

So You Want To Start An SU Group In School?



Great! This document is not intended as a training manual, but rather as a checklist to work through to ensure that your group gets off to the best possible start. It will help to work through at least some of this with Scripture Union Scotland (SU) or Associate Trust staff, another experienced group leader and all members of your team.

1. Research

Get to know your school and some of the people in it.

School name: _____

Headteacher/Rector: _____

School phone number: _____

School email: _____

Secretary: _____

Janitor: _____

Other key staff (e.g. Deputes): _____

2. Involve other Christians from the Chaplaincy Team, pupils, school staff or local churches

A team with a breadth of membership will bring different talents and availability to strengthen the programme.

Chaplains: _____

Christian staff or pupils: _____

Other Christians: _____

Likely leaders: _____

SU or Associate Trust Staff: _____

3. Pray as an individual and with others for the school, and for initiatives that could be taken to start a group in the school

Register with *Pray For Schools* (www.suscotland.org.uk/pray/) administered by SU Scotland; if others are praying for the same school and are happy to be put in touch, then we'll connect you.

Most SU staff circulate prayer needs for their region to supporters on a regular basis; get your news included by contacting your local office. Try to add news to your church prayer agenda in newsletters, prayer meetings or other services.

4. Think what kind of group you would like to start

It may well be that the format of the group changes as you talk and pray with others or once the group has started, but you'll need to have a plan to begin with – at least to be able to hold an intelligent conversation with school management.

Age group: _____

Timings: _____

Content: _____

e.g. a "safe place" lunch club with 5-minute thought; a 30-minute mix of games, teaching, discussion, worship; a Bible study and prayer time, Schools Alpha or SOUL/Christianity Explored.

Day of the week? _____

What days do choirs happen in the school – never a good one to clash with!

We have identified what makes a school group an "SU group" and these values are listed below. If it's an SU group you're running then these will need to be evident but, of course, it's possible to run a group that's not an SU group and still share these values.

- To deepen relationships with each other whilst learning dependence on God;
- To have prayer and Bible engagement central to the programme of meetings;
- To be centred on the needs of children and young people and encourage their faith journey;
- To strive to be inclusive to all and create an atmosphere of Christian love;
- To have clearly-defined aims which are evangelistic and discipleship oriented;
- To model Christian values and lifestyle amongst the group;
- To be fun and relevant for those who attend;
- To be well-led by accredited SU leaders

SU groups can take many forms and styles. This list of values is not intended to stifle creativity by group leaders, but rather to engender a common ethos that defines the ministry of SU Scotland.

If you are calling it an "SU Group", or referring to it as such with the school's Management Team, then we'd want you to be an accredited volunteer with SU Scotland – more of that next.

5. Work with the full knowledge of Regional Worker or Local Area Worker staff from SU Scotland or staff from an Associated Trust

There is an accreditation process to complete with SUS. Find your local office from the list of SU regions at www.suscotland.org.uk/regional or phone our Milton Street office on 0141 352 7631.

- One member of the team needs to be identified as the Team Leader and should request Team Leader Forms (and TL Reference forms) from your Regional or Associate Staff or Local Area Worker (these forms are not available from the SU Scotland website).
- Other Team Members complete Volunteer Forms, which are available from the SU Scotland website.
- Please send or hand your reference forms on to your two referees, asking them to send them on to the Volunteers Unit in Glasgow.
- The SU or Associate staff member will want to meet with the prospective Team Leader once they receive a copy of your TL Form from the SU Scotland Volunteers Unit.

- The SU Scotland Volunteers Unit will send you an application form for the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (formerly Disclosure). On completion of the process, they will send you a Volunteers' Handbook and a welcome letter.
- It may well be possible to put you in touch with other group leaders to see groups in action before you start, and also to find ongoing support.

