

SACRE document re Collective Worship

Acts of worship have always taken place in schools.

Collective Worship is a term coined from the 1944 Education Reform Act. The legal requirements were set out in the 1944 and 1988 Education Reform and clarified by non statutory guidance on the meaning and application of the collective worship in January 1994 in circular 1/94 and a General article Updated :26 April 2012 from the Department of Education.

The DFE paper 1/94 says that Collective Worship should aim:

1. To provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God. Schools should aim to offer collective worship which is broadly of a Christian nature(non denominational) but which includes multi cultural topics to help celebrate and understand the diversity of our society,
2. To consider spiritual and moral issues by providing experiences that provide social, moral, spiritual and cultural development which are acceptable to the whole community, staff and students.
3. To enable pupils/students to explore their own beliefs allowing reflection and response to the fundamental questions of life and those things that are of eternal concern and value to human beings.
4. To encourage a respect for self and engender a concern for the needs of others.
5. To develop community spirit by celebrating and giving thanks for achievements within the school, the local and international community and occasions of significance, including festivals.
6. To promote a common ethos and shared values
7. To reinforce positive attitudes.

Current requirements state that :-

1. State maintained schools, including academies and free schools in England must provide a daily act of worship.
2. This Collective worship must reflect the traditions of this country which are mainly Christian.
3. Acts of Collective worship should be appropriate, having regards to pupils' ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds.
4. If a community or foundation school believes that the Christian character clause is inappropriate for the whole school or certain

pupils within it, application can be made to the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) for a determination to have that clause lifted or modified. Unless the school requests otherwise, a determination will be reviewed by the local SACRE after five years.

5. A determination does not lift the requirement for daily collective worship. Such worship must still be nondenominational but may be distinctive of a particular faith.
6. Parents have the rights to withdraw their child from the daily act of collective worship and sixth formers can decide for themselves whether or not to attend, without giving reason for doing so. Schools must comply with this wish and must ensure a duty of care for pupils who are withdrawn from collective worship.
7. There can be a single whole school act of collective worship or separate acts for pupils in different age of school groupings.
8. Acts of collective worship can take place at any time of the school day and, with certain exceptions, should take place on the school premises.
9. Teachers - including head teachers - have the right to withdraw from collective worship and cannot be discriminated against for so doing. Attending "assemblies", on the other hand, is part of a teachers' contractual duties.
10. It is the responsibility of the headteacher, in consultation with the governors, to see that these arrangements are carried out.

Bill Gent in "School Worship" CEM 1989 lists six guiding principles.

Collective Worship should be:

1. Inclusive. All must be able to contribute; all can gain from it. It should recognise the integrity and dignity of all members of the school community
2. Curricular. As part of the curriculum it should be integrated, not just tacked on. It requires planning, monitoring, evaluating. It needs resourcing, and those leading may require training.
3. Educational. It has to be a learning experience for all members of the school community. It should be enquiry based, exploratory, equipping those engaged in it to make connections, to relate what they are doing to other experiences. It should foster positive attitudes.

4. Contributory to the spiritual and religious education of all. It ought to be an open ended experience, providing opportunities to explore and appreciate what faith communities do and feel when they worship. It should encourage pupils and staff to acknowledge or recognise that there is a spiritual dimension to their lives.
5. A sense of occasion, offering something that usual classroom activity cannot; offering "depth time".
6. Shaped to the needs of the particular school and the social and moral values it upholds.

You cannot compel people to worship or to respond to worship; but you can make worship possible and enable pupils to respond, silently and reflectively.

Success criteria

- Involvement, enjoyment and attention of pupils
- Respect and tolerance
- Positive responses to the shared experiences
- A sense of searching for meaning, questioning and challenge
- Staff affirmation
- Enrichment of pupils' intellectual, spiritual, moral and cultural experience

Policy Content

- We interpret the concept of "worship" as providing the opportunity for the school community to focus on, reflect, evaluate and reaffirm the values that are generally considered to be of supreme worth and importance.
- The values that are suitable as themes for collective worship can be linked with the SEAL programme; RE curriculum; Christian year; stand alone ideas; mix and match... e.g. altruism, care, charity, cooperation, courage, forgiveness, friendship, honesty, love, mindfulness, respect, responsibility, sacrifice.
- Collective worship can play an important role in deepening the spiritual awareness of pupils. Collective worship, at its best, provides pupils with an opportunity to reflect upon the purpose and the meaning of, events; people, their work, philosophies, or life in general.

- Pupils can be led into an experience of quietness to balance the noises and busy activities, which generally mark the rest of their day. Such quiet times can lend themselves to the nurturing of a sense of awe and wonder, especially with regard to the natural world. Issues of loss, grief, inequality and authority can also be sensitively explored.
- Collective worship can give pupils the opportunity to experience media, hear stories and words from religious and other literature that suggests that there is more to life than meets the eye and to looking after self interests.
- Collective Worship may complement Religious Education where children are encouraged to appreciate that there is a widely held belief in the existence of a deity.
- Values that are shared by different faiths may be positively considered. Reflecting the needs of the school community, the writings of and lives of the leaders of the world's faiths can provide relevant material for reflection on current issues and personal journeys.

