

WELCOME TO BLEND

THE 'HOW-TO' GUIDE TO SETTING UP A BLEND IN YOUR CHURCH

What is Blend?

Blend is a pop-up cafe, run by local churches, for young people in years 7 to 10, that offers a safe, fun and engaging space for young people to maintain their local friendships and to make new ones in their own community, to get practical support from trusted adults and to explore the bigger questions of life, faith, identity and prayer.

Blend runs after school in a location near the transport hubs used by young people to get back from school. It is open for between 2 to 3 hours once a week, with food, craft, games, chilling, homework support and lots of emphasis on friendship and being together.

Blend is run by a team of trusted adults who are committed to the wellbeing of young people and to offering a space that is available to the whole community far beyond the church congregation.

'Blend is a vital link to the friends he would have otherwise lost contact with and an opportunity to relax in a pressure free environment. I greatly appreciate all the time and effort all the volunteers put into running this each week. Thank you',

A Blend Parent



belonging, friendship, community

'It's a little community', Adam



Blend's Values

Blend is underpinned by 5 values, which we consider to be our DNA - those elements of our identity that must not change.

1. Relationships are everything

- The adults are there to provide a space in which strong, kind, loving friendships can develop between the young people, between the young people and adults, and between the adults.

- Blend is always run by a team, not by an individual.

- Relationships with the young people are our priority, but this often means developing strong relationships with their families as well.

2. Whole church engagement

- Blend is a missional initiative of the whole church and requires the support - in prayer and practical help - from the whole community.

- It must have the support of the church leadership, a

budget allocated and be widely known by the whole congregation.

3. Whole community focus

- Blend is for the whole local community. It is available to all young people, especially those who are struggling in any way.

- Blend intentionally invites others in the community to get involved - to bake cakes, give advice, offer their skills and gifts to the young people and it welcomes the contributions of anyone who wants to help out whether from the church family or not.

- Wherever possible, the Blend young people will find ways to interact with and serve the local community through initiatives which involve all generations and enable those who wouldn't normally come to church on a Sunday to be a part of church in a 'fresh expression'.



Belonging, friendship, community

'I love the brownies', Will



4. Taking time

- Loving young people and providing a great space in which they feel at home, takes time. It takes time to set up, run and clear up each week. It takes time with the young people, listening to them and prioritising their needs. It takes time with their parents and families, developing relationships of trust. It takes time for prayer and planning within the team.

- Building strong, trusting relationships with parents, the local community, and young people takes time. Blend may not be immediately successful, but needs time to bed down and develop.

'I think it's a nice place to meet outside of school', Mia

**For more information contact
caroline.turvey@gkchurch.org**

5. God at the centre

- Blend is an explicitly Christian and missional initiative which is underpinned by prayer and focussed on enabling the young people to encounter Jesus Christ. That means the team pray together and invite the whole church to pray for them. It means deep trust in God's care for the young people and for Blend as a whole. It means a high level of expectation that God will be involved and will open possibilities for faith to grow.

'I like that people are socialising instead of going on their phones'

Evie



Belonging, friendship, community

Blend steps to faith

Blend is an explicitly Christian initiative, which aims to be good news to young people, their families and the local community, both in the practical support it offers, and in the invitation to consider the possibility of God and faith.

Blend has a four stage theory of faith.

1. Listen and love

Blend is entirely based on developing loving relationships of trust and support, which allow the young people to feel safe and cared for. The adult team love the young people and are committed to their wellbeing. As friendships develop, and practical support is offered, trust grows between the adults and young people. Committed, supportive and trusting relationships are the beginning, middle and end of everything we do in Blend.



These trusting friendships take place within a wider culture of intentional community building, in which strong relational bonds are nurtured between everyone involved at every level.

2. God-talk

Blend does not separate out 'the God-slot' from the rest of the sessions, but brings God, naturally and normally into the ordinary life and culture of the Blend community. Adults are encouraged to offer to pray with young people in gentle and low key ways and to use simple wondering questions about faith, encouraging conversation about God and faith. There is no attempt to persuade or to teach, but simply to open up conversations about the big issues of life and meaning.

Blend also builds on the seasonal patterns of prayer and worship the young people learned at Primary School, using Harvest Festival, Christingle, Mothering Sunday and Christmas as natural opportunities to run simple times of worship, prayer and interactive teaching.

Blend steps to faith

3. An invitation to explore

On occasion, often at a special event, the young people will be offered more explicit input about faith. This is always done appropriate to the young peoples culture and to the culture of Blend, which means it must be engaging and invitational.

Blend is more interested in offering the young people the experience of prayer and worship than giving them teaching and input. With this in mind, regular creative prayer spaces are offered, and the young people invited to spend time in them.

These invitations to explore faith are a chance to invite young people to take a first step of faith.

4. Intentional discipleship

The adult team are always on

*'I like blend because it's a chance to see my primary class and catch up whilst bringing my new friends',
Brooke*



the look-out for young people who are open to exploring faith personally. They expect opportunities to emerge when one or more young people become eager to discuss their own faith. Where this is seen a plan is put in place; this will depend on the needs of those involved, and may include one to one faith mentoring, working with a young person to help them explore faith and make a commitment to Christ, or an invitation to a small group where they can engage in this together with others.

The key is to be intentional, expectant and ready to respond.

In time, our hope is that Blend will be the space in which young people can come to a living faith of their own. We are entirely open to the possibility that this will require us to support a new and emerging church community based around these newly committed young Christians.

