in a school today.

Schoolsworkers have increasingly contributed to this area of school life and offered both formal and informal pastoral support to students. You may be involved in supporting a particular student, running a group programme or offering general advice and guidance.

You will be able to describe:

- Key issues that may impact children and young people including self awareness, self esteem, anger and conflict, peer pressure, self harm, family life and bereavement.
- How to support to students facing these key issues.
- Educational restrictions and requirements in supporting students.
- How to signpost children and young people to relevant support services.
- Listening and reflective listening skills.

You will know how to:

- Work one to one with a student to provide support.

Example topics:

- Supporting a student who is being bullied.
- Running an anger management programme.

Extra Curricula Focused Work

11. Work informally in schools

I can work effectively with young people in an informal setting

Schoolwork will often involve informal contact with students outside of lessons and formal activities. This could include breaks and lunchtimes, involvement in an extended schools programme, schools trips or student drop-in's. Many schools especially value the different kind of relationship schoolworkers can have with a child or young person compared to a teacher.

Schoolworkers will need to be able to confidently meet and build appropriate relationships with students in these informal contexts. They will need to be viewed as approachable and friendly. They will also need to be aware of the potential and pitfalls of informal contact in an educational setting.

You will be able to describe:

- Reasons for working informally with students in a school.
- The differences and distinctions from working formally within a school.
- Boundaries and potential 'safeguarding children' issues that might arise.

You will know how to:

- Begin and sustain a conversation with a student in an informal setting.

Example topics:

- Meeting students in breaktimes at school.

Extra Curricula Focused Work

12. Working with small groups and clubs

I can work effectively with young people in small groups and clubs

Schoolswork has often included running lunchtime or after-school activities and clubs. Sometimes these are 'Christian Union' groups to support Christian students, others are focused on hobbies or fun activities. Schoolsworkers will need to be able to launch and run these type of clubs and groups, consider their purpose within their wider strategy, and ensure that they meet any requirements laid down by the school.

Schoolsworkers will also need to be aware of developments in government policy for extra-curriculum activities, including the introduction of the Extended Schools Programme.

You will be able to describe:

- Types of clubs and groups in schools and their different aims and benefits.
- How to launch a club or group.
- Developing material and content for Christian-based clubs and activities.
- The Extended Schools programme.

You will know how to:

- Develop material and content for clubs and groups.

Example topics:

- Starting a lunchtime group.
- Supporting students run their own group.
- Sourcing material for group content.

Key reading

'Effective Schools Work', Lee Jackson, 2003.

'Running Christian Groups in Secondary Schools', Simon Barker and Bruce Lockhart, 1999.

People Skills

13. Behaviour management

I can manage challenging behaviour

Many schoolworkers find that the work they are doing in a school involves having to manage difficult behaviour by students.

In many cases a member of the school staff (eg. a teacher) will be present. Even so, the schoolworker will still have a significant role in managing behaviour if they are, for example, leading a lesson. This isn't always easy, and will often depend not only on your own skills, but on other factors like the ability and experience of the member of staff present, the students themselves and even the time of day.

Outside of the classroom, you will still have to think about managing behaviour. You may come across students misbehaving in a school corridor or during a break and will have to think about how you, as an adult visitor, will respond. You may also find running a lunchtime or after school group involves managing difficult behaviour.

In all of these contexts, a schoolworker will also have to balance the impact managing behavior could have on how they are perceived by students and their wider pastoral and spiritual aims.

You will be able to describe:

- Common behavioural issues that might arise in a classroom and in informal contexts like a club or event.
- Reasons why students might exhibit challenging behaviour.
- Common policies and procedures schools adopt for dealing with challenging behaviour.
- Core skills for managing behaviour in a classroom and in informal contexts.
- Issues that might arise from being a visitor in a classroom.
- How managing behaviour might impact other work in a school.

You will know how to:

- Agree with a teacher roles and responsibilities in managing behaviour in a classroom.
- Settle down and start a lesson.
- Set appropriate ground rules for students to follow in a lesson or informal context.
- Deal with low level disruption.
- Deal with major disruption.

Example topics:

- Setting rules for behaviour at the beginning of a group or lesson.

Key reading

'Classroom Behaviour: A Practical Guide to Effective Teaching, Behaviour Management and Colleague Support', Bill Rogers, 2006.

People Skills

14. Working with staff and team

I can work collaboratively and as part of a team

As a visitor to a school, schoolworkers are dependant on the relationships they make with staff in much of their work and so have to think about how they build and maintain these relationships.

This includes working with school reception and administrative staff as well as with teachers and senior management. Some of these staff may be welcoming and extremely positive about your role in school, others may be less so or even hostile.

You will have to be adept at presenting yourself to staff and explaining your purpose in visiting the school. You will also need to be able to maintain the links and professional relationships you make.

Schoolworkers may also work as part of a team in a school, and will therefore have to be able work collaboratively with others.

You will be able to describe:

- Key relationships for schoolworkers in a school.
- Possible cultural, ethnic and religious sensitivities that need to be observed.
- Team work skills.

You will know how to:

- Explain to others your purpose and role in a school.
- Respond to negative or hostile reactions from others.

Example topics:

- Introducing yourself and your work to staff.
- Suitable dress code for schoolwork.

People Skills

15. Working with young people

I can develop and maintain appropriate relationships with young people

Schools offer the opportunity to work with children and young people in a huge variety of contexts: from the formal setting of an assembly or lesson to informally chatting to young people during a break, playing football on the field or working with a young person one to one.

A schoolworker will need be clear what kind of contact and relationship is appropriate in these settings, and how that might differ from work with young people in, for example, a church. In addition they will need to think carefully about how their role might be different from school staff and the implication this might have for the way they relate to young people.

They will also need to be highly personable and able to strike up a conversation with pupils who they may never have met before. Young people should find them open and non-threatening.

You will be able to describe:

- Appropriate boundaries for working with children and young people in an educational setting.
- Differences and similarities between how schoolworkers and school staff (eg. teachers) might approach relating to young people.
- Appropriate levels of personal disclosure.

You will know how to:

- Initiate contact with a child or young person.
- Sustain open and non-threatening conversation with a child or young person.
- Communicate with children or young people with limited social skills.
- Respond to verbal or other rejection from children or young people.
- Respond to inappropriate behaviour or conversation by a child or young person.

Example topics:

- Beginning work in a school.
- Working with children or young people of the opposite gender.

Theological Reflection

16. Christology and mission

I can articulate and apply the person and work of Christ to my work

As a Christian schoolworker your own faith is integral to what you are doing and why you are doing it. Your own personal motivation for your work is closely linked to your beliefs and faith.

It is important to reflect on how your personal faith will influence your behaviour and actions within a school, and how experiences within a school may challenge and test your personal faith. You will also need to find ways to be spiritually nourished through your work and sustain your own faith, sometimes in challenging or difficult contexts.

You will be able to describe:

- How your faith informs and motivates your work.
- How you find spiritual nourishment as a schoolworker.
- The potential challenges to your faith you may face in schoolwork.

You will know how to:

- Develop and sustain your faith as a schoolworker.
- Apply your faith to your work and activities.
- Talk about your faith to staff and students.

Example topics:

- Working with staff with different religious or moral standpoints.
- Facing moral dilemmas in the workplace.
- Sharing faith within schools.

Theological Reflection

17. The gospel and education

I can articulate and apply a theological construct to my work in school

'Why' you do schoolwork is as important a question as what you do and how well you do it.

Over the last two centuries the Christian church's relationship to schools has changed radically and reflected many different approaches to our responsibilities and role in education. Schoolwork is one aspect of that relationship, although there has often been an emphasis on practice rather than developing a theological rationale for the work.

As a schoolworker you will not only need to have some understanding of this historical context, but also a clear understanding of how you respond to the question of 'why' yourself.

You will be able to describe:

- Different theological approaches to education, evangelism and mission and the possible contradictions or connections between them.
- A historical overview of the relationship between the Christian church and education in the UK.
- A historical overview of Christian schoolwork and a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches.
- An overview of present day schoolwork and a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches.
- Your own conclusions for a theological rationale for your work.

You will know how to:

- Apply your theological understanding of your work to your own strategy and activities as a schoolworker.

Example topics:

- The role of evangelism and mission in education.
- Integrity and openness with schools.

Key reading:

- 'What is schools ministry?' Nick Shepherd and Nigel Roberts, Grove Booklets, 2008
- 'The death of schoolwork' Chris Curtis, article in Youthwork magazine, 2005
- 'Schoolwork resurrected' Chris Curtis, article in Youthwork magazine, 2007

Theological Reflection

18. Growing faith in education

I can create a context for young people to explore and grow in faith

In most Christian youthwork there is an explicit understanding that one of the aims is for young people not only to understand more about faith, but also to experience and grow in their own faith. It is important for a schoolworker to reflect on their own understanding of what this may mean in the context of a school where the emphasis is often on acquiring knowledge rather than personal experiences.

Schoolworkers will also often be involved in supporting Christian young people in a school, either informally or through a regular group or activity. You will need to be clear about your role and responsibilities towards Christian students.

You will be able to describe:

- The role of a schoolworker in supporting Christian children and young people at school.
- How children and young people engage with the Christian faith and grow in their understanding.
- Activities within schools that give opportunity for students to explore the Christian faith.

You will know how to:

- Support Christian children or young people in a school context.

Example topics:

- Running Christian groups in schools.
- Teaching Christian faith within the RE curriculum.