

We'll create church from singing groups

Parishes aim to work with schools to create choral groups that could ultimately become new worshipping communities

THESE children love singing so much that they are part of two choirs – a school choir and one connected to their local church.

Pupils from Bosmere Junior School rehearse choral music at lunchtime and perform in school and in the nearby St Faith's Church, Havant. They call themselves 'Faith in Harmony'.

And it seems entirely normal that they should sing about Jesus's death or fine-tune their version of the Magnificat. After all, their teacher is Graham Kidd, the director of music at the church.

Now the school and church would like to increase their collaboration as part of our diocese's plans to launch a series of Choir Church initiatives. These are ways of creating brand new worshipping communities for families, based on a love of music, and are part of our diocesan strategy to revitalise our parishes.

At Bosmere Junior School, ten Year 4 children were recruited to join the Faith in Harmony group last September, alongside around 15 Year 6 pupils who were already involved in regular music practices and performances.

And they've helped to lead worship at St Faith's – the most recent occasion was on Ascension Day, but they were also in church for its carol service just before Christmas.



Graham Kidd, director of music at St Faith's Church in Havant, leads the lunchtime Faith in Harmony group at Bosmere Junior School

Florence Greenway, aged nine, said: "I enjoy coming here because it helps me to express my emotions and to be myself through singing. If I'm sad, it makes me feel better, and if I'm scared, I can sing a song. I do like singing and I've been doing it since I was about one. My favourite is the Magnificat."

And Fearn Bathaud, also nine, said: "I like singing, and I'm in the school choir and this choir. I do like performing the songs and I also like

dancing, because it makes you feel proud of yourself for doing it. I like *Were you there when you crucified my Lord?* because I think the tune is really good."

Graham Kidd teaches the children about articulation of words, pacing and pitch among other things as he leads the lunchtime sessions – one week with the Year 4s and the next week with the Year 6s.

He hopes the diocese's new focus

on Choir Church means that his involvement with the school can increase.

He said: "We are exploring the possibility of a new 'youth choir' rehearsing after school, to give a singing opportunity to the Year 6s once they have left Bosmere. The end product of this is very unknown at the moment, which adds to the excitement!"

"We are also exploring the possibility of a boys choir to rehearse on alternate weeks to the girls at Bosmere on Thursday lunchtimes."

Teacher Sally Smith, from Bosmere Junior, said: "Bosmere embraces every opportunity to light up our children with the joy of singing, and our little church choir are thoroughly enjoying benefitting from the extra dimension Graham brings to their music through Faith in Harmony."

For centuries, singing in choirs has been a way in which children and adults have been drawn into congregations and learnt more about the Christian faith.

Many of those in our churches can trace their involvement back to singing in a choir as a child, and this method is still in evidence at churches such as our cathedral and St Mary's in Fratton.

The 'Choir Church' concept aims to make this form of evangelism and discipleship more intentional. The idea is that our parishes work in partnership with local schools, offering pupils the chance to learn choral techniques.

Those newly-formed choirs could then help to lead worship in their local church, as those from Bosmere Junior have been doing.

As they learn more about worship and the Christian faith, their families can be drawn into those congregations, perhaps even launching their own 'church plant'.



Graham Kidd leads singing from the Faith in Harmony group at Bosmere Junior School