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## **Collective worship and the law**

Arrangements for collective worship in Church schools are the responsibility of the governors in consultation with the Headteacher. Church schools must fulfil three main legal requirements for collective worship:

- Provide an act of worship for all pupils every day
- Ensure that collective worship is in accordance with the trust deed of the school
- Include a statement in the school prospectus that makes it clear that parents may withdraw their children from all or any part of collective worship.

## Anglican Heritage

In all Anglican schools worship should reflect some of the essential features within the rich traditions of Anglican prayer and worship. The suggestions below include some of the elements of the Anglican heritage which can be drawn upon over a period of time for use in school worship:

- Using the Bible as a source book for inspiration and learning
- Reflecting upon Christian symbols and their use in worship (for example, bread, wine, chalice, cross and crucifix are symbols which lead to an understanding of the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection)
- Observing the cycle of the Anglican year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost. This, with holy days, can provide the framework for a changing pattern of school worship
- Participating in the regularity and set order of Anglican worship. This recognises the central significance of the Eucharist while acknowledging the variety of other forms of worship, which may be decided locally in order to match, as far as possible, pupils' experience in school and church. There could be special services from time to time, eg welcoming new pupils to school or acknowledging the departure of older pupils.
- Using collects as a focus for short acts of worship in small groups
- Identifying a collection of prayers, hymns and psalms which might create a framework for worship within the school
- Learning traditional responses and prayers which express the essential beliefs of Christians throughout the ages
- Providing opportunities to discover the value of meditation and silence within the context of Christian worship
- Recognising that the Anglican Church has a strong commitment to ecumenism which may be expressed when members of other Churches are invited to lead worship
- Experiencing the bond of community which encompasses gender, age, race and religious opinion. This could be expressed through the range of visitors who are invited to lead or attend school worship
- Sharing in a commitment to dialogue with other faiths, shown in the welcome we offer to all pupils and the celebration of shared values and beliefs

## **Aspirations**

Collective worship should be central to the life of the school having high **status and value**. This means it needs:

- To be coherent with the school's mission statement
- To be well organised and planned
- Staff to participate as well as just attend
- An environment conducive to worship

Collective worship in schools should be an **educational** experience. This means it should:

- Take account of the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of pupils
- Extend the learning opportunities offered to pupils
- Reflect what goes on across the curriculum – not just RE

## **Aspirations**

Collective worship should be **inclusive**

All schools have pupils with widely differing experiences of worship. Some:

- go to Church regularly
- have no such experiences beyond school
- belong to and worship in the context of another faith

Worship in schools, even Church schools, is collective worship as distinct from corporate worship. The community is a school community engaged in an activity which, no matter how valuable, is a legal obligation. It is not a faith community. These are not people sharing one faith who have chosen to gather together for worship. The organisation and language of collective worship, should allow for different levels of response. It should invite not coerce.

Collective worship can include material from faiths other than Christianity. Many schools like, for example, to mark the major festivals of other faiths. Learning about them is part of the general religious and cultural education of pupils. It is also a way of developing a growing understanding and valuing of members of other faiths in the school. The inclusion of such experiences does not mean the worship itself becomes Muslim or Hindu worship.

## **Aspirations**

Collective worship is seen as a rich opportunity to provide for pupils' **spiritual, moral, social and cultural** development. For this to be successful worship should:

- Have a sense of occasion
- Invite participation
- Be concerned with the worship of God
- Provide an opportunity for pupils to explore their inner feelings
- Provide opportunities for individuals and the community to share what is of importance to them/it
- Celebrate beliefs, values and ideals
- Respect the integrity of all individuals, valuing everyone as a child of God
- Promote Christian moral values
- Promote the moral codes of the school and explore the rationale for them
- Promote personal qualities such as thoughtfulness, fairness, respect, honesty etc
- Reflect on models of moral virtue in literature and the lives of contemporary people and those of the past
- Foster a sense of community and belonging
- Be varied in style and include different forms of expression eg art, music, story, dance
- Celebrate pupils' talents
- Make use of symbols and imagery

## **Policy and Practice**

Schools are expected to have a policy for collective worship which is separate from that for religious education. The purpose of a policy is to:

- clarify the school's understanding of what collective worship is
- ensure that members of the school community have a common understanding of the aims of collective worship

A policy for collective worship should include:

- A summary of the statutory requirements for collective worship
- A statement about the school's understanding of collective worship; its definition/description
- A statement about what the school aims to achieve through its collective worship
- Information about who has responsibility for the management of collective worship
- Information about how collective worship is organised (groups, leaders etc)
- Information about the planning for collective worship (where it is, what it includes etc)
- A clear statement about the right of withdrawal

## **Policy and Practice**

Ways of planning and recording

Planning documents may be a mixture of forward planning and retrospective recording. There are many different, successful ways of planning and/or keeping records of collective worship. The most important factor is to find a way that is manageable in your situation. Too much detail means it becomes cumbersome and unsustainable and too little makes it a pointless exercise. Schools need to consider what the essentials are and what layouts might be most effective. Aspects often found in plans/records include:

- Themes
- Content/main focus
- Readings
- Source/resource
- Leaders
- Groups involved
- Music/hymns

## **Policy and Practice**

### Evaluation

If a school has a policy and aims for collective worship and aspires to make it an important and valuable part of each school day, evaluating its success will be important. As with planning there are many effective methods of evaluation. Schools will want to consider issues such as:

- The frequency of evaluation eg every day, weekly, half termly, termly, annually
- Who is involved eg teachers, visiting speakers, pupils, parents, governors
- How evaluation is recorded eg on planning sheets
- The impact of evaluation on future planning and practice eg report to governors, collective worship working party

## **Practical considerations**

### **Time**

Collective worship can take place at any time of the day. There are not requirements about the length of time to be allocated to collective worship.

### **Venue**

Collective worship should normally take place on the school premises. Voluntary aided schools are permitted to organise worship elsewhere on special occasions. Voluntary controlled schools wanting to hold collective worship elsewhere may do so only if this is in addition to the daily statutory act of worship which must still be held on school premises.

### **Groups**

Collective worship can be organised to take place with any grouping of pupils which exists naturally in the school eg classes, year groups, key stage groups (maybe some practical considerations for some different groups)

### **Leaders**

Many schools invite outside speakers to lead collective worship. It is good practice to make sure they are aware of/familiar with the school's policy on collective worship. They should be well briefed about the context in which they will be speaking.

### **Budget**

Funding will need to be available for resources. Consideration may need to be given to training for staff in leading collective worship – it doesn't have a high profile (if it features at all) in initial teacher training.

## Helpful resources

There is a very wide range of books published to support collective worship. Individuals have their favourites and many schools have a varied selection. In particular the following are recommended as helpful sources of support:

The *Space for Reflection* series of books published annually by Christian Education Publications and available from RE Today Services, Tel: 0121 472 4242, Fax: 0121 472 7575. Each book provides background articles, guidance for collective worship co-ordinators and some worked out examples of collective worship for primary and secondary schools.

Several websites provide plans for acts of worship eg:

[www.culham.ac.uk](http://www.culham.ac.uk)

[www.assemblies.co.uk](http://www.assemblies.co.uk)

<http://re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk/assemblies> provides a complete training package on collective worship