

Collective Worship in North Somerset Community Schools

	Contents	Page
1.	Why Collective Worship?	2
2.	What is Collective Worship?	3
3.	The Legal Requirement for Collective Worship	5
4.	Spiritual Development through Collective Worship	9
5.	Producing a Policy for Collective Worship	11
6.	Planning a Collective Worship Programme	12
7.	Themes for Collective Worship	13
8.	Guidance for Visitors	15
9.	Headteachers' and Governors' Guide to Collective Worship	20
10.	Websites for Collective Worship	22
11.	Collective Worship Policy: Example	25

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1. Why Collective Worship?

Schools are regularly reminded that Collective Worship is a legal requirement but here are some reasons why, even without this requirement, it is good to hold Collective Worship in schools.

Collective worship:

- gives both body and spirit time to breathe, offering space and stillness before, during or at the end of a hectic and pressured day to be oneself, to reflect or just to sit at rest;
- helps to foster a spirit of community in a school, year group or class;
- can enable the joys and sorrows of those present to be reflected upon and shared in a way which is otherwise not possible in school;
- enables the overall personality and ethos of the school to come across to everyone;
- is an opportunity to share and reinforce the values the school seeks to live by;
- enables individuals and groups of staff and pupils to share their concerns, interests and reflections;
- can be a time to present genuinely alternative views of life and lifestyles for pupils to consider;
- can help pupils ponder on the many ultimate questions life presents, and know that others of all ages ponder these too;
- can offer insights into religious and other beliefs and commitments in an open way;
- can be a time of sharing those things that unite, whilst acknowledging or celebrating the diversity of beliefs and values within and beyond school;
- may provide an opportunity for pupils (and staff) to come close to God and to reflect on the most important directions and values for their lives;
- may provide a time which pupils can make their own;
- is one of the few occasions in a week of schooling that offers, or should offer, space for the spirit.

The content of Collective Worship is almost completely open. There is no National Curriculum for Collective Worship.

[Back to Contents >](#)

2. What is Collective Worship?

DFE Circular 1/94 offers guidance on collective worship. Schools are reminded that the guidance does not constitute an authoritative legal interpretation of the provisions of the Education Acts or other enactments and regulations; that is exclusively a matter for the courts. The circular defines worship as:

- being concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power;
- needing (if it is to be broadly Christian) to contain some elements which accord special status to Jesus Christ and his teachings. This means that most school worship should reflect Christian beliefs, not necessarily Christian worship practices;
- implying more than simply passive attendance. It should be capable of eliciting a response from students, even though on a particular occasion some of the students may not feel able actively to identify with the act of worship.

In the view of North Somerset SACRE, collective worship in schools is to do with the fundamental recognition of worth and worthiness. It is concerned with ultimate questions and values. It is about identifying, affirming and celebrating those ideals and values held to be of central importance in the worshipping community.

Through reflection and response, it should be an important stimulus towards spiritual development. For many, but not all, spirituality finds its most comfortable expression within the context of belief in God.

Collective worship is not the same as *corporate* worship, where the basic religious beliefs of worshippers are assumed to be the same or similar. In collective worship pupils are presumed to come from a variety of beliefs and backgrounds and this should be taken into account in the preparation and delivery of the acts of worship. A school's acts of collective worship should seek to involve all pupils, including those who have different or no religious beliefs.

Collective worship is not the same as religious education and must not be confused with it. The law requires both RE and worship to take place in school, but at different times. In RE the focus is on study and learning, in collective worship the focus is on reverence, celebration and reflection or prayer. In fact, collective worship should be seen as part of the whole school curriculum, providing many cross-curricular opportunities.

Acts of collective worship in schools and colleges should be used to encourage pupils to come together and allow them to reflect upon their shared human experience and feelings of joy and sadness, thankfulness and need, their reflections on shared values and concerns and the exploration of the spiritual area of experience. These experiences and attitudes can also lead to a fuller and more mature capacity for worship.

‘WHOLLY OR MAINLY OF A BROADLY CHRISTIAN CHARACTER’

Acts of worship should be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’. To take the ‘wholly or mainly’ bit first: this means that *all or most* acts of worship in any one term should be identifiable as ‘broadly Christian’.

DFE Circular 1/94 (s.63) states that acts of worship do not need to contain *only* Christian material, though some elements relating ‘specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ’ are to be included in the programme.

Then note that it is *character*, not *content* that is the requirement, and the teachings, beliefs and stories of Christianity, like those from other major faiths, present themes which will be of interest or concern and relevance to all.

In selecting *broadly Christian* material or any other material, it is important that schools ensure that acts of worship are ‘inclusive’. It must be remembered that it is not the role of the school to nurture religious faith.

Christian beliefs centre on such themes as the creation, the fall, the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the kingdom of God. From these themes spring broad areas of spiritual and moral concern to all people: ecology, pollution, stewardship of resources, prejudice, cruelty, war and alienation, justice, peace and harmony. Assemblies that raise these issues provide opportunities for ‘broadly Christian’ collective worship as well as stimulating all young people to reflect, to feel awe, to learn to be still and to consider the direction and meaning of their lives.

