

MIRRORS AND DOORS

Collective Worship in Lancashire Schools

Foreword from the SACRE

The Lancashire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is pleased to be able to offer this updated guidance on collective worship to its schools for 2021.

Our intention is to support schools in providing all pupils with an opportunity to worship through engaging in relevant and meaningful experiences. Collective worship is one of the main ways to contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

We believe that collective worship offers opportunities to explore issues of interest and concern to the school community that cannot be afforded attention through the basic curriculum. It is a way of celebrating the school as a community and enhancing its ethos.

The Lancashire SACRE reminds its schools and Sixth Form Colleges that they are required to:

- Ensure that legal requirements for collective worship are met
- Provide collective worship time, which is distinctive from the curriculum
- Produce a policy statement and implement a collective worship programme in line with the guidance offered by this document.
- Be familiar with the Lancashire guidelines on requests for parental withdrawal.

Mirrors and Doors

The title 'Mirrors and Doors' reflects the purpose of collective worship as an opportunity given to pupils to reflect on spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences from where they are. Through this they may or may not choose to enter the door opened to them by the collective experience of worship.

CONTENTS

Page 1 - Foreword from SACRE

Page 3 - Section One: Collective Worship in the life of the school

1. Why collective worship?
2. Legal Requirements
3. The nature of collective worship:
 - a) What is collective worship?
 - b) Invitational
 - c) Wholly or Mainly of a Broadly Christian Character
 - d) Inclusive
 - e) Assembly v collective worship
4. Links with the curriculum
5. Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development and British Values

Page 11 - Section Two: The Management of Collective Worship

Headteachers
Governors
The Role of the Co-ordinator or Team
Withdrawals
Determinations
A Policy for schools

Page 17 - Section Three: Developing Collective Worship

Climate for collective worship
Classroom collective worship
Planning, Long and Medium Term
Monitoring and Evaluation

Page 25 - Section Four: Delivering Collective Worship

Planning an Act of collective worship
Styles and Strategies for use in collective worship
Guidelines for using Visitors in collective worship

Page 33 - Appendices:

NB – All of the appendix files are contained as separate files on the website

- A. Example of a collective worship Policy
- B. Resources
- C. List of themes for primary RE
- D. Suggested programme of themes in action for primary RE
- E. Suggested programme of themes in action for secondary RE
- F. Long Term Planning Grid
- G. A Planning, Recording and Evaluation Pro-forma for a Week
- H. An Act of collective worship Pro-forma
- I. Monitoring Pro-forma
- J. 32 ideas about collective worship from RE Today (2011)
- K. Where is God? A visual resource to demonstrate an assembly idea (2011)

Page 33 - Acknowledgements

Section One:

Collective Worship in the Life of the School

Why Collective Worship?

Schools have a legal duty to provide collective worship. But even without this requirement, there are many reasons for making space in every busy day for pupils and teachers to think about and reflect upon what is worth most in life.

Collective worship offers a uniquely special time where a school can nourish a sense of community and explore its shared values. It's a time to 'catch the life' of the school and feel its pulse. It is an opportunity to reflect on the fundamental questions of life and to celebrate things of worth.

Collective worship provides a focus for personal development and reflection where everyone's contributions are celebrated.

Here, in 'Mirrors and Doors', we invite all pupils to engage in **reflection** on what really matters in life (Mirrors) and to **enter into** worship if they wish (Doors). The 'Mirrors and Doors' will be clearly marked, **but using them will be invitational, never a requirement.**

Collective worship contributes to the ethos of the school and to the spiritual well-being of pupils when it:

- offers space and stillness for pupils to reflect on the values the school seeks to live by;
- fosters a spirit of community in the school, year group or class;
- explores the wonders and worries of the world;
- celebrates achievement and special times;
- helps pupils to reflect on what it means to be human;
- enables the joys and sorrows of those present to be shared and reflected upon;
- enables those present to share concerns, interests and reflections;
- provides alternative views of life and lifestyles for pupils to consider;
- help pupils ponder on the many ultimate questions life presents;
- offers insights into religious and other beliefs and commitments in an open way;
- shares what unites the community and acknowledges and celebrates diversity;
- provides opportunities for believers to come close to God;
- provides opportunities for all to reflect on the direction of their lives;
- offers opportunities for pupils to create their own 'space for the spirit'.

The Legal Requirements

The Education Reform Act of 1988 and Circular 1/94 set out the law regarding collective worship. The following bullet points give a concise summary of these requirements:

1. All maintained schools and academies, whether or not they have a religious character, are required to have daily acts of collective worship and to teach religious education as part of their curriculum. Schools with a religious character provide denominational collective worship in line with their foundation and are not subject to

- the requirement to provide 'wholly or mainly broadly Christian' acts of collective worship.
2. All pupils (5 - 18) are required to take part in an act of collective worship on each school day. Pupils in special schools should take part in an act of collective worship as far as it is practicable. Children under the age of 5 are not required to take part in an act of collective worship but those in reception classes should be included.
 3. Collective worship may be held at any time during the school day.
 4. Separate acts of collective worship may be arranged for different age or school groupings. Not all acts of worship need to be at whole school level.
 5. Collective worship must take place on school premises, but governors of aided and religious foundation schools may on special occasions arrange collective worship elsewhere.
 6. In a community or non- religious foundation school the majority of acts of collective worship must be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. That is, the worship must reflect the **broad traditions** of Christian belief without being distinctive of any one Christian denomination (see The nature of collective worship below).
 7. Collective worship must be appropriate having regard to the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of the pupils.
 8. Where worship which is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character is inappropriate, the headteacher and governors may apply to the local SACRE for permission to arrange worship for all or some of the pupils which is not wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character (See Determinations).
 9. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship (See Withdrawals).
 10. Teachers cannot be compelled to lead or participate in collective worship, but it is the responsibility of the headteacher and governing body to ensure that it takes place.

The nature of Collective Worship

a) What is Collective Worship?

