



## Society of St Vincent de Paul Scotland Senior Vinnies Guidebook: S4-S6



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# Foreword

The aim of this guide is to provide guidance and assistance to teachers, SSVP members and priests on setting up a Senior Vinnies group in a school or parish. Senior Vinnies members are usually S4-S6.

## SSVP Mission Statement

“As members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul, we seek to identify and combat all forms of poverty, by promoting social justice and actively working with those in need, acknowledging that, by freely giving of ourselves, we become more aware of the power of love in all our relationships”

SSVP is a worldwide Christian community founded in Paris in 1833, by a group of young Catholics and one older person who provided them with support and guidance.

# Senior Vinnies at your school

Establishing a Senior Vinnies conference provides our young people with opportunities for learning and growing in faith, as well as personally and socially. They work together to help anyone in need their area. Just like a parish SSVP Conference, these needs are addressed in what is considered a most appropriate way.

Senior Vinnies conferences promote the development and formation of their members. As well as developing their faith, it is a cross- curricular activity which enables young people to achieve outcomes of the Curriculum for Excellence.

- Health & Well-being
- Religious Education
- Social studies

# Senior Vinnies Purpose

Senior Vinnies groups operate in secondary schools or parishes. They are groups of young people, usually between S4-S6, who get together to help people in need within their school and local community. These groups follow on from Junior Vinnies in S1-S3, who in turn are preceded by Mini Vinnies in P4-P7.

The SSVP model of faith in action is a great way to get young people thinking and talking about their spirituality. Connecting their beliefs and values with service activities and issues in their community helps to make their faith real, meaningful, and relevant.



# Faith in Action for Others

The actions of a Senior Vinnies group generally involve three components:

**‘See’** - Education and awareness. Becoming aware that, in spite of some of a community’s social ills, there are always ways to make it a bit better.

**‘Think’** - Formation. This is a chance for Senior Vinnies members to participate in spiritual activities, personal development, and discussions, and to develop an understanding of the real world.

**‘Do’** - Community service and fundraising. ‘Doing’ means actively supporting the SSVP in its good works, and for the young people to address the issues that they have seen, thought about or discussed and act on them.

# Caritas Award

Senior Vinnies who are in S6 and working towards the Caritas Award also find that their SSVP work is an excellent and fulfilling way to achieve the aims required to qualify for the award.



# How to Begin

The first step is to introduce the young people in your school (usually S4 upwards) to the idea of Senior Vinnies and find out if any of them are interested in forming a group.

You will need to find a teacher or school staff member who is willing to help coordinate the group. Then arrange a time, date and room for the first meeting. The meetings are important. They help the group to grow in friendship and faith which in turn enables a fuller experience in the service of those in need.

If you have a school bulletin, daily notices or a class notice board, advertise the meeting there to ensure that the young people know the details.

It can be helpful but not essential to invite a representative from SSVP to join you at the first meeting. It could be someone from your local Conference or the National Office.



# The First Meeting

- Open the meeting with a prayer and reflection.
- Decide as a group when, where and how often you will hold meetings (usually weekly, fortnightly at a minimum).
- Discuss what activities and projects the group could undertake.
- Discuss what roles are needed in the group and what is required of people in those roles.
- Close the meeting with a prayer and details of the next meeting.

# Regular Meetings

When your Senior Vinnies group is established, your meetings can follow a similar format to the first meeting.

You may, invite guest speakers to address the group from time to time, perhaps once a term.

A guest speaker might talk about a particular issue, which could influence the group's activities for the following term and inspire them to persevere in their efforts to shape a more just society.



# Roles

Everyone in the group has a vital role to play. You might decide to have particular leadership roles within your group. These could include:

- **President** – works closely with the coordinating staff member, chairs the meetings and helps to allocate work to members of the group.
- **Vice President** – is supportive of the president and may take on the leadership of meetings or activities when the president is absent.
- **Secretary** – takes notes at meetings and keeps a record of projects and activities undertaken by the group.
- **Treasurer** – keeps track of money raised by the group.

# The Group Adviser

Any staff member in the school can assume the role of coordinating the Senior Vinnies group: it does not have to be a teacher. What is important is that the person is willing to commit their time to attend Senior Vinnies meetings and projects.

The role of the staff member is to guide the pupils as they develop their ideas into action, by keeping discussions within the realm of possibility. The adviser will assess the feasibility of projects according to school rules and duty of care requirements.

