

Collective Worship Policy in a Church School

KS1 and KS2

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Introduction

Church of England Primary Schools have a responsibility and mission to serve the needs of the children and their families in the parish. Church Schools and their Trust Deeds regulating worship were determined originally in the nineteenth century when society was very different from today. Today families will come from a variety of faith backgrounds or none and it is important to introduce children in the school to worship in a way which is inclusive rather than exclusive. Thus it will be important to offer opportunities for prayer and reflection in ways which enable children to join in or to remain alongside the worship without feeling left out.

In schools with children from families of other world faiths it will be important to be sensitive to offer prayers in ways that are not contrary to their beliefs but are still in accordance with Christian belief.

Because collective worship is regulated by law (Trust Deed in church schools and Act of Parliament in community schools) teachers and governors can feel apprehensive about its planning. It is of overriding importance to consider what is appropriate for the children in each particular school. It requires imagination and careful planning to make sure that the requirement for the worship to be Christian and for the needs of the children to be met are held together with integrity.

Governors and heads are welcome to seek the help of the Diocesan Adviser for Schools when they are drawing up their worship policy and planning their collective worship.

Collective Worship Policy

The policy statement on Collective Worship of an Anglican voluntary school should draw attention to:

- The Anglican principles on which the worship of the school is based;
- The partnership between the content and conduct of school worship and the ethos of the whole school;
- The organisation and planning within the broad traditions of Anglicanism which underpin whole-school worship or small group acts of worship;
- The opportunities given for pupils to reflect individually on spiritual issues;
- The commitment of the Anglican Church to ecumenism;
- The expectation that pupils will be present at acts of worship, but also the commitment of the school to respect the integrity of the religious communities from which the pupils come;
- The arrangements, planning, structure and monitoring of Collective Worship;
- The legal right of parents to withdraw their children from acts of worship;
- The importance of staff and pupils in the development of a whole-school ethos, they share together in worship in order to support the promotion of Christian values;
- Whether records of all the acts of worship are held in school and are available to parents on request;
- The fact that the school policy on collective worship in general accord with any existing diocesan policy on Collective Worship in voluntary schools.

Guidelines for Collective Worship in a Church School

The format for your collective worship policy should include information about the following:

- i. The Anglican principles on which the school is based:
- ii. The rationale
- iii. Legal requirements
- iv. Philosophy, aims and objectives
- v. Structure
- vi. Planning and Recording
- vii. Approaches
- viii. Monitoring

The Anglican principles on which the worship of the school is based

In church schools the act of worship must be in accordance with the school's trust deed. The trust deed is the original conveyance of land for the school and usually states that the land or property was given or bought in order to provide 'religious instruction and worship according to the principles and practices of the Church of England'. All church schools are, therefore, church foundations, that is why they have foundation governors.

The rationale

This will make reference to the school's ethos/mission statement and will demonstrate the partnership between the conduct and content of school worship and the ethos of the whole school based on Christian values.

Legal requirements

It is a statutory requirement that all schools hold a daily act of Collective Worship. In church schools this act of worship must be in accordance with the school's Trust Deed.

The governors of a church school, in consultation with the headteacher and worship co-ordinator must draw up a Collective Worship policy in accordance with the provisions of the school's trust deed. In drawing up this policy, regard must be given to the age, aptitude and background of the children in the school.

All parents may withdraw their children from worship providing they have notified the headteacher of their desire to do so. This right should be included in the worship policy and school brochure. If a child is withdrawn, the school is required to provide a safe alternative.

In a controlled school, staff retain the right to withdraw from worship. In an aided school staff are expected to attend.

Philosophy, Aims and Objectives

Why Collective Worship? Collective Worship aims to:

- * strengthen and support the school community and celebrate each unique individual member made in the image of God;
- * give expression to, reaffirm and practise the values of the school community;
- * allow reflection and response to fundamental questions of life and those things that are of eternal concern and value to human beings;
- * celebrate and give thanks for achievements within the school, local and international community and occasions of significance, including festivals;
- * contribute to the spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils;

- * foster and enable a concern for the needs of others– a recognition of the vulnerability of self and others;
- * provide members of the school community with the opportunity to:
 - praise and reach out to God,
 - experience stillness and quiet,
 - respond to Christian language and symbolism,
 - experience a variety of forms of prayer and meditation. These might include: praise, seeking forgiveness, asking of behalf of self and others and quiet reflection,
- * help pupils begin to understand the nature and purpose of worship and to
- * provide a foundation for a mature understanding and practice of worship in the future.