'Corporate worship' is the term applied to worship activities within a faith community, where all the adherents share belief, are committed to their faith and worship in the same fashion. This is impossible in a school setting, which is an educational institution, not a faith community. Even within schools of a religious character, there may be pupils of varying beliefs and none. It is impossible therefore, to expect all pupils to 'worship as one body'. Hence the term 'collective', whereby those with or without a faith commitment are

gathered together and given the opportunity of making a reflective response. This is 'worship' in its broadest sense and is related to the derivation of the term in Old English, 'to shape worth'.

DFE Circular 1/94 (which the DfE stated in 2011 that it would not be reviewing), section 50 says:

“Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values and reinforce positive attitudes.”

The term 'worship' is not defined by the legislation governing collective worship in schools but circular 1/94 talks of 'participation and response'. This cannot be compelled and the individual must feel sufficiently motivated to make a response. However, the law does not demand that our pupils are 'compelled' to worship, but that they are given the opportunity to do so.

b, Invitational

Participation in collective worship cannot be compelled, and involvement must **be invitational** in nature. Pupils must be provided with an opportunity to reflect and respond to God (if appropriate for them) but should not be instructed to do so. Pupils should not be coerced into saying prayers or singing religious songs.

This requires a sensitive use of language on behalf of the teacher especially in relation to times of prayer or reflection. The following phrases may be useful:

1. *We are now going to have a moment of silence. You may want to use this time to pray or think about God, or you may want to focus on today's theme or message.*
2. *I'm going to say a prayer, if you would like to pray please say the words with me in your head. If you do not want to pray, please think carefully about today's message and what it means to you.*
3. *Christians have a special prayer about today's theme. Please listen to it and make it your prayer if you want to.*
4. *I'm going to tell you this story which has meaning for many people including Humanists. We can all reflect on what this story says/ you might find something in it which is helpful to you.*
5. *We are sharing this Hadith which is important to many Muslims so we can understand what it says and let it affect us in a way that is right for us.*
6. *Now we can use this quiet time to reflect, meditate or pray according to our own beliefs.*

c, Wholly or Mainly of a Broadly Christian Character

In any one term, the acts of worship should be of a 'wholly, mainly or broadly' Christian character. It is character, not content that is the requirement, and the teachings, beliefs and stories of Christianity, like those from other major faiths, present themes which will be of interest or concern and relevance to all. In selecting 'wholly' Christian material or 'mainly' Christian material or any other material, it is important that schools ensure that acts of worship are 'inclusive'. It must be remembered that it is not the role of the school to nurture religious faith. This kind of collective worship offers opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Pupils are not required to follow Christian worship practices, and DFE Circular 1/94 (s.63) states that acts of worship do not need to contain only Christian material, though some elements relating 'specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ' are to be included in the programme.

During a term a school may have acts of worship which include elements which are wholly Christian, those that are broadly in the tradition of another faith, for instance when celebrating a festival such as Divali or Eid, and some where elements are drawn from a number of different faiths.

Christian beliefs centre on such themes as the creation, the fall, the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the kingdom of God. From these themes spring broad areas of spiritual and moral concern to all people: ecology, pollution, stewardship of resources, prejudice, cruelty, war and alienation, justice, love, charity, sacrifice, saying sorry, honesty, peace and harmony. Assemblies that raise these issues provide opportunities for 'broadly Christian' collective worship as well as stimulating all young people to reflect, to feel awe, to learn to be still and to consider the direction and meaning of their lives.

d, Inclusion

Collective Worship is for everyone. All must gain from it regardless of individual faith, views, or beliefs.

All pupils should be given the 'opportunity' to worship and collective worship must be appropriate to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils. In order to achieve 'inclusive collective worship', it is important to ensure that:

- the focus relates to the experiences, concerns or interest of all pupils present
- difference and diversity are explored and celebrated
- prayers, hymns and songs are carefully selected
- pupils are not coerced into saying prayers or singing hymns or religious songs
- there are times of stillness or silence where pupils can pray or reflect in accord with their own beliefs
- pupils are invited to listen to the words of a prayer and reflect on it. If they agree with what is being said, they may join in or say 'Amen'

- at times, the focus will centre on the traditions, practices and celebrations of a faith/s represented in the school or local community
- pupils are affirmed in their faith or non-faith stance
- pupils' needs are taken into account in the planning and delivery
- use inclusive language
- pupils should not be withdrawn from collective worship for any reason other than it is the wish of their parents.

e, Assembly v Collective Worship

Schools may assemble for a number of reasons, other than to hold an act of collective worship. It is understood however, that the term 'assembly' is commonly used to indicate the occasion of an act of collective worship. Whichever terminology is used, it is important here to clarify the differences and indicate good practice:

1. Schools will often use assembly time for administrative purposes as well as providing an act of collective worship. If this must be done, then ensure that there is a clear division between the giving out of notices or certificates and the act of worship.
2. It is a good idea to deal with administrative affairs before the act of worship rather than at the end. In this way, pupils leave the assembly with the collective worship fresh in their minds, allowing more reflection time before their lessons begin.
3. Separate the administrative affairs and the worship by:
 - a) playing some music
 - b) lighting a candle
 - c) changing the lighting
 - d) changing personnel
 - e) sharing a moment of silence
 - f) revealing or setting up a focal point
 - g) singing a song / hymn
 - h) reading a poem or prayer or extract from literature or scripture
4. Avoid complaints and reprimands which will destroy what you are trying to achieve in collective worship. Deal with these at some other time, even if it means assembling the school twice in one day.
5. Hymn practice does not necessarily constitute an act of collective worship. To combine the two, select an aspect of the hymn or song to expand and explore, remembering to identify its relevance to pupils. This does not have to take more than a few minutes. Offer some time for reflection.
6. Achievement assemblies where pupils receive their awards or certificates do not necessarily constitute an act of collective worship. To combine the two, select a quality or value which has been necessary for a pupil/s to achieve their award. Explore this and relate it to all pupils and offer some time for reflection.

Contribution of the curriculum to Collective Worship

Drawing from all areas of the curriculum, and feeding into them, is sound educational practice and provides valuable experiences in collective worship. There will be times when all pupils can gain by reflecting on the work done by particular classes or individuals. There will be times when collective worship will enrich classwork through its consideration of subject matter from different perspectives.

