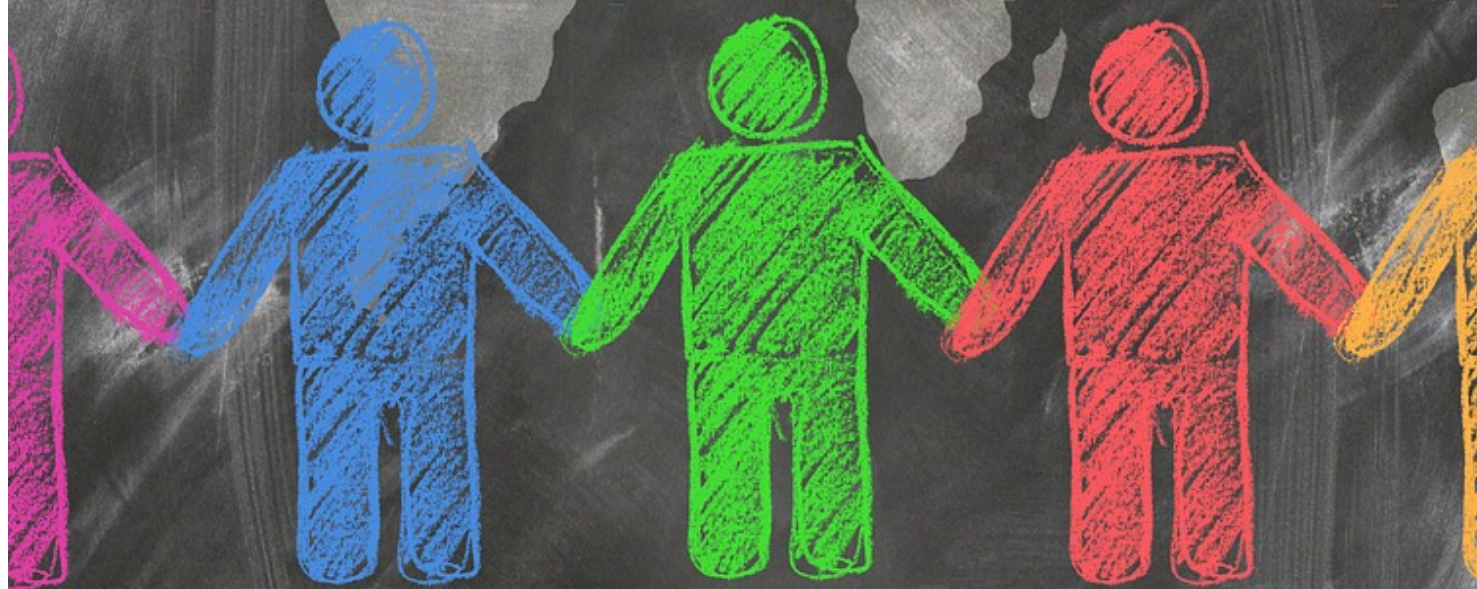


Policy and Guidelines for Collective Worship in Community Schools



September 2021

INTRODUCTION

Many years have elapsed since Northumberland County Council last issued guidance about collective worship in 2006, thus the Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE) felt it appropriate to refresh the existing documentation. The changes made are limited, however, because, in 2017, when the SACRE applied for the Accord Inclusivity Award, the judges singled out the County's Policy and Guidelines for praise.

The legislation determining the nature of collective worship in community schools has not altered since the Education Reform Act 1988, with the corresponding guidance offered in Circular 1/94. However, understanding of how to make the legislation meaningful in increasingly multifaith but predominantly secular school communities has changed considerably. There is now far greater agreement among teachers, educationalists and others about what constitutes good practice in relation to collective worship.

Northumberland County Council recognises the value of collective worship as an integral part of the whole curriculum and believes collective worship can make an invaluable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils. Collective worship can also provide valuable learning experiences that are distinctive from the taught curriculum.

The Policy and Guidelines apply primarily to Northumberland's community schools. Most other schools are required to provide worship shaped by a variety of influences somewhat different to community schools. These influences include legislation, an individual school's trust deed and, if the school is Anglican or Catholic, guidelines issued by the local diocese.

I commend this Policy and Guidelines to you as a way of enhancing the good quality collective worship already witnessed in many of our community schools.

Cllr Guy Renner-Thompson

Chair of the SACRE

Summary of the Legislative Requirements for Collective Worship in Community Schools



A daily act of collective worship (ACW) must be provided for all registered pupils in full-time education, except for pupils withdrawn at the wish of their parents, or sixth form students who withdraw themselves.

