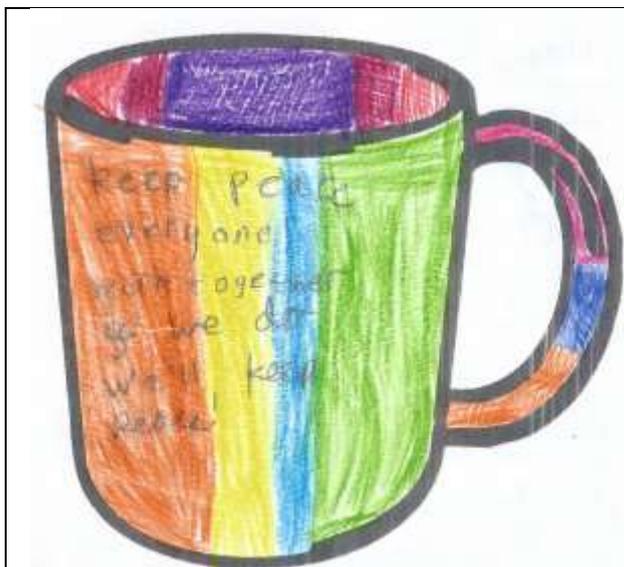


WOLVERHAMPTON SACRE GUIDANCE COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Written for SACRE by Lat Blaylock, RE Adviser, 2019.



7 year old Hafsa created this mug of peace.
“Keep peace everyone. Work together. If we do, we’ll keep peace.”



Emelia, 10, writes: “I have drawn the world because we all live on it, and I have picked these words because they are true.”

INTRODUCTION: THE BEST OF SCHOOL ASSEMBLY AND SCHOOL WORSHIP

There is a wealth of excellent practice in schools' collective worship in Wolverhampton. However, many schools request further advice and help in this area, and it is in response to these that SACRE is pleased to commend this new guidance.

The current law on collective worship in schools is governed by the 1988 Education Reform Act, with the corresponding guidance offered in Circular 1/94. SACRE recognises the contentious nature of the legislation, especially for many secondary schools. The debate has continued over recent years, notably with various proposals for new ways forward from the RE Council for England and Wales, the National Association of SACREs and the UK InterFaith Network, requesting regular rather than daily acts of collective worship. At present, however (in 2018), there seems no prospect of change to the law from the DfE.

Whilst SACRE acknowledges that some schools find the legal requirements constraining, we firmly believe in the great value of collective worship. Done well, as it is in so many schools, it offers a worthwhile and distinctive contribution to the ethos and values of the school, as well as giving opportunities for enriching the experiences of pupils. If there were no such thing as a school assembly, many school communities would invent it! SACRE has produced the following guidance in order to encourage and facilitate the further development of high quality collective worship in your school, as part of your provision of school assemblies.

Wolverhampton SACRE would welcome case studies of good practice in school worship, which we will share on the Local Authority website. If you would like to write a case study, then please contact the Local Authority / SACRE

Salaiman, 7, designed his peace shirt to show that 'together we can have peace.'



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WHAT IS THE POINT OF SCHOOL ASSEMBLY OR SCHOOL WORSHIP?



Staff developmental activity: in threes, discuss ~ which of these do you think are most useful, most controversial, most relevant to your pupils, firmly in place, innovative, useful?

1: THE VALUE AND PURPOSE OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN THE LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

The nature and purpose of collective worship

Why do we have collective worship in schools?

It is, of course, a legal requirement (see over) but we at SACRE believe that its value extends so much further.

Collective worship can both reinforce and contribute to the ethos of the school, in addition to offering a unique occasion in the school day to pause and explore life beyond the prescribed curriculum.

It encourages members of the whole school community, teachers and learners together, to challenge assumptions and reflect upon issues which transcend normal day to day experiences, thus broadening understanding and contributing to our search for meaning in life. By enabling pupils to acknowledge the value of diversity in terms of race, gender, culture and differing abilities, it fosters inclusion and breeds tolerance.

Furthermore, whilst allowing those with religious commitment to enter into worship, those who have no such commitment are offered an opportunity to sense what worship can mean.

Government guidance circular 1/94 (still officially in force in 2018, and unamended) states:

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.

Legal requirements

Daily

All community, foundation or voluntary schools, other than Pupil Referral Units, are required by law to provide a daily act of collective worship. Special schools should secure daily collective worship as far as is practicable.

Wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character

All pupils should take part in an act of worship which is 'wholly, or mainly of a broadly Christian character' in some appropriate grouping at some point in the day – unless they have been withdrawn by their parents. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 defines 'broadly Christian' to mean that it should 'not be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination'. This does not apply, however in Church schools in which collective worship is defined by the Trust Deed. Not every act of collective worship is required to be Christian, provided that 'taking any school term as a whole' most are.

Whose responsibility is it?

In community or foundation schools without a religious character, the arrangements for collective worship are the responsibility of the Headteacher after consultation with the governing body. In foundation schools with a religious character or voluntary schools, the arrangements for collective worship are to be made by the governing body after consulting the head, and must be in line with the schools' Trust Deed or Diocesan guidelines in the case of church schools. SACRE's responsibilities include the monitoring and support of collective worship in county schools.

Withdrawals

In accordance with legal requirements, parents have the right to withdraw their children from acts of collective worship on religious grounds. Parents should make their wishes known to the Headteacher who will ensure that any pupils who are withdrawn are appropriately supervised while the act of collective worship takes place. Pupils can be withdrawn wholly or partly from acts of collective worship only by parents. Schools should not use this time to withdraw pupils for other activities.

Determinations

Collective worship should be appropriate to the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of pupils within the school. The legal requirement for collective worship to be 'wholly, or mainly of a broadly Christian character' is appropriate for most pupils across the country and the county.

If, in the opinion of the Headteacher, the requirements for 'broadly Christian' worship is inappropriate for the whole school, or a group within the school, an application may be made to the SACRE for a 'determination'. This will allow for acts of collective worship according to a religion other than Christianity where this is more appropriate.

Where a determination is granted by the SACRE, the requirement for the school to provide daily collective worship remains; it is only the 'broadly Christian' nature of this worship which is 'lifted' or 'modified'. (For further guidance see Circular 1/94)

When is it assembly and when is it collective worship?

Assemblies can incorporate collective worship, but there is a distinction between the two. A report on sporting achievements may come under 'assembly' but using the pupils' sporting achievements to explore and reflect on human potential, determination, loyalty, courage could be the stimulus for a 'worshipful response' and therefore could constitute collective worship.

It is helpful to establish some ritual for marking out collective worship from assembly – perhaps by involving pupils in lighting a candle or playing music.

School notices should be separate from an act of collective worship and these are better dealt with at the beginning rather than at the end. This enables pupils to continue to reflect on the essence of the act of worship as they leave the hall to continue with other school activities.

What makes a good act of collective worship?

What some secondary school pupils had to say . . .

A group of 14 year old pupils from a school with a well established daily act of worship were asked what they thought made a good act of collective worship. These were some of their comments:

- “When it involves the pupils”
- “When you feel part of worship”
- “When there is strong eye contact between the person leading the worship and the audience”
- “A talk about a topic that is interesting or in the media at the moment”
- “Something that is funny and useful.”

Delivering collective worship – Chris Wright

From a Secondary school audit:

Secondary pupils said:

- better collective worship involved pupil participation of some sort, mostly because these were livelier and more fun than being talked to for a long time;
- they could remember collective worship with lively input and participation without any recollection of the intended message;
- they sometimes recognised the morals being put across - ideas such as truth, friendship, trust, judging, forgiveness, respect, fairness etc.
- they recall many with themes on bullying but were sceptical as to their effect on bullies;
- there was little enthusiasm for singing of any sort - too embarrassing! The only suggested way of introducing singing was with a decent group of musicians making up a band, and singing up-to-date songs or hymns.

Clearly to deepen the impact of collective worship, there are things to do!

What OFSTED has to say . . .