In particular, religious education, personal, social, health and economic education, citizenship, music and English may have much to contribute or gain from collective worship. However, the time must not be used as a vehicle to deliver religious education or any other curriculum subject. Collective worship time is distinct from curriculum time. In the curriculum subjects the emphasis is on study and learning, while in collective worship the focus is much more on reverence, celebration and reflection or prayer.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development and British Values

Schools should have a policy on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) which will offer guidance on providing opportunities during collective worship.

Effective provision for SMSC will make a positive contribution to pupils' understanding of the fundamental **British Values** of democracy, individual liberty, the rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance.

To ensure collective worship provides opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development it should be varied, address a wide variety of themes and topics, use a wide variety of stimuli and resources and provide pupils with the opportunity to 'respond' on their own level.

Spiritual development is best fostered when pupils are provided with opportunities to:

- Use all of their senses
- Use their imagination in creative ways
- Consider what is good about life
- Consider fundamental questions about life
- Develop self-knowledge and identity
- Reflect quietly
- Explore relationships
- Foster a sense of awe, wonder and mystery
- Express their thoughts, emotions, beliefs and feelings
- Explore feelings of transcendence
- Appreciate silence as a form of communication.

The following table provides exemplar definitions for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and shows how acts of collective worship may provide appropriate opportunities for such development to take place.

Spiritual development is concerned with helping pupils develop an awareness of self and an awareness of all that is not self. It

relates to exploring the complexity, wonder, purpose and meaning of life and developing a sensitivity to change and suffering.

Lancashire SACRE Guidelines for Collective Worship

Collective worship promotes **spiritual development** by providing opportunities for pupils to:

Moral development is concerned with helping pupils to consider, respond and make judgements and choices relating to matters of right and wrong, values and behaviour.

Social development is concerned with helping pupils to develop their own sense of identity, worth and belonging, in the context of promoting and encouraging positive relationships and encouraging individual and communal responsibility.

Cultural development is concerned with pupils' growing awareness and appreciation of the diversity and richness in their own culture and others.

- contemplate and reflect on their own beliefs, values and principles (religious or otherwise)
- gain knowledge of and respect for different people's faiths, feelings and beliefs.
- reflect on life's fundamental questions as they learn about the world round them
- develop imaginative, and creative thinking e.g. by responding to the aesthetic
- explore a sense of the sacred

Collective worship promotes **moral development** by providing opportunities for pupils to:

- recognise questions of right and wrong, and good and evil and reflect on how these may relate to their own lives
- develop understanding of the reasons why people behave in certain ways
- Understand the consequences of their own behaviour and actions so that they can make informed moral choices
- Encourage a respect for others and care for the environment.

Collective worship promotes **social development** by providing opportunities for pupils to:

- Consider their place within an inclusive community with a shared ethos and values
- celebrate special times together and individual talents and achievements.
- reflect on the need to live harmoniously together in a diverse world

Collective worship promotes **cultural development** by providing opportunities for pupils to:

- experience aspects of their own and others' cultural and religious traditions through stories, music and celebrations
- experience what visitors have to say and do with regard to their own cultural traditions
- reflect on the richness in diversity and how this has a positive effect on their own lives

Section Two

The Management of Collective Worship

Headteachers

Headteachers should:

- be aware of their legal responsibilities in regard to collective worship, taking account of the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988, Education Act 1996 and the School Standards Framework Act 1998
- take account of the policy and guidelines for collective worship issued by Lancashire County Council
- ensure that governors and staff are informed and receive training to enable the school to implement statutory requirements and take full account of the Authority's guidelines on collective worship
- ensure that the legal requirements for collective worship are met and that a daily act of collective worship takes place. Headteachers may designate the responsibility for managing collective worship to a co-ordinator or team (see the Role of the Co-ordinator).
- through the school brochure or prospectus, inform parents of their child's entitlement to a daily act of collective worship and their right to withdraw their child if they wish (see Withdrawals). This statement should be distinct from the statement on Religious Education
- if necessary, apply to SACRE for a Determination (see Determinations).

Governors

Governors should:

- be aware of their legal responsibilities in regard to collective worship, taking account of the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988, Education Act 1996 and the School Standards Framework Act 1998
- take account of the guidelines for collective worship issued by Lancashire County Council
- in a Voluntary Aided or Controlled School, also take account of the School Trust Deeds and guidance offered by the Diocese. They are also responsible for appointing a Section 48 Inspector for the inspection of collective worship and should consult the Diocese or appropriate faith foundation authority on this matter
- be aware of any documentation relating to collective worship, produced by the school on their behalf
- ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to a daily act of collective worship;
- monitor and review the provision and development of collective worship as part of the whole school development or improvement plan
- if necessary, consider Determinations (see Determinations)
- ensure that statements about collective worship in the school brochure or prospectus are distinct from statements relating to Religious Education.

The Role of the Collective Worship Co-ordinator or Team

Schools should appoint a person to co-ordinate the organisation and delivery of collective worship to ensure that the statutory provision offers pupils worthwhile experiences.

Some schools may establish a planning group or team who share the responsibility for co-ordinating collective worship. Such a team with a lead co-ordinator, might also include the headteacher, governors, staff, local clergy, representatives of local faith groups and pupils. The planning team needs to be of a manageable size and consideration needs to be given to the frequency and objectives of its meetings.

The role of the collective worship Co-ordinator / Team will vary depending upon the individual needs of the school. In some cases, they will be solely responsible but may at times involve other members of staff or professionals.

Duties may include the following:

- assisting the governors and headteacher to carry out their legal responsibilities with regard to collective worship
- creating a policy for collective worship
- reporting to the governors and headteacher on matters of concern and development
- communicating with members of the school community regarding the significance and content of acts of collective worship
- ensuring that there is a development plan for collective worship which may at times form part of the whole school development plan
- organising / leading training
- developing and maintaining documentation for the effective planning, recording, monitoring and evaluating of acts of collective worship.
- being responsive to the needs and views of other members of the school community
- buying resources, providing access and advising staff on their use, including books, posters, visual aids, artefacts and music
- organising visitors
- long and short-term planning, planning themes and organising rotas
- preparing and displaying termly and weekly planning sheets
- ensuring that a record of acts of collective worship is maintained
- monitoring collective worship.