Special schools must meet the legislative requirement for daily collective worship “so far as is practicable”.

Daily ACWs may be organised for separate groups of pupils (e.g. they can be provided for individual class groups, for year groups or for key stages rather than for the whole school) and can take

place at any time during the school day.

Across each term, a majority of ACWs must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, though not distinctive of a particular Christian denomination.

ACWs that are broadly Christian must reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief to an extent and in a way which gives them a Christian character.

All ACWs must be appropriate to the family background, age and aptitude of the pupils involved.

Where it is difficult to reconcile these requirements, either in the case of the whole school or a particular category of pupils, the headteacher may apply to the SACRE for a determination that the requirement for Christian ACWs should not apply in the case of the school or a particular category of pupils within it (determinations are normally reviewed by the SACRE after five years).

In cases where the SACRE supports the school's application, a non-Christian ACW, suitable for the whole school or a particular category of pupils, must be provided.

Pupils withdrawn from Christian collective worship must be provided with an alternative ACW on a daily basis. However, the ACW must not be distinctive of any particular denomination of any religion, but may be distinctive of a particular religion.

Teachers, including headteachers, have the right to withdraw from collective worship. Teachers who exercise this right should not be disqualified from employment or discriminated against in any way.

The school prospectus or brochure must contain information about the provision for collective worship, the parents' right to withdraw their children and, if appropriate, the right of sixth form students to withdraw themselves.

Responsibility for ensuring that the legislative requirements relating to collective worship are met rests with the headteacher in consultation with the governing board.

Summary of the latest thinking about good collective worship



Given the nature of the vast majority of community schools at the present time (they are predominantly secular but increasingly multi faith communities), it is inappropriate to insist on too narrow an interpretation of the requirement to provide collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Why? Because we run the risk of offending or upsetting non-Christians and/or of compelling non-Christians to engage in activities that conflict with dearly and sincerely held beliefs.

The nub of the issue inevitably surrounds the word “worship”.

What does “worship” mean?

What does “worship” entail?

And what must happen for “worship” to be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”?

Moreover, no matter what worship is, it is something that individuals should enter into freely. The idea that we might require or compel people to worship is simply unacceptable. Indeed, it is the opinion of many legal experts that such requiring or compelling to engage in worship is a breach of an individual’s human rights. It is the generally held view among the majority of teachers, educationalists and experts in the field that the present legislative framework presents community schools with a dilemma of potentially epic proportions.

However, because most people recognise that bringing the whole school community together is of immense value in terms of, for example, reinforcing shared values and common aspirations, it is rare that anyone recommends the complete scrapping of the legislation as it applies to collective worship, merely its revision. Hence the view which has emerged nationally that collective worship must be replaced with acts of collective reflection which are no longer wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, but provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on a diverse range of worldviews, secular as well as religious.

In the light of this, and by taking account of the Education Reform Act 1988, and DfEE, DfES and QCA circulars, guidance and other documentation, it can be said that the following principles underpin good collective worship in community schools. Collective worship:

- must be inclusive
- should promote a sense of community
- should enable participants to be actively involved
- should promote pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development
- should be a memorable occasion
- should be of high quality
- where appropriate, should provide those who believe in God/gods with the opportunity to worship God/gods, but those who do not believe in God/gods must be free not to engage in such worship
- in a majority of cases, must contain some element which relates specifically to the Christian religion, and, where appropriate, addresses the special status Christians accord to Jesus, but, when such material is shared with non-Christian pupils, it must be shared in a spirit and in a manner which is educational in intent.

Aims and objectives of collective worship in community schools



Northumberland County Council believes that, for collective worship to be truly worthwhile and to provide beneficial educational experiences, it should:

- be planned, prepared and delivered in a manner which ensures that parents do not feel compelled to withdraw their children and sixth form students to not feel compelled to withdraw themselves
- be inclusive occasions which reflect the beliefs, practices, aspirations and achievements of the whole school community
- provide opportunities to examine the beliefs and practices of our increasingly diverse communities locally, regionally, nationally and globally
- provide opportunities for pupils to examine and reflect on their own beliefs and values and the beliefs and values of others
- examine both what unites as well as divides the human family
- encourage understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity
- foster a respect for truth based on evidence, reason, an discussion and debate
- provide opportunities to examine a variety of questions and relevant moral, political, religious and social issues
- provide opportunities to celebrate human achievement
- cultivate a sense of wonder and awe
- be a meaningful and worthwhile occasion from an educational point of view
- encourage pupil participation
- make use of outside speakers representing a variety of viewpoints
- contribute to pupils' SMSC development
- provide opportunities to reflect on, revere or venerate a divine power or being.

