**NAME OF CHURCH**

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**Start of the New Academic Year Service**

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The Gathering

*Welcome to NAME OF LOCATION, as we join together to worship God.*

*Suggestions have been made about when to sit or stand at different points during the service if you are able. However, please do what helps you to enter into the worship of God.*

*In this service, children are invited to bring their school bags. They can be used as a symbol of growing into a community, joining a journey and as a focus during a prayer of dedication.*

Welcome and Introduction

*Informal words of welcome and introduction may be used to set the scene.*

Let us come to worship God, to learn together,
to sing, to pray, to listen and to share.
We come because we are all your children.

***All* Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace

from God our Father

and the Lord Jesus Christ

be with you

***All*    and also with you.**

Great God,

you have created learners and teachers,

explorers and adventures, journeys and surprises.

May we join the journey of discovery.

You have made us pupils and teachers,

friends and team-mates, families and community.

May we be your community.

You have called us disciples and followers,

friends and companions, peacemakers and neighbours.

May we be neighbours to each other.

***All*    Amen.**

Opening Hymn

*Please stand.*

Preparation

*Please sit.*

Dear friends. We gather today to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of learning, and the opportunity to prepare ourselves for the coming adventure of the new school year.

We remember that God’s love flows through us as we create new friends and communities. We will build new worlds to explore, in our minds and through work and play.

Later in the service we will ask God to bless our backpacks, so that as we travel through the year we will know that God is with us, and that God has blessed our journey.

As we begin, let’s take a moment to humble ourselves before God, to examine our hearts and ask for forgiveness for the ways we have not lived up to our God-given calling to care for people in our communities, and not valued the gift of wisdom.

Kyrie confession

*Please remain seated or kneel if preferred.*

Sometimes we forget to care about other people, even when they live in our own community. Let’s say sorry to God for the things that we forget to do, and for the times when we don’t do what we know we should do.

There are lots of people around us, in our own town, village or city, and we know that you love them all, God.Lord, have mercy.

***All* Lord, have mercy.**

Sometimes we aren’t very good at showing your love to people at school, at clubs, or to our neighbours, and we are sorry for that.Christ, have mercy.

***All* Christ, have mercy.**

There are many people who yearn for the opportunity of education and a better life. Forgive us when we forget what a gift learning is.Lord, have mercy.

***All* Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God,

forgive us our sins,

open our eyes to God's truth,

strengthen us to do God's will

and give us the joy of his kingdom,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

***All* Amen.**

A Litany in Praise of Learning

*Based on Psalm 78.1-7*

*Please stand.*

My people, listen to my teaching.

***All*    Listen to what I say.**

I will speak using stories.

***All*    I will tell things that have been secret since long ago.**We have heard them and know them.

***All*    Our fathers told them to us.**We will not keep them from our children. We will tell those who come later about the praises of the Lord.

***All*    We will tell about his power and the miracles he has done.**The Lord made an agreement with Jacob.
He gave the teachings to Israel.

***All*    And he commanded our ancestors
to teach them to their children**

Then their children would know them,
even their children not yet born

***All*    And they would tell their children.**

So they would all trust God.

***All*    They would not forget what God had done.
Instead, they would obey his commands.**

Reading (s)

*Please sit.*

*One or two readings may be read*

Sermon, talk or presentation

*This might be an opportunity to invite someone to speak from a children’s education organization.*

Hymn

Prayers

*This may be an opportunity for creative or participatory prayer.*

*Alternatively, prayers may follow this format, or a suitable alternative:*

Let us pray.

Loving God,

We give you thanks for the beauty of wisdom and learning,

and especially for our schools and clubs.

Jesus, our teacher,

We thank you for the gift of education.

We thank you for the sense of wonder that comes with finding out new things

We thank you for the friends we make and for the teachers who care about us and want us to do our best.
Lord hear us,

***All* Lord graciously hear us.**

We ask that you would bless our school,
in that working together and playing together
we may learn to love one another
and to serve you.

Lord hear us,

***All* Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for children who want to go to school, but cannot; for children in places of war, because of ill-health, or because they are excluded because they can’t afford it or because of their gender.
We ask that you would help them to access learning in other ways, and that they would know your presence with them.

Lord hear us,

***All*  Lord graciously hear us.**

*Ending with* ***The Lord’s Prayer***

***All* Our Father in heaven,**

**hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Lead us not into temptation**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,**

**and the glory are yours**

**now and for ever.**

**Amen.**

Preparing for the coming year

*Children are invited to hold their school bags to help them focus on the prayer. Symbols are held up to represent each idea.*

Creator God, who calls us to be together, bless us

as we pack our bags and prepare for school;

as we move from summer into school,

from holiday to homework, from play into discovery.

*Rubber eraser:*
May we remember mistakes are forgiven and new chances offered. Bless us,

***All* as we pack our bags and prepare for school.**

*Book:*
May we remember we are always learners ready to discover new things. Bless us,

***All* as we pack our bags and prepare for school.**

*Lunch Box:*
May we remember to share what we have with those who need our friendship. Bless us,

***All* as we pack our bags and prepare for school.**

*Name Badge:*
May we always be open to new friends and to learn from them. Bless us,

***All* as we pack our bags and prepare for school.**

*Blank notepad:*
And may we always remember to hope into the future. Bless us,

***All* as we pack our bags and prepare for school.**

In all the different ways we get ready for this week, bless us,

as we pack our bags and prepare for school.

***All* Amen.**

Hymn

*Please stand.*

*A collection may be taken during this hymn, which could be donated towards the work of a local or national children’s education organization.*

*At the end give each child something such as a ruler, rubber, or other stationary item in a sealed envelope as a gift for their journey.*

*Printing a label/luggage tag with a blessing printed upon it to attach to bags is also a popular option.*

The Dismissal

Lord Jesus Christ,
thank you for the power of questions:
their power to challenge us,
to make us think more deeply,
to help us reflect and learn more about each other,
and their power to grow our understanding.
Give us the wisdom to ask good questions this year,

as we look to you as our example and teacher.

Amen.

***All*** **May we go out from this church eager to learn even more,**

**ready to share God’s love with the people around us,**

**and thankful for God’s good gifts.**

**Amen.**

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**Hymn suggestions**

Here I am to worship

One more step along the world I go

You shall go out with joy

There are some quite good hymns about animals in the BBC Come and Praise series, which some of our young people will be familiar with from school.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/articles/zmgwkmn>

For example:

Back in school again

Being a friend

Friends

While we live we learn

Or from Out of the Ark: <https://www.outoftheark.co.uk/>

**Readings suggestions**

Proverbs 1.1-9 – The wisdom of learning

Matthew 19.13-14 – Jesus blesses little children

Luke 2.41-47 – The child Jesus is found in the Temple

Philippians 4.8-9 – Focus on the wise things

Romans 15.1-7 – Building up the whole community