Withdrawal of Pupils

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from attending an act or acts of collective worship. Parents should make their wishes known to the headteacher who will arrange that any pupils who are withdrawn will be supervised appropriately during the acts of collective worship.

Schools should ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from collective worship are aware of the programme and its intention to be open to and respectful of all

Lancashire SACRE Guidelines for Collective Worship

pupils' personal beliefs. They should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish. The school may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents. It might be appropriate to ask parents to observe an act of collective worship as on occasions withdrawal will be requested through a lack of understanding.

The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents (or pupils themselves if they are aged 18 or over), and it should be made clear whether it is from all or some specific acts of collective worship. No reasons need be given, though parents may make arrangements for alternative religious worship to take place for their child provided that such arrangements can be made at no additional cost to the school and provided the effect would not be to replace the statutory non-denominational collective worship in the school (see Determinations below).

Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from collective worship without influence from the school, although a school should ensure parents or carers are informed of this right and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the collective worship programme. In this way, parents can make an informed decision. Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected,

If parent and the school agree that the pupil should be allowed to remain physically present during the collective worship but not take part in it, nothing in the law prevents this.

Pupils should not be withdrawn so that they may participate in other activities. Schools have a duty to supervise pupils who are withdrawn from collective worship, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on school premises.

Determinations

The Education Reform Act of 1988 (sections 6, 7, 9 12) entitles schools to apply to the SACRE for a 'Determination' if, in the opinion of the headteacher, the requirements to have 'broadly Christian' collective worship is inappropriate for either the whole or particular groups within school. A 'Determination' will allow the school to adjust the legal requirements and allow worship of a different character to take place.

Applying for a Determination:

1. The headteacher consults with the governors to determine the extent to which the requirement for collective worship to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' is not appropriate for the school or groups of pupils within the school. It is also advised that the matter is brought to the attention of the school's link adviser or the adviser responsible for RE and collective worship.
2. The headteacher and the governors consult with parents.
3. The number of withdrawals from broadly Christian collective worship should be considered.
4. If a decision to seek a Determination has been reached, the headteacher must complete a standard proforma and submit it to the SACRE; outlining the reasons why a Determination is being sought, what the alternative worship will involve and give

Lancashire SACRE Guidelines for Collective Worship

evidence to support this. The application may relate either to a clearly defined group or to the whole school.

5. The SACRE will consider the application for a Determination and may request the headteacher to present the application in person to clarify any issues and answer any questions.
6. In considering the application, the SACRE will take account of the views of
 - a) the Officer representing the Director of Education
 - b) the family background of the pupils concerned.
7. The SACRE may accept or reject an application but cannot modify it. Each constituent group on the SACRE is allowed one vote, with the decision being reached on a majority.
8. The SACRE will notify the headteacher and the governors of its decision in writing.
9. A determination will last for 5 years from the date of its effect, after which time it must be reviewed.
10. Where such a determination is made in respect of all or some of the pupils in the school, daily collective worship must still be provided for them. Where a determination has been granted in respect of a class or description of pupils of a particular faith or religion, the alternative collective worship may be provided for those pupils as a whole. The proposed alternative worship will be educational in nature and affirm the values of the school community. It will be nondenominational and will not attempt to indoctrinate or evangelise.
Parents continue to have a right to withdraw their children from the collective worship.

Please note: Although Lancashire County Council encourages and supports 'inclusive' acts of collective worship which should be appropriate for the whole school community, irrespective of belief, non-belief or life stance, this does not remove a school's right to apply for a Determination.

A Policy for schools

A collective worship policy should include:

- a statement concerning the status of the school (including acknowledgement of legal requirements/trust deeds and guidance documents from the local authority or Diocese)
- a definition / description of collective worship
- the aims / intentions of collective worship
- the contribution of other areas of the curriculum to collective worship
- the contribution of collective worship to other aspects of the curriculum (including cross curricular themes and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development)

Lancashire SACRE Guidelines for Collective Worship

- a statement on the management of collective worship (who is responsible and areas of responsibility)
- a statement on the organisation of collective worship (including details of pupil groupings, timings, leaders and role of visitors)
- a statement on the planning of collective worship (including the Scheme/Cycle of Themes)
- a statement on the recording, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship
- a statement on the delivery of collective worship
- information about the right of withdrawal.

As a policy needs to go before the governors *every time* it is altered/amended it may be that some of the above, e.g. the Scheme or the details regarding Leaders / Visitors, can be placed in appendices and therefore altered more conveniently as they develop. You may also wish to include in appendices: guidelines for visitors, the role of the co-ordinator / team and resource lists / inventory.

An example of a collective worship policy can be found in the appendix.

Section Three:

Developing Collective Worship

The climate for Collective Worship

Before planning for collective worship begins, some consideration should be given to the 'climate' for collective worship in the school. Firstly, this is important because pupils should see their time in collective worship as a positive, valuable experience. Secondly, so that if pupils are sufficiently stimulated and moved to do so, they can respond in a positive way, which may be considered by any one faith group or many as being 'worshipful'.

Creating a favourable climate involves developing the right attitude to and the right atmosphere for collective worship. Consideration needs to be given to:

Venue

The room or hall generally used for collective worship will be multi-functional, its main use being a classroom, dinner hall or gymnasium. Consider how you can quickly and easily 'change' the space to make it different and perhaps more special for worship. You may need to make a large space feel more inviting, secure and welcoming. With a small space, you need to consider that it might make pupils feel claustrophobic, or that their 'personal space' is being invaded.

Pupil Comfort

If pupils are expected to stand for the duration, they are likely to become restless and their ability to see what is going on at the front be affected. Sitting on the floor may be acceptable to younger pupils, but older pupils often feel it is undignified and resent having their clothes dirtied.

In many secondary schools, pupils have to carry bags and coats with them and these add to problems of attention and engagement in a confined space.

Sound Quality

The acoustics can be affected by a number of factors, including the size of the room, and its furnishings. Meeting in a gym hall or having a kitchen adjacent to where you meet also affect the quality of sound and pupils ability to hear clearly. If the collective worship is taking place in a dining hall, ask the kitchen staff to carry out 'quiet' tasks for the duration, or invite them to attend.

