



Churches Conservation Trust

Self-Directed visit to a Historic Church

Teacher Guide

About Churches Conservation Trust (CCT)

Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity protecting historic churches at risk. Established in 1969, we care for more than 350 historic churches that are no longer used for regular worship.

These churches represent over 1,000 years of English history, art, architecture, and archaeology. CCT ensures that they remain open to everyone as spaces for community use, education, and inspiration.

The CCT is committed to welcoming schools and young people into our buildings by offering:

- Free access to historic sites,
- Educational materials for schools,
- Self-guided visit support,
- Cross-curricular, curriculum-linked resources.

Website: www.visitchurches.org.uk

For questions and support about learning: learning@thecct.org.uk

Why Visit a Historic Church?

A visit to a historic church provides a unique opportunity for pupils to explore local history, architecture, and heritage first-hand. It's an engaging way to bring learning to life across multiple subjects. Churches tell local stories that connect students to their community. A trip to a historic church supports student learning across several curriculum areas including History, Geography, Art, Science, English, Religious Education, and Citizenship. These buildings were designed for reflection and can inspire creative writing, art, philosophical discussions and critical thinking about the past and conservation.

Example exploration questions:

- How has this building changed over time?
- What materials were used and why?
- What can we learn about faith and community life in the past?
- Why is conserving heritage important today?



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Checking Availability

Before planning your visit, please confirm that your chosen church is available.

1. Visit the church's page on www.visitchurches.org.uk
2. Call or email the CCT contact listed on the church's page to confirm that the church is free on your preferred date and not in use for other activities.
3. Many sites have uneven floors, steps, or limited wheelchair access. Most do not have a toilet. The CCT contact will be able to give you more information.
4. For broader questions about learning, or for educational support and resources, email learning@theccct.org.uk.

Safety and Practical Information

Teachers are responsible for the supervision and safety of their group during the visit.

Before the Visit:

- Teachers are advised to conduct a preliminary visit to complete a risk assessment. You can email learning@theccct.org.uk for help.
- Many sites have uneven floors, steps, or limited wheelchair access.
- Ensure the site is open and available on your preferred date.
- Prepare students on acceptable behaviour whilst in the building and advise them to wear sensible footwear and appropriate clothing.

On the Day:

- **Do** get hands on with the building and feel the carvings and stonework.
- **Do** wear sensible footwear and bring warm clothing. Most churches have no heating and can be cool, even in summer.
- **Do** sign the visitor's book! Please include the date and the number of people in your group.
- **Do** leave a donation if possible. Our buildings are free to enter, but we appreciate donations big or small to help conserve our churches.



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- **Do not** run as floors can be uneven and slippery. Visitors should look where they are walking and come to a stop when filling out worksheets.
- **Do not** climb on furniture or enter restricted areas.
- Most churches have no toilets or handwashing facilities.
- Not all churches have power or lighting. Bring a fully charged phone and only use PAT-tested electrical equipment if essential.
- Remember that churches are public spaces and members of the public may be present.
- Take all rubbish away and do not leave materials or equipment unattended.

First Aid & Safeguarding:

- Administering First Aid remains the school's responsibility.
- Report any incidents, damage, or hazards to the church contact and learning@theccct.org.uk
- CCT has a zero-tolerance policy for abuse or exploitation. Any safeguarding concerns should be reported to safeguarding@theccct.org.uk.

Church Layout and Terminology

The vast majority of churches in Great Britain point East, which means the altar is found in the East end of the church. This is because these buildings were built as a place to worship Christianity. Jesus was born in the small town of Bethlehem, and he died in Jerusalem. These places are found East of Great Britain. Therefore, churches face East so Christians can pray facing the direction of their holy land.

Nave	The main area where the congregation sits, usually in pews.
Chancel	The most sacred area of the church around the altar, it is often raised and there may be specific chairs for the choir or clergy to sit.
Altar	The most important feature of the church used for Holy Communion.



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Font	Holds the holy water for baptisms
Pulpit	Where the priest delivers sermons.
Lectern	A stand (often eagle-shaped) holding the Bible
North/ South Aisle	Some churches have extra aisles on either side of the nave.
Porch	The main entrance area.
Chapel	A smaller space for private worship.
Tower	Often contains the bells.

Suggested Activities linked to the National Curriculum

Early Years & Key Stage 1:

- I Spy in the Church: Use senses to explore the sounds, textures, and colours in the building.
- Shape Spotting: Identify and count 2D and 3D shapes in architecture. Look for different faces, colours and animals.
- Special Objects: Match church objects to their use and meaning. Relate this to the special objects in their lives.
- Stories in Stained Glass: Explore the windows and create your own stained-glass picture.
- Hazard Alert: Identify safety risks and design warning signs.

Key Stage 2:

- Discover the Past: Compare old and new images to explore local history. Look for features in the church from different time periods: Victorian vs Medieval.
- Features of Faith: Identify Christian symbols and their meanings.
- Conservation Champions: Measure light, temperature, and dampness to discuss how to protect buildings.
- Material Safari: Investigate the materials used in construction and why.
- Poetry from the Pulpit: Write poems inspired by the church or local area and deliver them from the pulpit.
- Should We Save a Historic Church? Hold a classroom debate about conservation. Should the building be kept as it is or renovated?



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Key Stage 3:

- Architectural Detectives: Identify different styles (Norman, Gothic, Victorian). Look for changes made due to the Reformation and discuss the historic relationship between the monarchy and the church.
- Sustainability: Design a new, sustainable use for a historic church.
- Conservation Science: Investigate the science behind protecting old buildings.
- Language of Memorials: Analyse church inscriptions to study how language and beliefs change.

Cross-Curricular:

- Maths: Measure the perimeter, calculate the area and create scaled floor plans. Determine the age people died using memorials.
- English: Write guidebooks, trails, or creative stories inspired by features.
- Art & Design: Sketch carvings, windows, or architectural patterns.
- Geography: Use maps, directions, and coordinates to explore the site.
- Citizenship: Discuss community heritage and heritage conservation.

Conservation is central to CCT's mission. Encourage pupils of all ages to think about:

Why is it important to preserve historic buildings?

Final Checklist

- ✓ Visit the church webpage and confirm your date with the contact listed.
- ✓ Complete your own risk assessment
- ✓ Prepare pupils with expected behaviours.
- ✓ Bring suitable clothing and footwear.
- ✓ Ensure adequate adult supervision as per your school's policies.
- ✓ For any educational or general learning queries or additional resources, please email learning@thecct.org.uk