“Characteristics of the best acts of worship included:

- a good variety of stimuli including drama, music, literature, artefacts and pictures, which captured and sustained the attention of pupils of all ages;
- relevant content which promoted the spiritual growth and development of the pupils;
- questioning which elicited thoughtful and extended responses;
- opportunities for quiet reflection as well as prayer;
- and the involvement of the pupils in the planning and presentation of worship.”

What one respected writer on collective worship suggests makes a good act of collective worship . . .

1 It has to be worship.

Each act of worship should have:

- i) A space in the school building which is conducive to a worshipful atmosphere
- ii) A clear focus on important issues or concepts such as love, forgiveness, peace, meaning and values.
- iii) Materials and approaches which connect with the pupils (heart and mind)
- iv) Space for reflection – giving time to think about the issues raised and enabling those who want to, to pray.
- v) A feeling that this time is somehow special, out of the ordinary, has a sense of occasion.

2 Plenty of participation... both active and passive, by pupils and adults. This is a time for building up the sense of community and promoting the ethos of a school. It is clearly important therefore, that staff as well as pupils are in attendance.

3 Wide variety of approaches... dramatic, readings, stories, music, dance, silence, reflections, songs, hymns, prayers, mime, visual images and artefacts that could be used as a focus for worship.

4 Variety of leaders... including visitors from outside the school – local people from faith and community groups, representatives of charitable activities, school governors, parents... as well as different members of school staff.

5 Broadly Christian... this does not necessarily mean Christian prayers, hymns or Bible stories have to be used on every occasion – but it will be important to include over the course of each term Christian stories, teachings and perspectives and to mark special days and seasons in the Christian calendar.

Worship: Making Primary School Worship come alive' by John Bailey,
Diocesan Director of Education for Lincolnshire. Originally published by the Church of England, The National Society 1999.

2: POLICY AND PLANNING

Wolverhampton Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education Policy statement on collective worship

The Wolverhampton Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) believes that collective worship time, which is distinct from the curriculum, should provide all pupils irrespective of background, members of different faiths or of no religion, with:

- relevant, meaningful experiences which enrich the education offered through the curriculum
- opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- opportunities for responding to the best in humanity's journeys of faith and belief, including voluntary opportunities for worshipping God.

SACRE believes that collective worship can make a significant contribution to the ethos of the school by reinforcing and reflecting the beliefs and values which bind the school community together. It can inspire, uplift, celebrate and give a sense of purpose and direction.

SACRE believes that collective worship should model the ideals of inclusion, respecting the integrity of all involved.

The Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for Wolverhampton, endorses the requirement for schools to:

- comply with the legal requirements
- produce a school policy for collective worship which takes account of the legal requirements and the guidance offered by Wolverhampton LEA through its SACRE
- ensure that a school policy is fully implemented

The Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education for Wolverhampton will, from time to time, in accordance with its duty, monitor the provision and practice of collective worship in its schools.

School Policy for collective worship

A policy statement should describe what actually happens in the school. The process of developing the statement is as important as the written policy itself. The development of an agreed statement provides important opportunities for involving all members of the school community in an exploration of the value, purpose and practical arrangements for collective worship.

Developing your school policy statement

One way of developing a school policy is to address two key questions:

Why is collective worship important in the life of the school?

How is collective worship managed, organised and delivered within the school?

1 Why is collective worship important in the life of the school?

This might include:

- a statement concerning the status of the school (including acknowledgement; of legal requirements / trust deeds and guidance documents from LEA or Diocese)
- agreed definitions / descriptions of collective worship;
- the aims of collective worship;
- the contribution of other areas of the curriculum to collective worship;
- the contribution of collective worship to other aspects of the curriculum (including cross curricular themes and Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development, British values)

2 How is collective worship managed, organised and delivered?

This might include short statements on:

- management: who is responsible and areas of responsibility;
- organisation : including details of pupil groupings, leaders and visitors;
- planning : including the Scheme/Cycle of Themes;
- recording, monitoring and evaluation of collective worship;
- delivery of collective worship;
- legal rights of withdrawal.

As a policy needs to go before the Governing Body every time it is altered/amended it may be that some of the above e.g. the Scheme or the details regarding Leaders/Visitors can be placed in appendices and therefore altered more conveniently as they develop. You may also wish to include in appendices: guidelines for visitors, the role of the co-ordinator/team and resource lists or inventory.



Artwork by Shriya, 10.

Principles for planning for collective worship

Good collective worship enriches the life of the school and promotes the development of shared values and purpose. It is worth an investment of time and resources, even - and perhaps especially - in the context of a busy school and a demanding workload.

Time

- Time should be set aside for collective worship in every school, on every day in term time, and this should be separate from general school administration or curriculum time. It is not counted as part of the provision for RE, which is a separate curriculum subject.
- The length of time for an act of worship varies. In most schools pupils will be engaged in collective worship for 10 to 20 minutes a day, approximately an hour or more (and in others probably about two hours) a week. That is a great deal of time, more time than is allocated to some subjects in the curriculum.

Planning is essential

- Every school should appoint a person to co-ordinate the organisation and delivery of collective worship.
- To ensure quality in the curriculum, much thought is given to planning, the learning outcomes, teaching and learning strategies, and to evaluating success. The same rigour should apply to collective worship.
- In a busy school week we cannot justify 'filling in time' for up to two hours. Although it will always be right to 'catch the moment' and deal with something current, newsworthy and of immediate importance to the school community, effective planning is needed to ensure that pupils are offered quality experiences.

Long term planning

- Long term planning does not have to be a burden. Over time, you can build up a cycle of themes which can actually save time and effort.
- Some schools opt for a two-year cycle but will bear in mind continuity and progression within themes. It is possible to build a cycle of five years using the suggested themes on pages 11 and 12 alone.

Weekly planning

- As many schools now organise their collective worship or assemblies around a weekly theme it is useful to use a Planning Grid, see appendix A.

Aims and content

Aims and Objectives

- What kind of experiences, skills and concepts are to be developed long term?
- How does worship / the worship theme link into the curriculum, outside events, school life, short term?

Content: Does the content reflect:

- The school calendar?
- Local, national and international events?
- Religious and secular festivals and celebrations?
- Does the balance reflect the requirements of the law?

Suitability: Is the content suitable for:

- Whole school gatherings?
- Age related (e.g. year) groups?
- Small groups (e.g. classes)?

Themes and events

Identify each area of focus (suggested below) using a different coloured pen on your grid. This will enable you to see at a glance if your scheme is balanced and if it addresses pupil development.

Areas for focus are:

- Festivals that the school normally celebrates. Are there any other festivals which you should include? This may depend on the faith backgrounds of the children in the school.
 - Events which are significant to the school and the children. These might include: new beginnings, leavers' ceremony, founder's day, a famous local person, local community or charity events.
 - National events which you want the children to be aware of and reflect on, such as One World Week, Remembrance Day.
 - Brainstorm the question: 'If you could give one child a gift or quality when they leave school what would it be?' Integrate the results into the grid. Answers might include insight / courage / self esteem / strong sense of identity / resilience / willingness to face challenges and many more.
 - Select appropriate themes from the list which will enable you to address areas that have not been fully explored, or where opportunities have not been fully exploited. Such themes may, for example, address moral or social development, or national, international or local culture, or citizenship or PSHE
- Opportunities for spiritual development should be an important aspect of every act of worship. Attention should be given to planning to ensure that pupils are able to consciously or unconsciously make a response – there needs to be a 'space for reflection'.

Staff participation

- It is a good idea to plan for collective worship as a staff team, particularly if all members of staff are given the opportunity to lead acts of worship, therefore encouraging professional development.
- There is often anxiety over 'performing' in front of peers but this should be developmental. Consider addressing a class, a year group, a key stage, before addressing the whole school. This also gives staff the opportunity of being more than a subject or class teacher.
- The law safeguards teachers (and pupils) who object to being present on religious grounds but schools should consider carefully what kind of messages they are sending out if staff do not attend collective worship.