Northumberland County Council's policy for collective worship in community schools



In the light of the current legislative requirements and the latest thinking about good collective worship, Northumberland County Council urges all community schools to:

- plan collective worship with the aims and objectives previously outlined firmly in mind
- provide a daily ACW for all registered pupils in full-time education, except those withdrawn at the wish of their parents, or, if sixth form students, withdrawing themselves
- provide such ACWs to class groups, year groups, key stages or the whole school, as appropriate
- provide such ACWs at different times of the school day, as appropriate
- every term, ensure that a majority of ACWs are wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, but not distinctive of a particular Christian denomination
- ensure that ACWs are appropriate to the family background, age and aptitude of all the pupils involved
- where appropriate, seek a determination from the SACRE that the requirement for Christian ACWs should not apply in the case of the school or a particular category of pupils within it
- provide an appropriate ACW for pupils exempted from broadly Christian worship
- ensure that teachers are aware of their rights in relation to collective worship
- ensure that parents are aware of their right to withdraw their children from collective worship and, if appropriate, ensure sixth form students know they can withdraw themselves
- ensure that the school brochure or prospectus contains information about the provision of collective worship, the parents' right to withdraw their children and, if appropriate, the right of sixth form students to withdraw themselves
- ensure that the headteacher and the governing board are aware of their responsibilities in relation to collective worship
- ensure that an up-to-date policy and guidelines for collective worship has been adopted by the governing board and is understood by all teaching staff, and that the policy and guidelines is subject to regular review
- ensure that relevant teaching staff engage in regular training about collective worship
- ensure that collective worship is subject to regular monitoring and evaluation, both by teaching staff and the governing body
- ensure that the teacher or teachers responsible for planning, preparing and delivering collective worship have sufficient time and resources to meet their responsibilities
- ensure that staff are aware of the many people and agencies in the wider community that can assist schools with the planning, preparation and delivery of collective worship.

Guidelines for collective worship



These guidelines take into account the requirements set out in the Education Reform Act 1988, Circular 1/94 on Religious Education and Collective Worship and other guidance and documentation about collective worship.

Northumberland County Council recognises the value of collective worship as an integral part of the whole curriculum and believes it can make an invaluable contribution to pupils' SMSC development, whether they have faith commitments or not.

The role of the headteacher

Headteachers must be aware of their legal responsibilities in regard to collective worship and should take account of the Policy and Guidelines for Collective Worship in Community Schools issued by Northumberland County Council.

Headteachers should ensure that governors and staff are informed about their legal responsibilities and receive training in order to implement the local authority's Policy and Guidelines.

Headteachers may designate responsibility for co-ordinating collective worship to a member or members of staff.

Alternatively, a working group, perhaps comprising staff, pupils, governors and members of religious and worldview communities, might be convened to take responsibility for collective worship.

The role of the governors

Governors must be familiar with all documentation regarding collective worship issued to parents on their behalf, and may wish to be actively involved in the planning, delivery, monitoring and/or evaluation of collective worship within the school.

Governors should ensure that collective worship is reviewed as part of the school's self-evaluation process.

It is a statutory requirement that a school prospectus includes information about the collective worship provided. Such information should advise parents about whether a determination relating to worship that is "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" has been made. The parental right to withdraw their children from all or part of the collective worship should be clearly stated, together with the arrangements and provision made for those withdrawn. If appropriate, mention should be made of the right of sixth form students to withdraw themselves.

Guidelines for collective worship (continued)

The role of the collective worship co-ordinator or team

The role of the collective worship co-ordinator or team will vary depending on the individual needs of the school. In some cases the co-ordinator or the team will be solely responsible for collective worship, but might, at times, involve other members of staff or visitors or experts in the wider community.

Typical duties of the co-ordinator or team include:

- assisting the headteacher and the governors to carry out their legal responsibilities with regard to collective worship
- reporting to the headteacher and the governors on matters of concern relating to collective worship
- communicating with members of the school community regarding the significance and content of collective worship
- ensuring there is a development plan for collective worship which is included in the school improvement and self-evaluation processes
- developing and maintaining effective procedures for planning, recording, monitoring and evaluating collective worship
- responding to the needs and views of all members of the school community
- utilising the resources available for collective worship including books, posters, websites, visual aids and artefacts, music, visiting speakers, worship leaders.

