

New Generation Schools Trust

Why New Generation Schools Trust (NGST) works with churches

In the development of twenty-first century Christian ethos education, NGST has prioritised partnerships with local churches as a means to create innovative and incarnational schools that transform the lives of children, families and local communities. The rationale for this approach is as follows...

NGST hopes to honour the proud history and heritage of Christian ethos education. The church was a pioneer of mass education in the United Kingdom. At a time when policy-makers struggled to comprehend the benefits of education for working class families, churches chose to create schools (Sunday schools and charity schools), paving the way for politicians to provide and prescribe schooling for all children. Since this time, the state has recognised the decisive contribution of churches and supported the provision of faith-based schools by Christian denominations and, more latterly, by other faith groups. Through partnership with local churches, NGST will help to enable a contemporary expression of Christian ethos education that fits the context and communities in which we work.

NGST serves those parents, carers, children and communities who value a Christian ethos education. Two hundred years after the inception of mass education in England, a significant proportion of families continue to express a preference for their child to benefit from an education with a Christian ethos. Among them are families of Christian faith, other faiths and no faith, all of whom recognise the richness of this tradition and appreciate the enriching dimension that a Christian ethos education provides for their child's learning and personal growth. By partnering with local churches, NGST will enable more children and families to enjoy the benefit of a Christian ethos education, if it is their choice to do so.

NGST will play its part as a child-centred, family-focused and community-minded provider of state-funded education among a growing number of diverse organisations sponsoring schools in England. Over the past three decades subsequent governments have increasingly prioritised the role of parental preference and choice as a key driver of education policy and provision. Within the changing landscape of English schooling there are a growing array of organisations commissioned to create and develop new and existing state-funded schools (including, Local Authorities, charities, Christian denominations, faith groups, independent schools and parent and community groups). In partnership with local churches, NGST will work with communities to develop a number of schools that serve children and families of all faiths and no faith, developing a localised model of Christian ethos schools for the twenty-first century.

NGST schools will serve as communities of hospitality and learning where the whole community can come together to recognise and work towards the common good. In a society where meaningful community can be hard to find and where the greatest deprivation is often the deprivation of community itself, schools provide a unique touch-point for the whole of society; everyone has to go to school at least once in life. As a result, authentic community schools provide a gathering place where children, families and residents can come together and build relationships, demonstrate love, receive and offer support and experience genuine friendship and reciprocity. As a calling to the community, schools and churches hold all of this in common. NGST works with local churches that provide effective portals between the school and the community, creating meaningful connections with residents, community organisations, businesses, public services, other churches and faith groups to increase social cohesion and civic pride.

NGST recognises and harnesses the distinct roles and contributions that schools and churches make respectively to their community. A community school is charged with the unique responsibility to bring outstanding education and personal development to the children and families that it serves. A church exists to express authentic faith and provide meaningful service to the local community. To this end, schools and churches are different types of entities and must remain and develop as such. That said, a good school that receives support and resources from a local church or community group is likely to become even better and likewise, a church that seeks to invest in, and enrich, the lives of local children and families through partnership with a school will provide a more authentic and meaningful expression of faith and service. NGST partners with churches that are committed to supporting schools in their mission to educate children and support families.

NGST enables churches to contribute to the life of a school and enhance the life of the local community. We believe that it takes a community to raise a child. Hence, schools benefit greatly when local individuals and organisations invest their time and talent, energy and expertise in supporting and extending children's learning and family support. Schools in more disadvantaged communities often miss out on these benefits due to the reduced levels of social capital available in the surrounding community. Working with churches, NGST unlocks community resources to ensure that schools benefit from this increased interest and support and become the heart of the community.