Collective Worship – Advice from SACRE

Cornwall SACRE advises that schools reflect seriously on what they want their pupils to get out of the experience of collective worship and to understand this as a unique opportunity within the school’s day to promote spiritual development.

Introduction
Collective Worship is an important part of the current education system which is often misunderstood or, at worst ignored. Nevertheless, collective worship has the opportunity to transform a school and its pupils outside of the pressures of curriculum but within the school day. It provides the opportunity for the school to meet together in a variety of contexts and to consider itself in terms of the great ideas and events of the world and be able to see its life and the lives of its pupils and staff as part of the rich tapestry of human experience and existence.

This advice seeks to promote among Cornwall LA schools two things:

- compliance with the law; and,
- meaningful collective worship which positively contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school and development of its pupils.

The advice will clarify the law and the definition of collective worship for schools as well as give indications of how the law might be fulfilled. This advice it is meant to guide and challenge and SACRE hopes that it will fulfil both of these aims.

What is the aim of collective worship?
The DfES Circular 1/94 gives the current advice of the Department on collective worship. It clearly sets out the aims of collective worship in the mind of the government:

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

(Paragraph 50)

In this sense collective worship is something which should be distinctive in the life of the school and should provide particular sorts of experience for pupils which are different to what they would get in a lesson as part of the curriculum.

SACRE recognises that there is no ‘recipe’ that constitutes an act of collective worship and that such acts will be different in different schools and contexts. Nevertheless the DiES’s aims provide a good basis for asking whether or not an act of collective worship has occurred or whether the activity could be better described as an assembly. Indeed Circular 1/94 clearly states that ‘collective worship and assembly are distinct activities’ (Paragraph 58) although it recognises that both might occur as part of the same gathering.
How is worship to be defined?
Circular 1/94 is quite clear on this issue too, worship has its ordinary meaning: ‘it must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power’ (Paragraph 57). The Circular does, though, recognise that what happens in a school is not what will happen in a faith community as the nature of the school is different.

What about prayer?
Prayer is an enriching part of human life and certainly there is an expectation that prayer will be one of the features of collective worship in a school. It might be worth governors and teachers exploring what part prayer currently plays within the collective worship in their school and how its role might be enhanced. Prayer is often understood as a way that humans can articulate their gratitude, their hopes and fears and by bringing these to the fore be better equipped to deal with them in a positive way. An alternative to prayer in an act of collective worship might be the singing of a hymn or a time for reflection, nevertheless there should be some reference to a ‘divine being or power’ during the act.

Collective worship should be a formative and nurturing experience. Prayer, singing hymns and silence should be encouraged and can be expected. Certainly the use of the Lord’s Prayer should be a regular feature of collective worship in schools along with Christian hymns. There is a significant role for silent reflection and for contemplation in collective worship, something often missing from life in many schools.

What is a ‘broadly Christian character’?
Not every specific act of collective worship must be of a broadly Christian character but that over a term the majority should be. So what is this ‘character’? The answer is given by the DfES in paragraphs 60 – 67 of Circular 1/94. Here are some key points from the Advice:

- broadly Christian reflects the traditions of Christian belief but are not specific to one denominational tradition
- it must contain some elements which specifically relate to the traditions of Christian belief
- at times it must accord special status to Jesus Christ
- it should reflect the needs of parents and should be inclusive enough to accommodate the needs of non-Christian families – hence each headteacher needs to know and understand the school's intake and aim to meet identified needs

Broadly Christian in this sense would mean that schools should explore themes such as Creation, Fall, Salvation, Justification, Redemption, Sanctification and Faith, Hope and Love in terms that are age and development appropriate and ideally linked to the pattern of the Christian year. But it also means that worship should not be identified with a particular Christian tradition. It should include the breadth of denominational life found here in Cornwall.

Certainly the special status of Jesus Christ should be evident in a programme for collective worship. This would include what Christians believe Jesus has done for the world by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension into Heaven and sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It would also include the teachings of Jesus in the
parables and in his preaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Hymns and prayers which reflect this should also be used as part of collective worship.

**Contributing to the spiritual development of pupils**

Spiritual development is an essential part of a school’s work; it is also clear that spiritual development is closely associated with collective worship. The 2003 OfSTED Handbook for Inspection is quite helpful in relation to this issue:

**How well do pupils develop self-knowledge and spiritual awareness?**

Where schools foster pupils’ self-awareness and understanding of the world around them successfully, they will be developing a set of values, principles and beliefs which may or may not be religious to inform their perspective on life and their behaviour. They will defend their beliefs and challenge unfairness.

Do teachers foster curiosity and build in opportunities for spiritual development by providing interesting experiences for pupils? To what extent do teachers raise questions of faith sensitively and appropriately, encourage children to talk about themselves and draw on their personal experiences? Teachers should help pupils to make connections across their work and raise further questions to help them to think more deeply, developing their self-knowledge and spiritual awareness.

Schools are required by law to provide a daily act of collective worship, mainly Christian in character, unless the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) has determined otherwise. Inspectors must evaluate the provision and its quality and its contribution to pupils’ spiritual development.

Whilst this handbook is no longer used for inspection the question at the end might still be useful if we change inspectors to teachers or governors. In light of this another question then arises:

**how should collective worship promote spiritual development in my school?**

The answer can work on two levels.

