

Guidance for Collective Worship in Church Primary Schools and Academies



Diocesan Board of Education

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Guidance for Collective Worship in Church School and Academies

Diocesan Rationale

The diocese is committed to 'Growing disciples – Wider, younger, deeper'. Church school/academies play a significant role in this mission offering children an opportunity to encounter and be engaged with the Christian faith.

Through school/academy worship the school/academy community can share in opportunities to experience Living Worship and explore the Christian faith through meaningful acts of Collective Worship. Worship in school/academy offers the opportunity for the school/academy community to be encouraged and challenged by the message of the Christian Gospel and engage with issues that encourage working towards a fairer world for everyone.

What is Worship?

Christian worship is an honouring of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It acknowledges His transcendence; His "worth" and "value" (Holiness). It is a loving response to His nature as revealed in Jesus Christ. Worship arises out of personal experience. It is a central characteristic of faith communities which are in relationship with God. Since worship is an attitude of the heart, focused on God, we cannot make anyone worship. In the school/academy situation, people can be led to the "threshold of worship" by providing a setting where they have opportunity to worship God.

Collective worship is a term which is used only in education. Churches and religions usually think of their worship as being corporate. Assumptions cannot be made about shared beliefs within a school/academy community. Collective worship in the church school/academy context must take account of the varied backgrounds of the pupils (and staff) as well as of their ages and aptitudes.

It is the task of collective worship to provide a setting in which the integrity of those present is not compromised but in which everyone finds something positive for themselves. In collective worship, children and adults will be responding to the worship in different ways and at different levels. Some will be passive observers, learning about worship but not participating in it; some will be "at the threshold", interested in the process and participating in it but not full believers; for others the act of collective worship may be a time of real worship of God.

Distinguishing between Collective Worship and Assembly

Assembly is:

Meeting together for a common purpose. E.g. a visiting theatre company in school/academy, or the need to give out important notices or deal with matters of common concern.

Collective worship is:

A coming together of the school/academy community for the purpose of engaging in an opportunity to worship. In each act of collective worship some of the elements of worship (i.e. of "giving worth to God") must be present.



An Assembly may include Collective Worship. Not every Assembly is Collective Worship.

Collective worship and the Law

Arrangements for collective worship in a Church School/Academy are the responsibility of the governors in consultation with the Headteacher. There are three main legal requirements for collective worship:

- collective worship in a Church School/academy should be carried out in accordance with the school/academy's founding Trust Deed, and in accordance with the School/academy's Ethos Statement, which is to be found in the statutory Instruments of Government.
- the school/academy must provide an act of collective worship for all pupils and staff every day. This act of worship can take place at any time of the school/academy day and in any regular school/academy grouping e.g. whole school/academy, key stage or class unit.
- a statement must be included in the school/academy brochure that makes it clear parents may withdraw their children from collective worship on religious grounds. A similar statement should appear in the collective worship policy document. The "religious grounds" do not have to be justified and explained by the parents. Should children be withdrawn, the school/academy must provide adequate supervision to ensure their safety during the period in which the worship takes place. Children should therefore not be withdrawn from collective worship for any other reason.
See DfE Circular 1/94 for further details