A school policy for collective worship should include:

a statement concerning the status of the school (including acknowledgement of the legal requirements, the existence of trust deeds and/or any guidance or other documentation that derives from the local authority or, if relevant, the Anglican or Catholic diocese)

- a definition or description of collective worship
- the aims of collective worship
- the contribution collective worship can make to the curriculum and its role in the life of the whole school
- the contribution collective worship can make to the cross-curricular themes and dimensions and the SMSC development of pupils
- information about the management of collective worship
- information about planning for collective worship, including the Worship Schedule or Cycle of Themes
- information about the recording, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship
- information about the delivery of collective worship
- information about the right that parents have to withdraw their children from collective worship and, if appropriate, the right of sixth form students to withdraw themselves
- guidelines for visiting speakers.

Schools should use the above sub-headings to help to construct their policy. The policy must be reviewed on a regular basis. The policy must be submitted for approval to the governing body every time it is amended.

Summary of the advice in Circular 1/94

Circular 1/94 offers non-statutory guidance on legislation concerning Religious Education and Collective Worship. It is not in itself a legal document.

However, sections of the Circular that apply to collective worship contain a number of clear principles and expectations. These are important for schools as they attempt to convert the legal requirements into manageable and effective practice within existing constraints. To ensure schools provide high quality collective worship:

- it must be inclusive
- it should promote a sense of community
- it should enable participants to be actively involved
- it should promote pupils' SMSC development
- it should be a special occasion
- it should be high quality
- it should provide an opportunity for pupils who wish to do so to worship God/gods
- most acts of collective worship should contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord special status to Jesus.



The contribution of collective worship to school

The contribution of collective worship to other aspects of the curriculum

Collective worship can contribute to pupils' SMSC development by encouraging them to:

- reflect on their own beliefs and values and the beliefs and values of others
- reflect on their behaviour
- celebrate together
- learn about their own religious and cultural traditions and the religious and cultural traditions of others.

The contribution of the curriculum to collective worship

It is sound educational practice to draw from all areas of the curriculum (and not just from RE) to provide valuable experiences in collective worship (e.g. from English literature, History, Mathematics, Citizenship Education).

The organisation of collective worship

Collective worship can be organised for pupils in a variety of groupings and can take place in the school hall or classroom.

Planning collective worship

All collective worship should be considered carefully to ensure that the ages, aptitudes and backgrounds of all the pupils are taken into account. There should be termly planning sheets which identify themes, topics, special events and/or festivals that will be addressed. Monitoring and evaluation should take

place. This in turn will lead to higher quality collective worship.

The role of collective worship in the life of the school

Collective worship provides an opportunity for the school community to reflect on important issues. It also:

- reinforces a sense of group and community identity
- gives pupils the experience of being still and quiet
- provides an opportunity for celebrating success and times of joy
- provides an opportunity for being together in times of sadness and sorrow
- provides an opportunity for highlighting and reflecting on core human and school values such as truth, justice, respect, personal integrity and accountability
- provides an opportunity to mark significant points in the year such as festivals and important international, national, local and school events.



The contribution of collective worship to school

Collective worship contributes to pupils' spiritual development by providing opportunities to:

- reflect on the value, purpose and meaning of life and our existence
- experience times of quiet and stillness in the midst of the busyness and activity of the school day and school life
- experience ideas, stories and insights from religious and secular sources which suggest there is more to life than the immediate and the material.

Collective worship contributes to pupils' moral development by providing opportunities to:

- reflect on issues of right and wrong
- learn about religious and secular teachings concerning right and wrong
- hear about people in whom goodness, moral awareness and rightness are exemplified.

Collective worship contributes to pupils' social development by providing opportunities to:

- gather with others for a common purpose
- share times of joy and sadness
- learn how to behave appropriately in a particular social setting.

Collective worship contributes to pupils' cultural development by providing opportunities to:

- hear music and stories from a variety of cultures, times and places
- reflect upon ideas concerning beauty and what is pleasing to the eye and the ear
- appreciate the range of talents and gifts found in the school community and wider society.
- Collective worship contributes to pupils' intellectual development by providing opportunities to:
 - think and expand their knowledge and understanding
 - have ideas, beliefs, preconceptions and prejudices confirmed or challenged
 - reflect upon the nature of learning and the value of education.



