Upham Primary School

Church of England (Aided)

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Friday 2 October 2026

Dear New Parents,

Re Harvest Festival at Blessed Mary Church – How this 'works' for new families

We will be holding our Harvest Festival Service at the Blessed Mary Church at the top of the village next Friday at 9am. This letter is to explain some of the routines we have around church visits as it's the first time you will have experienced them.

Dropping Off

Parents and family members are invited to join us but you do not have to. It will be fully staffed as a 'school day' so if you have commitments then this is not a problem. We do ask you to drop off at the church though first thing. Staff (and buddies) will be around from the usual 8.45am until 8.55am and we will aim to start at 9am -ish. If your child is attending breakfast club that day, just drop them off as normal and school staff will walk the group up to the church just before. The service will last 45mins or so. The children sit in class groups on the floor so when you arrive look for Mrs Mason and send your child over.

What happens

During the service, we will sing songs together – we like to choose a mix of classical hymns (which you might know) and contemporary songs (which you probably don't). Parents and families are invited to join in and we will hand out a simple programme with the words. Classes will also sing a song on the stage at the front. Children from Years 5 & 6 will present some information and teaching about the theme of Harvest. This is linked to things we've been talking about in school. All of these children will have volunteered to do this and are keen to take a role in leading the collective worship; a key responsibility for our oldest children. Towards the end, children will share prayers they have written in class and we will say The Lord's Prayer together – we use some British sign language for this to emphasise the meaning of key words.

Our new Year R children will be experiencing this for the first time so they will not be actively involved – they need to watch the older ones to see 'how it works'. They will have a go at joining in a song with Squirrels Class though. For the Christmas service, they will have more of a role.

At the end

The services are a bit different for our youngest children – having got them used to a morning routine we are changing it! As a result, they can get a bit disrupted or emotional. It is the end of the service that can be the problem. If they know you have stayed, when you leave they can suddenly want you or have to go through the goodbye process again. It's fine at the end to say goodbye but you know your child, it may be better to make a quick exit.

Walking Back to School

At the end of the service, I encourage families to leave whilst the children stay sat down. This is to let parents (and cars) disperse so that our journey back is quieter.

When children lead out of the church, the Year R children will be holding hands with their Year 6 buddies, who will stand road-side. School staff then stand outside of the Year 6 children. We walk back in a long line and when a car drives past, adults call 'car is coming' as a cue to the children to stop. Everyone stands still whilst the car passes so there is no risk of anybody tripping. The Year 6 buddies will of course model and direct this which the year R children always listen to. Adults will be between the passing car and the children. This system works really well and although at times the walk back is rather slow, it is very safe.

We use this system whenever we walk around the village and the children just learn the routine. It's also part of our evacuation plan. If, in an emergency, we needed to leave the site, then we would walk up to the church as our 'refuge' using this routine.

Harvest food Gifts

The one unique element of the Harvest service is the giving of food gifts. This year we are collecting food for the Meon Valley Food bank because the Year 5 and 6 children wanted to support this charity. There are more details about this on the website. If you are able/ would like to offer a food gift, children can just bring this into church with them as they go to sit down.

We hope you enjoy your child's first Church Service with our school family, if there is anything else you'd like to know, please feel free to ask.

Yours sincerely,



D. Woolley
Headteacher