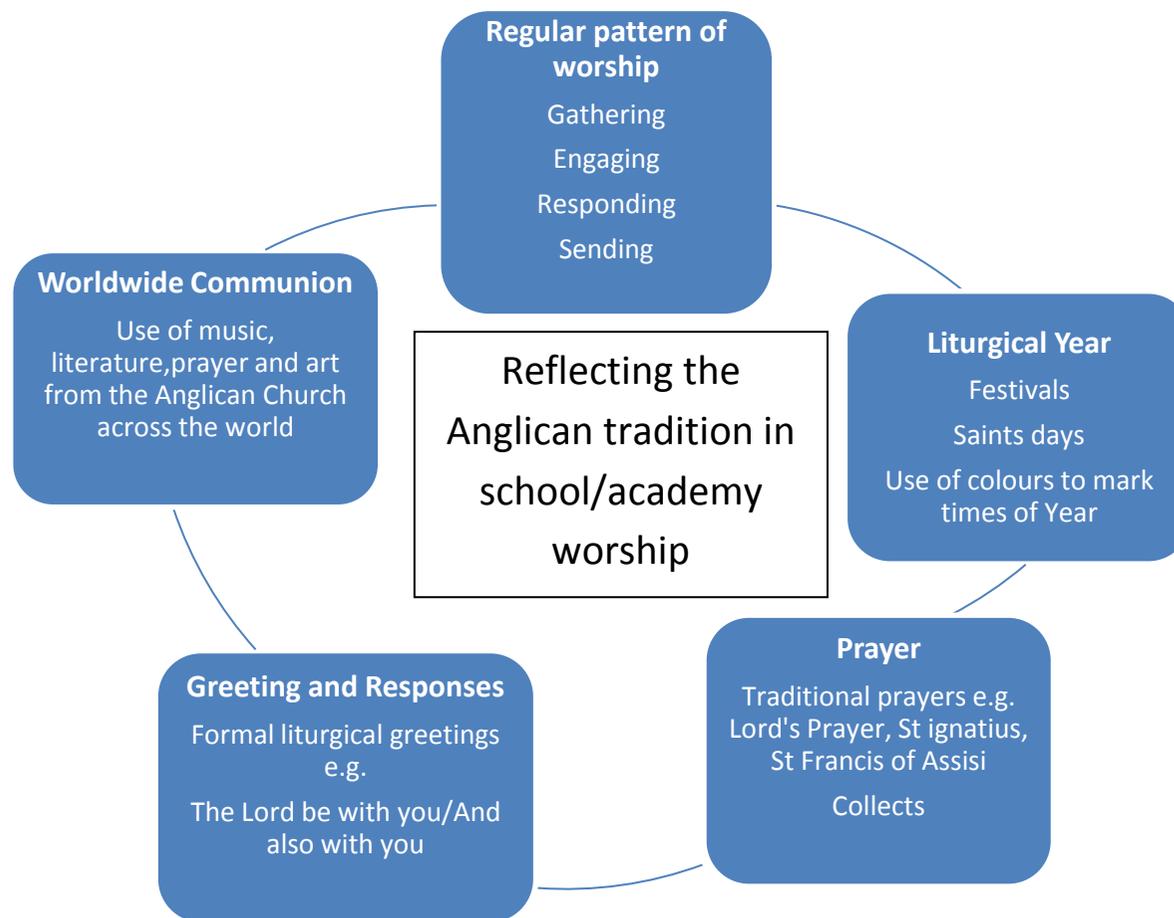
Aims of collective worship

Effective collective worship is one way in which a Church School/academy can give expression to its founding Trust Deed and its distinctive Christian character. Collective worship should therefore be closely related to the school/academy's Mission or Vision Statement. Worship in Church Schools/Academies should be a central activity in the life of the school/academy and of the highest quality.

The following aims are suggested. They are not listed in any order of priority.

Collective worship in a church school/academy should aim to:

- Enable children and staff to appreciate their worth and value to God, and to the community, and respect the integrity of each individual as a child made in the image of God.
- Share with participants some of the central teachings of the Christian faith at an appropriate level and thereby give them the encouragement to explore their own beliefs and understanding of God within a Christian framework.
- Provide an opportunity for the school/academy community to reflect upon God and to give Him honour.
- Enable the school/academy community to make effective use of silence through opportunities for reflection, contemplation, meditation and prayer thereby encouraging those present to engage with the spiritual dimension of worship.
- Heighten awareness of the ultimate questions / realities of life by providing the opportunity to reflect and search for meaning.
- Provide an opportunity to bring personal needs and the needs of others before God in prayer.
- Experience moments of awe, wonder, thankfulness, mystery and joy.
- Provide an opportunity to celebrate Christian festivals.
- Celebrate gifts, talents and achievements.
- Provide a vocabulary of worship and an experience of a wide variety of worship forms, including symbols and imagery.
- Establish, explore, and reinforce the common Christian values of the school/academy community such as love, peace, kindness, compassion, forgiveness (www.christianvalues4school.org.uk).
- Encourage respect and care for God's creation by a positive attitude to both local and global environmental issues.
- Provide opportunities for self-expression and creativity in worship.
- Share some of the central teachings of the Christian faith at an appropriate level.
- Encourage children and staff to explore their own beliefs and understanding of God within a Christian framework.
- Foster sensitivity to other religions, their beliefs, values, cultures and traditions and as appropriate use these to enrich or deepen Christian faith
- Use of the Bible
e.g. stories read from the Bible or Bible storybook, dramatised stories.



Resources /websites

www.worshipworkshop.org

Resources/books

Be Anglican through Worship Diocese of Lichfield
 Be Bold! - Church House Publishing
 Pathways to Prayer – Gill & Macmillan Ltd
 Roots and Shoots - Imaginor

Planning Opportunities for worship

When planning opportunities for worship you may need to consider the following:

Timing: Consider the rationale for the timing of worship in the school/academy day. E.g. if you want to commit the day ahead to God it would be appropriate to have worship at the start of the day, if you are celebrating achievements the end of the school/academy day on Friday could be the best time

Venue: In most schools/academies the choice of room for worship lies between the hall, or remaining in the classroom with smaller groups. With class-based worship it is important that efforts are made to differentiate between the time for worship and the other activities of the classroom, perhaps by the use of a special collective worship corner or a particular layout of the classroom. Be creative with the space available and offer a range of spaces and places in which to worship e.g. by using the playground or local Church.