Advice on providing high quality collective worship

- Ensure that collective worship meets the legislative requirements, but, more importantly, make collective worship a meaningful and enjoyable educational experience for the pupils.
- Ensure there is a distinction between the assembly and the act of collective worship.
- The best collective worship is that which pupils can relate to. It speaks to them about issues and topics important to them.
- Collective worship should evoke a response from pupils.
- Ensure that pupils know the routine for collective worship. Make collective worship special and different from other parts of the school day.
- Collective worship can take place in large communal spaces such as halls, but also in more intimate surroundings such as classrooms.
- Create an appropriate atmosphere or mood by using music, shade, light, visual aids and artefacts.
- Create a positive and reflective atmosphere. Separate out school matters (behaviour, notices etc) from the collective worship itself.
- Encourage pupils to understand what the term “collective worship” means. Such understanding might break down resistance to the concept among some pupils and staff.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to participate and encourage them to do so. Worship should not be something that is “done” to them.
- Worship should build in opportunities for all learners, regardless of their special needs or learning difficulties.
- Consider using a whole school or year group Thought for the Day, which, although it might last no more than two or three minutes, can be followed up in class with comment and discussion.
- Encourage colleagues across the school to contribute to Thoughts for the Day. They need only volunteer for a few thoughts per year. Tailor the theme or topic to suit colleagues’ strengths or interests.
- Show a film clip or pre-record a visiting speaker to illustrate a particular aspect of belief, faith or moral teaching.
- Ensure that pupils are invited to contribute to collective worship and Thoughts for the Day. Remember: they can and should prepare and present collective worship.
- Give pupils variety in the ways in which collective worship is presented. ICT can be a very useful tool in gaining pupils’ attention and bringing world issues directly to them.
- Always build in a time for quiet reflection at some point during collective worship. This might be a simple invitation to think about what has been seen and heard. It might be an invitation to join in a prayer or to listen to a poem or short reading.
- If appropriate, invite pupils to participate in prayer. Pupils must not be forced to pray, but ensure that those who do not want to pray respect the rights of those who do. Pupils not participating should remain silent. Remember that all children will be at differing stages of their spiritual development and that they should feel free to respond and participate in their own way and at their own level.
- Visiting speakers will need guidelines about what is acceptable and the norm for collective worship in your school. Not everyone feels comfortable standing up to speak to large groups of sometimes restless young people, so any advice will generally be welcomed!
- Visitors should be encouraged to provide feedback to the school on their experience of helping to provide collective worship.
- As a matter of good practice, insist that colleagues who attend collective worship with their pupils focus on the worship itself and not on checking uniform, detention letters or other sundry activities.
- Plan the collective worship schedule well in advance and link at least some of it to major festivals. The major Christian seasons and festivals should be included in any such schedule.
- Plan, monitor and evaluate collective worship. Involve the staff, governors and pupils. The pupils’ voice is a critical part of the evaluation process.

Spiritual development

For collective worship to contribute to the spiritual development of pupils it should:

- celebrate all that is good and beautiful and express thankfulness for the joy of being alive
- provide opportunities for pupils to share what is meaningful and significant to them
- ensure the experiences provided are relevant to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils
- give time for silent reflection and exploration of inner space
- utilise forms of worship that others have found helpful in their spiritual development, e.g. silent contemplation, music, song, dance, art, architecture
- provide a rich variety of forms of expression, e.g. music, art, drama, prose, poetry, and give pupils an opportunity to experience these at their own level.



Visiting speakers

It is helpful if visitors:

- are familiar with the school and the pupils through, perhaps, a prior visit
- are clear about their brief and stick to it
- have prepared their material thoroughly
- know where they stand in relation to other members of their community
- arrive promptly
- provide prior notice about the equipment they require
- are articulate and easily heard, use words and materials appropriate to the ages of the pupils and pause at various points
- are pupil-friendly, e.g. they are not patronising, are aware of the cultural sensitivities of some pupils about touching or eye contact, are visible to all pupils, convey a sense of enjoyment and a sense of humour, use artefacts and visuals aids
- are prepared to receive questions from pupils, some of which might be awkward
- do not use collective worship to influence pupils unfairly or attempt to win them over to their belief or faith stance
- are aware of the need to challenge negative stereotypes
- receive feedback from teachers and pupils on positive points about their contribution as well as advice about what might be developed or altered.



Inspecting collective worship

Ofsted inspections may include a review of collective worship. The inspection team may report on whether the school is meeting its legal requirements in relation to collective worship and the contribution collective worship makes to the SMSC development of its pupils.