- Firstly, by giving pupils an opportunity to reflect on the major themes of human existence we enable them to develop their own views.
- Secondly, to provide a structured approach to the education of the spirit, understanding where to start, what the end point would be and how to get there.

Collective worship should provide both time and space for the worship of God and for the nurture of spiritual development of pupils. Allowing pupils to consider:

- their attitudes and values in the light of others’ attitudes and values;
- exploring what and who inspires them, what they aspire to themselves and the motivation needed to realise the vision they have of themselves at their best; and,
- opportunities to wonder at the world in which they live

are core to their spiritual development.

In this context the person and teaching of Jesus are particularly significant in helping pupils to know, understand and articulate their own aspirations, attitudes and values in a predominantly Christian culture.
SACRE advises that schools reflect seriously on what they want their pupils to get from the experience of collective worship and to understand this as a unique opportunity within the school’s day to promote spiritual development.

**Time and Space**
The time and space we give to collective worship will show how much it is valued or not. For collective worship to be effective it must be given sufficient time and space. Sufficient time is just that, not too much and not too little. There needs to be enough time for reflection, prayer and/or singing. Hence there needs to be enough time to deliver a simple message or have a reading which is accessible to the listener. When we consider that the average concentration span of a five year old is seven minutes we need to think carefully about the length of time reception children and infants have to sit still and listen to someone trying to give a message to a whole school, or even key stage.

Space is also an issue. Collective worship can happen in any suitable space in the school, such as a classroom or a hall or even outside (weather permitting), but there are real issues about what might be going on around that space at the same time. If the act of collective worship is in a hall where dinner is served and constantly in the background is the noise of people talking or people moving it would be hardly conducive to spiritual development. Likewise, if an act of collective worship was happening in a classroom and a non-teaching assistant was removing wall displays and putting new ones up this could hardly be considered appropriate, in fact it would seem sacrilegious given the context.

In some schools it will be important to create a context which is clearly designed for worship. This might include the use of candles, pictures or objects associated with worship or even prominent verses of scripture. These might become a focus of attention and transform a space in such a way that pupils find it conducive to worship. Hence, if collective worship was to take place in a classroom already rich with pictures and objects to have a simple candle might enable pupils to focus on the act of worship as opposed to the other stimulus around them.

Schools need to think carefully about the time they give collective worship and the space they give to it. Both need to be fit for purpose and if they aren’t the school needs to do something about it.

**Pupils**
We need to recognise that in most schools there is a real range of age and experience which impacts on what is done in collective worship. There may be 4 – 11 year olds in the same act if collective worship, or even 11 – 19 year olds; in Special schools there might be 3 – 19 year olds with a vast developmental range. Understanding the range and nature of the pupils at an act of collective worship is really important. Hence, schools should towards look having different forms of collective worship where some are age and development appropriate. It also helps if the leader of an act of collective worship understands what they want pupils to take away from that experience and then tailor it to the needs of pupils they are addressing.

None of this is to take away from the impact that collective worship can have on staff. Whoever is there when an act of collective worship is taking place is part of that worshipping community and it is right to include them at what ever level they wish to be involved.
The DCSF guidance recognises that pupils should not simply be onlookers at an act of collective worship; they are not an audience to be entertained. Their participation may be evident in a number of ways but that they should be engaged with what is going on is without doubt.

**The place of visitors**

Visitors to collective worship can have a really positive contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visitors might be clergy, they might be other members of the community who have something to offer or they might be occasional visitors to the County. Schools need to be clear, though, on a number of issues:

- headteachers need to understand where visitors actually fit into the school’s programme for collective worship and how visitors support the school’s aims for collective worship
- visitors also need to know where they fit in with the programme for collective worship
- visitors need to understand the parameters set for collective worship in any particular school and what pattern the school generally follows
- pupils need to be introduced to visitors in a positive way as part of the wider schools community

All schools should have a policy for visitors which clearly set out what the school expects of them during their time at the school.

Where visitors often contribute best is where they have an established relationship with the school. In such a context staff and pupils can feel confident about what is going to happen in collective worship and the visitor can feel that they are not just a token presence but also a real part of the school community.

It is also useful to ask: what is the rationale which informs us about which visitors to invite into the school and why at this time and in this place? If these questions can become a part of the review of collective worship they may significantly improve collective worship in the school as the staff will have a clearer vision of what they are seeking to do as part of collective worship.

**Other practical considerations**

**The place of pupils**

Pupils themselves are a tremendous resource. They can actively participate in collective worship and, with proper support, lead collective worship for the whole school or even part of the school – such as a year or Key stage. It is important for schools, though, to ensure that pupils and parents are happy with what they are asking pupils to do. It should also be recognised that in primary schools a whole class might be involved in an act of collective worship. It is not uncommon in such contexts to see every pupil in the class doing or saying something. Usually this type of act of collective worship is of poor quality because of the amount of management needed to keep the whole ‘show’ together – especially with younger pupils. It is often better to have a small group of pupils from a class to lead an act of collective worship but also to ensure that over time all pupils in that class would have the opportunity to participate fully.

**The use of readings**

Readings in collective worship tend to be less common than in previous generations. Yet there are rich resources to be found in the world’s religious literature, especially the Bible. A simple reading of a Bible story can be an effective springboard for
reflection and teacher should not overlook the Bible as a primary resource for collective worship in all phases of education. Wherever sacred books are used they should be treated with respect.