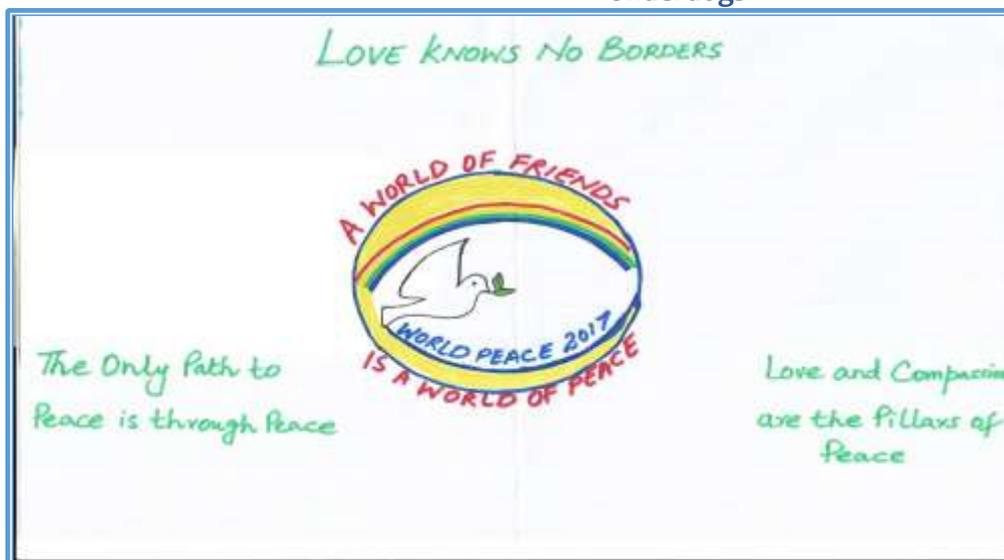


3: THEMES, STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

Some appropriate themes suitable for development over a week or longer:

- Ability and disability
- Achievement
- Adventure
- Aggression and hate
- Aims and ambitions
- All Saints?
- Ambitions
- Angels
- A time for everyone
- Autumn
- Baisakhi
- Barriers
- Beauty
- Beginnings
- Big and small
- Big ideas
- Big questions
- Blindness & sight
- Books
- Bravery
- Bridges
- Building relationships
- Care and caring
- Challenge
- Change
- Charity
- Children
- Choice/Choices
- Christmas
- Citizenship
- Communication
- Communion
- Compassion
- Conservation
- Courage
- Creation
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Day and night
- Democracy and Government
- Desert Island Discs
- Differences
- Disability
- Discipleship
- Discovery
- Divali
- Dreams
- Easter
- Earth in Future
- Education and learning
- Education and life
- Enjoyment
- Environment
- Epiphany
- Experience
- Exploring the future
- Exploring the past
- Faith
- Fake news and real news
- Fame
- Fantasy
- Film to inspire
- Finding your way
- Food for thought
- Forgiveness
- Freedom and responsibility
- Freedom and slavery
- Friends + Friendship
- Fury and Frustration
- Futures: sci-fi and new worlds
- Gender
- Gifts
- Giving up and going on
- Global issues
- God and gods
- Goddesses
- God's world
- Good and evil
- Good news
- Green issues
- Growing
- Guiding light
- Guilt and suffering
- Handicaps
- Happiness is...
- Hardship
- Harvest
- Haves and Have-nots
- Health
- Helping Hands
- Heroes and heroines
- Hobbies
- Holidays and travel
- Homes and families
- Hope and despair
- Human vices
- Human virtues
- Humility
- Humour
- I believe...
- Illusion and reality
- Imagination
- Individual liberty
- Influences and indoctrination
- Intentions
- Invitations
- Jesus
- Journeys
- Joy and happiness
- Joy and sorrow
- Justice + fair play
- Just thinking about it...
- Key people
- Language
- Laws and rules
- Leaders and leadership
- Learning
- Leisure
- Lent
- Liberty
- Life and death
- Life's challenge
- Life's ups and downs
- Light
- Listen
- Living and loving
- Living with tomorrow
- Loss and grief
- Love and hate
- Love in action
- Memories and reflections
- Messages and messengers
- Method and madness
- Miracles
- Mothering Sunday
- My favourite music
- My favourite poem
- Myself and others
- Neighbours
- New life
- News
- New school year
- New year resolutions
- Obedience
- Obstacles
- Old age
- Old and new
- One world
- Opportunities
- Optimism and hope
- Parables
- Parents and children

- Passover
- Past and future
- Peace (and tranquillity)
- Personal qualities
- People I have met
- Pilgrimage
- Places of worship
- Planet earth
- Poetry
- Power and spirit
- Praise
- Prayer and meditation
- Prejudice
- Preparations
- Pride
- Proverbs and wise sayings
- Questions and questioning
- Quietness and silence
- Quality time for quality learning
- Rebirth
- Red letter days
- Relationships and sexuality
- Remembrance
- Respect
- Responsibility
- Reward and punishment
- Rhyme and reason
- Riches
- Rights and responsibilities
- Roots
- Rule of Law
- Sacrifice
- Saving life
- School and community
- School and opportunity
- School and tradition
- Science
- Seeing the light
- Serving and service
- Signs and symbols
- Sound of silence
- Special books
- Special interests
- Special people
- Special places
- Speech and speaking
- Stepping stones and stumbling blocks
- Stories from the lives of great leaders
- Stories from the New Testament.
- Stories from the Jewish Bible
- Stories from scriptures worldwide
- Strain and stress
- Strength and weakness
- Success and failure
- Taking risks
- Talk, talk, talk
- Tolerance
- Thanks
- Thanksgiving
- The 12 Apostles
- The Arts
- The future
- The good things in life
- The Lord's Prayer
- The message
- The natural world
- The outsider
- The still, small voice
- The unexpected
- The world about us
- Things to avoid
- Treasures
- Turning points
- Us and them
- Underdogs
- Upside down world
- Victory and defeat
- Views of education
- Visits and visitors
- Voices
- Voices from the past
- War and peace
- Wealth and poverty
- Wealth, money and riches
- What God doesn't tolerate
- What's it worth?
- Why are we here?
- Windows
- Wisdom
- Wise and foolish
- Witness
- Wonder and awe
- Words, words, words
- Work and play
- Worship
- Youth
- Years passing by
- Zzzzz... Boredom and interest



Arwork by Zainab, 10

Breaking down a Theme

One theme can deliver a variety of foci for collective worship. It is important not to exhaust a theme, but equally important not to overlook the opportunities it may offer. The easiest way to ‘break down’ a theme is to brainstorm it with colleagues, selecting those aspects most suitable for promoting school issues and concerns, whilst taking account of the ages, ability and aptitudes of the pupils.

For example a brainstorm on the theme of ‘Love’ might include:

- sacrificial love
- love of neighbour
- agape
- erotic love
- love of possessions
- hedonism
- love of God
- unconditional love
- love of self
- love for the Earth

Some aspects on this list may not be considered appropriate for a week’s assemblies but others may form the basis of a week’s collective worship. Future planning may therefore use the same theme again but explore a different aspect. Materials from religious and non-religious sources may be used to support the theme: we hope the list can make any teacher’s imagination kick into action!

Planning, Recording and Evaluating individual acts of collective worship

The intention of the planning sheets in the appendix is to provide examples of administratively lightweight frameworks, which can provide a valuable tool to ensure that monitoring is effective. At a glance you will be able to see that all legal requirements are met and that appropriate balance is being provided. Using similar sheets, will enable leaders to plan and prepare effectively, bearing in mind continuity and progression, for they will be able to see which resources have been used and to what effect.

You may need to customise the sheets to meet your own school needs. A space for the overall aim of the theme is useful. The content should be identified in brief but specific resources should be named so that they are not used repeatedly. One word answers or code letters or symbols will be sufficient to identify that opportunities for spiritual, moral, social or cultural development will be provided, or that a particular faith or cross curricular theme or dimension will be addressed. These aspects form the ‘planning’ of the acts of collective worship.

An ‘evaluation’ column gives the opportunity to record what actually happened - ‘according to plan’; ‘story too complex’; ‘children responded well’; ‘opportunity to address citizenship arose’, etc. The evaluation need not be lengthy but completing this means that the planning sheet has also become a recording sheet which may be used to monitor worship at a future date.