Ensure that all pupils can hear what is being said clearly or they will quickly disengage.

Quality of Vision

Seating arrangements can sometimes affect how clearly pupils see the leader and worship activities. Schools may need to consider changing the way seating is arranged, particularly in long halls when pupils at the back are likely to feel excluded from the activities because they cannot see clearly.

Punctuality

Pupils become restless when they are waiting for long empty minutes until all the school are assembled. If you have a large school, consider staggering the time pupils are expected to leave their classrooms to meet in the hall and open more than one entry into the hall. Ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of this factor and that they release pupils on time.

Focus for worship

Providing a focus for the collective worship activities helps to change the room from its main purpose. It should be seen as more than lighting a candle. The focus may change daily or weekly or take the form of a permanent artefact or piece of artwork on the wall. Use available display space for prayers, prose, quotations and artwork of a spiritual, reflective nature. On occasions, the focus tied to the weekly theme, may build or develop over the duration and can aid pupils' reflections.

Using an auditory signal to mark the start of worship (e.g. rain stick, singing bowl, chime bars or piece of music) can calm the atmosphere and focus the mind.

Assembly v Collective Worship

There should be a distinction between assembly and collective worship. See Section One.

Staff presence

The law safeguards teachers who do not wish to participate in acts of collective worship, but schools should consider carefully what kind of messages they are sending out if the staff do not attend collective worship.

Involving staff in leading acts of collective worship is valuable for professional development. There is often anxiety over 'performing' in front of peers, but this should be developmental. Consider addressing a class, a year group, a key stage, before addressing the whole school. This also gives staff the opportunity to be something other than a subject or a class teacher.

Pupil ownership

Involving pupils in the planning and delivery of acts of collective worship is very important. It increases motivation, promotes self-esteem, enhances skills, develops their understanding and creates further opportunities for spiritual development.

The best collective worship is often pupil led and should be a developmental process. Initially the teacher will make most of the decisions but increasingly pupils can take more initiative so that by upper KS2 they are actively involved in policy, planning and evaluation. Pupils can be involved by:

- joining the worship committee; helping staff plan the music, themes and reading etc.
- actively evaluating collective worship. Pupils could survey the school to gather ideas and views.
- Taking turns to signal the start/end of worship e.g. lighting the candle and saying a brief sentence to introduce worship.
- Taking turns to read stories, prayers or sayings; perhaps with everyone holding hands.
- Leading class worship in pairs.
- Inviting older pupils to plan and deliver worship in small teams (of 2 -4) around a theme to the whole school or another class.

A worthwhile, positive experience

Addressing issues which are meaningful and relevant to pupils, even though some elements may be challenging, will encourage them in feeling that they are being offered worthwhile, positive experiences in collective worship. However, delivering an address on the environment, for example, and using it as a stick to beat the pupils with over the state of litter in the school yard is not a positive experience! Any matters of discipline should be dealt with at another time, allowing clear reflection on the focus of the act of collective worship.

Classroom Collective Worship

Legislation provides for acts of collective worship to be held at any time of the school day and in any grouping desired by the school. Whole school assembly is not always possible because of the difficulties accommodating large numbers, but there are merits in holding year group, key stage or classroom-based acts of collective worship.

Collective worship in the classroom should not be seen as an odd five minutes to be slotted into the day at a convenient time. It should be planned for, and the same ground rules apply to it as with other acts of worship. Attempts should be made to create the right atmosphere and developing the right attitude. When meeting in the hall for collective worship, the time set aside for it is marked by the transition from classroom to hall. The walk from the class to the hall will have given the pupils time to switch mentally from “lesson mode” to “collective worship mode”. Consider ways in which this time in the classroom can be marked as ‘special’. Play some music, perform a relaxation or stilling exercise, light a candle, develop a routine or liturgy.

Collective worship in the classroom provides opportunities to:

- explore particular issues which are pertinent to the age group or curriculum
- extend the ways in which pupils respond to the stimulus. In a large gathering, the only practical responses may be reflection or prayer, but in a classroom the responses could be much more creative involving music, dance, movement, artwork, writing of prose and poetry.

Planning

To ensure quality in the curriculum, thought is given to learning outcomes, teaching and learning strategies and monitoring and evaluating success. This same rigour should apply to collective worship. In most schools, pupils will be engaged in collective worship for 10 to 20 minutes a day, which is approximately an hour or more (and in some schools probably about two hours) a week. That is more time than is allocated to some subjects in the curriculum. In a busy school week, we cannot justify ‘filling in time’ for up to two hours. Any time spent in school should provide pupils with valuable, worthwhile, learning experiences. Although it will always be right to ‘catch the moment’ and deal with something current, newsworthy, of immediate importance to the school community, we cannot ensure that we are offering quality experiences without planning.

Long Term Planning

Planning a two-year (or more) cycle of themes will actually save time and effort in the long run. When opting for a two-year cycle, it will be necessary to bear in mind continuity and progression within themes, to avoid repetition and the boredom of pupils. Using the suggested themes in the appendix, a five-year cycle of themes could be developed. As many schools now organise their collective worship around a weekly theme, a very simple, long term planning grid allowing for the maximum number of weeks in a term can be found in the appendix. This should be customised by schools to take account of the length of term and the half term break.

Lancashire SACRE Guidelines for Collective Worship

It is a good idea to begin planning as a staff team, particularly if all members of staff are given the opportunity to lead acts of collective worship.

Teachers might complete the long-term planning grid by identifying the areas for focus suggested below. Using a different coloured pen for each focus area will enable planners to see at a glance if the scheme is balanced and addresses the development of the 'whole child'.

The areas for focus are:

- Festivals normally celebrated by the school. Should any other festivals be included? This may depend on the faith backgrounds of the pupils
- Events which are significant to the school and the pupils. These might include: new beginnings, leavers' ceremony, founder's day, achievements of a famous and / or local personality, local community or charity events
- National events which pupils should be aware of and reflect on, such as World Book Day and Remembrance day
- Brainstorm the question 'If you could give one pupil a gift or quality when they leave school what would it be?' Integrate the results into the grid. Answers might include 'self esteem'
- Complete the grid by selecting themes from the suggested list in the appendix. Selected themes should address areas and opportunities that have not been fully explored or fully exploited. These themes should be relevant to the school and the school community and may address, for example, moral or social development, national, international or local culture, citizenship or PSHE.