When preparing for an inspection, a school may wish to consider the following:

- Does the school's collective worship policy and practice conform with the legal requirements?
- Is the collective worship policy consistent with the school's ethos, values and mission statement/aims and objectives?
- Is there a planned approach to collective worship?
- Does collective worship provide opportunities for spiritual development?
- Is there a clearly understood approach to the diversity of religions and worldviews represented in the school?
- Is a record kept of each ACW?
- Is there a clearly understood approach to the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship?
- Do the staff responsible for the management and delivery of collective worship have access to relevant training?

The inspection team will focus on the quality of the collective worship provided. Indicators of effective collective worship include the following:

- The collective worship promotes SMSC development and encourages reflection and response.
- The collective worship is inclusive and appropriate to all participants.
- The collective worship fosters a sense of community, identity and self-esteem.
- Learning opportunities are linked to pupils' own life experiences.
- There is evidence of preparation, planning, effective delivery and evaluation.
- There is appropriate use of resources.
- There is a clear understanding of the distinction between collective worship and an assembly.
- There is evidence that the collective worship is special and separate from the everyday activities of the school.

Appendices

Glossary of key terms

Assembly

The legislation draws a clear distinction between a daily ACW and an assembly. It is a requirement that schools provide a daily ACW for all registered pupils in full-time education, except those withdrawn at the wish of their parents or, if sixth form students, withdrawing themselves. An assembly, which need not be daily, is separate and distinctive from an ACW, although there is no reason why it might not immediately precede or follow the collective worship. While collective worship involves worship in some shape or form, the assembly is devoid of worship.

Put simply, an assembly is an occasion when information relating to the smooth running of the school is shared with the whole school community. For example, during an assembly the school informs pupils of changes to routine practices or shares information about recent or forthcoming events. Alternatively, the school reports on pupils' successes in lessons, on the sports field or in the wider community. Perhaps the school has collected for a charitable cause. The assembly might be used to inform everyone how successful the exercise has been.

In the right hands, an assembly can seamlessly merge into an ACW. A report on a sporting achievement in the school - perhaps the netball team wins a competition - may come under assembly time, but using the pupils' sporting achievement to explore and reflect on human potential, determination and courage could be the stimulus for a "worshipful response" and therefore constitute collective worship.

Some teachers suggest that, if an assembly and an ACW are held one after the other, the assembly, when school notices are given out, should occur at the start rather than at the end of the event. Why? Because this will enable pupils to reflect on the significance of the ACW as they set off to engage in other, more routine, school activities.

It is worth remembering that, although parents can withdraw their children and sixth form students can withdraw themselves from collective worship, all registered pupils in full-time education must attend assemblies.

Glossary of key terms

Collective Worship

Collective worship is different from corporate worship. Corporate worship takes place when everyone present and participating is committed to the same religion. Corporate worship usually takes place in a church, gurdwara, mandir, mosque, synagogue or temple. The word “collective” acknowledges that a school is a community of diverse individuals and beliefs, one in which there are likely to be followers of many religions and none. “Collective” implies inclusiveness, but not a commitment to any one religion. Nonetheless, the legislation requires that the collective worship must be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”, which many people see as conflicting with the common understanding of “collective” in a school context. Moreover, if a narrow understanding of worship is applied to the occasion, Buddhists and non-religious pupils and teachers will be among those who find themselves engaging in activities that conflict with their beliefs and practices.

Existing legislation and government guidance are not very helpful in describing how schools square the circle by overcoming the inherent contradiction in the term “collective worship”. Consequently, we recommend the following advice as a way of ensuring that collective worship is, indeed, inclusive. ACWs should:

- appropriate for all pupils and others present, no matter their religious commitment or lack of it
- celebrate and affirm difference and diversity in the school community and beyond
- not place any person who attends them in a position on which they are made to feel uneasy or less than honest or where their personal integrity is not respected
- not ask any person who attends them to pay lip service to statements of belief which they might not understand or to which they do not subscribe
- be educational experiences judged on their educational merits.

Glossary of key terms

Corporate Worship

Corporate worship describes the nature of worship found within a religious community. During corporate worship, a body of believers, a “corpus”, meets voluntarily and for reasons of shared commitment. They know exactly what the worship entails and everyone can join in because of the shared commitment.

Determination

If a school feels it is inappropriate for ACWs that are “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character” to be provided in the case of the school or of a particular category of pupils within it, the headteacher can apply for a determination, or judgement, from the SACRE to modify the requirements.

When applying for a determination, the following steps should be taken:

- the headteacher discusses with the staff the school’s situation relating to ACWs.
- Once agreement about seeking a determination is reached:
- the headteacher formally proposes to the governing body that a determination be sought from the SACRE.

Once agreement about seeking a determination is reached:

- the headteacher and governing body consult with parents.