Strategies for collective worship

Any strategies used in a classroom situation can be applied in an assembly/acts of worship. It is very important to vary the strategies that we use so that our pupils do not become bored with the same diet and disengage. Using a variety of strategies enriches the stimulus material and so makes the opportunity for response (perhaps worshipful) more likely.

The following is not an exhaustive list of possible strategies, but it may encourage leaders to try something new. As in a lesson, a particular strategy should only be used if it actually enables pupils to reach the intended outcome.

Artefacts

There are rules of respect and sensitivity to observe when using artefacts, but they are excellent windows into a faith. Use them as you would in the classroom – to stimulate interest, to provoke questions, to illustrate an aspect of faith, to provide a sensory experience. An artefact may provide a focus for worship but they should not be used only as a ‘display item’ without pupils understanding what it is and its significance.

Bible / Sacred Text

Looking at the Bible or other sacred text, exploring its significance to believers, may be the focus for acts of worship or assembly. At times it will be useful to read directly from the text, at others it may be appropriate to retell a story in your own words. It is useful to explore concepts and issues found in the Bible and other sacred text which have some relevance, relationship or impact on pupils’ lives today.

Buzz Groups / Pairs

Allowing pupils to talk to each other in assembly / collective worship gives every pupil the opportunity to participate. This may require patience if you have never tried it before, but once the skills and the process have been learned and practised, it is a very effective strategy. Give pupils only 2–3 minutes to talk about a given subject (favourite things, why they like their best friend, who they turn to in times of trouble etc.) Feedback will include obvious answers which you can supplement. Their experiences provide the bridge to their understanding of the concept you are exploring.

Current News

As you read the newspapers cut out and preserve ‘gems’ for the future. If you are addressing a current issue use a video clip (BBC’s Newsround) or newspaper cutting. Remember:

- you should select a piece that can be easily read, understood, talked about.
- you will need time to think it through
- ask yourself: ‘Why do I want to share this with my pupils?’ - your aim
- be aware that your selection may or may not directly affect your pupils
- introduce the article with a general chat about what is happening
- focus on the article read / show / talk about
- encourage reflection by asking for their impressions. For example: What would be their response in a similar situation? What do they think will / should happen next? Who else should be involved? Use question and answer technique or as you speak, write up questions on OHT, for the pupils to discuss in pairs.
- if you have given yourself enough time, you may be able to add another dimension by using a reading / quote / religious teaching to further explore or reflect on the issue.

Discussion Groups / Pairs

This works best with upper KS2 and above, in year or class group assemblies. Give pupils 3–5 minutes and visit each group. They can discuss issues such as the world we live in, what matters to me, forgiveness means... etc. The discussion itself and/or the points raised may constitute a worship / ‘reflection time’.

Everyday Objects

Using ordinary everyday objects as visual aids can be particularly effective and it is surprising just how many opportunities there are using this particular strategy. The next time you have an assembly planning meeting with other members of staff, bring along 10 items you’ve picked up around the home or classroom. Consider how you would use each item separately in different acts of worship and see what you come up with.

Here are three examples and a few objects for you to think about:

- a bruised apple doesn't mean it is all bad (good and bad in everyone?)
- a tube of Smarties contains lots of different coloured shells, same chocolate (one world, lots of different people essentially the same?)
- lots of different sizes and shaped candles, light them and the flame is the same (we may look different but our spirit is the same?)

To consider:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| • safety pin | • balloon | • soap |
| • infant's dummy (soother). | • party poppers | • orange |
| • Mirrors | • can of drink | • tube of toothpaste |
| • The school 'late book' | • false beard, disguise | • contents of a bin |

Gifts and Talents

A visitor, a member of staff or a pupil talks or is interviewed about his / her outstanding talent.

This is not an occasion to explore how we use talents, but an opportunity to recognise positive aspects of life and humanity. Qualities such as courage, determination, perseverance, or things that are good, honourable, true, noble, loving, right, pure, just, or things which bring joy, happiness, contentment and hope – all deserve acknowledgement and praise.

Guided Imagery

'Stilling' and 'Relaxation' are the skills which need building to have success with this strategy. It is extremely effective and powerful, but there are ground rules and if you have never used this strategy with a class/group before you need to be careful and do not expect too much. It can be done in whole school assembly but pupils need to have developed the necessary skills for this is a classroom situation first.

Improvisation

Most pupils will be happy to volunteer at primary level, but this tends to lose its appeal with some pupils once they enter secondary school. A stock of costumes, hats, masks etc. for them to wear whilst the 'story' is told does enhance the activity. Pupils will take their 'cue' from your structured narrative.

Music

This is not only useful for creating atmosphere when pupils are entering or leaving the assembly hall or room. It can be used to great effect to explore concepts and themes. As music is very important to youth culture there is a danger that your audience may not consider your choice of music as contemporary. It is a good idea to involve the pupils in music choices and presentation.

Posters

Use as you would in a classroom, on a whiteboard or screen – including: What does the image say to you? What did the artist intend? What is being said? Why is this image important and to whom? Encourage pupils to consider, reflect on and think about the issues raised through the poster.

Poetry and Prayer

Use either children's own prayers or poems or some of the good examples available. Many poems are not only humorous but address issues of concern for today. The NATRE website's 'Spirited Arts' section (www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts) has hundreds of great examples.

Power Point / Prezi / Presentation tools for the big screen

You don't have to have a PowerPoint for an assembly! But a good one is valuable. PowerPoint presentations can offer a less threatening 'introduction' to leading assemblies as you need to rely less on a 'live' presentation. Sequences of slides, together with reflective music, with an occasional word screened to encourage reflective thought can be enriching. Presentation software might tell a story, bring in a song, use a news item, clip from a film or be useful in one hundred other ways.

Pupils as leaders

Work with pupils as part of a presentation team, or as their director, or simply as their facilitator. Given ownership of what they are going to talk about / present, pupils will often respond very positively. They may feel more confident in front of their class or own year group rather than the whole school.

Puppets

Can be as elaborate or as simple as you choose to make them, including using people, paper bags and shadow puppets.

Reflection Diary

Useful for older primary and secondary pupils in group assemblies / collective worship. Each pupil keeps a diary and writes their thoughts in it, based on a focus for reflection. This is private, only to be shared with the teacher, and therefore great care needs to be taken with confidentiality and security.

(Acknowledgements to Michael Beasley 'Space for the Spirit')

Story

Use a good story to symbolise or illustrate an issue or a point, (a modern parable) for example, to explore the nature of God. Stories can be told in so many ways and it is worth trying out a few methods – using role play, puppets, masks, straight reading from a book, or dramatic retelling using your own words. If you think some key words might not be understood – explain them before you begin the story.

Stunt

These should not be overdone or the element of surprise will be lost. Set something up that comes as a complete surprise. You may consider following this up with a simple reflection rather than an elongated elucidation. For example: cutting off the headteacher's tie to illustrate 'Is seeing believing?' or a member of staff "heckles" over something – dealing with conflict.

Tableau

Position pupils in a 'frozen' position to illustrate a scene from a story or a particular situation. If you wish characters can 'unfreeze' to tell you who they are, what is happening to them, where they are and how they are feeling.

Toys

Use children's toys to help illustrate a story or to explore a particular concept. These are particularly useful for younger children but baby toys may be equally appropriate props in the secondary school, given the right circumstances. Pupils easily relate to toys and they are good aids for understanding. For example, a jigsaw with a piece missing – life is not complete for some people without their religious life; teddy bears – special friends you can tell anything to, like prayer to God.

Values

It is a central focus of good collective worship that story, wisdom sayings and personal experience are used by assembly leaders to highlight the kinds of values which the school promotes, including for example the British values of tolerance, respect, individual liberty, democracy and the rule of law.

As pupils grow up, the situations where values conflict with each other are a fruitful area for investigation and thinking. Exploring values presents pupils with opportunities for personal reflection on their own commitments, attitudes and behaviour.

Visitors

As with any visitor, clear guidance should be given as to what is expected of them. They need to know what support they can expect from the school too, and what the constraints are. If you ask a visitor to lead one assembly in a series of five on the same theme, ensure that they know what else is being done so that they do not duplicate. Do not overdo the charity requests for fund-raising.