Please note that opportunities for spiritual development should be an aspect of every act of collective worship. Attention should be given at the planning stage to ensure that pupils are given the opportunity to make a response - there needs to be a '**space for reflection**'.

Medium Term Planning

One theme can deliver a variety of foci for collective worship. It is important not to exhaust a theme, but equally important not to overlook the opportunities it may offer. The easiest way to 'break down' a theme is to brainstorm it with colleagues, selecting those aspects most suitable for promoting school issues and concerns, whilst taking account of the ages, ability and aptitudes of the pupils.

For example, a brainstorm on the theme of 'Love' might include: sacrificial love, love of one's neighbour, agape, love of possessions, hedonism, love of God, unconditional love, love of self.

Some aspects may not be considered appropriate, but others may form the basis of a week's collective worship. Future planning may use the same theme but draw on another aspect. Materials from religious and non-religious sources may be used to explore the theme.

A weekly planning, recording and evaluation pro-forma, designed for use with a weekly theme can be found in the appendix. This will need to be customised, particularly in a school where, for example, separate key stage, or classroom acts of collective worship take place on the same day. The intention of this pro-forma is to provide an administratively lightweight framework for leaders to plan, record and evaluate. At a glance leaders will be able to see that all legal requirements are met and that there is continuity and progression in terms of the activities and resources used.

There is space on the pro-forma for the overall aim of the weekly theme to be identified but it may be appropriate for each leader to identify their own aim for their individual exploration of the theme. The content should be identified in brief, but specific resources should be named so that they are not used repeatedly. One-word answers or code letters or symbols will be sufficient to identify that opportunities for spiritual, moral, social or cultural development will be provided, or that a particular faith or cross curricular theme or dimension will be addressed. These aspects form the 'planning' of the acts of collective worship or assemblies.

The 'evaluation' column gives the opportunity to record what actually happened - 'according to plan'; 'story too complex'; 'children responded well'; 'opportunity to address citizenship arose'; etc. The evaluation need not be lengthy but completing this means that the planning sheet has also become a recording sheet. This will be a valuable tool in effective monitoring and planning for future provision.

Short Term Planning

The weekly 'planning, recording and evaluating pro-forma', described in 'medium term planning' may be all you need. However, leaders may find the 'An Act of collective worship Pro-forma' in the appendix useful.

More guidance on planning individual acts of collective worship is given in Section Four of this document.

Monitoring and Evaluation

There are two kinds of evaluation which are important for collective worship.

The first is **self-review of delivery**. All leaders of collective worship should be reflecting on their own practice and identifying opportunities to improve. Being open to evaluative ideas from colleagues and pupils is also helpful.

The second type of evaluation is concerned with **reflecting on outcomes**.

In the first instance, monitoring the provision and quality of collective worship will be the responsibility of the co-ordinator or worship team. A report will then need to go to both the headteacher and the governors. In a community school, it is the headteacher who has the

overall responsibility to provide collective worship, but in an aided or voluntary controlled school, it is the responsibility of the governors.

In reaching a decision on the quality of collective worship, the monitoring process will need to take account of:

- examples of acts of collective worship from each type or grouping
- comments from teachers regarding the support they receive, and whether their needs for training or resources have been met
- comments from pupils on their involvement and reactions to the experiences offered
- comments from other members of the school community or visitors on their perceptions of the collective worship experience
- documentation for collective worship, which should be current and reflect practice. It should include a policy statement, and evidence of planning and recording
- input from visitors as to whether this was appropriate to the identified aims in the collective worship policy
- resources in terms of leaders, materials, artefacts, visual aids, etc.
- views of parents as part of a questionnaire

An example of a monitoring pro-forma can be found in the appendix.

Evaluating the current position and determining the next steps for developing collective worship follows the monitoring process.

Section Four

Delivering Collective Worship

Delivering an Act of Collective Worship

Once a theme for the week has been selected, the following process may be helpful in planning individual acts of worship:

- Select one aspect of the theme to focus on and develop
- What is the point or the aim?
- What strategies and resources are available and are most appropriate?
- How can this be related to the experiences of the pupils?
- How can the pupils be involved?
- What opportunity will be planned for pupils to make a response? (Could this be considered as providing the opportunity for a 'worshipful response'?)
- How will you close?

Remember to:

- Check planning sheets to ensure other leaders are not exploring the same aspect of the theme
- Set up or add to the focal point
- Complete a recording / evaluation pro-forma

There are several effective **models** which support planning for collective worship. Schools might like to develop their own format or model.

This might include:

1. A **gathering** to mark the beginning of this special time and awaken interest
2. An **engagement** session which focuses on a particular story, article, artefact or message
3. A **response** which invites pupils to reflect, consider and ponder on the engagement.
4. A **sending out** where pupils are challenged to feed the experience into their lives.

An individual pro-forma for a single act of collective worship which follows this model can be found in the appendix.

Styles and Strategies for use in Collective Worship

Any styles and strategies used in a classroom situation can be applied in acts of collective worship. Pupils are likely to come from a mixture of faith and non-faith backgrounds and varying the approaches we use provides pupils with a wide variety of experiences. It is also important to vary the approaches so that pupils do not become bored with the same routine and disengage. Using a variety of styles and strategies enriches the stimulus material and so makes the opportunity for response more likely.

The following is not an exhaustive list, but it may encourage leaders to try something new. As in a lesson, a particular strategy should only be used if it actually enables pupils to reach the intended outcome, and overuse will render it ineffective.

Artefacts

There are rules of respect and sensitivity to observe when using artefacts, but they are excellent windows into a faith. Use them as you would in the classroom – to stimulate interest, to provoke questions, to illustrate an aspect of faith, to provide a sensory experience. An artefact may provide a focus for worship, but they should not be used only as a 'display item' without pupils understanding what it is and its significance.