There are also anthologies of poems and other inspirational stories that can be used. The internet is a useful and easy way to access such resources and sites such as http://www.assemblies.org.uk can prove to be very useful.

The use of hymns, singing and music
It is not uncommon now for pupils to enter a place for collective worship listening to music. This can be a real opportunity for cultural development. Where music is used pupils should be told who composed it or where it came from. Music can be used successfully in creating the right atmosphere for worship to occur. Where music is used before and after worship its relationship to that act should be drawn out.

At primary and special schools it is not uncommon to hear the singing of songs and hymns, this is much less common in secondary schools. There is no reason why secondary school pupils should not sing hymns – and often they want to. Staff need to be careful not to presume they know what will work with their pupils without asking them first or at least giving it a try. Many pupils leave primary school with a rich singing heritage and this can be built on at secondary school.

Schools should not forget there is a rich history of Christian hymn writing and singing, especially associated with Cornwall. Older hymns should not be neglected by schools simply because they are old. Such hymns represent an important spiritual and cultural heritage which links pupils with generations past. Where a hymn is sung there need not be a prayer as a hymn is prayer in music and as St Augustine says: he who sings prays twice.

The pattern of collective worship
In some schools what happens in collective worship from day to day is predictable. This is not a bad thing in itself. Human beings are deeply ritualistic and thrive in stable environments; having said that, if collective worship is uninspiring it cannot achieve its aims. It is not possible, nor desirable, to make every act of collective worship novel and schools should not try. Schools should not confuse variety with novelty. Variety can be very good if it has a clear rationale and pupils can see how it enhances worship in the school. In policy development and planning schools need to think carefully about the format of their collective worship to ensure it meets the needs of pupils and provides a context for spiritual development. Schools have to steer a clear path between wanting collective worship to be constantly novel and always having it the same.

Staff training
Staff training for collective worship is often overlooked. Teachers should be given an opportunity to reflect on their own experience of collective worship and recognise how their own attitudes and values have been shaped by those experiences, whether positively or negatively.

Some staff initially feel quite threatened by taking an act of collective worship and are embarrassed in front of their peers and pupils. Other staff are full of enthusiasm but do not necessarily provide an appropriate input or context for collective worship. Schools should ensure that in their review processes collective worship finds a place, partly to ensure continued standards in this area of school life.
SACRE believes it is essential that schools invest in training to improve collective worship. Training and support is available from a number of providers, not least the Adviser for RE and the Diocese of Truro.

**The management of collective worship**

It is important that collective worship is positively managed, it should not happen by accident. Here are some important elements in the management of collective worship:

- a clear policy statement with a thorough review process
- a programmed approach which has a clear beginning, middle and end
- an appropriately resourced programme where teachers can feel in control of the materials they are going to draw upon
- a proper process of monitoring and evaluation

A clear policy statement with a thorough review process

In appendix 1, below, a model policy for community schools is provided for discussion when a school its own policy on collective worship. It is important to recognise two things with regard to policy:

1. the policy should describe what the school does and enable the school to develop its own practices with regard to collective worship
2. the policy sets a series of expectations for collective worship, this is useful for staff and visitors alike

A policy also enables a school to raise the profile of collective worship and enter into a professional dialogue about how collective worship contributes to the life of the school and the spiritual development of pupils.

A programmed approach which has a clear beginning, middle and end

SACRE recommends that schools have a clear view of the structure of collective worship. The programme below could be used as a structure for collective worship but more importantly it could be used to start a debate within the school about how collective worship should be planned.

As you will see the programme identifies the term for delivery, the theme – here based on the Christian calendar – and cross cultural contributions where other religious traditions might support the overall theme.

It is not the intention that the cross cultural contributions replace the theme but rather that they support what the school is doing with regard to broadening spiritual development and cultural awareness. For many pupils there will be no experience of traditions other than those of a broadly Christian nature and schools ought to be careful not to become tokenistic in the way they use non-Christian religious traditions. Likewise the cross cultural contribution also links to other European and world Christian traditions. As a result of collective worship pupils ought to be aware that Christianity spans many cultures and that those cultures have something to contribute to a broader understanding of what it is to be a Christian.

Each year SACRE provides schools with Shap Calendars and staff may want to use these calendars as a basis for the cross cultural dimension of collective worship.
The following should not be seen to be a complete programme:

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<th>Cross cultural contribution</th>
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<td>Autumn Term</td>
<td>New beginnings</td>
<td>Jewish New Year</td>
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<td>Harvest – creation</td>
<td>Jewish Festival of Sukkot</td>
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<td>Light – the need for physical light and</td>
<td>Hindu and Sikh Festival of Divali, themes from Buddhism, Chanukah in Judaism</td>
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<td>love for the world, Incarnation</td>
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<td>Spring Term</td>
<td>The festival of Epiphany – God revealed to</td>
<td>Epiphany celebrations around the world</td>
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<td>Orthodox communities in Cornwall</td>
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<td>Christmas in the Eastern Orthodox tradition</td>
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<td>Holocaust Memorial Day</td>
<td>Fasting in Islam - the month of Ramadan (this will change from year to year and schools might like to do it at the appropriate time or here to support the theme of Lent)</td>
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<td>Season of Lent – the importance of self</td>
<td>Passover in the Jewish tradition – celebration of freedom</td>
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<td>discipline (fasting), taking stock of your life</td>
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<td>(prayer) and responding to the needs of others</td>
<td>Spring festivals for Hindu's and Sikhs (Holi and Hollah Mollah)</td>
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<td>St Piran’s Day – celebrating our Cornish</td>
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<td>Jesus for Christians and new life</td>
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<td>Summer Term</td>
<td>Eastertide – season of Christian joy</td>
<td>Easter around the world</td>
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<td>St George – patron saint of England and also</td>
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<td>Pentecost – focus on inspiration, what</td>
<td>Jewish festival of Shavuot – giving of the Torah</td>
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<td>inspires us in what we do, what we aspire to</td>
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<td>and what motivates us, Sanctification</td>
<td>Looking at people who have contributed significantly to humanity from around the world</td>
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<td>time, a celebration of who we are</td>
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An appropriately resourced programme where teachers can feel in control of the materials they are going to draw upon

There are many resources for collective worship which can be bought by the school and there are website resources also available. Many schools have found the CEM’s Assembly File to be really useful and this can be accessed by subscribing to RE Today. On the whole, though, it is better to have resources that are going to contribute to the school’s own vision of its programme. Many resources that are purchased are never fully used and schools need to be clear why they are buying resources, who they are meant for and who has access to them.

Resources also include pupils and visitors and they should be seen in that way at times. This enables schools to ask: what sort of resource is this person/group and am I getting the best out of them as a resource?

A proper process of monitoring and evaluation
The question is: what are we trying to monitor and evaluate? There are three main areas worth looking at:

- is the practice of the school in line with its policy?
- does the act of collective worship promote spiritual development?
- does the act of collective worship contribute positively to the life of the school?

With a policy there should be no real difficulty in seeing whether it is being done or not. It might be worth putting into that process a question about how the policy might be improved to improve the quality of collective worship (see Appendix 1 for a model policy framework).

The question of spiritual development is less easy to answer. Here you would need to have a clear view of how you expect collective worship to contribute to spiritual development. Here is a checklist that staff might find useful:

- is there an opportunity for reflection on an identified theme
- was the act of collective worship accessible to all pupils present
- was there an opportunity for worship
- was the act of collective worship broadly Christian
- did the act of collective worship introduce or reinforce agreed language about spiritual experience
- was music used to promote spiritual development
- was art used to promote spiritual development

the latter two points might also be used for assessing impact on cultural development.

Does the act of collective worship contribute to the life of the school?
It is important that schools know what they want to get out of collective worship for themselves. If the act of collective worship also serves to develop a sense of the school community then that should be observable.

Who should a headteacher or collective worship coordinator involve in the monitoring and evaluation process? Teachers themselves ought to be able to tell the headteacher/coordinator what they believe the contribution of collective worship is to spiritual development and the life of the school. A governor may also be involved in observing collective worship and be asked for their thoughts on the experience –
often governors need some direction in what they are supposed to be looking at and it is important that they have a clear view of what they are there to do. Pupils are also key to the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship. Here are some questions that might be directed at pupils:

➤ why do you think we have collective worship in school?
➤ do you feel that you have an opportunity to think or pray during collective worship?
➤ what do you enjoy about collective worship?
➤ how would you improve collective worship?
➤ can you think of one act of collective worship that you remember really well?
  o what made it so memorable?
  o what was it about?
  o did it change the way you thought about things?

➤ tell me about today’s act of collective worship
➤ what have we being exploring in this week’s acts of collective worship?

Such questions can be really useful in assessing the current impact of collective worship and moving it on to meet the needs of pupils.

Some considerations for different types of schools
Here are some things that different types of school might wish to consider.

Secondary schools
Collective worship can, and does, happen in many secondary schools. Often secondary schools do not fulfil the whole statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship but some do, and not just denominational secondary schools. What is needed in secondary schools is a professional debate about the ‘whys’, the ‘hows’ and the ‘whats’ of collective worship.

Collective worship can happen in a variety of contexts in a secondary school. Whole school assemblies, key state and year assemblies and as part of tutor times. Staff need clear support on delivering worship in each context. There are an important series of considerations secondary schools need have when approaching this, at times, delicate subject:

1. that staff have a clear understanding of the purpose of collective worship in an educational context
2. that staff have support materials which can be easily used for collective worship in the school
3. that staff have an opportunity to be trained to deliver simple acts of collective worship which can be a springboard for spiritual development of pupils
4. that pupils share the school’s understanding of collective worship and see it as a positive opportunity for personal growth
5. that collective worship is monitored and evaluated by the senior management team to ensure all pupils have an equality of opportunity afforded to them by the law.

Research shows that pupils are sensitive about faith and belief as they are growing through adolescence. Presenting faith and belief in a positive and practical way in collective worship can help create a better context dialogue about the nature of the world in which pupils live and can help them to explore issues of meaning and purpose. As in primary schools pupils should be given the opportunity to worship
God, to meditate and reflect, and to explore the great themes of human experience. Where schools are positive about this entitlement they usually experience positive reactions from pupils. Allowing pupils to be at the heart of developing collective worship in the secondary school will also enable pupils to feel that collective worship has something positive to offer them.

**Secondary schools with 6th Forms**

Students in 6th Forms have a statutory right to withdraw themselves from collective worship as the result of an amendment to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (see appendix 2 below). It is reasonable to expect 6th Form students to attend assemblies but if the assembly contains an act of collective worship then those students who have notified the school of their withdrawal must be allowed to leave with as little disruption as possible.

It is the case that secondary schools with 6th Forms must have a daily act of collective worship for all of those students, it must also notify students of their right to withdraw via the school’s prospectus. Schools should not canvass withdrawal so that they can avoid their statutory duty to provide an act of collective worship for all registered students.

**Primary schools**

Primary schools need to think clearly about how they explain collective worship to their pupils. Do reception children have any clear understanding of what they are doing when going into an act of collective worship? The same question could, quite profitably, be asked of Year 6 pupils. Visitors and staff often have an expectation that pupils should pray and sing and when they don’t staff often feel it incumbent upon themselves to publicly encourage pupils to do so or make pupils conform. It is often more appropriate to discuss these issues with pupils after the act of collective worship and not during collective worship.

Another issue has to be the appropriateness of collective worship input when the whole school is involved. The developmental range is so great that it is difficult to see what all pupils could gain from the experience. One problem is getting pupils in and out. Because schools tend to put the youngest at the front they get them to come in first and yet they have the lowest tolerance for sitting still. It could be suggested that the oldest pupils go in first from the back and fill up to the front so the youngest are brought in last. At the end of the act of worship the youngest could go first and the oldest last. In this way we recognise the needs of pupils as opposed to the needs of our management of space and time.

One impact of having younger pupils in an act of collective worship is about their behaviour. Expectations around behaviour in collective worship need to be discussed before they go in to such an act. It is not uncommon to see staff wading through a body of children to pick out the one miscreant who is looking around and distracting others. Staff need to think carefully about the disturbance they create in removing a pupil against the often limited impact of that pupil. Where staff are involved in collective worship, but not actively, they often appear to be there for crowd control, often this actually negatively affects the atmosphere in the room. Teachers and non-teaching assistants need to think carefully about their roles in collective worship in that it is supposed to be a special-different activity during the school day.

**Special schools and area special classes**

Many of the issues for secondary and primary schools affect special schools in their various phases of education. One obvious issue for special schools is the level of inclusion in collective worship. Given the tremendously wide developmental range in
special schools, from PMLD to MLD, and with such disparate learning disabilities, from Downs to Autism, it is difficult to know what pupils as a whole may get from the experience. Special schools need to cater for the sensory education of some pupils to the cognitive education of others and so planning the programme for collective worship becomes important if it is to benefit all pupils. Pupils with language skills should be part of the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship relative to their abilities and it is also possible to observe the behaviour of PMLD pupils in collective worship as an indicator for appropriateness of content and context. Where possible all that is said should be signed and visitors should be expected to have enough Mackaton at least to say Hello, Thank-you and Goodbye.

**Some issues for all schools**

*Pupils with special needs*
It is the case that all schools have special needs pupils who often need greater care and supervision. Pupils on the autistic spectrum and those with ADHD often have teaching assistants supporting them. It should not be the case that these pupils are excluded from collective worship; in fact, it is illegal to do so. Senior managers, teachers and teaching assistants should spend time looking at how best to include these pupils so that they not only have their entitlement met but also that they can feel part of the whole school community. If this does not happen such pupils can feel even more socially excluded than they might at present. If anything collective worship in a school should be able to model social inclusion at its best.

*Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)*
Many primary, secondary and special schools have adopted the SEAL programme. As part of that programme there are a number of assemblies. It is clear that these assemblies do not fulfil a school’s duty to provide collective worship. When a school does a SEAL assembly teachers must either adapt it so that it includes an act of worship or must have an act of worship at some other time in the school day.

*The right of withdrawal from collective worship*
SACRE has issued other guidance on withdrawal from collective worship and how best to manage it. Schools should consult that guidance if they are in doubt about how best to proceed when a request for withdrawal is made. The right to withdraw is both in whole or in part and this should be clearly indicated in the school’s prospectus.
APPENDIX 1

POLICY

As daily collective worship for all pupils not withdrawn from it by their parents is a legal requirement and both governors and head teachers have legal duties with regard to it, SACRE regards it as important that each school has a policy concerning its provision and implementation. Such a policy should include the following aspects:

1. Introduction
The legislation itself, the responsibilities of governors and the head teacher.

2. Aims
A statement of how the school community sees the place and value of collective worship, within the parameters of the legislation as interpreted and advised by SACRE e.g. to promote the spiritual development of pupils, preparation for adult life; links with the community; sense of identity in school; aspects of conscientious objection by pupils, staff etc.

3. Management
3.1. Organisation
How the responsibility for organising collective worship is to be exercised and by whom.
3.2. Format
Whether collective worship is to be provided through assembly (of which groups); tutor groups and/or other means. How long it might be. Whether pupils are seated; the variety of input and stimulus; the variety of opportunities for response and reflection by pupil; entry/exit procedures, etc.
3.3. Contents
How the majority of acts of worship will be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, the use of hymns, singing, prayers, themes, etc.
3.4. Leaders
Who will lead acts of worship in assemblies or other ways and when? This might include reference to visitors and governors, in particular. Who will supervise pupils before and/or during and/or after?
3.5. Location
Where collective worship is to be held.
3.6. Co-ordination
How the different acts of worship are to be co-ordinated to prevent confusion, clashes, repetition, omission, etc. This could cover the programming of rooms, leaders, themes, contents, groups, resources, monitoring, Inset, etc.

4. Resourcing and Training
How the leaders and acts are to be resourced with ideas, books, equipment, etc and enabled to make the best use of them.

5. Monitoring
How the collective worship is be evaluated and a brief record of each act kept.
EXAMPLE OF POLICY

Context/Introduction
Any School is a county school, serving a community in an almost totally and mostly nominal Christian area of the south-west of England. The ethnic/religious survey shows that % of the pupils and their parents are white and Christian. However, the pupils are not immune from developments and influences in a wider world, through family and personal contacts, the media, and from their education. It is a part of the aims of the school to offer a wide ranging education, to prepare pupils for life not only in their own community but in a wider world.

Legal Requirements
(For details see School Standard and Framework Act 1998 and Circular 1/94)

- All pupils must take part in a daily act of collective worship, unless they have been withdrawn from it by their parents.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship. At present children have been withdrawn, mainly because ..................
- As Any is a county school, collective worship must be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’, that is be within the broad traditions of Christian beliefs, on the majority of occasions.
- Collective worship must be non-denominational in county schools.

Aims of Collective Worship
Aims have been agreed with the governors to be the following: (egs)

- To establish, affirm and celebrate the common and shared values of the school.
- To nurture the identity and nature of the school as a community.
- To develop positive attitudes among the pupils.
- To provide an opportunity for pupils to worship God.
- To enable pupils to come to terms with their own beliefs, values and commitments, and with those of others.
- In short to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments of pupils etc.

Worship is understood as an act of collective worship in a county school and can be interpreted very openly and widely as an act which brings a school group to a point where they are able to make a shared, reflective response to a divine being, power, ideal or value of some worth, wholly or mainly within the broad traditions of Christian belief on the majority of occasions.

Collective worship is an essential element in the schools’ promotion of the spiritual and moral development of pupils as required by ERA 1988.

Approaches
Daily worship is provided through the following means: (egs)

- Acts of worship in class/tutor group.
- Acts of worship by year group/key stage group assemblies.
- Whole school acts of worship in assembly.

The pattern is as follows:
Management:
Responsibility for collective worship in any school lies with the head teacher, who has delegated its organisation to …………………etc. The task of the co-ordinator is:
(egs)

- To provide a rota of leaders of worship.
- To provide a sequence of themes for each term.
- To establish and maintain a resource base.
- To liaise with the local community in terms of visitors etc.

Methods:
There should be a suitable variety of methods for collective worship to enable the experience to be as valid and relevant to the pupils a possible. There will also be a ritual element associated with some of these methods to allow the pupils to benefit from the security and pattern of worshipping together.

These will include the following as is appropriate to the nature of the occasion: (egs)

- Music on entry and exit.
- Hymn singing.
- Use of prayers, including the children’s own, and the Lord’s Prayer.
- Readings from suitable sources, including the Bible, but also other sources of worth.
  (See SACRE document for details here)

Resources
The school maintains a resource base for collective worship in the ………area, to which will be added new material as finance permits. A list is attached in Appendix A.

Recording
All acts of worship should be briefly recorded in the Collective Worship Book, noting the date, the leader, the theme/contents. This record may consist of the programme suitably amended to indicate any changes that took place. These records should be kept………….

Development Plan
Collective worship features in the SDP as one of the targets for 20… The following developments are desirable:

- Inset
- Resourcing
- Community involvement
- Etc

Evaluation
This policy was written in 20…., and was agreed by the Governing body on ……… It will be reviewed annually. Its implementation and effectiveness will be monitored by ………………, and their evaluation used in the review of the policy.
APPENDIX 2

Collective Worship and the Law – the basics
The current legislation governing collective worship is to be found in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 which simply states:

70. - (1) Subject to section 71, each pupil in attendance at a community, foundation or voluntary school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship.

Section 71 goes on to allow a certain exemption:

71. - (1) If the parent of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school requests that he may be wholly or partly excused-

(b) from attendance at religious worship in the school,

the pupil shall be so excused until the request is withdrawn.

The right to withdraw on the basis of conscience has long been established, going back to the 19th Century.

The Education and Inspection Act 2006 goes on to further amend the right to withdrawal by amending the School's Standards and Framework Act 1998 with the following:

55 Right of sixth-form pupils to be excused from attendance at religious worship

(1) Section 71 of SSFA 1998 (which, in relation to religious education and attendance at religious worship, makes provision for exceptions and special arrangements, and for special schools) is amended as follows.

(2) For subsection (1) substitute—

(1A) If the parent of any pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school other than a sixth-form pupil requests that he may be wholly or partly excused from attendance at religious worship at the school, the pupil shall be so excused until the request is withdrawn.

(1B) If a sixth-form pupil requests that he may be wholly or partly excused from attendance at religious worship at a community, foundation or voluntary school, the pupil shall be so excused.”

The Act in Schedule 20 goes on further to define the nature of worship, firstly for schools without a religious character in Section 3:

(2) Subject to paragraph 4, the required collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2), collective worship is of a broadly Christian character if it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.
(4) Not every act of collective worship in the school required by section 70 need comply with sub-paragraph (2) provided that, taking any school term as a whole, most such acts which take place in the school do comply with that sub-paragraph.

Here we see that the law recognises that normally acts of collective worship will be **mainly of a broadly Christian character with no denominational bias** but there may be exceptions to that general specification.

The Schedule goes one step further, though, with regard to the situation of the school and that the school should consider:

(6) (a) any circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils which are relevant for determining the character of the collective worship which is appropriate in their case, and

(b) their ages and aptitudes.

In this sense schools need to think carefully about the collective worship they have in their school and that it should meet the needs of families and pupils in a definite way.

With regard to foundation schools with a religious character and voluntary schools they are governed by their trust deeds and should comply with the direction given within such deeds.

**Are there exceptions?**

The Act does allow an exception from the requirement for a school to have a daily act of collective worship which is broadly Christian in character with regard to the needs of specific groups of parents and their children. The exception is called a **determination**. The school must be able to make a case to its local SACRE that parents want a particular form of collective worship for their children. If SACRE agrees with the school on this issue then it is possible to have a particular form of collective worship for a specified group of pupils.

**Does the law say anything else?**

The law does further define three areas that schools should be aware of. Firstly, what constitutes a 'collective' for collective worship and secondly, where collective worship should happen and finally the issue of when it should happen.

2. (2) The arrangements for the required collective worship may, in respect of each school day, provide for a single act of worship for all pupils or for separate acts of worship for pupils in different age groups or in different school groups.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) a "school group" is any group in which pupils are taught or take part in other school activities.

The belief, held by some, that collective worship is a whole school or key stage or year activity is erroneous. Collective worship can happen in any recognisable group in the school, such as a class or tutor group. As all pupils tend to be in these groups fairly constantly then there is no excuse for not having a daily act of collective worship for pupils not withdrawn by their parents.

(5) Subject to sub-paragraph (6), the required collective worship shall take place on the school premises.
(6) If the governing body of a community, foundation or voluntary school are of the opinion that it is desirable that any act of collective worship in the school required by section 70 should, on a special occasion, take place elsewhere than on the school premises, they may, after consultation with the head teacher, make such arrangements for that purpose as they think appropriate.

(7) The powers of a governing body under sub-paragraph (6) shall not be exercised so as to derogate from the rule that the required collective worship must normally take place on the school premises.

This law is important because it preserves the general character of collective worship as non-denominational.

And finally, the timing of collective worship is a matter for the school. It need not be at the same time for all pupils but it must be part of the school day. As part of the school day it should not be confused with curriculum time and should be calculated relative to time outside of the school’s curriculum framework.

**Who is responsible for collective worship?**
The School standards and Framework Act is quite clear on this matter:

(2) Subject to section 71, in relation to any community, foundation or voluntary school-

   (a) the local education authority and the governing body shall exercise their functions with a view to securing, and

   (b) the head teacher shall secure,

that subsection (1) is complied with.

Responsibility for collective worship is a partnership between the LA, the governing body and the headteacher. Legislation does allow teachers themselves not to participate in or lead collective worship and headteachers should work closely with their staff to ensure both the requirement of the law and the needs of teachers are met without discriminating against teachers for the choice that they have made in good conscience. Here headteachers may need to be creative with the way they deploy staff with regard to collective worship.
APPENDIX 3

Community and controlled schools might be interested to see how collective worship is judged in Church of England Aided Schools. Whilst not been wholly appropriate it might be useful as a point of reflection when improvement planning for collective worship.
What is the impact of Collective Worship on the School Community?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How important is the worship in the life of the school and how is this demonstrated?</th>
<th>How positive are the attitudes to Collective Worship?</th>
<th>To what extent do learners and staff of all faiths derive inspiration, spiritual growth and affirmation from worship?</th>
<th>How well does the Collective Worship develop learners’ understanding of Anglican faith and practice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outstanding</strong></td>
<td>Worship occupies a place of vital importance in the life of the school and is a fundamental aspect of its Christian character. Participants gain significant spiritual development as the result of imaginative and inspiring Acts of collective worship. Learners clearly articulate the importance of worship and the key Christian values that the school promotes. Acts of worship are exceptionally well planned, recorded and evaluated by all the stakeholders. The school creates an atmosphere of spiritual depth where the presence of God is acknowledged and celebrated by all present. Christian values promoted in worship are clearly evident when talking to learners and throughout the school.</td>
<td>The worship involves high levels of participation and a very positive response from those attending. Learners reflect in depth and are highly enthusiastic about the collective worship at the school. All stakeholders, including governors, staff, parents and learners respond very positively to the worship provided by the school and show high levels of respect for each other and other people’s beliefs and cultures. All staff attend, participate and lead worship.</td>
<td>Staff and learners derive inspiration, and affirmation from worship. The participants make excellent use of prayer, silence and reflection as a means of spiritual growth. Participants advance their religious understanding, experience and commitment. Many aspects of the whole curriculum are used to stimulate worship. Collective Worship recognises the different backgrounds, experience, ages and ability of all learners. Learners’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced at very opportunity by collective worship and all stakeholders are extremely positive about the spiritual support that worship offers.</td>
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</table>

