

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Christian Science

Christian Science is an international religion whose presence is usually to be seen by its **Reading Rooms** and Churches in many towns and cities. Publishing has been a major activity of the organisation since its beginning. For example *The Christian Science Monitor* is a widely respected newspaper.

Like a number of other groups it has its origins in the USA IN THE 19th century and its roots in Christianity.

The Founder, Mary Baker Eddy (1821 – 1910), was not in good health for the first half of her life. Following an accident in 1866, and whilst reading her Bible, she came to the view that Spiritual healing was above all else, the most important issue of faith. She saw it as the outcome of the ministry and teaching of Jesus. In 1875, Mary Baker Eddy published the first edition of '**Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures**', which following a number of revisions, is used by present day Christian Scientists as the principal source book alongside the Bible, which is usually read in the King James Version.

Spiritual healing through prayer can be found in most other Christian traditions but in Christian Science the emphasis upon it raises it to a defining distinction. Christian Scientists believe that '*healing is intrinsic to faith*'.

What special contribution can Christian Science children make to a school and what may be their particular pastoral needs?

Christian Science children will have a strong background of Sunday School attendance and a good knowledge of the King James Bible. They will therefore be able to play an active part in RE/RS and will have a distinctive contribution to make on any debate on 'spirituality'. Sunday School attendance provides the main source of Christian teaching for them and exclusion from normal subject teaching within school is not an issue.

The main pastoral concern for Christian Science children will be their distinctive requirements at times of ill-health or accident, in school or out of school. Any treatment is normally carried out by a Christian Science Practitioner, who is recognised and qualified by experience in the Christian Science community. Christian Science children would not normally have had any experience of doctors' surgeries or hospitals.

For school staff the following advice is recommended:

- If first aid is required then the best course of action, if the nature of the condition or injury allows, is to contact the parent/carers and if necessary take the child home. If the parent/carers cannot be contacted then first aid treatment can be administered but contact must be made as soon as possible.
- The names of local Christian Science Practitioners should be appended to the records of any Christian Science pupils in our schools.

- Christian Science families do not normally accept inoculation or immunisation treatment. However, they will receive normal dental treatment.

As with other advice offered in *Faith Matters* the issue of first aid or emergency treatment within or away from school is always best discussed with parents/carers in advance and a written agreement signed by all appropriate parties.

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Local Churches:

First Church of Christ, Scientist, Bristol and Reading Room, Kensington Place, Victoria Square, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3AH, 0117 973 3155.

Second Church of Christ, Scientist, Bristol and Reading Room, North View, Westbury Park, Bristol BS6 7PY, 0117 907 7060

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