

Appeal sees 137 cash-strapped children kitted out in school uniforms

Organisers hope the scheme can operate across Stoke-on-Trent next summer

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Almost 150 children have been kitted out in school uniforms in time for the new term thanks to a scheme to help struggling families.

Parishioners within [Chell](#) Parish teamed up with Tesco's [Kingsgrove](#) store to collect pre-loved and new school uniforms over the summer holidays.

The appeal - which launched at St Michael's Church, in Chell - was so successful that 137 children have taken advantage of the scheme.

Now vicar Chris Coupe hopes the scheme can operate across the whole of Stoke-on-Trent next year.

He said: "Our family and children's worker Becky Berrisford came to me with the idea and I thought it was great.

"We've kitted out 137 children in school uniforms from head to toe which is a fantastic achievement. We had no idea how many children we would clothe but we've had a fantastic response.

"The surprising thing is the level of need. It has proven to be far greater than we ever thought. We've even had requests from the south side of the city.

"I grew up in a single-parent family and my mother got school clothes grants which no longer exist so I know what it's like to be in a household where money is tight and there are so many demands."



Vicar Chris Coupe said the parish has been 'inundated' with donations

The appeal was 'inundated' with good quality second-hand school uniforms.

Chris added: "People also donated brand new uniforms as well as money for us to buy some. We've kitted out many children from head to toe, even with things like bags, shoes and PE kits.

“It is great to know the children can hold their heads up high with nobody knowing where their uniform has come from. They will be looking like the rest of their peer group.

“We are still getting donations. Kidsgrove Tesco is still having bags of uniforms donated to them even though schools have already started back.

“We are so grateful to those who have donated. We’ve been blown away by people’s generosity.”

Tesco community champion Richard Evans has organised the collections at the Kidsgrove store.

Becky, aged 43, of [Talke](#), said: “The demand has been incredible so I would love to get more churches on board across the city next year so we can localise the collections and distributions.

“School uniforms are expensive for families, especially if they have two or three children. People's generosity has been amazing and the quality of the items has been brilliant. They were even washed and ironed ready to put on.”