For teachers, this work will provide an excellent CPD opportunity and a chance to engage in extra and cross curricular activity.



## Make Contacts

It is important that others are aware of the fact that you are setting up a new group. They will be able to support and guide you through the process. Speak to the parish priest and SSVP Conference to let them know what you would like to do. Also contact the SSVP National Office, to let them know that you are setting up a group. They can register your group and provide contact details of local SSVP parish conferences.

## SSVP Knowledge

It is important for a Senior Vinnies group to learn about the history and works of the St Vincent de Paul Society, both locally and on an international level. A local Conference member could talk to the group about when and where the Conference meets, what the needs are in their Diocese and ways in which the Conference helps local people.

# Having Fun

A shared lunch or morning tea at the start or end of each term is a good way to celebrate the success of the group.

Some groups have also invited local SSVP members in to have a shared coffee morning or lunch, which has proven to be of great benefit. This fun and social element of Senior Vinnies makes it enjoyable and interesting.

It can also help them to establish friendships and support networks that will be of great benefit to them as they leave school. We hope they may continue in a St Vincent Youth group at college or University or even join the SSVP Conference at their local parish.



# Good Works

Some suggestions of good works include:

- Visiting a local nursing home: helping in their garden, chatting to residents, playing board games, singing, etc.
- Holding appeals - food, clothing, toiletries, Easter eggs, winter woollies, gifts.
- Fundraising for a local SSVP Conference or a particular service such as the Ozanam Centre.
- Hosting a morning tea in the school for residents of a local nursing home.
- Helping out at soup kitchens or food banks, homeless shelters as appropriate.



# Raising Funds

The main aim of Senior Vinnies groups is not to fundraise. The focus should be on providing support: a listening ear, time and kindness. However, there may be occasions when they need some funds. This may be due to a particular project that they want to organise. Please bear in mind that the SSVP is not a fundraising group for other charities.

Some fundraising Ideas:

- Raffles
- Guessing competitions
- Non uniform days
- Cake stalls
- Fun runs
- Bag packing



# Supporting the School Community

Senior Vinnies could also raise money to help struggling families within the school.

Even though the group would not know exactly who is being helped through such a program (confidentiality is a fundamental requirement of all SSVP works) they would know that they are giving vital support to a family within their immediate community.

This money could help with school trips, uniforms, stationery, etc. The group advisor would liaise with senior management to organise a project such as this.



# Raising Awareness

Raising awareness of social justice issues is a very important part of the work of SSVP, and Senior Vinnies can play a key role in this.

There are lots of ways for your Senior Vinnies group to stand up and speak out in your school community. They can teach others about the injustices in our communities. Once people know and care about an issue, they are more likely to stand up and speak out against it.

Here are some examples:

- School assemblies- speak about current issues and why they are considered unjust.
- Create stalls, displays or events that draw attention to the issues.
- Write letters- local councillors, government ministers, business leaders etc.

# Senior Vinnies Meeting Planner



Date of meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

- Opening Prayers
- Reflection
- What has been happening with the group?  
(Write down any news from members or teachers)
- **See, Think, Do** – Who could you help?  
Discuss ideas. Make plans
- Closing Prayers



## OPENING PRAYERS

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Leader:** Come Holy Spirit, penetrate our hearts and kindle  
within us the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and new  
life will be created.

**Group:** and the whole face of the earth will be renewed.  
Our Father...      Hail Mary...

## Vincentian Family Prayer

Lord Jesus, you who decided to become poor,  
give us eyes and a heart directed towards the poor.

Help us to recognise You in them, in their hunger,  
their loneliness, and their misfortune.

Ignite unity, simplicity, humility and the fire of love that burned  
in St Vincent de Paul in our SSVP family.

Strengthen us, so that we will remember you and serve you by  
serving the poor.

May we one day be united with you in Your kingdom.

Amen.



## Prayer for a Fruitful Meeting

Let us remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “When two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Short Silence).

Lord Jesus, help us through meeting together to deepen our Vincentian friendship and answer the call every Christian receives; to seek and find those who are forgotten, to bring your love to the suffering or deprived. Help us to be generous with our time, our possessions and ourselves, so that we may grow perfect in Your love and learn to share Your sacrifice for others in the Holy Eucharist.

**Leader:** St Joseph, Patron of Families

**Group:** Pray for us

**Leader:** St Vincent de Paul

**Group:** Pray for us

**Leader:** (School patron saint)

**Group:** Pray for us

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.







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