Video

Depending on your theme, select any video which will illustrate your point. Use ‘sensory deprivation’ (listen to the dialogue with covered screen or watch the scene without the sound) to focus on a particular aspect. Or select a clip which you can talk about / discuss. For example, there are numerous scenes in ‘Toy Story’ which cover many dimensions for SMSC development.

Creating the right atmosphere and attitude

The purpose of this guidance is to support Wolverhampton schools in developing quality acts of collective worship. Planning obviously plays an essential role in this but to ensure quality we must create the ‘right atmosphere’ and the ‘right attitude’. The right atmosphere will aid pupils’ ‘feel good’ factor and with a positive attitude towards assembly and collective worship pupils are more likely to respond in a positive way – a way which could be considered by any one faith group or many as being ‘worshipful’.

Creating the right atmosphere

Space

- Is there adequate space so that the pupils do not feel claustrophobic or feel that their ‘personal space’ is being invaded?
- How do you make a large space feel inviting, secure and welcoming?
- If the room or hall is multi-functional ensure that it ‘changes’ to make the space more special for worship.

Seated or standing? Chairs or floor?

- Are pupils expected to stand, sit on chairs or sit on the floor? Standing for the duration will affect the pupils’ ability to see what is going on at the front and they are more likely to become restless. Sitting on the floor may be acceptable to younger pupils, but older pupils often feel it is undignified and resent having their clothes dirtied. Can all pupils have a seat, or a place on a bench? Probably best.

Acoustics

- The quality of ‘sound’ can be affected by a number of factors, including the size of the room, and its furnishings. Meeting in a gym hall, or having a kitchen adjacent to where you meet also affect the quality of sound and pupils’ ability to hear clearly.

Vision

- Can all pupils see the leader and worship activities clearly? Sometimes the arrangement of seating makes this particularly difficult.
- Consider changing the way seating is arranged if you have a particularly long hall – pupils at the back are more likely to feel excluded from the activities because they cannot see (or hear) clearly.

Punctuality

- Pupils become restless when they are waiting for long empty minutes until all of the school are assembled.

- If you have a large school population, which is spaced out, consider staggering the time pupils are expected to leave their classrooms to meet in the hall, and open up more than one entry into the hall.
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the importance of this and that they release pupils for assembly on time.

Focus for worship

- Provide a focus for the worship activities. This may change daily or weekly or take the form of a permanent piece of artwork on the wall.
- Use display space available for prayers, prose, quotations and artwork of a spiritual, reflective nature.

Creating the Right Attitude

A worthwhile experience

- As professionals we have to ensure that we are providing valuable experiences for our pupils and making the most of time we have available to us.
- Are we providing valuable experiences?
- Are we taking into account the various backgrounds of pupils in the worship activities we provide?
- Are we ensuring that the act of 'collective' worship is 'inclusive'?
- Addressing issues which are meaningful and relevant to our pupils will encourage them in feeling that we are offering worthwhile experiences in collective worship.

Pupil comfort

- If pupils are comfortable, sitting not standing; not having to worry about their bags and coats; not having their personal space invaded, they are more likely to become engaged in the worship activities taking place. Those present who do not wish to become engaged with the activities are less likely to become restless and spoil the occasion for others.

Pupil ownership

- Involving pupils in the planning and delivery of acts of worship is very important. It increases motivation, promotes self esteem, enhances their understanding and opportunities for spiritual development.

Positive experience

- Ensure that you are offering 'positive experiences' even though some elements may be challenging.
- Delivering and address on the environment and using it as a stick to beat the pupils with over the state of litter in the school yard is not a positive experience!
- Any matters of discipline should be dealt with at another time, allowing clear reflection on the focus of the assembly/act of collective worship.

Staff presence

- The law safeguards teachers (and pupils) who object to being present on religious grounds but schools should consider carefully what kind of messages they are sending out if staff do not attend collective worship.

Classroom worship

As long as there is a 'daily' act of collective worship, schools may organise this however they wish. Whole school assembly is not always possible because some schools have problems accommodating large numbers of pupils. But neither is whole school worship always desirable – there are merits in holding year group and key stage assemblies/collective worship. Here, particular issues, relevant to the age group or curriculum can be explored.

Classroom acts of worship too have their value

They should:

- be planned for, and the same ground rules apply to it as with other acts of worship
- teachers should try to create the right atmosphere and the right attitude. Consider ways in which you can 'mark' this time as 'special' in the classroom. Do you play some music, perform a relaxation or stilling exercise, light a candle, develop a routine or liturgy?

They should not be:

- seen as an odd five minutes to be slotted into the day at a convenient time

Classroom worship can:

- provide opportunities to extend the way pupils respond to the stimulus provided.
- enable pupils to be involved creatively in making music, dance, movement, art work, writing of prose and poetry.

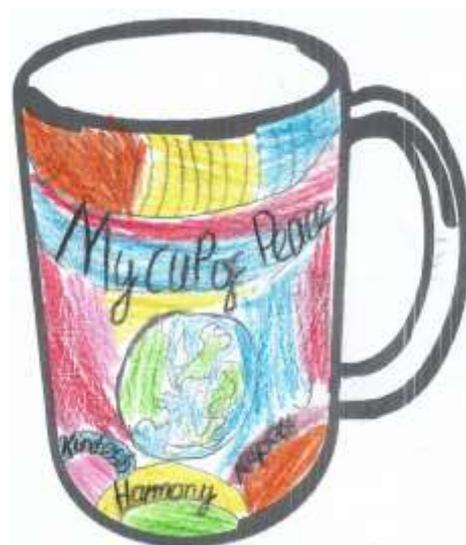
Thought for the day approaches to collective worship

This format, so familiar to those who listen to radio is a useful tool that is used in many schools. A committed religious or non-religious person talks briefly on a subject about which he/she has an opinion – a worked out reflection on an aspect of life. It may be humorous, may include the ups or the downs of life, happy or sad times - but it is almost exclusively centred around one main point. It does not leave the listener feeling depressed, anxious or guilty. It should be wide reaching and should always aim to be a spiritual reflection and not just a current affairs slot.

Visitors

As with any visitor, clear guidance should be given as to what is expected of them. They need to know what support they can expect from the school and what constraints there are. The following pages contain examples of guidance given to visitors invited to lead collective worship in a community secondary school and in a Church of England Primary school. These could be adapted to meet the needs of your own school.

Clo-Dean: "My cup of peace has a splash of harmony, a spoonful of respect and a lot of kindness in it."



4. School Collective Worship Policy: Visitors

Expectations

Visitors invited to lead collective worship should be made aware that:

- collective worship is non-denominational in county schools; must be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’; and reflect the religious traditions of the United Kingdom.
- School assembly is not an opportunity for any kind of coercion. An evangelistic or proselytising presentation by groups of whatever faith or life-stance perspective will not be suitable or acceptable. Schools do well to make sure this does not happen;
- speakers can encourage pupils to reflect and consider ideas presented to them, but these must be contextualised (i.e. ‘Christians believe...’ ‘Atheists think...’ rather than ‘This is the case...’)
- space should be allowed for the process of reflection, but pupils should not be put under pressure to accept or reject faith viewpoints. Calls for commitment to a religious viewpoint are not appropriate.

Visitors should:

- present their acts of collective worship with care and sensitivity, but also in a dynamic and compelling way; they should not be dull!
- bear in mind the age, interests and aptitude of the pupils they are addressing, avoiding inappropriate language or references to materials such as films and TV programmes that are not suitable to that age group.

Practicalities: Some questions to consider

Before the day:

- What is the theme of the assembly?
- Is this part of a wider theme or a one-off?
- If it is linked to previous assemblies what has been covered so far?
- What age group is to be addressed?
- Does anyone need an outline in advance?
- What equipment will be needed? Who should the visitor contact in advance about this?

On the day of the assembly:

- Who will be the contact point for visitors? How will they be able to get in touch at the last minute in case of emergency?
- Where should the visitor park? Where should they sign in? Who will meet them?
- Where will the assembly take place? What are the acoustics? Will they need a microphone?
- Is the required equipment available? Who has responsibility for this? (Computer, projector, sound system, microphone, music, interactive white board; stage for drama; lighting etc)
- How do pupils enter for assembly? Will the speaker be present already or enter later? Who will introduce the speaker? Who will thank the visitor and conclude the collective worship?