Bible / Sacred Text

Looking at the Bible or other sacred text, exploring its significance to believers, may be the focus for acts of worship or assembly. At times it will be useful to read directly from the text and at other times it may be appropriate to retell a story in your own words. It is useful to explore concepts and issues found in the Bible and other sacred text which have some relevance, relationship or impact on pupils' lives today.

Buzz Groups / Pairs

Allowing pupils to talk to each other in assembly / collective worship gives every pupil the opportunity to participate. This may require patience if you have never tried it before, but once the skills and the process have been learned and practised it is a very effective strategy.

Give pupils only 2 – 3 minutes to talk about a given subject (favourite things, why they like their best friend, who they turn to in times of trouble etc.) Feedback will include obvious answers which you can supplement. Their experiences provide the bridge to their understanding of the concept you are exploring.

Current News

As you read the newspapers cut out and preserve 'gems' for the future. If you are addressing a current issue use a video clip (BBC's Newsround) or newspaper cutting.

Remember:

- you should select a piece that can be easily read, understood, talked about.
- you will need time to think it through
- ask yourself: 'Why do I want to share this with my pupils?' - your aim
- be aware that your selection may or may not directly affect your pupils
- introduce the article with a general chat about what is happening

Lancashire SACRE Guidelines for Collective Worship

- focus on the article read / show / talk about
- encourage reflection by asking for their impressions. For example: What would be their response in a similar situation? What do they think will / should happen next? Who else should be involved? Use question and answer technique or as you speak, write up questions on OHT, for the pupils to discuss in pairs.
- if you have given yourself enough time, you may be able to add another dimension by using a reading / quote / religious teaching to further explore or reflect on the issue.

Discussion Groups / Pairs

This works best with upper KS2 and above, in year or class group assemblies. Give pupils 3 - 5 minutes and visit each group. They can discuss issues such as the world we live in, what matters to me, forgiveness means... etc. The discussion itself and / or the points raised may constitute a worship / 'reflection time'.

Everyday Objects

Using ordinary everyday objects as visual aids can be particularly effect and it is surprising just how many opportunities there are using this particular strategy. The next time you have an assembly planning meeting with other members of staff, bring along 10 items you've picked up around the home or classroom. Consider how you would use each item separately in different acts of worship and see what you come up with. Here are three examples and a few objects for you to think about:

- a bruised apple doesn't mean it is all bad (good and bad in everyone)
- a tube of Smarties contains lots of different coloured shells, same chocolate (one world, lots of different people essentially the same)
- different sizes and shaped candles, light them and the flame is the same (we may look different, but our spirit is the same)
- safety pin; balloon; party poppers; can of drink; soap; orange.

Gifts and Talents

A visitor, a member of staff or a pupil talks or is interviewed about his / her outstanding talent. This is not an occasion to explore how we use talents, but an opportunity to recognise positive aspects of life and humanity. Qualities such as courage, determination, perseverance, or things which are good, honourable, true, noble, loving, right, pure, just, or things which bring joy, happiness, contentment and hope - all deserve acknowledgement and praise.

Guided Imagery

'Stilling' and 'Relaxation' are the skills which need building to have success with this strategy. It is extremely effective and powerful, but there are ground rules and if you have never used this strategy with a class / group before you need to be careful and do not expect too much. It can be done in whole school assembly, but pupils need to have developed the necessary skills for this is a classroom situation first.

A simple way to become still is to focus on the breath or on a sound.

Improvisation

Most pupils will be happy to volunteer at primary level, but this tends to lose its appeal with some pupils once they enter secondary school. A stock of costumes, hats, masks etc. for them to wear whilst the 'story' is told does enhance the activity. Pupils will take their 'cue' from your structured narrative.

Liturgy

Some schools feel that developing a liturgy (ritual or regular set form or order) for collective worship, ensures that what is happening can truly be described as a worship activity. It overcomes the possibility that the assembly is a mere extension of the curriculum (usually RE or PSHE), rather than an opportunity to worship.

This may be a useful approach but not all faith groups follow a "liturgy". The Quaker tradition, for example, with the emphasis on silence as a way of worship - no creeds, songs, prayers, or sermons but a freedom to respond inwardly or outwardly if so moved. It is also the accepted view of most westerners that worship is an activity directed towards God as its focus. But if we examine the Buddhist tradition, although we will see no godhead, there is a meditative approach to life, which is spiritually fulfilling.

Liturgy may suit your needs and your school, but care must be taken to ensure that your ritual or set order is inclusive of all pupils.

Music

This is not only useful for creating atmosphere when pupils are entering or leaving the assembly hall or room. It can be used to great effect to explore concepts and themes. As music is very important to much youth culture there is a danger that your audience may not consider your choice of music as contemporary. It is a good idea to involve the pupils in music choices and presentation.

Interactive Whiteboard

This is an extremely valuable piece of equipment to have in the assembly hall or classroom. Many primary schools do use it to display the words of hymns or songs to be sung. It does however present many more opportunities. The smallest illustration in a book or picture postcard can become visible to all; you can write up answers to questions or comments that the pupils have made; use it for shadow puppetry, creating on the spot poems or prayers; use it to project an image which acts as a focus throughout the assembly. Some commercial resources are now featuring presentation slides in their packs or illustrations which could be projected onto the screen.

Posters and Photographs

In small groups, posters and photos are fine. For larger groups it is worth having them digitally scanned and projected though you must be careful with copyright. Use as you would in a classroom - including: What does the image say to you? What did the artist intend? What is being said? Why is this image important and to whom? Encourage pupils to consider, reflect on and think about the issues raised through the poster.

Poetry and Prayer

Use either children's own prayers or poems or some of the good examples available. Many poems are not only humorous but address issues of concern for today.

PowerPoint

PowerPoint presentations can offer a less threatening 'introduction' to leading assemblies as you need to rely less on a 'live' presentation. Sequences of slides, together with reflective music, with an occasional word screened to encourage reflective thought can be enriching.

Pupils as leaders

Work with pupils as part of a presentation team, or as their director, or simply as their facilitator. Given ownership of what they are going to talk about / present, pupils will often respond very positively. They may feel more confident in front of their own class or year group rather than the whole school.