How to get started



Blend - first steps

1. Get the church on board
2. Build a team
3. Develop a clear plan
4. Work with the local community
5. Raise funds
6. Launch

- Go to the church leaders and PCC first to seek approval for Blend.
- Once the concept is agreed, start the jungle drums rolling.....use the graphics and publicise the idea to the local community through social media and word of mouth.
- Find someone to teach you how to use instagram and facebook if you're not used to social media!!!
- Enable others in your church to see the benefits of them getting involved. Encourage by speaking in church publically to help them see that Young People are not difficult to work with, but need support and love more than ever. The church is there to encourage transformation through love. Your team will begin to form from those who see that they can be instruments of that change and love by just being there each week.
- Visit the local schools, especially the primaries to show the viability of Blend and the need to work alongside them in enabling Blend to get up and running.
- Put a call out to people outside the church who have skills or ideas to bring diversity and a wide range of activities to the group. Ideas: cake bakers, local potters, mechanics to mend bikes, skateboard experts, circus skills, carpenters to work on a project, teachers for homework help, unwanted laptops/games
- Set a time line for the launch date to include a detailed plan for each stage eg. bus timetables to hand cups out to teens with an invitation to 'fill this cup for free' before the launch.

The Practical Stuff

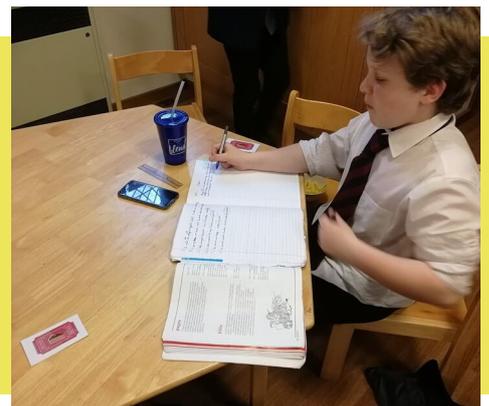
Shopping list:

Bean bag chairs,
sofa, coffee table, oil cloths,
fairy lights, rugs, cushions
2 blenders, toaster,
table tennis table and equip
mini snooker table
wii and games
card and board games
ice cream, milk, crisps, bread
cakes, fruit, fruit powders
(Don't forget the allergies)
jam, chocolate spread, butter
BLEND CUPS
BLEND FLAGS



- Call your local Scripture Union rep as they have an abundance of resources to help you get up and running and also offer money through the '95 community'.
- Meet with the local Parish Council. You may find that there is a pot of money for youth projects in the area and it's worth seeking funding from them as it benefits their parish.
- Do a fund raiser in church to raise awareness and funds.
- Update the PCC with progress and seek funding and a budget.
- Search for suitable venues in the locality. Do a pros and cons list and meet with each overseer to gain insight into how each venue would benefit or hinder the project.
- Order, buy in supplies. Ask for resources from the community. It's amazing what people are ready to give up.
- Gather your team. Keep them informed, encouraged and enable them to give their input into the smooth running of the project.
- Gather a prayer team from the church to back you in prayer all the way from now, and throughout.

All documents from project launch to notifications to parents available on google drive. Contact caroline.turvey@gkchurch.org for access to the drive



Where we are now



- D of E scheme runs to enable Young People to achieve their volunteering section of the award.
- Young Leader scheme for older teens to grow their sense of responsibility and care for the younger children.
- Holding it in the church breaks down walls between community (prejudice) and the church. Children are far more ready to come into the building as they feel it's 'theirs'. Some have also attended Sunday groups, church youth group and Youth Alpha.
- There is a natural tendency for older teens to tail off so this is an opportunity to grow Blend into a 2 tier project. Young People who used to come along but are now in year 11 upwards, are arriving at the end to join in. We keep Blend open for an extra hour for them and are looking at ways of making this more permanent.
- We now have trained mentors in our team who are confident to journey alongside our Blend young people in the ups and downs of their lives.
- Blend gives the perfect excuse to engage with parents, both at drop off and pick up. We see several parents now coming each week for a cuppa and a chat with the team.

*'I simply love being with the young people each week and being part of such a great team',
Blend Leader*

Blend on Tour

- Within the first year we took Blend outside to where the children live. We took our table tennis table, a few gazebos, some sports equipment, an outdoor PA system, a BBQ, craft activities, prayer space and a large team and simply had fun.
- This can create so many more opportunities for chat with parents and for the church to be seen outside the building. This brings people out of their homes and younger children are also welcomed. This is now a yearly event and we are running Mission Through Sport (Scripture Union) alongside.

Belonging, friendship, community

What are the outcomes so far?

Blend has been running for 18 months. The key outcomes so far are:

- 120 young people have attended with 75 who have attended regularly.
- A strong level of trust between the young people and the adult helpers.
- An average of 29 young people attending each week.
- 2 young people attended Youth Alpha through an invitation given at Blend.
- 3 have attended our church youth group through personal invitation at Blend.
- A team of 10 volunteers run Blend every week. They have all received DBS and safeguarding checks and have developed a strong team culture. 4 of them have gone on to do mentoring training, for use within Blend and in a local Secondary School.
- A wider group of local people who support Blend through prayer and the provision of cakes and food.
- Individual young people have had significant conversations, both around personal issues and faith with members of the team.
- Strong and local recognition of Blend and extremely high levels of positive feedback from the local community. Blend has helped position the church as a key compassionate and committed provider of support to young people and families.
- Interest from 4 other churches beginning Blend, leading to the launch of 2 Blend plants in Sandhurst and Sittingbourne.



