



## **Ignite Growing Faith Hub**

### **Progress report January 2024**

In September 2023 Ignite officially started as a Growing Faith Learning Hub. The area we work in is determined by the schools that feed into the only secondary school in our area, which has the largest catchment in the country. Therefore, our approach needs to embrace our unique rural context and consider how we can connect households, church and school. We employ two paid workers and have about 40 volunteers.

Our Growing Faith Steering Group has met five times; during which we have considered:

- Our direction of travel
- The way-markers that help us to navigate the GF approach
- What will progress look like

Currently as a hub:

- We are working to establish Open the Book in all our 16 primary schools (currently it's in 11 schools), providing rich connection between schools and their local churches.
- We have four Christian youth groups that meet weekly ranging from ages 7- young adults. These are Christ centred relational groups, offering space to explore faith and share the journey of life with one another. We have been able to use some of the GF grant to fund a much-needed worker for one of these groups. This has enabled us to increase our offer of support. We have also funded two workers to receive mentoring training which will be put to such good use with our teenagers.
- Under the GF banner, and with the support of a new worker we have been able to significantly increase what we're able to offer our local primary schools. We now have created a 'program' of events that will be offered to our key schools, including a point of contact every half term, such as Prayer Spaces in Schools, Experience Easter, year 6 transitions work.
- We have begun to explore how we can support clergy and congregations. We have provided training to local lay leaders, where an evidence based, child-centred approach has been at the heart of our message. We are also working with a group of local vicars to see if a more collaborative approach could be taken to baptism preparation and support afterwards.
- We have a new youth event planned for the summer which we are developing alongside the Newcastle Diocese. For the first time, this will bring together various Christian youth groups from across rural Northumberland for an evening of worship, prayer, teaching and food.
- We have started a Youth Council called CANNY (Council of Alnwick and North Northumberland Youth) where students in year 5 and 6 are supported to think about how we can improve our local environment.
- We are working with the RE Resource Centre to create an Ignite RE Hub. This will be a space to welcome RE leads from our local schools. Physical resources can be shared alongside networking and peer support. We also hope to support church-based children's work through these resources and also provide tools for faith conversations at home.
- We are so delighted to host the first Growing Faith Big Lunch in March. Never before has something like this been hosted in Northumberland; we're so pleased to welcome new and old supporters of the Growing Faith movement.

Our first five months of being a Growing Faith Learning hub have been filled with energy, excitement and hope for something new. We're laying important foundations and wait to see what the next few months will bring.

Jessica McArdle  
Ignite Project Leader