Puppets

Can be as elaborate or as simple as you choose to make them, including using people, paper bags and shadow puppets.

Reflection Diary

This is useful for older primary and secondary pupils in group assemblies / collective worship. Each pupil keeps a diary and writes their thoughts in it, based on a focus for reflection. This is private, only to be shared with the teacher and therefore great care needs to be taken with confidentiality and security.

(Acknowledgements to Michael Beasley '*Space for the Spirit*')

Story

Use a good story to symbolise or illustrate an issue or a point, a modern parable for example, to explore the nature of God. Stories can be told in so many ways and it is worth trying out a few methods - using role play, puppets, masks, straight reading from a book, or dramatic retelling using your own words. If you think some key words might not be understood – explain them before you begin the story.

Stunt

These should not be overdone, or the element of surprise will be lost. Set something up to come as a complete surprise. You may consider following this up with a simple reflection rather than an elongated elucidation. For example: cutting off the headteacher's tie to illustrate 'Is seeing believing?' or a member of staff "heckles" over something - dealing with conflict.

Tableau

Position the pupils in a 'frozen' position, illustrating a scene from a story or a particular situation. If you wish characters can 'unfreeze' to tell you who they are, what is happening to them, where they are and how they are feeling.

Thought for the Day

Many schools follow this format used on radio. The speaker talks about any subject on which he or she has an opinion for a brief time. It may include anecdotes, humour, pathos, but its focus is one main point and offers scope for spiritual reflection. It is a good model, particularly for the secondary school as a variety of views can be presented by speakers of any faith or non-faith stance and it is best to keep the presentation brief. As it does not compel the listener to agree with a viewpoint, it is good for inclusive acts of collective worship.

Toys

Use children's toys to help illustrate a story or to explore a particular concept. These are particularly useful for younger children, but baby toys may be equally appropriate props in the secondary school, given the right circumstances. Pupils easily relate to toys and they are good aids for understanding. For example, a jigsaw with a piece missing - life is not complete for some people without their religious belief; teddy bears - special friends you can tell anything to, like praying to God.

Visitors

See the separate guidance on 'Using Visitors in Acts of collective worship' in this section.

Video

Depending on your theme, select any video which will illustrate your point. Use 'raising sensory awareness' strategies (listening to the dialogue with covered screen or watching the scene without the sound) to focus on a particular aspect. Or select a clip which you can talk about / discuss. For example, there are numerous scenes in 'Toy Story' which cover many dimensions for SMSC development.

Your own style

Commercially produced assembly books may be just what you want and there is no shortage of these on the market and the Internet. (See the Resources list in the appendix to this document). However, as a professional teacher you will have practised the skill of public speaking every day in your classroom. It is different and sometimes daunting to stand up in front of your peers, but it is a valuable professional development exercise and is skill building for both staff and pupils who lead. This is an opportunity to use your own talents - you may be good at retelling anecdotes, or role play or playing a musical instrument and you can draw on your own interests and experiences. Like teaching, you need to feel confident about what you are doing. This requires planning, a secure knowledge base, resources to back you up, a listening audience - and no notices.

Guidelines for using Visitors in Collective Worship

Using visitors to lead an act of collective worship or as a resource or participant can enrich the experiences of pupils. As with any visitor to the school, it is advantageous to have clear guidelines so that both the school and the visitor know what to expect. It is the school's responsibility to ensure that visitors know that:

- legal requirements may affect what they have to say. For example, there should be appropriate regard for the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils and that most acts of worship should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, without being distinctive of any one denomination
- representatives of faith communities may present their faith and the practices of their faith community for pupils to consider and reflect upon. They may not impose their views on pupils or criticise the viewpoints or faith stances of others.

To assist visitors make an effective contribution to the collective worship they should be made aware of:

- policy and guidelines for collective worship
- the structure and organisation of collective worship for the day of their presentation
- the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils attending the act of collective worship
- what is expected of them in terms of theme and focus
- any rules and routines e.g. management of behaviour
- use of language
- the length of time allowed for their presentation
- where their presentation fits into the overall programme for collective worship
- the resources and equipment available to them
- any recording documents they have to complete.

Visitors should never be left alone with groups of pupils during the act of collective worship while staff are engaged elsewhere. Safeguarding procedures must be followed at all times.

Charity fund raising addresses should be limited to once or twice a year. Regular visitors should be encouraged to use a variety of styles and strategies in their presentations. Occasionally a visitor may present an address which does not form part of the school's collective worship programme and this should also be recorded in the documentation.

Appendices

See the separate documents for:

- A. Example of a collective worship Policy
- B. Resources
- C. List of themes for primary RE
- D. Suggested programme of themes in action for primary RE
- E. Suggested programme of themes in action for secondary RE
- F. Long Term Planning Grid
- G. A Planning, Recording and Evaluation Pro-forma for a Week
- H. An Act of collective worship Pro-forma
- I. Monitoring Pro-forma
- J. 32 ideas about collective worship from RE Today
- K. Where is God? A visual resource to demonstrate an assembly idea

Acknowledgements

Helen Harrison, consultant to Lancashire SACRE, for overlooking this work.

Dave Francis, RE consultant, who has developed the latest form of this guidance and resource work

Lesley Beadle Adviser for RE Today for writing the original of this document.

RE Today advisers Stephen Pett and Lat Blaylock, who undertook the revision and renewal of 'Mirrors and Doors' in 2011, and RE Today for allowing material from their courses and 'Space for Reflection' to be used in this document.

Karenza Passmore who collaborated with Lesley Beadle on some aspects of this document which originally appeared in 'Space for Reflection'.

Gill Broom's previous work as CST for Durham Local Authority

Terence Copley 'Worship Worries and Winners' upon which some styles and strategies are based.

Ben McMullen, Helen Harrison and Sue Sanderson for their helpful suggestions and proof reading.

Lesley Singleton of Ashton Community Science College, Sue Lee and the children of Morecambe Rd School for their design contributions.

NB Material from RE Today remains the copyright of RE Today, but in the form of this document is the copyright of the Lancashire SACRE.

2011 © Lancashire SACRE

These original materials were updated by Lancashire SACRE in September 2021.