



Guidance for Collective Worship in Church Secondary Schools/Academies



Diocesan Board of Education

July 2013

Guidance for Collective Worship in Church Schools/Academies

Diocesan Rationale

The diocese is committed to 'Joining Together in the Transforming Mission of God'. Church schools/academies play a significant role in this mission and are communities where there can be an out working of the three strands of this Mission – Living Worship, Growing Disciples and Seeking Justice.

Through worship the school/academy community can share in opportunities to experience Living Worship and explore the Christian faith through meaningful acts of Collective Worship. Authentic worship offers the opportunity for the school/academy community to be encouraged and challenged by the message of the Christian Gospel. Such worship could appropriately include opportunities to explore questions of faith. It may also 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, students 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. 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 should be carried out in accordance with the founding Trust Deed, and in accordance with the Ethos Statement, which is to be found in the statutory Instruments of Government. In the case of an academy reference should be made to the Funding Agreement.
- 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 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 students 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 students be withdrawn, adequate supervision must be provided to ensure their safety during the period in which the worship takes place. Students should therefore not be withdrawn from collective worship for any other reason.

See DfE Circular 1/94 for further details

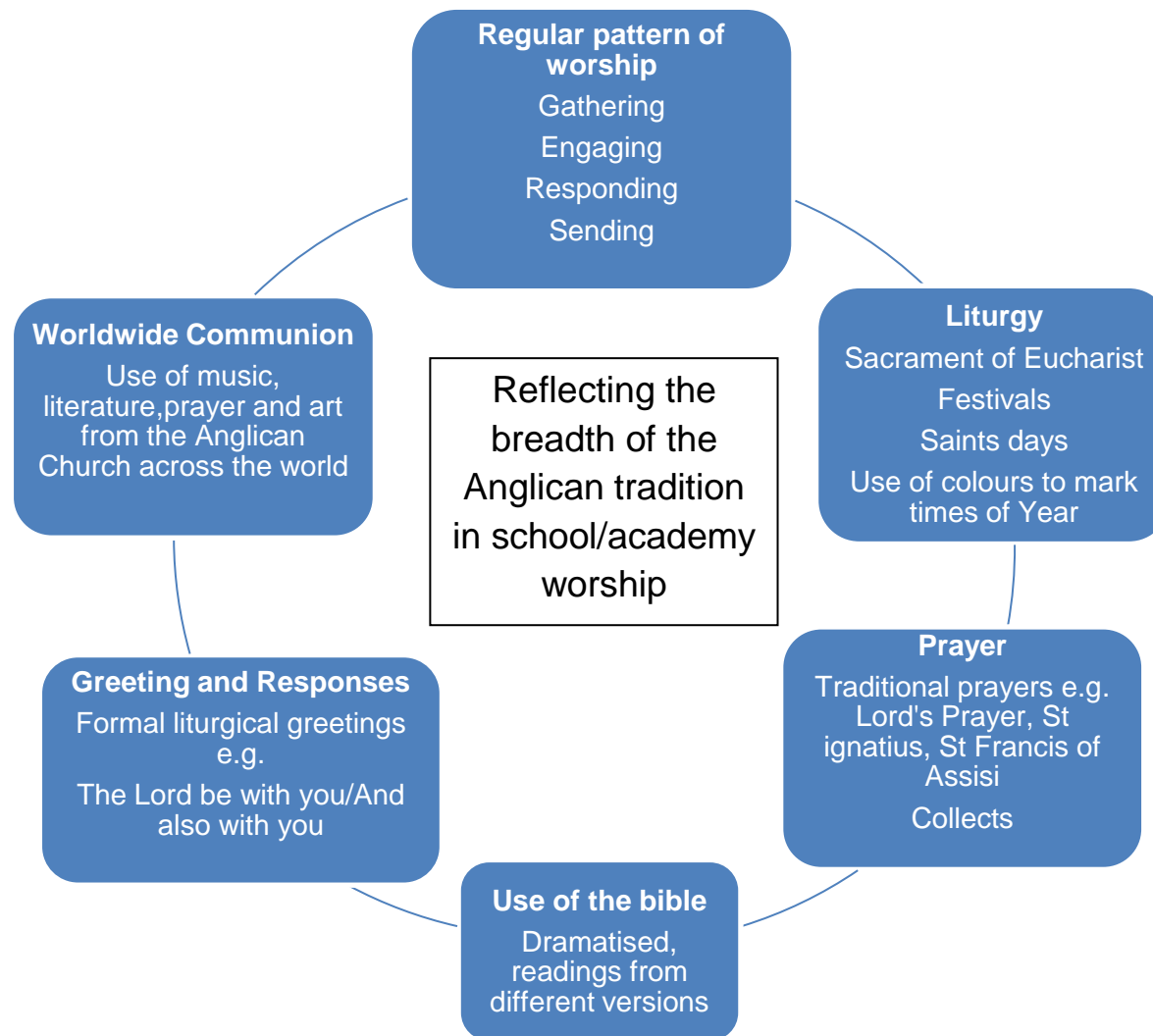
Aims of collective worship

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 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 students 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 community to reflect upon God and to give Him honour
- enable the 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.christianvalues4schools.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 students 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

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. If you want to commit the day ahead to God it would be appropriate to have worship at the start of the day.

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.

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. Images and words displayed using IWB can have a significant impact on those present. It would be appropriate for senior managers and worship leaders to discuss ways in which students will be managed on entry, during and leaving collective worship in order to maintain a suitable atmosphere for worship.

Seating: Seating is likely to be in structured groupings e.g. houses/vertical groupings. For voluntary attendance at Eucharist students may have some choice about where they sit.



Maintaining an atmosphere for Worship:

Worship should be planned and delivered so that students remain engaged with the content throughout. Appropriate strategies should be used to ensure this engagement is possible for all students through for example asking a question, pausing, moments of silence.

If staff intervention is necessary it should be carried out as discretely and unobtrusively as possible so as to maintain an atmosphere for worship. Staff and governors should develop a policy for dealing with difficult situations.

Attendance at Worship

(i) **Students:** Students 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 student'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 students will worship together in a school/academy. It is therefore appropriate that staff be seated alongside students. This provides a powerful role model for students and makes an important statement about the status of worship in the school/academy. Worship should not create the impression that this occasion is voluntary for adults and compulsory for students. 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 students. 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 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?

Involving Students in the Organisation and Planning of Collective Worship

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

Ways of involving the students can include:

- being a part of the initial planning process
- evaluating worship should include a record of student comments
- engaging them in setting a mood and creating a worshipful atmosphere. Talk with the students about the effectiveness of music and allow students to be involved in the selection process.
- Opportunities should be provided for students to lead worship



- provide time for quiet reflection and/or silent prayer on the theme of the story. Allow the students to write and share their own prayers. Have an established procedure for allowing students to contribute their personal prayer needs to the time of worship.



Collective worship and 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 ethos. This might be in the content of collective worship themes which could be exploring the Christian values or the way in which themes covered in collective worship are being followed up through SEAL or PHSE.

Appendices

1. Linking Christian values and SEAL to Bible stories
2. Guidelines for visitors leading worship
3. Evaluation of secondary collective worship

Date guidelines reviewed: