

Staffordshire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education

Collective Worship Support
exploring the role of Collective Worship in the
life of a school



Did you know....

.... If a young person spends 15 minutes a day in collective worship this adds up to 47.5 hours or 9.5 school days a year and 522.5 hours or 104.5 school days by the age of 16?

From the age of 5 to 16 pupils could spend half a school year in collective worship?



A rabbi was walking down a road when he saw a man planting a tree. The rabbi asked him how many years it would take for the tree to bear fruit. The man answered that it would take seventy years. The rabbi asked, 'Are you so fit and strong that you expect to live that long and eat of its fruit?' The man answered, 'I found a fruitful world because my forefathers planted for me. So I will do the same for my children'

The Talmud



What does the law say?



- Each pupil in attendance at a community, foundation, academy or voluntary school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship
- The required collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character...without being distinctive of any particular denomination
- Schools should provide for a single act of worship for all pupils or for different age groups or in different school groups on school premises but at any time
- Not every act of worship has to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character provided that in any school term as a whole the majority comply
- Collective worship should take account of the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of the pupils
- Pupils who do not come from Christian backgrounds should be able to join in the daily act of worship
- Parents can withdraw their children wholly or partly from collective worship

Collective Worship should.....

.....provide a sense of occasion different from other school activities, including assemblies.

.....foster a sense of community and shared experiences.

.....be challenging and enjoyable, extending pupil's understanding and imagination.

.....foster a thought-provoking atmosphere allowing for spiritual reflection and response.

.....provide opportunities for pupils to respond to specific accounts of Christian and other experiences (personal, biographical, scriptural) and to engage in, or observe, religious activities (prayer, singing, silence).

.....be respectful of pupil and staff integrity.

.....encourage pupil participation, and enable them to practise certain skills such as being still, listening, saying or singing words together, as well as performance skills in speaking and playing instruments.

.....be appropriate to an educational setting, taking account of pupils' family backgrounds ages and aptitudes.

.....be an integral part of the school day, spilling over into the classrooms and corridors.

.....be based on an agreed policy, and appropriate records should be kept.



Worship is....

a special reverence and high regard given to those values, ideals and achievements which are of ultimate worth and lasting significance

learning from the inside some of the formal traditions of religious life, such as prayer, singing hymns and responding to scripture and story

affirming and responding to that which is of *worth* or ultimate value

acknowledging the presence of God

responding spontaneously to God in thanksgiving and humility, and endeavouring to follow the will of God

celebrating our highest common values

reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power

adding significance and meaning to the daily lives of pupils

raising the sights of the school community

exploring and affirming experiences which transcend the immediate and mundane

providing opportunities for personal reflection on the spiritual dimension of life

Skills for Collective Worship

Being quiet
Being still
Listening
Thinking
Reflecting
Making choices
Making decisions
Weighing arguments
Taking a stand
Making a response
Being responsible
Performing in front of peers
Working as a team
Using imagination
Relating the experiences of others to their own lives
Deciding what to share and what to keep private
Respecting the privacy of others
Tolerance
Observing
Engaging with ideas or activities
Sharing
Taking action
Responding to trust
Accepting personal challenges
Establishing rules
Facing new situations
Handling confusion
Accepting diversity
Celebrating worth

Collective Worship Thought for the day

The effects of even the most sensitive moral or spiritual reflection may be quite other than what is hoped for.

No one can be forced to worship, but experiences can be offered to pupils which for many, if not all, make worship possible.

The focus of collective worship should be on the meeting points between the experiences of pupils and the received traditions of a religion, normally Christianity. Some of the most productive occasions will be those when pupils or staff are led, consciously or unconsciously, to acknowledge inwardly that their lives have a spiritual dimension, even with little or no direct reference to formal religion.

In formulating school policies on collective worship it is helpful to start by addressing the question of what kind of worship is appropriate in an educational setting.

Neither teachers nor pupils should be expected to pretend to a level of commitment which they do not hold.

There are foundation experiences which can lead either to open reflection or to more explicit worship, and which can be shared without violating the integrity of the individuals.

Pupils' responses may vary across various levels of involvement, from indifference to basic awareness, appreciation, respect, preference, commitment and finally devotion or worship.

Collective worship should be appropriate for and include all pupils attending a school.

Acts of worship are occasions to raise the sights of the school community and to aid positive attitudes to ways of transcending out ordinary experience.

Collective worship can offer pupils a safe environment in which to develop skills which equip them for adult life. This may mean trusting them enough to offer:

the right to reply

the chance to reflect

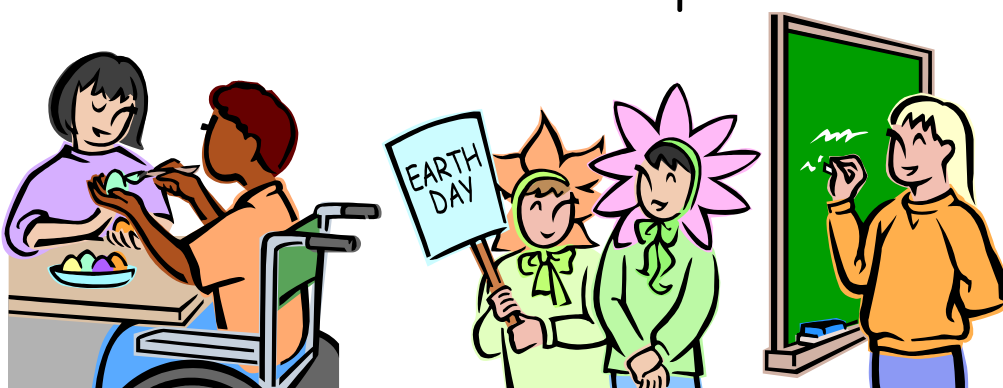
the opportunity to do something

the right atmosphere to listen

the moment to say something without fear of
recrimination

the chance to take responsibility

the occasion to learn to respond to trust



Suggested themes for collective worship

There are many advantages in planning long term for Collective Worship. The following list provides some suggestions for themes which could last a week or longer.

Achievement	Disability	Hardship
Adventure	Discipleship	Harvest
Aggression and Hate	Discovery	Haves and Have-nots
Aims and Ambitions	Dreams	Health
All Saints	Easter	Helping Hands
Ambitions	Education and Learning	Heroes and Heroines
A Time for Everyone	Education and Life	Hobbies
Autumn	Enjoyment	Holidays and Travel
Barriers	Epiphany	Homes and Families
Beauty	Experience	Hope and Despair
Beginnings	Exploring the Future	Human Vices
Big and Small	Exploring the Past	Human Virtues
Blindness and Sight	Faith	Humility
Books	Fame	Humour
Bravery	Fantasy	I believe ...
Bridges	Films I Have Seen	Illusion and Reality
Building Relationships	Finding your way	Imagination
Care and Caring	Food for thought	Influences and Indoctrination
Challenge	Forgiveness	Invitations
Change	Freedom and Responsibility	Jesus
Charity	Freedom and Slavery	Journeys
Children	Friends and Friendship	Joy and Happiness
Choice and Choices	Gifts	Joy and Sorrow
Christmas	Giving Up and Going On	Justice and Fair Play
Citizenship	Global Issues	Just Thinking about It
Communication	God and Gods	Key People
Communion	God's World	Language
Compassion	Good and Evil	Laws and Rules
Conservation	Good News	Leaders and Leadership
Courage	Green Issues	Learning
Creation	Growing	Leisure
Day and night	Guiding Light	Lent
Democracy and Government	Guilt and Suffering	Life and Death
Desert Island Discs	Handicaps	Life's Challenge
Differences	Happiness Is ...	Life's Ups and Downs

Light	Praise	Talk, Talk, Talk
Listen	Prayer and Meditation	Thanks
Living and Loving	Prejudice	Thanksgiving
Living with Tomorrow	Preparations	The Apostles
Love and Hate	Pride	The Arts
Memories and Reflections	Proverbs and Sayings	The Future
Messages and Messengers	Rebirth	The Good Things in Life
Method and Madness	Red Letter Days	The Message
Miracles	Relationships	The Natural World
Mothering Sunday	Responsibilities	The Outsider
My Favourite Music	Reward and Punishment	The Still, Small Voice
My Favourite Poem	Rhyme and Reason	The Unexpected
Myself and Others	Riches	The World about Us
Neighbours	Rights and Responsibilities	Things to Avoid
New Life	Roots	Treasures
News	Sacrifice	Turning Points
New School Year	Saving Life	Us and Them
New Year Resolutions	School and Community	Victory and Defeat
Obedience	School and Opportunity	Views of Education
Obstacles	School and Tradition	Visits and Visitors
Old Age	Science	Voices
Old and New	Seeing the Light	Voices from the Past
One World	Serving and Service	War and Peace
Opportunity and Opportunities	Signs and Symbols	Wealth and Poverty
Optimism and Hope	Sound of Silence	Wealth, Money and Riches
Parables	Special Books	What God Doesn't Tolerate
Parents and Children	Special Interests	What's It Worth?
Passover	Special People	Why Are We Here?
Past and Future	Special Places	Windows
Peace and Tranquillity	Stepping Stones – Stumbling Blocks	Wisdom
Personal Qualities	Stories of Great Leaders	Wise and Foolish
People I Have Met	Stories from the New Testament	Witness
Pilgrimage	Stories from the Old Testament	Wonder and Awe
Places of Worship	Strain and Stress	Words, Words, Words
Planet Earth	Strength and Weakness	Work and Play
Poetry	Success and Failure	Worship
Power and Spirit	Taking Risks	Youth

Ways to follow up an act of collective worship

Reflection:

Quiet time to think alone or in pairs about the point of the session

Evaluation sheets

Diaries of reflection

Personal 'thought for the day'

Thought bubbles, bricks or balloons

Writing a prayer or a meditation

Composing a poem or picture

Writing a letter

Sharing ideas with a friend

'Dinner table' debate

Circle time

Candle time

Guided meditation

Drama

Response:

Sharing ideas to produce a class response

Class discussion - what would you have done differently? Plan your own.

