



Personal Search Weeks in Scottish secondary schools

Scripture Union Scotland (SU) and our Associated Trusts support the work of Scottish schools in a variety of ways. A “Personal Search Week” is a programme offered to secondary schools that contributes most obviously to the areas of

- Religious observance
- Religious and moral education
- Personal and social development

To offer a Personal Search Week (PSW), SU works in partnership with local churches to provide a team of professional musicians, actors, youth workers and church-based volunteers who will lead assemblies and classroom content alongside lunchtime and after-school events during a high profile week in the school.

Many schools have close partnerships with their local community, including local churches, and PSWs “reflect the developing role of the school as a partner with other providers of services for children and other organisations.” The event is generally sponsored by local churches and groups with which the school already has an ongoing relationship. These local organisations and people will cover the costs of bringing the team to the school (c£2,000) and finding accommodation as necessary. Most schools provide lunch for team members in the school over that time and cover the cost of the printing of any classroom resources used.

This programme of rock music, drama presentations and small group discussion has a proven track record of engaging with pupils, stimulating them to think through and “check out” a range of issues. We aim to help pupils to

1. Gain confidence in expressing their own beliefs and values
2. Understand aspects of what Christians believe
3. Develop informed choices about their own values and beliefs and to consider how these affect their behaviour and attitudes.
4. Contribute to the life of the school community by involving pupils and staff in the planning and delivery of the programme.

The format of PSWs organised by SU relates closely to many of the key outcomes of *Curriculum for Excellence* and our teams seek to use a range of learning and teaching styles which actively encourage pupil participation. Our staff will work with school management to determine the best format for that school. PSWs are suitable for S1 – S6 pupils and often take a theme which is then explored through different subject areas. These themes are often planned to coincide with local, national or international events and have given rise to such titles as *Freedom Week*, *Peace Week* or *Passion Week*.

A typical programme may include a live chat show on teenage anger, comedy sketches which provoke questions about self-worth, a music





workshop, songs which explore identity, the possibility of a spiritual reality, the meaning of freedom, etc. Individual lessons can be organised to work within the school timetable or to bring classes together for single periods; longer thematic sessions which may involve a year group over an entire afternoon. Plays and sketches invite individual and group participation, whilst music or drama workshops and performances are linked to multi-media presentation to heighten impact and relevance. By these means pupils explore a wide variety of issues related to Social Studies, Citizenship, Health & Wellbeing and Expressive Arts as well as RME and Religious Observance.



Each week has aspects to it that are unique to that school but here are some of our experiences from recent Personal Search Weeks.



- A pupil designed and developed the publicity for her Advanced Higher Art project.
- Pupils assist with the lighting, sound and technical presentations of the week using school or team equipment.
- Groups of pupils have been the core planning group for the week and invited school and SU staff to assist as necessary.
- Pupils and staff work together to put on follow-up discussion groups as part of the informal curriculum.
- P7 Pupils from associated primary schools are invited along to their own session with a welcome from the appropriate school staff member, some transition content using the "It's Your Move" material and a thought provoking input from the band and drama team.



Ideally a school commits to having a PSW between 6-18 months in advance of the event allowing for us to book team members and involve a range of people in the planning of the event.



SU and associate staff - along with other members of a school chaplaincy team - would want to see this week as part of their on-going partnership in and service to the school rather than being an isolated week of activity.



The rock band and drama team who we work with carry a lot of equipment and would need to be based in the school hall or dedicated classroom all week meaning that the timetabling of outside lets or examination diets would need to be considered. There may also be some timetabling adjustments to bring year groups together for sessions. Various Principal Teachers or Faculty Heads may also need to be involved in the planning at an early stage.



Further questions about Personal Search Weeks can be directed to our Regional and Associate Workers who can also identify schools that have recently put on such a week; members of the Senior Management Team from these schools are able to act as referees for the programme.



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