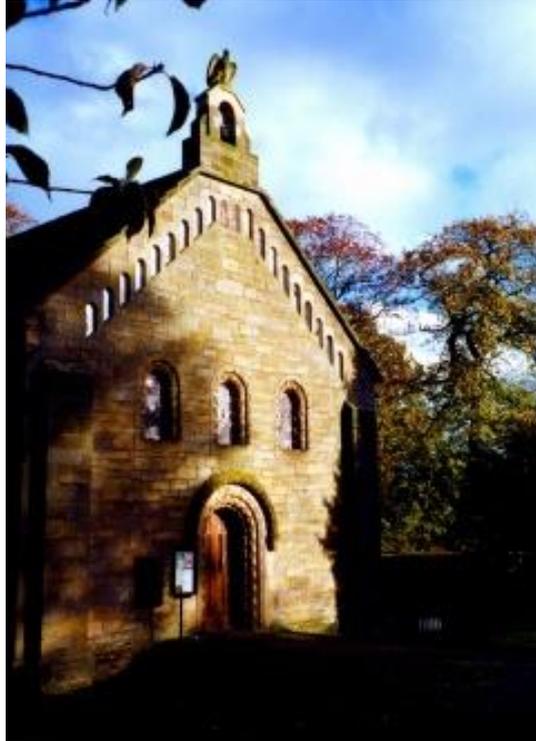


 THE FRIENDS OF
ST MARY'S CHURCH, WREAY 

Teachers Notes 1: How to visit a church



When visiting a place of worship with children, it is important for them to respond to the experience thoughtfully and creatively – for them to experience a special time and go away with impressions and questions.

To some children this might well feel like an alien place, remote from their experience so it is important that , whilst the value of respect is fostered and maintained throughout the visit , they can feel relaxed and comfortable. A church is a place of stillness and reflection but it is also a place of joyfulness and celebration. It is a great educational resource!

- Making connections can help the child build on their experiences so linking with other times in a church is helpful eg weddings, christenings, school celebrations or worship at special times such as Christmas. In St Mary's there is the bonus of making connections with nature with a host of birds, mammals, insects and even fossils
- Using all the senses. The children can be encouraged to use their
 1. Sight – through colour matching greens in the churchyard, using paint sample cards or an I Spy activity outside and inside, looking for animals, taking digital photos or “snapshots” with their own eyes.

2. Hearing – being very still and silent and listening for one minute, then sharing what they heard.
 3. Smelling – most churches have a quite distinctive smell – musty hymn books, furniture polish, damp stone and burnt candles! What do the smells remind them of?
 4. Touching – St Mary’s lends itself very well to a “touch tour” where the children feel the carvings rather than look at them - a good preliminary to drawing.
 5. Tasting? – if this is relevant to the visit, a simple role play shared communion with bread and grape juice. Even better if the vicar is there to support this.
- Seeing “angels in the architecture”. Using the church to investigate how and why people use the church.

There is nothing wrong with identifying and labelling key areas and furniture in the church, using technical names such as chancel and apse and discovering their use.

In St Mary’s all the key items are there (apart from the cross??) but they are a bit different, for example the font is a mirrored lily pond and the pulpit is a prehistoric tree stump! It might be helpful if the children know a slightly more conventional church first.

Just beware the worksheet syndrome when it becomes all about the searching and not about the finding out....

- Creative response on the spot – St Mary’s is about creation and filled with creativity so being creative during the visit is very fitting and provides a quiet space. Drafts can be followed up back at school and become part of the experience.
 1. Sketching can help the children to look closer, sometimes providing a card frame to look through can focus the composition. Colouring is generally decried in educational circles but the stained glass designs certainly just ask for colour and, of course, we all know about mindfulness now!
 2. Poetry writing is another natural response but is best done with some structure such as a list poem, a question and answer design or a shape poem.
 3. Singing and music making is part of any church service so singing together can feel just right.
 4. Praying, circle time and stilling can all lead to reflection on their experience possibly before leaving.