

Nottinghamshire County Council
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education
Collective Worship Policy Guidance

This document is offered to schools / academies in response to a number of requests from headteachers for guidance and support in this important area of school life. Its purpose is to provide schools / governors / headteachers with some basic guidance on the provision of collective worship in order to fulfil the legal requirements. It also contains some suggestions to help in the development of quality educational collective worship.

What is collective worship?

Collective Worship is

- an **educational** activity which is inclusive, involving pupils of any faith and none as a school is a community of people holding different beliefs
- different from corporate worship, which is the shared experience of people belonging to a particular faith or denomination

What does collective worship do?

Collective worship:

- provides opportunities for pupils and staff in the school to reflect together on:
- What is important in life
- What it means to be human - exploring a range of beliefs and ideas and how the behaviour of some people gives an example of the best a human can become
- Ideas of right and wrong - applying these to current personal, school and external issues
- contributes to the way in which people live and work together as communities, both in school and beyond
- reflects ways in which people in different places and times have experienced, responded to and expressed issues of belief and behaviour.

By providing **good quality collective worship**, a school can build an inclusive ethos around shared purposes and values, which contributes significantly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of each child. In doing so it contributes to a thriving learning community and to the development of an awareness of British Values. 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.

What is best practice?

At its best collective worship in our schools will offer opportunities for the whole school community to:

- celebrate together and share common values
- develop a reflective approach to living and thinking deeply
- foster a corporate identity and build community
- affirm the individual and the community
- deepen every individual's capacity for emotional responses
- awaken empathetic responses

- look beyond the material and the physical
- share experiences and possibilities of the transcendent
- challenge and question their own thinking and the views of others.

It may include:

- Pupil's contributions
- Sacred and secular stories/readings
- Dance/drama
- Prayer/reflection/meditation/songs/hymns/music
- Artefacts/natural materials
- Visual aids/focal points
- Film/video
- Dialogue/creative silence
- Visitors

A note about Prayer

There is no specification anywhere about what collective worship should include. Where prayer is used it is important to ensure that:

- There should be no expectation that children will pray.
- Words introducing any prayer-like activity are given as an invitation rather than an instruction.
- Any invitation to pray is made for the benefit of those pupils for whom it is appropriate.
- The use of silence gives space for prayer or reflection or both.
- The words need to be owned by the speaker and/or grounded in a religious tradition
- Everyone can be included in a personal reflection on the theme or story or words of a prayer.
- There is an expectation that everyone will be still and listen to the words a prayer, without expectation of participation.

A note about best practice for quality collective worship

Schools are encouraged to ensure that there is:

- a commitment from senior leaders to the value of collective worship
- an allocation of an appropriate budget for resources and training
- thorough planning to meet the needs of the particular school, its learners and community
- educational use of religious and other material, ensuring variety in its form and presentation
- an open approach that gives pupils opportunities to respond without compromising them in any way
- every opportunity to interest and inspire pupils
- encouragement for all members of the school community to share in the planning and leading of collective worship
- an appropriate structure to indicate the beginning and end of collective worship.
- a briefing available to staff and to visitors concerning Acts of Collective Worship
- a statement on the school website on Collective worship in your school.

A note on the legal status of collective worship

Collective worship has been a legal requirement in maintained schools since 1944 and for academies and free schools, is set out in their funding agreement. It can take place at any time of the school day, in any place within the school and with any age or school grouping of learners and schools are encouraged to take advantage of the flexibility this affords.

The law requires that all registered school age pupils take part in an act of worship each day. These acts of worship must be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character” for the majority of the time. They must also be “appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils”.

Teachers do have the right to withdraw from Collective Acts of Worship.

In inviting the school community to worship, we have to be mindful of the varied backgrounds that the school community come from and it is therefore never the practice of our schools to preach to or seek to convert. The faith background of all is to be respected at all times.

A note on the DfE circular 1/94

States that collective worship is to provide **opportunities** for pupils to:

- worship God
- consider spiritual and moral issues
- explore their own beliefs
- encourage participation and response
- promote community/shared values
- reinforce positive attitudes

A note on Assembly and Worship

Collective worship is **not** the same as an assembly, though can take place in the same gathering. A school may hold any number of assemblies each week, but **must** have a daily act of collective worship. Collective worship could additionally be held in class or tutor groups for a shorter period of time.

Further support and guidance

It is intended that, over time, there will be further support and guidance provided.