After the assembly

- Who will write to thank the visitor and offer feedback to them? What about offering an expenses claim form? Schools may feel they are poor or strapped for resources: religious visitors may be more so!

Example of Guidance for Visitors

Collective Worship at our school

Guidance for Visiting Speakers

Thank you for agreeing to speak to our students in an act of collective worship.

You agreed to come in on to address Year students.

The theme for the collective worship is The acts of collective worship leading up to your visit will be covering the following themes

Equipment:

If you need any particular equipment for your talk, please let know by.....

Arriving in school

When you arrive at school please follow signs for reception and visitor parking. Please sign in at Reception by You will be met there by two students who will show you to the hall you will be using so that you can set up as necessary, and then take you to meet the member of staff responsible for the day's assembly:

Times of assemblies

Assembly begins at and finishes at Students will enter in silence, with music playing as they do so and sit in rows in their tutor groups. Tutors accompany their groups. If you would like particular music to be played, please let know by..... and bring it with you. Notices will be given at the beginning of the assembly, but there is a clear demarcation between such school business and the collective worship you will be leading. You will have a full fifteen minutes.

Student participation

Students are accustomed to ending collective worship with a moment of reflection, with a prayer, perhaps, to which they may respond as individuals. They are not accustomed to singing hymns. You may like to challenge this tradition, but if you do you are a braver person than most!

Legal requirements

The legal requirements for collective worship in county schools are that over any school term the majority of acts of collective worship should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. This clearly is not the requirement for every single act of collective worship. However, they:

- should reflect the broad traditions of Christian beliefs;
- should not be distinctive of any Christian denomination;
- need not contain only Christian material.

Legal guidance makes it clear that the aim should be to provide worship which is capable of uniting the school community around a core of shared values, though these values are to have a religious – and in the main a Christian - point of reference, not only a moral or social focus.

Worship?

Collective worship, as defined by successive Education Acts and DES Circular 1/94, is really *a celebration of worth*. This is *different to corporate worship*, which involves willing submission to a divine being together with others sharing the same belief, as part of a way of life. School worship is a way of reflecting and celebrating the human spirit, making use of the insights of the religious traditions in this endeavour. In this country the insights of Christianity are deemed to be of major importance, but those of other major world religions (an non religious life stances) are also seen to be valuable.

The 1994 guidance includes a clause which says that collective worship should 'be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power'. This means that those who believe in God may have the opportunity to respond personally. It also means that as pupils reflect on issues of life and death the possibility of a 'divine being or power' might be the focus for reflection. Suggestions of this kind should be contextualised, i.e. 'some people believe....' etc.

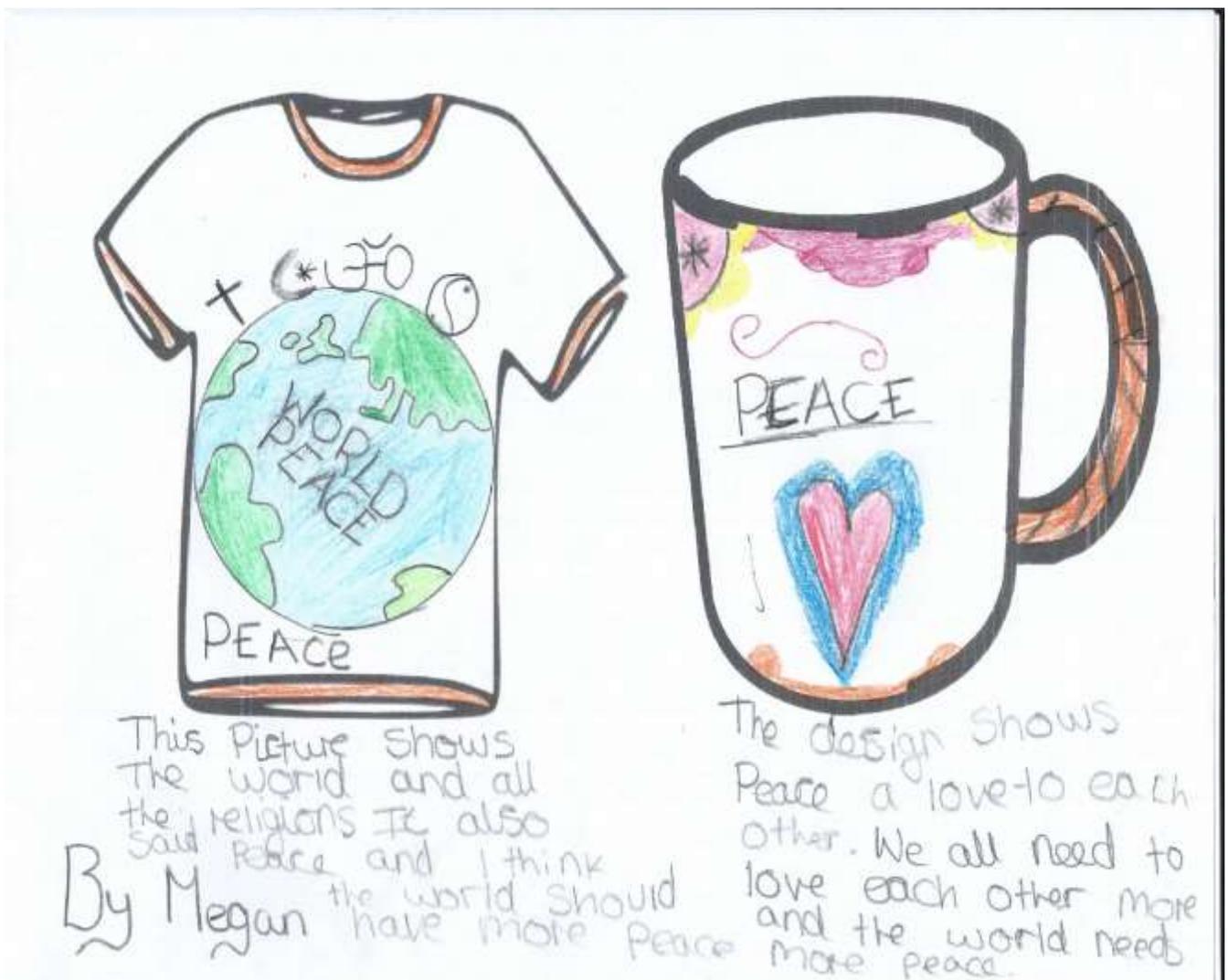
In view of these legal requirements it is important to recognise that school worship is not the same as that in a church, mosque or temple service, or an evangelistic campaign. Whilst pupils may be challenged to reflect on spiritual and moral issues, there cannot be any compulsion for them to accept a particular faith stance, or indeed any non-faith stance or ideology. There should be no 'calls to commitment'!

Student Participation

Pupils respond well to collective worship when they are able to participate – they should not simply be passive recipients. They prefer lively, interesting, clearly audible and well-constructed presentations. Contemporary references are often helpful but must be age appropriate.

We look forward to seeing you

Your contact for this assembly is..... Last minute or urgent contacts please speak to the office staff (tel:..... email:.....)



5. MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Roles:

The role of the head teacher

In community or foundation schools without a religious character, it is the overall responsibility of the Headteacher in consultation with the Governors to ensure that legal requirements are met and that quality collective worship is taking place in the school.

The role of the governing body

- Governors should be aware of their legal responsibilities in regard to collective worship taking account of the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988/Education Act 1996 and the School Standards & Framework Act 1998. In foundation schools with a religious character or voluntary schools, the arrangements for collective worship are to be made by the governing body after consulting the head, and must be in line with the schools' Trust Deed or Diocesan guidelines in the case of church schools.
- Governors must be familiar with all documentation regarding collective worship issued on their behalf and may be actively involved in the process of collective worship Development in the school.
- Governors should ensure that collective worship is appropriately reviewed as part of the Whole School Development Plan.
- In Voluntary Aided or Controlled Schools, Governors are responsible for appointing a Section 23 Inspector for the inspection of collective worship and are advised to consult the Diocese on this matter.