Sharing thoughts if appropriate.
Create a tutor group booklet

Compile school booklet

Contribute a tutorial bubble, brick or balloon to a whole school display

Compile a school book for use in collective worship

Create a tutor group display.
Select a contribution for a school display

If appropriate, collate, share, send
Share ideas with others and the group

Identify issues of common concern and feed back to co-ordinator for future consideration

Discuss the importance of listening to others. Draw up some ground rules for collective worship.

Think about translating ideas into action if appropriate

Share responses, and other possible ways to reflect

Make a presentation to others

Classroom Collective Worship

Creating an atmosphere

- Have music playing when the pupils arrive
- Have chairs arranged before the session in a way they are not used in class
- Sit on the carpet - but make it different from story time
- Physically move from one place to another
- Sit in a particular way - next to a friend
- Change the groupings for the different activities to develop relationships
- Use quiet, silence, create a calm approach
- Have something good to look at - flowers, a picture, an object

Entering Devices

- Play music
- Use the same music for a series of sessions on a particular theme
- Change the music for a new theme, or a different type of activity
- Light a candle
- Allow pupils to light the candle on a rota basis or for birthdays
- Allow pupils to choose the candle
- Select a different type of candle for different activities
- Have a different coloured candle for the seasons of the year
- [Make the candle the focus of the session - working on light
 - Talk about the importance of light
 - Discuss where they would want to shine a light
 - Make a display of candles, pupils wishes written on flame]
- Start with a few moments of silence
- Encourage a few deep breaths

Establishing the ground rules

- When pupils are used to the situation, take a few sessions to discuss what they think proper behaviour is for collective worship
- Talk about what they would like
- Write ideas on 'bricks'
- Create a 'brick' wall with the rules
- Talk about the importance of all the 'bricks', of holding the wall together
- Review the 'bricks' from time to time.
- Develop new rules as necessary.
- Discuss the application of these rules at other times

Stilling

- Establish a routine
- Gradually develop skills of sitting still, breathing deeply
- Use exercises to develop confidence, improve concentration
- Explore feelings, stories, atmospheres
- Encourage personal responses where appropriate
- [Don't just do something, sit there by Mary Stone, St Martin's College, Lancaster]

Making a response

- Invite responses. Avoid asking directly
- Develop pupils' confidence
- Support the answers of each individual
- Encourage listening skills
- Let pupils disagree in a constructive way
- Allow for private responses - in a diary, shared with a friend
- Use written responses - bricks, balloons, tears, thought bubbles
- Make displays - value the ideas

Circle time

- Establish a routine
- Create a positive atmosphere
- Make a good beginning and a good end
- Select an object to hold - allow the pupils to choose
- Vary the object, depending on the topic
- Involve the pupils in the selection of topic
- Make sure there is a variety of topic - happy, sad, serious, light
- Join in
- Discuss how to deal with the different emotional responses

Reflecting

- Use something special to focus the thoughts - a picture, an object, a story, a joke
- Create a variety of moods
- Create space to think
- Discuss feelings

Responding

- Select an issue to which the pupils can respond
- Use stimulus material to challenge ideas
- Ask 'What can we do about it?'
- Be active - write letters, make posters, collect litter, take assembly

Using Questions

- Invite pupils to devise their own agenda
- What questions would they like to ask?
- Who would they like to answer them?
- Where could they look for answers?
- Create a question and answer display

Celebrating

- Discuss the idea of a celebration
- Choose something or someone to celebrate
- Plan the celebration
- Celebrate in an appropriate way during worship time
- Share food, drink, ideas, applause
- Create a photographic record
- Reflect on the experience
- Talk about the importance of good memories

Being active

- Role play a situation and talk about feelings
- Create a collage of images
- Reflect the topic - if sharing, plan a sharing activity
- Use groupings to support and discuss
- Create a dance to a piece of music
- Touch, feel and smell
- Go for a walk
- Welcome a visitor

Making a good ending

- Use a few moments silence
- Use a prayer/meditation to which all can respond
- Repeat the music from the beginning
- Blow out the candle
- Wish everyone a happy day
- Shake hands
- Have a thought for the day

