



# Worship Works

Collective Worship support for Diocesan  
Schools and Academies

## Foreword by the Chairman of the Board of Education, The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr John Sentamu



All human beings were created for worship. The question is not whether we worship, but who we worship. Worship is the most important human activity. Worship causes us to look beyond ourselves. Worshipping God causes us to discover more about ourselves and our place in this amazing universe. Worship, therefore, provides the very foundation of our being.

That is not to say that engaging with others in worship is always easy. That is why I am delighted to commend these guidelines to you as source of inspiration as we seek to introduce children and young people to worship in its many forms. As we worship we gain glimpses of a greater reality and that is why Collective Worship is at the heart of the life of every Church of England School. Our worship informs our living and reveals to us what it is to live well together before God. As you use this resource, I pray that those in your school will be drawn to God in worship and that the experience of worship will be genuinely life changing.

We are created to worship God and to enjoy him forever. That journey starts now.

## Collective Worship and The Law

All maintained schools and academies **must provide an act of collective worship, for all children, every day.** The act of collective worship **can take place at any time of the school day, and in any regular school grouping** e.g. whole school, key stage or class.

A key difference, however, lies in the form of that worship. In community schools, that worship must be “*wholly or mainly of a Christian character,*” reflecting the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination. The legal requirements for worship in voluntary (aided and controlled) schools, Church of England foundation schools and Church of England academies are different: the requirements include that collective worship in such schools must be **in accordance with any provision of the trust deed relating to the school/academy and/or in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Church of England.** The ethos statement in the Instrument of Government of a Church of England school reflects its status as a Church of England school and collective worship is a vital way in which the religious character of the school can be preserved and developed in accordance with that ethos statement. This ethos statement is in the Instrument of Government of each maintained Church of England school and can be found in the Appendix to this handbook.

Parents must be made aware that the school is a church school and as such collective worship will be based upon the foundations and principles of the Church of England. The governing body should be made aware of their legal responsibilities and be clear of their statutory responsibility to uphold the Christian foundation of the school. This responsibility to uphold the Christian ethos and foundation of the school should also be made clear to staff on their appointment.

### The Right of Withdrawal

A statement must be included in the school prospectus that makes it clear that:

- parents may withdraw their children, wholly or partially, from collective worship; and
- (if applicable) a sixth form pupil can withdraw themselves, wholly or partially, from collective worship.

A similar statement should appear in the collective worship policy document (the reasons for withdrawal do not have to be justified or explained). This does not mean that schools can guarantee an exemption from the Christian ethos of the school.

If children are withdrawn, the school must provide adequate supervision to ensure their safety.

It is illegal for staff to withdraw children from collective worship (for intervention groups, music lessons, booster classes, etc) – due to the requirement that an act of collective worship must be provided each day for every child.



It is hoped that governors of church schools will phrase their statement on the rights of withdrawal carefully so as to indicate a desire that children will take part in worship, which will be an integral and vital part of the school day.

Teachers have the right to withdraw from worship. However, worship is an important part of the ethos of the school which teachers must be willing and able to uphold. Adults not attending collective worship send a negative image to children about its importance. Collective worship **cannot** be used as part of PPA time.

### **Responsibility for the Daily Act of Worship**

Arrangements for collective worship in a voluntary school, Church of England school or Church of England Academy are made by the governing body after consultation with the Headteacher. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring requirements are met. Foundation governors have a particular responsibility for ensuring that the character or foundation of the school is reflected in worship.

### **Complaints**

If parents make a formal complaint about school worship and fail to be satisfied by their appeal to the governing body, in this Diocese there is a right of appeal to the Diocese. Initially, this appeal should be directed to the Diocesan Board of Education.



# The Importance of Worship in the Church School

The Christian foundation of the church school points to worship as a central focus for its ethos. A church school should be a place where pupils experience worship as a quality activity, important to the life of the school and to its religious character. It is one of the means whereby Christian vision and associated Christian values and principles may be reflected and affirmed, and God will be the focus of worship. The church school is an important part of the work and mission of the parish. The school should have close connections with the local parish and worshipping community, and enjoy its support and encouragement. In the same way, the church school should contribute to the life of the local worshipping community.

Worship is, therefore, an area of church school life which presents special opportunities to promote spiritual and religious development. It also has the potential to contribute to faith nurture, providing a means by which all pupils - both those of the faith and those from other backgrounds - may understand more about the Christian faith, while experiencing and learning about worship and what it means to those who take part.

## Church Schools: the communities they serve

It must be recognised that pupils in church schools come from a wide variety of backgrounds. The school community is a collection of people from different backgrounds and if school worship is to be meaningful, it must be sensitive to this.

Whilst the Christian context will be explicit in church schools, the overall pattern should be **collective** rather than **corporate**, as *shared* beliefs and values cannot be *assumed*. The use of the term **collective** is important in that it recognises that pupils and staff will subscribe to a range of beliefs, and that there is a need for the church school to provide opportunities for all to share in worship in a way which make sense to them and is appropriate to their stage of development.

In reality, our schools are being challenged to develop a unique kind of experience. One which is analogous to faith group worship, but which still retains the openness and integrity of learning.

Collective worship should play a central role in the life of a church school and it should reflect the Christian vision, values and ethos of the school. It should therefore:

- Be grounded in distinctively Christian teaching
- Be inclusive, engaging, inspiring, inclusive and accessible
- Be clearly visible in key school documents and on the school website
- Be well organised, resourced, planned and delivered
- Be effectively monitored and evaluated as part of the school's cycle of review.



## Some Definitions of Worship

**Worship** can be defined as paying homage to (revering) that which is of worth ('Worth-ship.'). Religious Worship is the acknowledgement of 'worth' which is attributable to a supreme being. Therefore in Church of England schools, opportunities should be provided for children to offer worship to God, through Jesus Christ. We can never *make* anyone worship because it is an attitude of the heart focused on God; in a school situation we should seek to lead people to the threshold of worship by providing a setting where they may worship God if they so wish.

**School Assembly** is a gathering of the school community; it is often used to celebrate and focus on the life and values of the community itself and is without religious content.

**Corporate Worship** is a gathering of a body ('corpus') of believers and presupposes a particular religious commitment. When a school, or groups within a school, meet together for worship the activity is unlikely to be corporate worship, where the worshippers are broadly in agreement in their beliefs. Even in a school where the background of the children is Christian, the children may not regard themselves as believers.

**Collective worship** is a gathering of a 'collection' of people of diverse religious, agnostic and non-religious backgrounds and does not pre-suppose any particular religious commitment. In our context it refers to a service of worship which is educational and inclusive in its nature, rather than being a gathering of believers. Opportunities should be provided for children to offer worship to God, through Jesus Christ, without losing sight of either the different starting points of each of the children, or the need for the act of collective worship to take account of the developmental ages of the children.

Used by permission, Chester Diocese Collective worship guidelines



## School Worship Should Aim To:

- enable the school community to explore and celebrate the differences and diversity found in the variety of forms of worship in the Anglican Christian tradition;
- share the central teachings of the Christian faith in order for the school community to make an informed choice about their own involvement and to consider their own personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
- seek to deepen and widen the experience of those of 'faith' and encourage those of 'no faith' so that they begin to feel for themselves something of what it means to worship;
- use celebration, silence, stilling, reflection, contemplation, meditation, prayer, song, symbols and imagery as vehicles for worship and spiritual growth;
- provide opportunities for the whole school community to address God directly through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit through acknowledging his presence, reflecting upon his character and giving Him praise and honour;
- use a vocabulary of worship that encourages the whole school community to attend, participate and lead worship;
- encourage all present to explore their own beliefs and understanding of God within a Christian framework by learning more about the Christian faith and by encountering Christ through worship;
- raise awareness through reflection of the ultimate questions of life relating to matters of faith;
- explore the school's Christian vision and values and celebrate each unique individual member of the school community as made in the image of God;
- Encourage respect and care for God's created world by promoting a positive attitude to environmental issues locally, nationally and globally;
- seek to provide opportunities for spiritual, social and moral development that is characterised by feelings such as awe, wonder, being uplifted, elation, appreciation, gratitude, respect, and reverence;
- develop a sense of community within the school, the locality, (e.g. local church) and foster the sense of being part of a wider community through the celebration of achievements, festivals and special occasions;
- provide an opportunity to bring personal needs and those of others before God in prayer;
- help children discover their place in the world.

Adapted, with permission, from Chester Diocese Collective Worship Guidelines



## Diocesan Expectations: A Summary

### Worship in our Church Schools should always:

- offer opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- offer space for reflection, prayer, meditation and silence
- offer opportunities to worship God
- underpin the Christian vision and associated values of the school
- be inclusive and aim to respect each individual's integrity
- be clearly planned and appropriate to the ages, aptitudes and backgrounds of pupils
- be clearly outlined in the school prospectus and documentation.

### Worship in our Church Schools should, at various times in the school year, give opportunity to:

- reflect some of the practices and traditions of the local church
- celebrate the Christian vision, associated values and worth of the school community
- enable pupils to reflect on human existence
- enable children to explore and evaluate their own beliefs
- give time to consider the beliefs and values of others, especially those within the school community
- be shared by *all* staff including support staff, sometimes ancillary staff, sometimes parents, carers, governors and members of the local community
- celebrate special occasions and seasons in the church's year and the life of the community
- show appreciation for the God-given gifts and talents of the school community.

### Responsibility

The governors hold overall responsibility for ensuring that the legal requirements for worship are met. The Headteacher may wish to take on the responsibility for organising and planning the worship, however a working party of staff, perhaps with governors, might be formed. A church community might also be encouraged to be involved in the planning and preparation of school worship as this can help to ensure continuity between the worship in the school and in the parish or parishes. It must however be made clear to all staff and clergy who lead collective worship that they should do so in a way that ensures that all present can take part with integrity.

### Documentation

#### Governors should ensure that the school provides the following:

A clear statement on collective worship in the school prospectus which makes clear the Christian foundation of the school and includes parents' legal right to withdraw their children.

A clear and concise policy statement on Collective Worship including the following





- ethos statement
- aims and principles
- the school's commitment to worship
- the centrality of worship to the life of the school
- the school's commitment to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- how the school's worship will reflect its Anglican heritage
- arrangements and practice within the school
- where and when worship takes place
- links made with the local churches and the clergy
- advice to visitors and clergy when leading collective worship in the church school
- the educational value of worship and the possible links made with other areas of the curriculum
- planning showing themes to be covered each term or year
- evidence of regular recording, monitoring & evaluation.



## The Shape of Collective Worship

Collective worship should provide opportunities for participants to gather, engage and respond in a variety of ways, grounded in distinctively Christian teaching. Using the language of Gathering, Engaging, Responding and Sending is a practical and helpful way to plan collective worship.

This four part model for worship is unpacked below based on a very helpful resource called Flippin Praise (available from CASIAS)

<http://www.churchschoolseast.org.uk/documents/A4FlippinPraisetouse.pdf>).

The principles can be applied to whole school, phase and class worship settings.

### Gathering

A distinctive atmosphere and a clearly visible focus point are important. There should be a feeling of expectation as people gather for worship.

We gather together and greet each other. We all come to play a part in this community.  
We are preparing to meet with God.

Think about...  
How is the room arranged?  
How are people greeted?  
Does everyone know their role?



### Engaging

This may be the main part in an act of worship. In a Church school, it should encourage children to engage with the Bible, Christian teaching, and most importantly, with God.

We engage with the big things and the little things in life. We encounter Jesus and the stories of the Bible. We are listening for God's message to us.

Think about...  
How will you share the message? From the Bible? God's people in history? God's people today?  
What strategies will you use?  
Will you use your own experience or current events?



## Responding

For every child and adult present, some response should be possible. All should understand that this is time set aside for deep thought and for each to respond in an appropriate way.

We respond to what we have heard and seen. We respond together and as individuals. We are given the opportunity to worship God.

Think about...  
Will you spend time thinking or reflecting?  
Will you pray?  
Will you do something practical as a response? How?



## Sending

The ending of the act of worship should be full of purpose, as people are sent out to be different and to 'do' differently.

We are sent out to love and serve one another and to make a difference in the world. We are all dismissed with God's blessing

Think about...  
How will people be sent out of worship?  
Will there be special words? A blessing? A dismissal?  
Who will lead this?

## The Role of the Collective Worship Coordinator

### The Person who Co-ordinates Collective Worship should:

- Assist governors and Headteacher in fulfilling their legal responsibilities with respect to Collective Worship  
*Why not send invitations to your governors at various times throughout the year?*
- Ensure that collective worship maintains a high profile in the life of the school  
*Are there displays / resources / artefacts visible in the school?*
- Write / review the school's collective worship policy in consultation with the Headteacher, staff and governors  
*See exemplar*  
*Liaise with designated governor for worship*
- Ensure staff and governors are aware of and use the policy document
- Plan a programme of worship for the year
- Work with staff, children and visitors to support the planning & delivery of worship
- Evaluate and review provision for Collective Worship with governors and staff.  
*Update as appropriate the schools self-evaluation for SIAMS*
- Plan for the development of Collective Worship  
*An annual report is useful – so is a budget!*  
*Is collective worship included in the school development plan?*
- Develop documentation for planning, monitoring, evaluating and recording acts of worship.
- Develop an adequate range of resources for worship.
- Attend relevant inset & disseminate information to staff  
*Lead a discussion on worship in a staff meeting*
- Liaise with a variety of people, including the parish clergy, diocesan advisers and visitors who can advise and support the delivery of Collective Worship.



# Collective Worship Policy

A collective worship policy should contain the following sections:

## **Introductory Statement**

An introductory statement should include the legal position of collective worship and explain that collective worship is central to the life of the school and is held, for everyone in the school community, every day.

The statement should include the importance of collective worship in relation to church school distinctiveness.

The statement should also explain that worship is held in accordance with the teachings of the Church of England.

Reference to the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) can also be made.

## **Statement of Withdrawal**

The right of all parents to withdraw their children (and, where relevant, sixth form pupils to withdraw themselves) from worship providing they have notified the Headteacher of their desire to do so should be included.

This should also be included in the school prospectus.

If a child is withdrawn, the school is required to provide a safe alternative.

## **Aims**

A statement of aims for collective worship should be included.

These should highlight the core values and purpose of collective worship and the relationship with the school's Christian vision.

Reference should also be made to the relationship between collective worship and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children.

Reference should be made to the central place collective worship has in the life of the school. Reference should be made to the expatiation that collective worship is distinctive and inclusive, and is for all members of the school community.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

This section should contain a description of the school's cycle of review for collective worship.

It should explain how worship is monitored and evaluated and by whom.

It should also include how the school uses the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation activities to inform future planning.

## **Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**



This section should include how the policy deals with matters of inclusion and it should make reference to the school inclusion and equal opportunities policy. It should also refer to the arrangements for right of withdrawal and what provision is made for children who are withdrawn.

### **Responsibilities**

This section should outline the roles and responsibilities of people or groups in the school that have responsibility for collective worship.

It should include the responsibilities of the governing body in guaranteeing the provision of and distinctively Anglican character of collective worship. It should also include the responsibilities of the collective worship co-ordinator.

It may also include a Church School Group or pupil group.

### **Organisation of Collective Worship**

This section should contain an outline of how collective worship is planned and organised;

Who is responsible for organising collective worship on a day to day basis?

Do clergy and other visitors contribute?

When does collective worship takes place in church?

What structure does collective worship take? (e.g Gather, Engage, Respond, Send)

When and how do children plan and lead worship?

### **Visitors**

This section should include guidelines provided for visitors e.g. your visitors handbook or protocol.

### **Resources**

This section should include resources available to support collective worship and where they are kept in school.

### **Planning and Record Keeping**

This section should outline school practice for planning and record keeping

Highlight where these are kept in the school and how these might be available to parents, inspectors etc if requested.

### **Conclusion**

This should reinforce previous sections that emphasise the important and distinctive role of collective worship in the life of a church school.

### **Signature and Date**



## Appendix 1 Ethos Statement

'Recognizing its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England/Church in Wales and in partnership with the Churches at parish and diocesan level. The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.'