The role of the collective worship co-ordinator or team

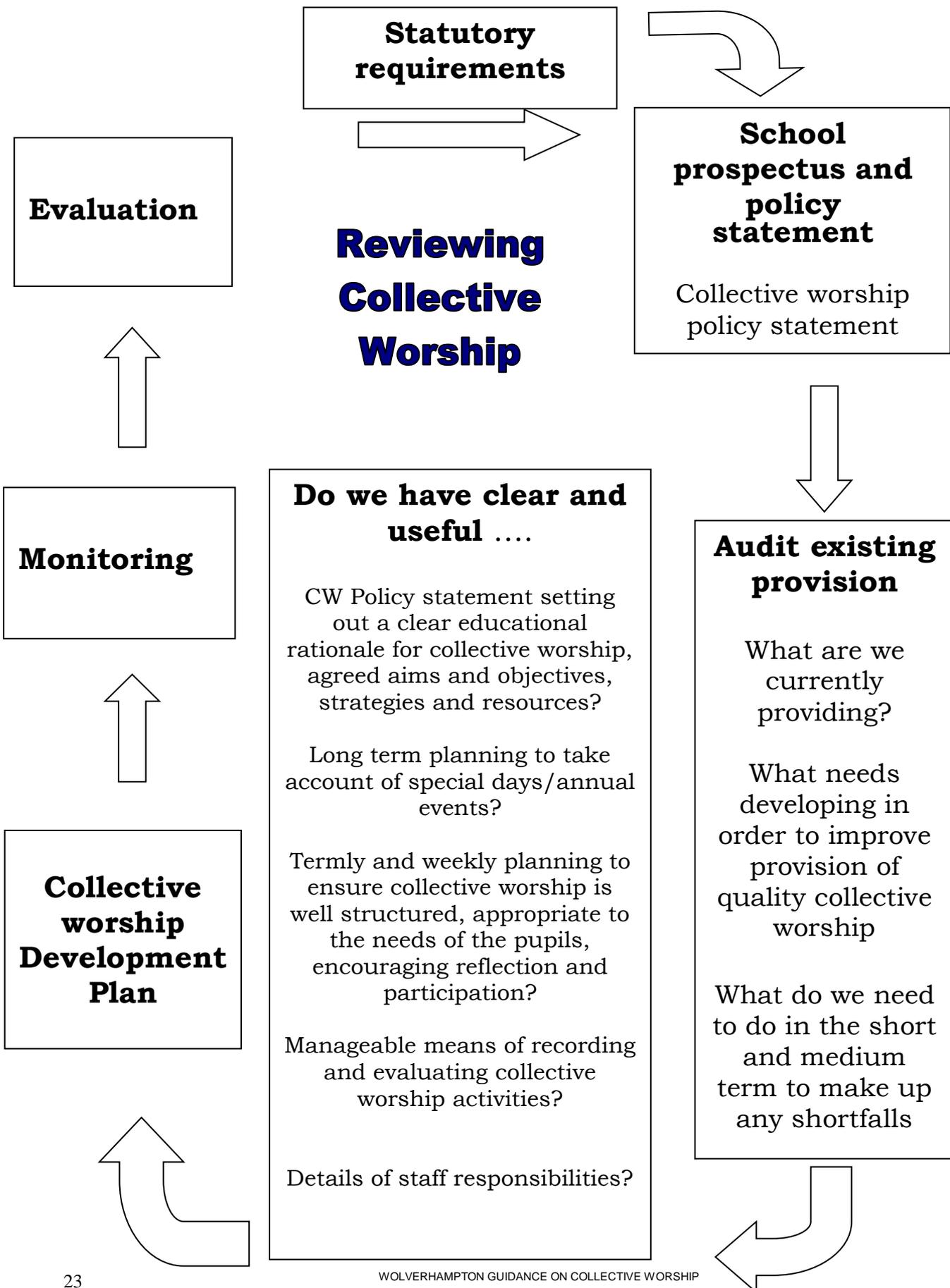
The role of the collective worship co-ordinator/team will vary depending upon the individual needs of the school. In some cases they will be solely responsible but may at times involve other members of staff or professionals.

Duties may include the following:

- assisting the Governors and Headteacher to carry out their legal responsibilities with regard to collective worship
- reporting to the Governors and Headteacher on matters of concern and development
- communicating with members of the school community regarding the significance and content of acts of collective worship
- ensuring that there is a development plan for collective worship which may at times form part of the Whole School Development Plan.
- developing and maintaining documentation for the effective planning, recording, monitoring and evaluating of acts of collective worship.
- developing and maintaining effective procedures for planning, recording, monitoring and evaluating acts of collective worship.
- being responsive to the needs and views of other members of the school community.
- developing the resources available for collective worship including new and relevant books, posters, visual aids, artefacts, music, visitors, leaders.

MANAGING COLLECTIVE WORSHIP – KEY ACTIVITIES

i) Reviewing



ii) Auditing Collective Worship

Collective Worship Co-ordinator's Audit: Twenty Questions

- 1 Does your job description describe your duties and opportunities fully?
- 2 How would you outline your main responsibilities?
- 3 To what extent are colleagues involved in the development of collective worship?
- 4 Do you have any non-contact time to fulfil your responsibility?
- 5 Is there an opportunity to support colleagues, and co-ordinate teachers' planning?
- 6 What are your current priorities for the development of CW
 - In terms of resourcing?
 - In terms of content?
- 7 Is collective worship a current priority within the school development plan?
- 8 How do you monitor the quality of provision and delivery?
- 9 What systems of planning, recording and evaluation are in place?
- 10 Do you have a separate allocation of funds for resources?
- 11 What have you been able to spend over the past two years
- 12 Is the accommodation for CW appropriate and have efforts to create the right atmosphere been successful?
- 13 How much time is allocated each day for CW and is the timing within the school day effective?
- 14 Have there been opportunities for in-service training over the past two years?
- 15 Do visitors contribute in any way?
- 16 How do you keep yourself and colleagues abreast of new developments and evaluate new approaches?
- 17 How do you liaise with other agencies?
- 18 How do you promote parental interest and understanding?
- 19 Are there any tasks relating to CW which you would like to take up but are unable to do at the moment?
- 20 Do you ask pupils what they think about collective worship and reflect on the impact it has on participants?

How are we doing? – checking up and making it better

In a maintained school, it is the overall responsibility of the Headteacher in consultation with the Governors to ensure that legal requirements are met and that quality collective worship is taking place in the school.

In Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled Schools it is the overall responsibility of the Governors in consultation with the Headteacher to ensure that legal requirements are met and that quality collective worship is taking place in the school. This may be delegated to the Headteacher, collective worship Co-ordinator or worship team. Those responsible will ensure that acts of worship are in accordance with the Schools Trust Deed and should be consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England.

In order to ensure that adequate monitoring of collective worship takes place the following questions need to be addressed.

- 1 Is the monitoring of collective worship part of the School Development Plan?
- 2 Is the monitoring/improvement of collective worship of importance to the Governing body and therefore an item on their agenda?
- 3 Is the Headteacher/Worship Co-ordinator /Worship team the most appropriate person /people to do the monitoring?
- 4 How will the monitoring process be used to further develop collective worship?

What is to be monitored?

The School may have a document on Curriculum monitoring which could be appropriately adapted for Collective worship. In the absence of such a document the following may be considered.

- Is the documentation for collective worship in place and effective? This will include a collective worship Policy Statement, evidence of planning of acts of collective worship, records of each act of daily worship, evidence that the quality of acts of worship have been evaluated.
- Is sufficient time set aside to ensure that monitoring can take place? This may include observations of acts of collective worship. Discussions with those who lead worship i.e. Staff and visitors. Discussions with those who experience worship i.e. pupils, staff, parents, governors and other members of the school community.
- Is the documentation for collective worship consistent with observed practice?
- Is collective worship adequately resourced in terms of leaders, materials, visual aids etc.?
- Is there a record of, requirement for, Staff development or In-service training?
- Are the various groupings and environments for collective worship maximising opportunities for worship?