Preparing for worship: Consider how you might arrange the space to facilitate the movement into worship. Use a focal point to draw and focus attention, such as a particular table, artefact or screen. The object of attention may be something fixed such as a standing cross, flowers or a candle, or may vary according to the worship theme. Notice boards in line with the focal point may be used for displays which will support and enhance the worship experience and challenge everyone's thinking. The use of IWB in collective worship should not be forgotten. Images and words displayed here can have a significant impact on those present.

Seating: It is customary to seat pupils in classes, either in lines or in a horseshoe shape. Schools/academies may like to experiment with allowing children to sit in friendship groups or in "family" or "buddy" groupings which cross the age ranges. This is best done by creating 'families' containing one child from each year group - older children taking responsibility for the younger ones.



Setting the Atmosphere for Worship: Pupils should enter and leave the worship space with a sense of order and respect. This could be carried out in a quiet and reverential way or in a celebratory manner. The school/academy community could be called to worship by the ringing of a bell or an agreed signal.

Visitors Leading Collective Worship

Refer to guidance available on website for visitors leading collective worship.

Attendance at Worship

(i) **Pupils:** Pupils need to be encouraged to attend and contribute to collective worship as a valued and pleasurable experience from which they can gain significant insights.

The reason for a pupil's withdrawal from collective worship **can only** be "on religious grounds".

(ii) **Staff:** Staff cannot be compelled to attend collective worship. However, collective worship should be seen as a valuable time for community building. It is hoped that staff and children will worship together in school/academy. This provides a powerful role model for children and makes an important statement about the status of worship in the school/academy. School/academy worship should not create the impression that this occasion is voluntary for adults and compulsory for children. Worship should be an integral part of the school/academy's life and connected to the whole curriculum. Staff should therefore be involved in all aspects of what is offered to the children. The member of staff leading worship should be able to do this without being distracted by behaviour management issues. The presence of other adults can also facilitate the monitoring and assessment of the worship.

iii) **Others:** It is also good to involve the wider community in the life of the school/academy. It is a positive step to invite and welcome parents, governors, local Christian leaders, the school/academy's ancillary staff and members of the community to join the school/academy's collective worship on a regular basis. This strengthens the idea of worship as a unifying and cohesive force.

Keeping records: Keep a record of acts of worship. Evaluate the impact of the worship half termly by gathering responses to the following questions:

How positive are learners' attitudes to collective worship?

To what extent do learners and staff derive inspiration, spiritual growth and affirmation from worship?

Monitoring and Evaluation of Collective worship

Forms to facilitate this are available on the website.

Involving Children in the Organisation and Planning of Collective Worship

Outstanding collective worship is where children are not passive spectators but *enthusiastic contributors*.



Ways of involving the children can include:

- being a part of the initial planning process
- engaging them in setting a mood and creating a worshipful atmosphere. Talk with the children about the effectiveness of music and allow children to be involved in the selection process.

- when telling stories as part of collective worship do not follow up with information seeking questions but encourage children to empathise with the characters e.g. "How do you feel about what happened in this story?" "Does the story remind you of anything in your own life?" Begin questions with the words 'I wonder'?
- give the children a few moments to allow them to talk with their neighbours about what they thought about the meaning of the story.
- provide time for quiet reflection and/or silent prayer on the theme of the story. Allow the children to write and share their own prayers. Have an established procedure for allowing children to contribute their personal prayer needs to the time of worship.

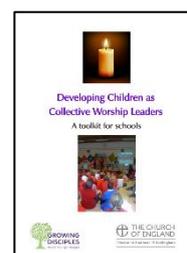


Some examples include;

- a prayer tree or plant (real or man-made) where children leave their topics for intercession written on leaf shapes on the tree.
- individual classes or year groups have a set day of the week on which they can recommend the topics for prayer.
- a book of prayers/prayer tree is kept where pupils can write prayers which will be used in worship.
- even if the worship is not class-led, children may occasionally read their own prose or poetry, perform drama or mime, make music etc.
- the assessment of collective worship could include a record of pupils' comments on the acts of worship.

On special occasions such as the "Good Work Assembly" and the class led "Show and Tell" consideration should be given to including elements of worship. E.g. stories and songs that reflect the Christian belief that all gifts and talents are God-given and should be celebrated as such. Similarly hymn practices should be opportunities for Christian teaching and for learning the meaning behind the words of the songs/hymns.

Further guidance is available in the document 'Developing Children as Collective Worship Leaders: a toolkit for schools/academies'. This is also available on the diocesan website.



Collective worship and whole school/academy ethos

Consideration should be given as to how collective worship is impacting other areas of school/academy life and the contribution it is making to whole school/academy ethos. This might be in the content of collective worship themes which could be exploring the school/academy Christian values or the way in which themes covered in collective worship are being followed up throughout the curriculum.



Appendices

1. Linking SEAL to Bible stories
2. Guidelines for visitors leading worship
3. Forms for monitoring and observation of collective worship for primary schools/academies