<p>| <strong>Good</strong> | Worship occupies a place of central importance in the life of the school and underpins its Christian character. Participants make positive gains in spiritual development as the result of stimulating Acts of collective worship. Most learners can articulate the importance of worship and the key Christian values that the school promotes. Acts of worship are well planned, recorded and evaluated. The school creates an atmosphere of spiritual depth where the presence of God is widely acknowledged and celebrated. Christian values promoted in worship are frequently evident when talking to learners and throughout the school. | The worship provided evokes willing participation and a positive response from those present. Participants behave well and reflect with enthusiasm on the collective worship. The worship takes place in an atmosphere of calm and respect. Most staff take an active role as worshippers alongside the learners. All stakeholders, including governors, staff, parents and learners respond positively to the worship provided by the school and value and respect each other and other people’s beliefs and cultures. | Staff and learners are often inspired and affirmed by collective worship. The participants make frequent use of prayer, silence and reflection as a means of spiritual growth. Most participants advance their religious understanding, experience and commitment. Other aspects of the whole curriculum are sometimes used to stimulate worship. Collective Worship matches the backgrounds, ages and abilities of learners. Learners’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced by collective worship and all stakeholders are positive about the spiritual support that worship offers. | The learners are able to talk about the key Christian festivals and the church’s year. Most learners are able to recite the Lord’s Prayer and know key Christian Prayers, hymns and greetings. The worship is distinctively Christian and supports the school’s Anglican heritage and trust deed. There are productive links with the local parish Church. Where possible, this Church is also used for services and to enhance the learners understanding of worship. Where Eucharist takes place learners take an active part and talk enthusiastically about the experience. It is celebrated in an atmosphere of holiness. |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Inadequate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most participants make gains in spiritual development as the result of acts of collective worship.</strong> Most learners understand the importance of worship and the key Christian values that the school promotes. The legal requirements for worship are met in accordance with the school’s trust deed and the worship is integral to the school day. The school’s policy for worship is implemented and acts of worship are planned. The worship reflects Christian values and these have an impact upon the learners.</td>
<td><strong>Few or no participants make gains in spiritual development as the result of acts of collective worship.</strong> Few learners understand the value of worship or gain any knowledge or understanding of key Christian values. The school is not meeting legal requirements for worship or is following them in a way that does not meet the spirit of the requirements. Insufficient attention is given to worship and it is not regarded as important in the life of the school community. Worship does not underpin the Christian character of the school. It is not supported by effective planning or a budget and little or no effective monitoring and evaluation takes place. Staff and learners are unclear about the differences between assembly and worship and little or no training has been provided for staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learners enjoy collective worship and talk about it with interest. Teaching staff are present and take part as worshippers. Behaviour is appropriate to the occasion and learners show respect during the worship. The themes chosen engage the majority of learners.</strong> Most stakeholders, including governors, staff, parents and learners respond positively to the worship provided by the school and respect each other and other people’s beliefs and cultures.</td>
<td><strong>Few learners enjoy collective worship, reflect on it or talk about it with much interest. The acts of worship provided are uninspiring and the learners’ attitudes to worship are neutral and apathetic. Senior management and staff are apathetic towards worship. The leaders of worship are unprepared and the behaviour of the learners is inappropriate. Little respect is shown for each other or the beliefs and practices of members of faith communities.</strong> Few, if any, stakeholders, including governors, staff, and parents take an interest in collective worship.</td>
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<td><strong>The worship takes account of the ages, aptitudes and backgrounds of the majority of learners. The leaders provide an atmosphere in which worship can take place effectively. The worship offers a contribution to the learners’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Learners respond appropriately to opportunities for prayer, silence and reflection. Account is taken of the needs of those from other or no faith backgrounds.</strong> Many staff and learners are inspired and affirmed by collective worship. Most participants make regular use of prayer, silence and reflection as a means of spiritual growth and advance their religious understanding, experience and commitment. Other aspects of the whole curriculum are occasionally used to stimulate worship. Collective Worship matches the backgrounds, ages and abilities of learners. Learners’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is broadly enhanced by collective worship and most stakeholders are positive about the spiritual support that worship offers.</td>
<td><strong>Very few participants reflect or pray meaningfully as part of collective worship. Staff and learners are rarely inspired and affirmed by collective worship. Few participants advance their religious understanding and experience commitment. Collective Worship fails to match the backgrounds, ages and abilities of learners. Learners’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is rarely enhanced by collective worship and few if any stakeholders are positive about the spiritual support that worship offers.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>The school observes the major festivals of the church’s year and the learners can articulate the key elements of these festivals.</strong> Links with the local church are positive. Learners can engage with the Lord’s Prayer and a selection of Christian hymns both modern and traditional. No learners are made to feel uncomfortable. Aspects of Eucharistic worship are built into the planning. Where Eucharist takes place the learners are prepared and understand what they are observing and talk with some understanding about the key elements of what they are observing.</td>
<td><strong>The learners are unable to talk about aspects of the Anglican heritage. They do not know the Lord’s Prayer, the significance of the major Christian festivals or the key elements of the Christian tradition. Acts of worship convey only a broad Christian message, or are secular, and do not draw on the Anglican tradition for worship. Links with the local church and parish are neutral or unproductive.</strong></td>
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