Evaluation

Monitoring will lead onto evaluation – how well are we doing? What do we need to do to improve?

6: ASSEMBLY AND SCHOOL WORSHIP RESOURCES

Websites

A number of websites for resources are listed. General sites like Twinkl, TES and Pinterest are worth checking. We are not able to vouch for everything on these sites: we ask schools to take responsibility for what you use in your own school. But you might like to look at:

- The BBC offer extensive high quality resources and ideas at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship>
- The Christian publisher SPCK offers here a wide range of resources, updated frequently and free to use: www.assemblies.org.uk/
- This free-to-download book has many clear and practical ideas for values assemblies <https://www.lifesavers.co.uk/docs/ValuesForLifeSavers-Justice.pdf>
- This is a sharing site for primary assemblies with lots of free ideas. Quality varies <http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/assembly/assembly>
- This is a subscription site, popular with teachers and with a wide range of resources: <http://myschoolassembly.co.uk/>
- This is a site where free resources are shared for assembly: <http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/subjects/assemblies>
- Many development charities provide interesting and exciting materials for global awareness and exploring values of justice. Excellent examples include www.christian-aid.org.uk/ <https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Primary-teaching-resources/Primary-school-assemblies> and <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/resources/education/>
- Video clips and free ideas for values assemblies are shared at <https://assemblytube.com/primary-school-assembly-ideas/>
- This site has free initial resources and then moves to paid subscription: <https://bigstartassemblies.org/>
- This is an insightful Catholic site about prayer from the De La Salle Community. www.prayingeachday.org/
- **This Christian charity provides thoughtful and original ideas:** www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/assembly
- **This site has both primary and secondary ideas for free use.** <http://www.assemblies.org.uk/sec/>
- **This is the Church of England's entry point for thinking about assembly and school worship:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/education/church-schools-academies/collective-worship.aspx>

Planning Grid Examples

Primary School's weekly planning sheet

Collective Worship Planner		Week beginning.....				
	Grouping	Leadership	Theme/Content	Learning Intention	Resources (Music/Visual Aids)	Children's Involvement
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						

Examples

A Secondary Assembly: The F-Word

Assembly material from Lat Blaylock (REToday)

This is a hard-hitting assembly on how students use swear words and what Christian and Buddhist scripture (the Bible and the Dhammapada) has to say about our language. The aim is to get them thinking about the impact of their words on themselves and others.

Preparation

Before the assembly takes place you could conduct a brief survey among pupils and use the results throughout your assembly. For example, you could ask:

- how often do you swear a day?
- would you like to swear less? Why? Is this a kind of habit? A bad habit? One that can change?
- what made you start swearing?

Introduction

To start: "There is usually at least one word which can get a pupil suspended or excluded from school". Tell the pupils that this assembly is about the F-word, but you won't say it.

Point out that in the room there will be four groups of people, including the teachers. You may want to have the four groups displayed on a slide to help students remember them.

In one group, there are all the people who never ever use the F-word. They just don't say it.

In the second group there are people who very occasionally, perhaps by accident, or when they're really furious, or when they've suffered something awful, say the F-word.

In the third group there are people who use the F-word when they decide that they will, as part of the way they talk, for emphasis or insult.

In the fourth group are people who don't realise when they say F---. It slips out all the time, peppering their conversation without them noticing.

The groups may not be clear at the borders, but almost everyone will fit themselves roughly into one of them.

And it's interesting that religions such as Christianity and Buddhism include in their holy writings sayings about the ways in which we speak.

(Buddhist): 'Good is restraint in speech... He who is controlled in tongue, who speaks wisely, sweet indeed is his speech.'
Dhammapada 363

(Christian): 'Rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.' Bible, Colossians 3:8.

(It may be appropriate in some settings to refer to a different faith as well as Buddhism and Christianity – many religions teach their followers to speak wisely and without insult!)

Christians and Buddhists want to follow the guidance and teaching of their holy books, and so they might take note of these words in the way they speak.

You might illustrate the assembly with an anecdote of your own about a time when bad language got you into deep waters.

Discussion

You will need to judge how best this will work in your school. A minute of silence to reflect individually on the question may be more appropriate, but if they can discuss

sensibly this will be a good element to include.

Ask the pupils one or two questions, and give them two minutes to talk in pairs about them. This activity in assembly remains unusual - we usually tell them to stop talking - but it is a simple way of getting everyone to participate, and it's surprising how much effect it has. The questions in this instance might be one or two from this list:

- Which of the four groups are you in?
- How do people feel when they are sworn at? (pairs to choose three words that describe the feeling)
- Is it possible to go through your whole life without swearing?
- Does not swearing make you a better person, a worse person or no different?

Reflection

Ideally for this section, you'll need an electric buzzer game: where you have to pass a loop of metal along a wire without it touching and setting off a buzzer. Have a volunteer out to try and complete it.

One of the problems we face as humans is finding the will power to be different. Some people would like to swear less but, even if they try, they still do it. It's impossible for them to get through the day without swearing, just like trying to get the loop along this wire without setting it off. So how do we change if we want to?

- some people manage it by sheer will power and practice
- others, especially those from a faith background, would say that you need a greater force at work in you to overcome such ingrained habits.

You might finish the assembly by talking briefly about moments when you've found your faith or beliefs gives you strength to deal with things you want to change.

Final Challenge

Finish by asking students to think about whether they feel they are in control of their swearing or bad language and whether they'd like to change their habits.

Prayer or Reflection:

I sometimes use this kind of prayer, inviting pupils to listen to it, or to join in with the 'Amen' if they wish to. I would use this prayer with this assembly:

“God of words, we pray to you.

Can you help us to speak the truth, and do it kindly.

Where our words run out of control, or get us into trouble, give us your forgiveness

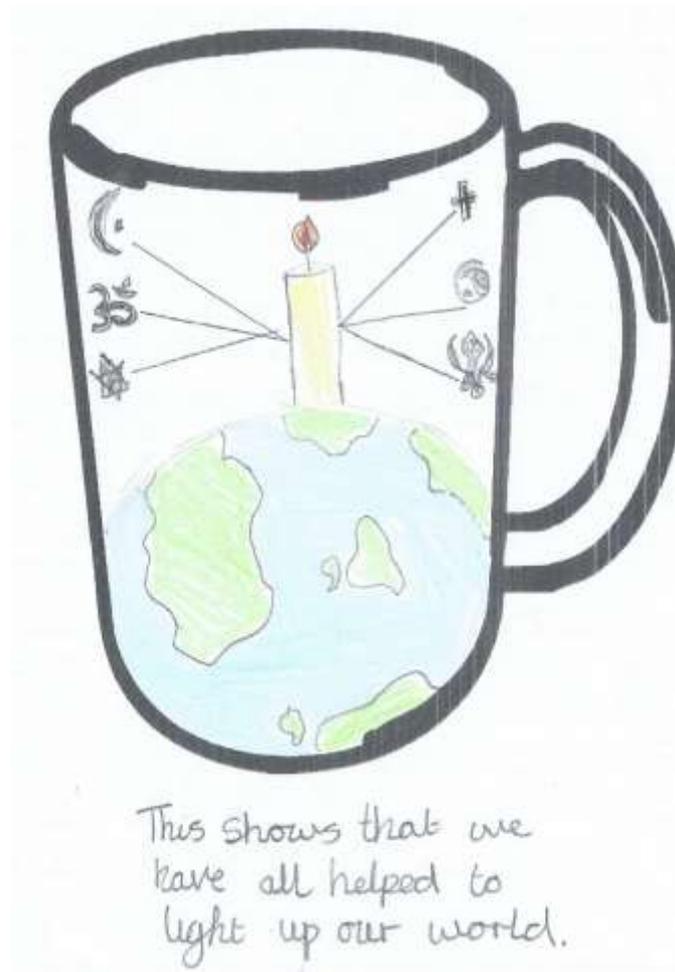
Teach us to be good speakers.

Teach us to spread goodness by what we say.

Amen.

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By Amber, aged 10

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