
Collective Act of Worship Procedure



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Introduction

Schools are legally required to provide a daily act of collective worship for all their pupils. The regulations are set out in the Education Act 1944 as amended by the Education Reform Act 1988.

Worship from within a faith tradition has a very specific definition. A school community is not a worshipping community and the law recognises this by requiring “collective” not “corporate” worship. This might encompass what is offered in a spirit of admiration, celebration and respect to God and/or people of excellence, worthy of honour and by extension to concepts, principles and conduct which are worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit.

Worship defined in this way draws on literature, music, art, drama and other sources of inspiration and reflection for pupils and staff whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none. In this way collective worship is inclusive not exclusive.

Statutory Duty

All maintained schools provide daily collective worship for registered pupils (apart from those that have been withdrawn by parents/carers). This is usually provided during a daily assembly.

The Senior Executive Head Teacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging the daily collective worship after consulting with the governing body. The precise nature of collective worship will depend on the background, ages and abilities of the pupils.

In line with the 1988 Education Reform Act, which states that collective worship should be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’, we normally base our assemblies on the traditions of the Christian Church without being denominational. However, we conduct our assemblies and collective worship in a manner that is sensitive to the individual faith and beliefs of all members of the school. If it is inappropriate for some or all of the pupils to take part in Christian collective worship, the Senior Executive Head Teacher may apply to the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for a determination to have this requirement lifted.

While the majority of acts of worship in our schools are Christian in basis, we also hold assemblies that reflect other religious traditions that are represented in the school and the wider community.

Aim of collective acts of worship

- to provide an opportunity for the children to worship God
- to enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues
- to enable children to explore their own beliefs
- to encourage participation and response
- to develop in children a sense of community spirit
- to promote a common ethos with shared values and to reinforce positive attitudes

Implementation

Through the use of songs, story, drama, dance, prayer, music, readings and silence people may come to a deeper understanding of the spiritual dimension to their lives. They may come to a greater awareness of other people, themselves and their world in the light of which they may go out to live and work in the community.

Collective worship, whether during whole school, key phase or in-class assemblies will:

- be accessible to all staff and learners
- commence daily
- include a variety of elements
- involve the pupils in the assembly in as many ways as possible

Organisation of Collective Worship

Collective worship and assembly are not the same thing but it is usual for an act of collective worship to take place during an assembly. It is a special time for all present to reflect upon their life experiences and to seek awareness to ultimate questions as far as they are able. It is a time when children can celebrate social and academic achievement and to foster positive values held by the school, the local community and the wider world.

We conduct assemblies in a dignified and respectful way, which includes a period of calm reflection. We regard it as a special time and expect children to behave in an appropriate way. We ask them to be quiet and thoughtful and to listen carefully to the teachings and participate fully, responding in an appropriate but personal way. We create an appropriate atmosphere by using items such as music, candles or other objects that act as a focal point for the attention of the children.

The leadership team or other members of staff normally conduct assemblies, but sometimes invited visitors such as local clergy or other representatives of local religious groups conduct or contribute to them.

We take the themes of our assemblies from beliefs that are 'broadly Christian' yet common to other major world faiths including: justice, love, peace, good, evil, greed, poverty, pollution, morality, tolerance, co-operation, selfishness, war, prejudice and forgiveness. Assembly and collective worship themes may also be based on values we feel are important to our school communities such as: respect, trust, fairness, understanding, tolerance, appreciation, responsibility, caring, co-operation, patience, peace, honesty, courage, freedom, quality, friendship, humility, happiness and thoughtfulness. Topics and themes link where possible with the UNICEF Rights' Respecting programme which is followed in the schools. The assembly schedule is set annually.

Our assemblies reflect the achievements and learning of the children. Assemblies offer an opportunity to acknowledge and reward children for their achievements both in and out of school. They play an important part in promoting the ethos of the school, which is that all children are valued and all achievements are recognised.

We invite parents/carers to assembly during the year as this promotes the community spirit of the school and is a practical demonstration of the way the home and the school work together to support the achievements of our children.

We welcome governors' attendance at our assemblies.

Assemblies, including collective worship, take place daily within the school. Assemblies are held in key stage groups, within class or with the whole school (space permitting). All class teaching staff have the opportunity to lead assemblies; school leaders lead assembly regularly.

Right of withdrawal

We expect all children to attend and participate in assembly and collective worship. However, any parent can request permission for their child to be excused from attending the collective worship aspect of an assembly. The school will make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the child during the period concerned. Parents do not have to explain or give reasons for withdrawal; this complies with the 1944 Education Act and was restated in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

Parents must however make their request to the Head of School in writing. The Head of School keeps a record of all children who withdraw from collective worship.

Monitoring and review

The schools' procedures for assembly and collective worship are regularly reviewed and shared with the governing body.