Once consultation has been completed:

- the headteacher writes to the SACRE seeking a determination.
- The SACRE notifies the headteacher in writing of its decision.

The SACRE will either grant or deny the application. If granted, a determination lasts for five years. A school may re-apply for an extension of the determination after the five-year period. The SACRE must take account of all relevant circumstances such as the family backgrounds of the pupils concerned.

Please note that a determination does not remove the requirement that collective worship should be daily; it merely removes the requirement that the daily ACW must be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”.

Application forms for a determination are available from the Clerk to the SACRE, c/o County Hall, and should be sent to the Chair of the SACRE, also c/o County Hall.

Headteachers and governing bodies keen to study advice about a determination in further detail should examine sections 6, 7, 9 and 12 of the Education Reform Act 1988. Paragraphs 69 to 80 of DfEE Circular 1/94 provide a useful interpretation of the legislation.

Glossary of key terms

Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE)

Every local authority must have a SACRE. A SACRE advises the local authority on matters connected with collective worship in community schools and on the RE to be given in accordance with an agreed syllabus. Every five years it requires the local authority to review its agreed syllabus. Also, it must consider and decide whether to support or reject an application made by a headteacher to suspend the requirement that collective worship in community schools be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character” for some or all of the pupils in his or her school.

The broad role of the SACRE is to support the effective provision of RE and collective worship in schools. In particular, a SACRE will examine methods of teaching, the choice of teaching materials and the provision of training.

Withdrawals

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship and sixth form students have the right to withdraw themselves. Parents and sixth form students should make their wishes known, either verbally or in writing, to the headteacher, who will ensure that pupils who are withdrawn are appropriately supervised as the collective worship takes place. Schools should be aware that it is improper for pupils who should attend collective worship to miss an ACW merely so they can engage in alternative activities.

Worship

The term “worship” is not defined in the present legislation so we do not know what the MPs who drafted the legislation had in mind when they required schools to provide a daily act of collective worship. This said, the word “worship” derives from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning to attribute “worth” or “worthship”. It has the same root as the word “worthy”. The most obvious meaning of the word “worship” is that of paying homage to a divine power or being. Religious communities worship God or gods in the form or forms their tradition demands. However, worship can also refer to the celebration of, the honour paid to or the service offered to individuals or things people consider worthy. In our own day, for good or ill, people have been known to “worship” pop groups, football teams, political leaders, money, fame and/or power.

Worship may take many forms including music, song, dance, drama, prayer, reading, silence, meditation, the contemplation of icons and symbols, the transmission of one’s beliefs and the lighting of candles and lamps. These actions may originate in the actions of religious communities but they have their parallels in various secular domains (e.g. during a typical football match on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon).

Suggested festivals upon which to base collective worship

Key Christian Festivals

- The season of Advent
- Christmas
- Epiphany
- The season of Lent
- Holy Week
- Easter
- Ascension
- Whit Sunday
- Harvest

Key Festivals from the main World Religions other than Christianity

- Wesak (Buddhism)
- Holi (Hinduism)
- Diwali (Hinduism)
- Al-Hijra (Islam)
- Ashura (Islam)
- Ramadan (Islam)
- Eid-ul-Fitr (Islam)
- Eid-ul-Adha (Islam)
- Purim (Judaism)
- Pesach (Judaism)
- Shavuot (Judaism)
- Rosh Hashanah (Judaism)
- Yom Kippur (Judaism)
- Sukkot (Judaism)
- Hanukkah (Judaism)
- Birthday of Guru Gobind Singh (Sikhism)
- Baisakhi (Sikhism)
- Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev (Sikhism)
- Birthday of Guru Nanak (Sikhism)

Some national and international events that provide the basis for Collective Worship

- Holocaust Memorial Day (27th January)
- Chinese New Year (late January to late February)
- Darwin's Birthday (12th February)
- St. David's Day (1st March)
- Commonwealth Day (early to mid March)
- International Women's Day (8th March)
- St. Patrick's Day (17th March)
- Mothering Sunday (March)
- St. George's Day (23rd April)
- World Red Cross Day (8th May)
- Father's Day (early to mid May)
- Christian Aid Week (mid May)
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month (June)
- International Humanist Day (21st June)
- International Day of Peace (21st September)
- Black History Month (October)
- International Day of Older Persons (1st October)
- World Animal Day (4th October)
- World Mental Health Day (10th October)
- United Nations Day (24th October)
- Halloween (31st October)
- Anniversary of Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder Plot (5th November)
- Armistice Day (11th November)
- Remembrance Sunday (early November)
- International Day for Tolerance (16th November)
- BBC Children in Need (mid to late November)
- Anti-Bullying Week (late November)
- International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25th November)
- St. Andrew's Day (30th November)
- Human Rights Day (10th December)

Collective worship policy: suggestions for content

Rationale

Collective Worship at School takes place daily in accordance with the provisions of the Education Reform Act 1988. The content of all our acts of collective worship is in accordance with the aims of the school.

