

## Collective Worship in Rotherham

Rotherham 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.

Acts of Collective worship have always taken place in schools in the U.K. 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 Acts and clarified by non-statutory guidance on the meaning and application of collective worship in January 1994 in circular 1/94 and then in a General article Updated: 26 April 2012 from the Department of Education.

Collective Worship is a term uniquely applied to state schools in The U.K. It is distinct from Corporate Worship where believers are assembled together. Collective Worship reflects the fact that school communities are diverse and Collective Worship aims to bring these communities together in unity and mutual respect.

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 Collective worship.
2. This Collective worship must reflect the traditions of this country which are mainly Christian. They need not contain just Christian materials but the majority should be 'broadly 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 non-denominational 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 listed 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.

### Closing Reflection/Prayer

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. Collective worship should be accessible to pupils from all religious backgrounds or no religious background. Pupils should be given the opportunity to opt in/out of worship.

### 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; festival calendar; 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 found helpful

1. Choose the theme

2. List images it brings to mind
3. Biblical and other inspiring 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 and establish atmosphere.
2. Opening prayer or quiet
3. Introduction (grounded on children's experience)
4. Game or illustration
5. Involvement of/interaction with children and adults (Asking questions often promotes attention.)
6. Main input (story/drama/etc)
7. Focus point
8. Quiet /led reflection
9. Closing reflection
10. Closing song

### Content for older Students

1. Illustration from life
2. Input on theme
3. One clear point
4. Limited interaction
5. Prayer or reflection

### Aiming to produce the positive responses of:

- Appreciation
- Enjoyment
- Awareness
- Challenge
- Encouragement
- Respect
- Preference
- Commitment
- Awe and Wonder

- Reflection
- Evaluation
- Inspiration
- The Affective, Positive Emotions Provoked e.g. empathy and altruism.

### Stumbling blocks to maintaining effective Collective Worship

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
- Religion seen as irrelevant, dull, boring and uncool
- Teachers with faith get unreasonable demands made on them.
- Inadequate budget for resources
- Lack of recognised specialist teachers E.g. through time allocation/renumeration
- Lack of priority given to Collective Worship by busy leaders.
- Problems with guest (religious) speakers failing to understand/respect professional boundaries E.g. the rights of students in a state controlled school, the concept of Collective worship

### Where it can go wrong!

- Tenuous connection with story/texts
- Visual aids that don't work
- Inappropriate contributions
- Prejudice can be easily and unintentionally transmitted.
- Obviously not "normal"
- Not for the whole community
- Entertainment or housekeeping
- Last minute
- lack of value
- Poor choice of music
- Inaccessible concepts in E.g. liturgy or prayers
- Too tightly held and controlled
- Formless and void
- No space for reflection/ planting

- An unhelpful environment (school hall layout, location)
- Seating; sightlines; angles
- All pupils not hearing clearly - Microphones can make a real difference particularly when pupils are speaking.

### Resources

<http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk/>

[www.School-Assemblies.co.uk](http://www.School-Assemblies.co.uk)

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

[www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk) (then go to assemblies)

[www.schoolassemblies.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.schoolassemblies.btinternet.co.uk)

[www.primaryresources.co.uk](http://www.primaryresources.co.uk) (then go to assemblies)

[www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/assemblies/contents.htm](http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/assemblies/contents.htm)

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

<http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/>

<http://www.theassemblyline.co.uk/>

<http://www.tes.co.uk/assemblies-whole-school-teaching-resources/>

<http://learn.christianaid.org.uk/TeachersResources/Default.aspx?gclid=C Pqg6KuU9bYCFTIQ+AodxDQACg>

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk/resources/>

Ofsted/SIAS Criteria for Quality Collective Worship  
(Useful for Self Evaluation)

Good/Outstanding

- Collective Worship appears as an area for development and refinement on the school's documentation.
- Visual aids used are of high quality and reflect a variety of different religious traditions.
- 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 reflection and response.
- The Collective worship is inspirational.
- The Collective worship provides every opportunity for pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.
- The deliverers are confident with the religious content of Collective worship being presented.
- A clear atmosphere conducive to Collective worship and reflection is maintained throughout,
- Pupils are actively involved in: planning, organising and delivering the Collective worship.
- The pupils are engaged with the Collective worship.
- Pupils show a high level of respect for other people's beliefs and cultures.
- Pupils singing/music is of a high standard and is relevant to/promotes the Collective worship
- Recorded music is used effectively to enhance an atmosphere conducive to Collective worship.
- Pupils know, understand and can talk with confidence about the festival calendar.
- Pupils from all and no faith background are fully integrated within the community and their spiritual development catered for.
- Pupils are made aware of positive moral values and concepts promoted through Collective worship.
- Staff, governors/parents and other members of the community are given the opportunity to attend Collective worship on a regular basis.
- Collective worship is rigorously monitored and evaluated by staff, pupils and governors.
- The school has regular and positive links with faith communities.
- The deliverer understands the make-up of the target audience they are presenting too.