Structure

This part of the policy needs to draw attention to how worship is organised, ie

- * Pattern throughout the week - whole school, class, keystone group,
- * Leadership and participation by the children,
- * Provision of time,
- * Where it will take place.

Planning

The content and methodology of collective worship should be varied and there should be evidence of this in planning.

How should worship be planned?

- * observing the cycle of the Church's year and selecting themes appropriate to this and the pupils' aptitude and ability
- * how worship reflects the Anglican heritage, ie
 - using the Bible as a source book for inspiration and learning;
 - reflecting upon Christian symbols and their use in worship (for example, bread, wine, chalice, cross and crucifix are symbols which lead to an understanding of the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection);
 - observing the cycle of the Church's year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost. This, with holy days, can provide the framework for a changing pattern of school worship;
 - participating in the regularity and set order of Anglican worship. This recognises the central significance of the Eucharist while acknowledging the variety of other forms of worship, which may be decided locally in order to match, as far as possible, pupils' experience in school and church. There could be special services from time to time, eg welcoming new pupils to school or acknowledging the departure of older pupils;
 - using collects as a focus for short acts of worship in small groups
 - identifying a collection or prayers, hymns and psalms which creates a framework for worship within the school;
 - learning traditional responses and prayers which express the essential beliefs of Christians throughout the ages;
 - providing opportunity to discover the value of meditation and silence within the context of Christian worship;
 - recognising that the Anglican Church has a strong commitment to ecumenism which may be expressed through the range of visitors who are invited to lead or attend collective worship;
 - experiencing the bond of community which encompasses gender, age, race and religious opinions. This could be expressed through the range of visitors who are invited to lead or attend collective worship.
 - sharing a commitment to dialogue with other faiths, shown in the welcome offered to all pupils and the celebration of shared values and beliefs;

Recording

All acts of worship should be planned, recorded (see planning/recording sheets – appendix (1)) and there should be evaluation during any week of how the worship was received. This could be achieved by asking a child, teacher or class to reflect on the worship and these evaluations could be a part of the ongoing monitoring of collective worship at half-termly/termly staff meetings.

Approaches

Collective Worship is first and foremost for the educational benefit of pupils. It is a shared activity which allows a variety of responses.

1. Worship should provide an opportunity for those of any religious faith or none to focus and reflect on stimuli which allow the human spirit to respond with integrity.
2. Worship in church schools should also offer the opportunity to explore, reflect upon and respond to the mystery and meaning of the Christian faith. It should be an inclusive activity which seeks to build links with all dimensions of the curriculum. It should include the traditional elements of Christian worship; prayers, hymns, Bible reading, to which pupils are given the opportunity to respond.

Monitoring

The collective worship will be monitored by:

1. Discussion at staff and governor meetings (minutes to be kept with the collective worship records). This discussion will include:
 - * Review of content and methodology;
 - * Suitability for age, aptitude and ability, variety of styles, groupings, leadership;
 - * Links to curriculum and classroom experience;
 - * Resources and budget;
 - * Inset
2. Review of job description and role of collective worship co-ordinator
3. Attendance at worship by foundation governors for monitoring purposes,
4. Are the requirements of law being met?

Use the following sample policy as a starting point for reviewing your own school collective worship policy. For each section of the policy suggestions are made, use the space in the boxes to adapt each section to reflect the practice in your school.

This Policy has been drawn up by the governors of the school in consultation with the headteacher, worship co-ordinator and other members of staff.

Legal requirements (adapt as appropriate)

(Name of School) is a (VC/VA) Church of England (Primary/Secondary) School

As such it has a Trust Deed which states that worship should be ‘in accordance with the principles and practices of the Church of England’.

In accordance with legal requirements (School Standards & Framework Act 1998) an act of collective worship, taking account of the age, aptitude and background of pupils, is provided daily for all pupils except those withdrawn by parents. The school expects that withdrawal will only be made following discussions with the headteacher, followed by written confirmation of withdrawal. The school has a system of suitable supervision for children withdrawn from acts of worship. In a controlled school, staff have the right to withdraw from the act of collective worship. In an aided school the staff are expected to attend the act of collective worship.

Rationale

Insert school mission/ethos statement and a sentence that demonstrates the partnership between the conduct and content of school worship and the Christian ethos of the school.

Because we aim for acts of worship to be inclusive of all pupils there is an expectation that all pupils will be present. Careful planning and preparation ensure that there are clear learning intentions for pupils. Collective worship is first and foremost for the educational benefit of all pupils. It is a shared activity that allows for a variety of responses, and provides an opportunity for those of any religious faith or none to focus and reflection stimuli which allow the human spirit to respond with integrity. The school is committed to respect the integrity of the religious communities from which pupils come.

The school will also offer the opportunity to explore, reflect upon and respond to the mystery and meaning of the Christian faith.

Aims of Collective Worship

At School Collective Worship aims to: (select aims from the list below and add aims that are appropriate for your school)

- Strengthen and support the school community and celebrate each unique individual member made in the image of God.
- Give expression to, reaffirm and practise the values of the school community
- Allow reflection and response to fundamental questions of life and those things that are of eternal concern and value to human beings
- Celebrate and give thanks for achievements within the school, local and international community and occasions of significance, including festivals
- Contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- Foster and enable a concern for the needs of others – a recognition of the vulnerability of self and others
- Provide members of the school community with the opportunity to:
 - Praise and reach out to God
 - Experience stillness and quiet
 - Respond to Christian language and symbolism
 - Experience a variety of forms of prayer and meditation. These might include: praise, seeking forgiveness, asking on behalf of self and others, and quiet reflection
 - Helping pupils being to understand the nature and purpose of worship and to
 - Provide a foundation for a mature understanding and practice of worship in the future

Structure

In School, worship is organised in the following way:

Leadership, Grouping, Time, Place, Participation by children

Planning

In planning worship regard is given to: (select statements which reflect your school practice and add your own if necessary)

- Observing the cycle of the church's year and selecting themes appropriate to this and the pupils' aptitude and ability (see Appendix)
- How worship reflects the Anglican heritage, ie
 - Using the Bible as a source book for inspiration and learning;
 - Reflecting upon Christian symbols and their use in worship (for example, bread, wine, chalice, cross and crucifix are symbols which lead to an understanding of the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection);
 - Observing the cycle of the Church's year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost.
 - Participating in the regularity and set order of Anglican worship. This recognises the central significance of the Eucharist while acknowledging the variety of other forms of worship, which may be decided locally in order to match, as far as possible, pupils' experience in school and church.

There could be special services from time to time, eg welcome new pupils to school or acknowledging the departure of older pupils;

- Using collects as a focus for short acts of worship in small groups;
- Identifying a collection of prayers, hymns and psalms which creates a framework for worship within the school;
- Learning traditional responses and prayers which express the essential beliefs of Christians throughout the ages;
- Providing opportunity to discover the value of meditation and silence within the context of Christian worship;
- Recognising that the Anglican Church has a strong commitment to ecumenism which may be expressed through the range of visitors who are invited to lead or attend collective worship;
- Experience the bond of community which encompasses gender, age, race and religious opinions.

Linking with the broad dimensions of the curriculum;

- Creating an atmosphere for worship by the use of appropriate music, visual foci and symbols
- Using the whole range of creative arts to appeal to the pupils' imagination.

Recording and Evaluation

All acts of worship are planned and recorded, and there is an evaluation during every week to see how worship was received. This is achieved by asking a child, teacher or class to reflect on the worship, and these evaluations are part of the ongoing monitoring or collective worship at staff meetings. At School all acts of worship are planned and recorded. This is achieved by.....

Monitoring

The collective worship will be monitored by:

1. Discussion at staff and governor meetings (minutes to be kept with the records). This discussion will include:
 - Review of content and methodology;
 - Suitability for age, aptitude and ability, variety of styles, groupings, leadership;
 - Links to curriculum and classroom experience;
 - Resources and budget;
 - INSET.
2. Review of job description and role of collective worship co-ordinator;
3. Attendance at worship by foundation governors for monitoring purposes;
4. Asking are the requirements of law being met?

Visitors

Visitors leading an act of worship must be given precise instructions concerning age and ability of pupils, purpose of occasion and appropriate delivery (content and material used). The Board of Education is able to offer helpful advice on visitors in school. It may be useful to consider the following questions:

- What are the visitor's connections with the school, eg parent, charity representative, clergy from other denomination, adviser, colleague?
- What brought the visitor to school, eg did the visitor approach the school or vice versa?
- Why has the school chosen the visitor to lead this particular act of worship?
- What is the aim and content of the visitor's act of worship?
- Does it fit into the overall scheme for Collective Worship?
- Does the visitor's method, approach or style maintain the respect for, and is it sensitive to, all those involved in worship?
- Will the school prepare beforehand or follow up after the visit with the pupils?
- Has the visitor been recommended by colleagues, Board of Education etc?
- What does the school hope to achieve by having the visitor lead and act of worship?
- What effect will the visitor have on the pupils spiritually, educationally, emotionally?