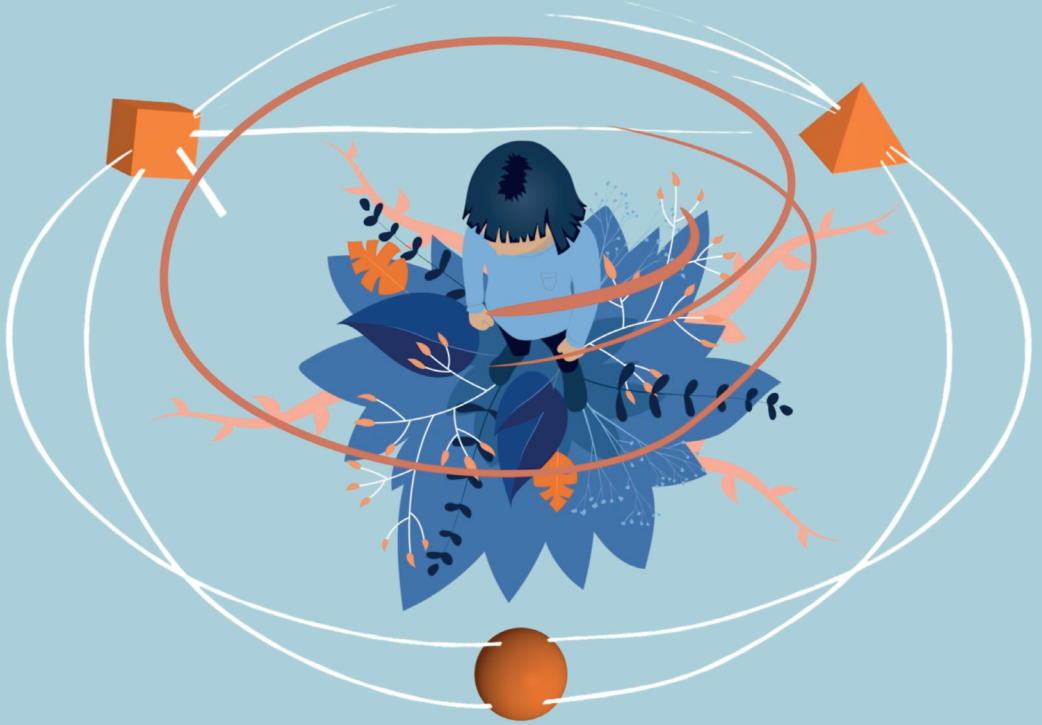


FAITH IN THE NEXUS



Faith in the Nexus and the Domestic Church

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The Faith in the Nexus research project.

In the Faith in the Nexus research project the term nexus refers to the connections between home, church school and the local church community.

The Faith in the Nexus project investigated the ways church primary schools, working in collaboration with churches and interested key groups, facilitated opportunities for children's exploration of faith and spiritual life in the home.

The project involved 20 church primary schools, a cross-section of Church of England and Catholic primary schools. Focus group interviews were held with 187 pupils and 267 adults (parents, staff, local clergy, and other interested key groups) and an online survey was completed by 1002 people; 730 pupils and 272 adults.

Key questions raised by the research:

How can we sustain flourishing connections between the parish, school and domestic church?

How can positive relationships across the nexus impact the domestic church?

Key findings from the research:

A strong relationship between parish and school has a strong association with attitudes and behaviours within the domestic church.

The powerful impact these positive relationships have on aspects of family faith life is mostly unseen but is apparent in the significance for church school families of their connection with the local parish.

When questions were asked about how children explored faith at home, some parents suggested that it was not about talking, praying together, or religious rituals, or going to church but about what you did to help others.



The family is the smallest unit of the Church, it is the Church in the home that Augustine referred to as the domestic churchⁱ. The role of the domestic church is to nurture and foster an environment that is Christo-centric and gives a living witness to the Gospel. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their childrenⁱⁱ.

Findings from our Nexus report revealed that families talked about faith-related matters in the home more than they participated in faith-related activities in the home. However, our research also found that families engaged more with faith-related activities at certain times of the year linked to the key Christian festivals; evidence of increased school activity at these times rippled into the home environment. The cycle of celebrations influenced the families' perception of the rhythm of the liturgical year and offered opportunities to facilitate exploration of faith in the home.

A strong theme emerging from our report was children's appreciation of the need for space to think, reflect and pray. When children spoke about reflection time at home it was something that happened as and when, there was no set time. However, occasionally children drew attention to specific times for prayer, most commonly at bedtime. This space and time is essential for spiritual wellbeing, yet many children, like adults had no or little quiet time in daily life.

Families who spoke of a strong connection to the church school and parish signified it had a positive impact on faith-talk and interactions at home creating a climate where children's spiritual development can flourish.

ⁱ *De Bono Viduitatis 29 (PL 40:450) See Atkinson, Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Family, 271-282 for Augustine's development of the term.*

ⁱⁱ *Vatican II: Lumen gentium (Nov. 21, 1964), paragraph 11*



Watch

View our animation explainer at nicer.org.uk

Conversation Starters.

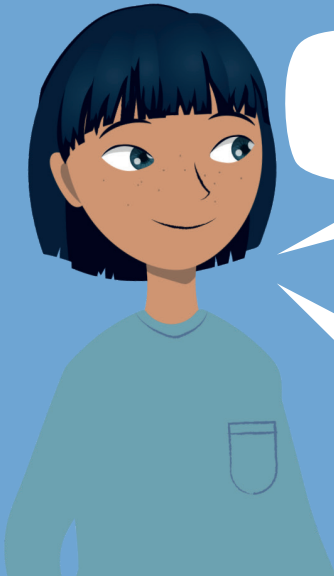
What did parent's say?

At home we do stuff mostly around the festivals like the Christmas crib service. (Parent)

I think for me it's action...cos personally with our family, I find it hard to find time to sit down and have quiet time and praying but we do a lot of things for our community. (Parent)

Often my son would pick up a Bible that's not instigated by me, it's what he chose to do. (Parent)

What did children say?



For reflection I lay on my bed, and I shut my eyes... I reflect on the world and how lucky we are to have the things that we have. (Pupil)

Sometimes before I go to bed, I do a prayer but I mean sometimes because I don't always. (Pupil)