The governors and headteacher have prepared this policy with assistance from the teacher co-ordinating collective worship.

Aims

We aim to provide collective worship that provides pupils with the opportunity to:

- Worship that which is considered worthy
- Consider spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues
- Explore their own beliefs
- Develop their spiritually
- Develop community spirit and promote community cohesion
- Reinforce positive attitudes
- Participate and respond
- Promote a common ethos and shared values
- Develop respect and sensitivity for the beliefs and values of others.

A Definition of Collective Worship

Collective worship is the time set aside from other aspects of school life when pupils are given the opportunity to learn and reflect on a variety of issues which may evoke in them a worshipful or spiritual response.

The contribution of Collective Worship to SMSC

Collective worship can contribute to the SMSC development of pupils through:

- reflection on their own beliefs and values and the beliefs and values of others;
- reflection about issues of right and wrong
- influencing behaviour
- celebrating together
- celebrating their own religious and cultural traditions and the religious and cultural traditions of others
- providing different perspectives on aspects of life, promoting thinking skills and understanding and encouraging further research.

The Management of Collective Worship

Management of collective worship will take place through the worship team comprising the collective worship co-ordinator, the headteacher, governors and representatives of the different year groups.

Collective worship policy: suggestions for content

The Organisation of Collective Worship

Collective worship is organised for a variety of groups (e.g. year groups, key stage groups, tutor groups) and will take place in the school hall, in classrooms or in other suitable areas of the school. Collective worship takes place on a daily basis for all. Acts of collective worship will usually last minutes, although it is acknowledged that the time might be extended or reduced, as appropriate.

Planning Collective Worship

All acts of collective worship will be carefully planned to take into account the needs, ages, aptitudes and backgrounds of the pupils. A termly (or annual) schedule/rota of Act of Collective Worship themes will be drawn up with a different theme each week. The schedule/rota will include religious festivals and events of a national and international nature but will be flexible enough to accommodate topical issues and current affairs. The schedule/rota will indicate who in the school will deliver each act of collective worship and include opportunities for collective worship to be led by visiting speakers.

Monitoring and Evaluating Collective Worship

Regular monitoring and evaluation of collective worship will be undertaken by (the collective worship co-ordinator, the headteacher, year heads, governors and/or pupils). Feedback will inform practice and assist decision-making in relation to the themes chosen and issues to do with delivery, visiting speakers and pupil participation. Good practice will be disseminated across the school community and used to help plan the schedule/rota for the following term/year.

Withdrawal of Pupils from Collective Worship

In accordance with legal requirements, parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship (if appropriate, include the right of sixth form students to withdraw themselves). Parents, (and sixth form students, if appropriate) should make their wishes known to the headteacher who will ensure that pupils who are withdrawn are appropriately supervised while the collective worship takes place.

Note: Pupils not in the sixth form can be withdrawn wholly or partly from collective worship only by their parents. Parents must make this request to the headteacher verbally or in writing.

Collective worship policy: suggestions for content

Planning Collective Worship

Themes for worship include.... (see Appendix Two for possible ideas). Visitors will be invited to help deliver the collective worship (see "Visiting speakers" above).

Resources

Describe what resources are available for collective worship and explain where they are stored/how they can be accessed. Have a plan for regularly updating/adding to the resources.

Monitoring

The collective worship team will ensure that the acts of collective worship fulfil the legal requirements and maintain the spirit of the law. In particular, collective worship will:

- be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character while ensuring that other religions and worldviews are considered and valued
- contribute to the SMSC development of pupils
- utilise knowledge and understanding from across the curriculum
- reflect on topical issues of local, regional, national and international significance.

Evaluation

Members of the worship team will ask for regular verbal and written comments from pupils, staff and visitors.

The views of pupils and staff will be sought and collated on a termly basis to help enhance the delivery of collective worship and to improve the collective worship schedule/rota.

Visitors will be asked for feedback on their experience of delivering collective worship

Thank you

On behalf of the Northumberland SACRE thank you for the work you do in bringing collective worship to life for our young people.

The SACRE exists to support you in your work - please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any assistance.