

Aspects of Collective Worship

*Worship,
experience,
consider,
explore,
appreciate,
think about,
promote,
reaffirm and
celebrate*

The DCSF offers the advice that Collective Worship in schools should aim to provide opportunities for pupils to:

- worship God
- experience prayer, meditation and silence
- consider spiritual and moral issues
- explore their own beliefs and those of others
- appreciate the importance of religious beliefs to those who hold them
- think about the needs of others and develop a sense of community spirit
- promote a common ethos and shared values
- reaffirm, interpret and put into practice the values of the school
- celebrate the various achievements of the community that are held to be of worth
- appreciate and develop positive attitudes.

Schools should seek to ensure that each of these aims is reflected through the acts of Collective Worship that are provided. In so doing, the school makes significant contribution to the promotion of **community cohesion**.

*Community
Cohesion!*

The guidance clearly states that Collective Worship should provide opportunities for pupils to worship God. Pupils can be encouraged, but not coerced, to participate. Ensure that the leaders of worship always invite participation - never expect or assume participation. Pupils are free to respond or not, as the case may be. However, if we fail to provide such opportunities then we not only fail in our statutory duty, but we may also be denying pupils an experience of participating in, and responding to, worship.

Collective Worship is a key area through which schools can make **explicit** the values that underpin their ethos and aims, and which are **implicit** in their community life and work. It enables staff and pupils to come together to affirm shared values and to celebrate achievement, both collective and individual. Consider celebrating:

- special school events and achievements
- the success of individuals and groups
- festivals and holy days of the faith communities.

*Affirm shared
values and
celebrate
achievement*



The manner of presentation should encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship, or through listening to and joining in the worship offered.

Focus

Opportunities to think, to form new ideas and to develop a personal response to new and different experiences should be part of Collective Worship. Development of such reflective skills may be encouraged through the provision of these opportunities:

Stilling is an activity in which pupils (and adults) are encouraged to sit in a way that is comfortable and allows them to concentrate, control their breathing and focus on their thoughts. They are encouraged to respond to an atmosphere that is reflective. For support in developing stilling techniques consult Mary Stone's *Don't Just Do Something, Sit There*, RMEP, Lancaster (1992).

Pray

Encourage pupils to write their own prayers, perhaps as a response to curriculum work on the environment or to some event happening in the wider world. These prayers could be shared as part of Collective Worship. There are a number of excellent collections of prayers written by and for young people.



Consider Belief

Invite people from different faith groups and denominations to lead, or speak at, your act of Collective Worship. Pupils should be encouraged to consider their own thoughts, feelings and beliefs following such encounters.

Question

In our daily lives we sometimes face events which cause us to raise ultimate questions. To ask "why?" Collective Worship may often be the most appropriate vehicle through which we can help pupils to explore these questions. Internet sites such as www.assemblies.org.uk responded almost immediately with material and ideas to 9/11; 7/7; the Boxing Day tsunami etc. This and other sites listed in the Appendices have thousands of ideas for themes and activities.

Participate

Encourage pupils to present their own ideas to the rest of the school or year group. There are a number of travelling and local theatre groups willing to come into school and presenting a particular idea or message. Some offer a particular faith stance, others will support moral issues such as anti-bullying, and others should be invited to share something of their culture.

Wonder

It is possible to use music (see list in Appendices), art, artefacts and photographs - enlarged and projected for all to see, to set an atmosphere which provides opportunities to experience wonder. But wonder can be experienced in the telling of a story, in the recounting of an experience, in the handling of a small animal, in the unexpected. Be open to opportunities to provide for the experience of wonder.

Pose questions of meaning

Collective Worship may provide the opportunities to pose questions of meaning. This does not mean that answers have to be provided. Some schools keep comment books for pupils to record their responses to, and questions about, the content of their acts of Collective Worship. Such a book may contribute to the evaluation of Collective Worship but may also help pupils reflect on and respond thoughtfully to the content of Collective Worship.

Be curious

The skills of reflection and response are developed through the fostering of positive attitudes and encouragement to be curious, thoughtful, sensitive to and respectful of the beliefs of others, open-minded and willing to question. These attributes enable us to consider and develop personal beliefs and values.

Worship Works... when you leave a cliffhanger!