Preparation Process

1. Choose the theme
2. List images it brings to mind
3. Biblical or other stories
4. Links with pupils' experience
5. Focus point to bring out
6. Draft notes of outline
7. Re write with focus point in mind
8. Final plan

Suggested List of content

1. Music or song to enter
2. Opening prayer or quiet
3. Introduction (grounded on children's experience)
4. Game or illustration
5. Involvement of/interaction with children and adults
6. Main input (story/drama/etc)
7. Focus point
8. Quiet /led reflection

9. Closing prayer
10. Closing song

Content for older

1. Simple illustration from life
2. Input on theme
3. One clear point
4. Limited interaction
5. Prayer or reflection
6. Be around afterwards

How pupils should respond

- Appreciation
- Enjoyment
- Awareness
- Devotion
- More thought
- Challenge
- Encouragement
- Respect
- Preference
- Commitment
- Adoration
- Reflection
- Sadness
- Happiness

Stumbling blocks to the situation

You may need to consider the following points and decide your course of action in your school community.

- Not enough curriculum time
- Physical and organisational problems
- Christianity seen as dull and boring
- Teachers with faith get dumped on
- No budget for resources
- Lack of specialist teachers
- Those responsible don't support it

- Problems with Christian visitors
- Fear and prejudice

SACRE encourages schools to continue to hold collective worship; to develop time together as a school or large group that promotes peace and adds to the sense of cohesion and community within the school. These times should be very important in the life of the school. It provides an opportunity for members of the school community to pause from the timetabled curriculum lessons, to gather together, to remind themselves of and reflect upon the beliefs and values, which should bind the school, local national and international community together.

Where it can go wrong !

- Tenuous connection with story/Bible
- Visual aids that don't work
- Inappropriate contributions
- Obviously not "normal"
- Not for the whole community
- Entertainment or housekeeping
- Last minute lack of value
- Poor choice of music
- Inaccessible liturgy/prayers
- Unhelpful environment
- Seating; sightlines; angles
- Too tightly held and controlled
- Formless and void
- No space for reflection/ planting

Resources

Publishers Christian and Educational..

Scripture Union; Stapleford Centre; RE today;

www.School-Assemblies.co.uk

www.assemblies.org.uk

www.teachernet.gov.uk (then go to assemblies)

www.schoolassemblies.btinternet.co.uk

www.primaryresources.co.uk (then go to assemblies)

www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/assemblies/contents.htm

<http://www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk/resources-area/assembly-ideas/>

JUDGEMENT GRADES FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Very Good / Excellent / Outstanding

- Worship appears as an area for development and refinement on the school's documentation
- Full use is made of the breadth of Anglican material in worship eg. Psalms, canticles, collects etc
- Art / artefacts used are of a high quality and reflect the broad spectrum of the Christian /Anglican tradition
- Expectations of behaviour are very high
- The leader's expectations are very high
- The theme is thought provoking and challenges the pupils' thinking
- There is a clear focus for prayer and worship
- The worship is inspirational
- The worship provides every opportunity for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development
- The leader shows expert knowledge of the subject
- A clear atmosphere conducive to worship and reflection is attained throughout
- Older pupils plan, organise and deliver the worship
- All pupils are engrossed in the worship
- The relationships reflect mutual respect
- Pupils show a high level of respect for other peoples beliefs and cultures
- Pupils are positive about the worship provided by the school
- The pupils are active participants in the worship
- Pupils' singing / music is of a high standard and does not detract from the worship
- There is effective use of music on entering and leaving
- Visitors are an integral part of the worship with high standards and expectations
- Pupils know, understand and can talk with confidence about the churches year, key Christian festivals ,symbols and artefacts
- Pupils from other faith backgrounds are fully integrated within the community and their spiritual development is catered for.
- Pupils have a clear knowledge and understanding of key aspects of the Anglican tradition
- The school has its own prayer that pupils know and understand
- Pupils know and are able to recite other key prayers eg 'The Grace'
- Pupils are able to talk about the churches year and key Christian festivals
- Pupils are aware of the key Christian values and concepts eg love, compassion, justice and forgiveness
- Staff, governors / parents and other members of the community are given the opportunity to attend worship on a regular basis eg. members of the PCC
- Supply staff are fully briefed on the importance of worship in the life of the school
- Worship is rigorously monitored and evaluated by staff, pupils and governors
- The school has regular and positive links with the local church
- Clear links are made between the worship in the school and the worship in the parish eg. A purple table cloth is used for Lent
- The school has formed a 'worship' group to develop the worship