

Collective Worship Guidance

What is Collective Worship?

All maintained schools must provide daily Collective Worship for all registered pupils (apart from those who have been withdrawn from this by their parents after discussion with the headteacher). This may be provided within daily assembly, but the distinction should be made clear. 'Worship' means 'giving worth to' usually a divine being. The law dictates that schools must provide a daily act of Collective Worship, which is broadly and mainly Christian. Worship is a response. Leaders must ensure that worship is invitational not instructional, based on an individual's choice.

What is 'of a broadly Christian character'?

Circular 1/94 (this reinforced the 1988 Education Reform Act but is not statutory in its own right) says that worship that reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief will be of a broadly Christian character. Most broad traditions of Christian belief are shared by people of other faiths and worldviews - humankind as stewards of the earth and its resources, for example. According to 1/94 acts of Collective Worship that are broadly Christian need not contain only Christian material. Some universal concepts and human values like justice and respect for life are part of the broad traditions of Christian belief, and much can be made of those in Collective Worship. Themes such as charity, kindness, peace or saying sorry are broadly Christian. A useful way in for your school might be to think of concepts, attitudes, values, that have general application and see how well they fit the "broad traditions of Christian belief". Collective Worship should be engaging and inspirational so the lives of the pupils of faith or of no faith will be enriched and they will be excited to learn about the diverse and complex society in which they live in.

Good practice in Collective Worship

1. Develop a yearly plan setting out major festivals and focus weeks that encourages respect for different faiths and cultures.
2. Ensure that staff have had the training to feel comfortable in delivering Collective Worship.
3. Consult pupil voice on the content of Collective Worship so that it is meaningful and relevant.
4. Invite members of the local faith communities to take part in Collective Worship. See the section on 'Guidelines for Visitors Leading Collective Worship' (***)
5. Ensure that pupils have the opportunity to reflect and question what has taken place during Collective Worship.
6. Allow for planned opportunities for pupils and adults to take time to pause and respond if invited. Be respectful, remain still and quiet whilst others reflect.

What is a 'Determination'?

It is acknowledged that the requirement for daily Collective Worship of a 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' may not be appropriate for all pupils in all schools, however this is the current law. Maintained schools may apply to SACRE for a 'determination'. This lifts or modifies the requirement for some or all pupils, while safeguarding the interests of children from Christian families. Academies should apply for a 'determination' directly to the Department for Education. Before requesting a determination, the headteacher must consult the school's governing board, which in turn may wish to seek the views of parents. It is good practice to seek advice from the county RE Adviser at an early stage. The application may relate either to a clearly described and defined group or to the whole school.

Collective Worship – different schools

Collective Worship can take place within a daily assembly but can also be done within individual classes or groups of children. For community, voluntary-controlled and foundation schools without a religious character, it is the responsibility of the headteacher to arrange the daily Collective Worship after consulting the governing body.

For voluntary-aided, voluntary-controlled, multi-academy trust with a religious character and foundation schools with a religious character, it is the responsibility of the governing body to arrange the daily Collective Worship after consulting the headteacher. Worship should be according to the founding trustees' instrument of government of the school. Church schools, which will offer daily Christian Collective Worship which may include elements from their founding Church. It is important to note that 'If a school is designated as having a religious character, they will have its denomination Religious Education and Collective Worship inspected, in addition to Ofsted'. This is called a Section 48 inspection.

How is Collective Worship different from an assembly?

An assembly is a gathering of the school, or part of it, for any purpose. It may be to share information or give instructions. Although Collective Worship and assembly may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be made clear.

An assembly is a gathering of people for a purpose, that might be to share information or to celebrate an event like 'Lead Learner'. This type of gathering is valuable in school and should continue. Collective Worship is different. It can be part of an assembly or separate, but it is not the same thing. See full guidance for more understanding (***)

The benefits of Collective Worship

1. It allows for a reflective approach to life. Collective Worship is time dedicated to 'giving worth usually to a divine being' and it should be broadly and mainly Christian as per the law states.
2. It creates an ethos for the school and affirms the values of the school and a chance to celebrate successes of the school.
3. It makes the school feel part of the wider society through learning to respect and understand others.
4. It develops a sense of belonging and community and allows people to share what is important to everyone.
5. It develops an awareness of universal moral principles.
6. It allows for schools to support pupil's spiritual development.
7. It is a time to ask and explore 'Big Questions' such as purpose, reason and global issues.
8. It creates time for links with outside communities through inviting visitors into school.
9. It allows for time to foster respect and spiritual awareness
10. It gives time to respond to national and international religious and world view events.

Right to withdraw

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from Collective Worship. If withdrawn the school has a duty to supervise those children away from where Collective Worship is taking place. All staff, including the headteacher have the legal right to withdraw from Collective Worship. The headteacher remains responsible for finding someone suitable to organise and lead the acts of worship. (The right to withdrawal does not extend to staff in Aided schools). It is hoped that the approach to Collective Worship in our schools is fully inclusive and well-balanced and therefore will not cause parents to withdraw their children.