



# Pompey Churches

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CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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## School Pastors launches in Portsmouth to provide support for pupils

**CHRISTIANS from Portsmouth's churches will offer a listening ear to pupils - as School Pastors.**

The initiative, which allows volunteers to support young people in schools, is now being launched in Portsmouth. Similar schemes already exist in Gosport and on the Isle of Wight.

And the first pupils to benefit will be those in Charter Academy, our diocese's only mainland C of E secondary school. Christian volunteers will be available from September at lunchtimes to chat with students about any issues on their minds.

It builds on the success of Street Pastors, who provide support and practical help late at night for those who go to pubs and clubs.

Sandra Morgan, who is a Reader at Christ Church, Portsdown, has been appointed as the co-ordinator for School Pastors in Portsmouth. She was previously vice-principal at Charter Academy until 2011, and also helps to lead assemblies at Purbrook Infant School with an 'Open the Book' team.

She has invited anyone interested in finding out more to come to North End Baptist Church, Powerscourt Road, at 2.30pm on April 27.

"I've been a Street Pastor for eight years, and that has been great," she said. "But I know that Les Isaac from the Ascension Trust, who created the idea, was particularly keen on helping those in schools who need support.

"There are teenagers who have low self-esteem, who are self-harming, and who are having problems with family situations who just need someone to talk to.

"I know from my time working in schools that teachers haven't always got the time to help pupils as much as they would like with personal issues. But schools recognise that School Pastors can make a difference, and so they are happy to invite them in.

"Since leaving Charter, I've been doing supply teaching, but I felt that it was right to stop that, as

# 'How can we help you?'



School Pastors will be available to talk to pupils at lunchtimes in Charter C of E Academy

### HOW IT WORKS IN GOSPORT AND ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

SCHOOL Pastors have been working on the Isle of Wight since 2012. Christian volunteers began by patrolling outside Medina College, and now they are available inside the school three lunchtimes a week.

The team have been welcomed by the school, who appreciate the quiet work they do to help pupils with difficult issues. It will create a display board featuring the faces of School Pastors to encourage pupils to go to them with any problems.

Co-ordinator Dan Wells said: "We used to patrol outside after

school, but everyone dispersed pretty quickly. We still do patrol outside for the first couple of weeks in September, to help the Year 7s catch the right buses and so on. But now we're available at lunchtimes and around the grounds. We'd love to be in another school as well, but we need to recruit more volunteers."

School Pastors have also been working in Brune Park Community School in Gosport since 2014. The two-year pilot scheme is now ending, and it's hoped the initiative can become permanent.

God was calling me to something else. And this seems the right thing for me.

"We're going to pilot School Pastors at Charter Academy, coming in at lunchtime and getting to know pupils in the canteen or the playground. It's about having a light hearted chat - not necessarily deep conversations all the time. And we're not there to solve

problems, just to listen.

"It's inter-denominational, so we hope to recruit from all Portsmouth's churches. But we also want people who can commit themselves to being around for a while, as it takes time to build up good relationships.

"There will be full training given, before we start to go into the school in September. That will

The team there also started patrolling outside, but are now available in school. They run a support group for vulnerable children, and have been asked to help children with the transition from primary to secondary school. Co-ordinator Lesley Davis said: "What has happened in the past couple of years has been phenomenal."

If you are interested in volunteering in either the Isle of Wight or Gosport, contact Dan Wells on 07428-399866 or Lesley Davis on 07500-058486.

include training in listening, in youth culture, and how to handle issues presented. Each volunteer needs to be DBS checked and to have references from their own church. And there will be a commissioning service too.

"Each volunteer will be there for one hour-and-a-half session each week and ideally we'd like a team to be there for three

lunchtimes each week, but it depends how many volunteers we get. And once we've piloted it at Charter, I'd like to think we could offer this to other secondary schools too."

School Pastors will dovetail with the work already being done in Charter Academy by King's Church in Somerstown, and by the Deanery Youthwork Project.

Street Pastors was launched in Portsmouth in 2007 after church leaders in the city came together to meet a need. It continues with weekly patrols in Guildhall Walk and Albert Road on Friday and Saturday nights.

Crime figures from those once notorious areas have fallen dramatically and there is now a very different atmosphere there.

For more details, see: [www.schoolpastors.org.uk](http://www.schoolpastors.org.uk) or contact Sandra Morgan on [portsmouth@schoolpastors.org.uk](mailto:portsmouth@schoolpastors.org.uk) or 07722-377850.