6. Work with the full knowledge of the School Management Team

Headteachers often value a busy extra-curricular programme of clubs on offer in their schools. SU groups can contribute to the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence in a school as pupils learn and lead together (see Network News Autumn 2010 – details in section seven). They are also understood to have an important place in Religious Observance in schools:

Members of the school community, including pupils, parents and representatives of faith groups and communities, may wish to have opportunities for organised acts of worship within the informal curriculum of the school. Ministers would encourage headteachers to consider these requests positively and make suitable arrangements if appropriate personnel and accommodation can be provided.

(Scottish Government letter to Directors of Education & Headteachers of all schools, February 2011)

Contact the school, asking to start an SU group and requesting a meeting with the Headteacher.

- Will you need to provide the school/council with evidence of membership of the PVG scheme?
- Will the school require written permission for pupils to attend the group? *Some* primary schools do ask for this and therefore would have to be included; otherwise SU Scotland does not suggest it.
- Do they have suggestions or limitations on the venue, time or day for the group?
- In the area of child protection, your group will operate under the school's policy is it is first and foremost a school club; you will need some advice on their procedures (SU Scotland's on-call service and advice is still available to you as an accredited leader. (Details are in the Volunteers' Handbook.)

Some other questions may well come up later with the school:

- What is the dress code that is expected of you?
- Are you allowed to park in the school car park?
- What technology is available in the school? Where is it stored and who looks after it?
- Are pupils able to take packed lunches to the room?
- Where are posters allowed in the school?

7. Make sure that you and your leaders are properly prepared for your group meetings

When is your start date? _____

Agree in advance what materials you will use. Here are some suggestions, and there are always more in our *Network News* magazine, issued to SU group leaders twice a year and available from SU & Associate staff in your area. Back copies are on our website at www.suscotland.org.uk/networknews.

Primary: Eyelevel books and DVDs such as *Awesome*, *Streetwise*, *Rocky Road* and *Target Challenge* from SU publications; *Impact* or *Fusion* (monarch); *LIGHT* Material (SU "Sunday School" material); *SUPAClub* material from www.schoolslive.org; *JAFFA* (SU book – sadly out of print, but possibly able to borrow or share copies)

Secondary: Resources on the www.suscotland.org.uk/resources page; secondary materials on www.schoolslive.org; *SU Substance* (SU publications) a growing series of secondary material; *The Grid* (from the SU LIGHT Material normally associated with Sunday Schools)

What will you use? _____

- How will you plan and communicate who does what each week?
- Do you need any other resources for music, crafts, games etc? How will these be paid for?

8. Advertise your group to those whom you would like to see coming

What will you call the group? _____

e.g. The Point, The SU Group, Scripture Union Group, Bible Union, ignite, Delve; JAM Club (Jesus and Me), Tuesday Club, Lunch Bunch, Super/SUper/SUPA Club.

Even if the group is registered with SU Scotland, it does not need to be called "SU Group."

Look on the SU Scotland website and download logos if you want to use them:

www.suscotland.org.uk/about/corporate-identity

How will you advertise the group? Try some of these suggestions:

- Ask for some input to assemblies.
- Have a stall at a Clubs and Societies Fair (you might have to organise the fair first)
- Hold a special launch event like a concert, question panel or guest celebrity
- Put up posters – check where these are allowed in the school. Who will design them? Are they good at design? Is the design going to attract the age group you want?
- Have it announced weekly by class teachers, through notice sheets or on the Tannoy. Who will arrange this each week?

9. Personally invite those who you would like to see coming

Perhaps some pupils already have a connection with you or with a local church; try to get information to all the local churches. Perhaps some have been to a Scripture Union holiday, weekend or mission. Ask your Regional Worker or Associate Trust worker for a list of these people.

10. Persevere with your vision for the school for at least a term and then evaluate

A couple of questions to think about:

- What has gone well in this launch process?
- What do you want to see happen in the school?
- What should you start, stop and continue doing to realise this?
- Are there other people who you need to involve?