[Back to Contents >](#)

3. The Legal Requirement for Collective Worship

1. All maintained schools and Academies, whether or not they have a religious character, are required to have daily acts of collective worship and to teach religious education as part of their curriculum. Schools with a religious character provide denominational collective worship in line with their foundation and are not subject to the requirement to provide 'wholly or mainly broadly Christian' acts of collective worship.
2. All registered school pupils (5 - 18) are required to take part in an act of collective worship on each school day (unless withdrawn – see below). Pupils in special schools should take part in an act of collective worship as far as it is practicable.
3. Collective worship may be held at any time during the school day.
4. Separate acts of collective worship may be arranged for different age or school groupings.
5. Collective worship must take place on school premises, but governors of aided and religious foundation schools may on special occasions arrange collective worship elsewhere.
6. Acts of collective worship taking place in any one term in a community or a non-religious foundation school should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. That is, most (or all) of the acts of worship must reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any one Christian denomination.
7. Collective worship must be appropriate having regard to the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of the pupils.
8. Where worship which is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character is inappropriate, the headteacher and governors may apply to the local SACRE for permission to arrange worship for all or some of the pupils which is not wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character (see Determinations).
9. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship (see below).
10. Teachers cannot be compelled to lead or participate in collective worship, but it is the responsibility of the headteacher and governing body to ensure that it takes place.

Every school under Local Authority control must have a policy for collective worship that is drawn up in accordance with the law, and reflects as far as possible the

consensus of views of the various stakeholders i.e. staff, governors and the community.

Within the legal framework the responsibility for arranging collective worship rests with:

- the headteacher after consultation with the governing body in community schools;
- the governing body in consultation with the headteacher in VC and VA schools.

DFE Circular 1/94 is not legislation but offers guidance. See 'What is collective worship?'

The Diocese of Bath & Wells also produces guidance on planning collective worship for its schools.

See <http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/children/schools-colleges-universities/> for contact details.

THE RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from attending an act or acts of Collective Worship. Parents should make their wishes known to the headteacher who will arrange that any pupils who are withdrawn will be supervised appropriately during the acts of Collective Worship.

Schools should ensure that parents who want to withdraw their children from collective worship are aware of the programme and its intention to be open to and respectful of all pupils' personal beliefs. They should be given the opportunity to discuss this, if they wish. The school may also wish to review such a request each year, in discussion with the parents.

The use of the right to withdraw should be at the instigation of parents (or pupils themselves if they are aged 18 or over), and it should be made clear whether it is from all or some specific acts of collective worship. No reasons need be given, though parents may make arrangements for *alternative religious worship* to take place for their child provided that such arrangements can be made at no additional cost to the school and provided the effect would not be to replace the statutory non-denominational collective worship in the school.

Parents have the right to choose whether or not to withdraw their child from collective worship without influence from the school, although a school should ensure parents or carers are informed of this right (for example through the school prospectus) and are aware of the educational objectives and content of the collective worship programme. In this way, parents can make an informed decision.

Where parents have requested that their child is withdrawn, their right must be respected.

If parent and the school agree that the pupil should be allowed to remain physically present during the collective worship but not take part in it, nothing in the law prevents this.

Pupils should not be withdrawn so that they may participate in other activities. Schools have a duty to have a duty to supervise pupils who are withdrawn from collective worship, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra cost. Pupils will usually remain on school premises.

DETERMINATIONS

The Education Reform Act of 1988 (sections 6, 7, 9, 12) entitles schools to apply to the SACRE for a 'Determination' if, in the opinion of the headteacher, the requirements to have 'broadly Christian' Collective Worship is inappropriate for either the whole or particular groups within school. A 'Determination' will allow the school to adjust the legal requirements and allow worship of a different character to take place.

Applying for a Determination:

1. The headteacher consults with the governors to determine the extent to which the requirement for Collective Worship to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' is not appropriate for the school or groups of pupils within the school. It is also advised that the matter is brought to the attention of the school's link inspector/adviser or the inspector/adviser responsible for RE and Collective Worship.
2. The headteacher and the governors consult with parents.
3. If a decision to seek a Determination has been reached, the headteacher must apply to the SACRE in writing, outlining the reasons why a Determination is being sought and giving evidence to support this.
4. The SACRE will consider the application for a Determination and may request the headteacher to present the application in person to clarify any issues and answer any questions.
5. In considering the application, the SACRE will take account of the views of:
 - a) the Officer representing the Director of Education;
 - b) the family background of the pupils concerned.
6. The SACRE may accept or reject an application, but cannot modify it. Each constituent group on the SACRE is allowed one vote, with the decision being reached on a majority.
7. The SACRE will notify the headteacher and the governors of its decision in writing.
8. A determination will last for 5 years from the date of its effect, after which time it must be reviewed.

9. If a Determination is accepted, it will be the headteacher's responsibility to decide what form the alternative worship will take, and inform SACRE, the governors and parents.
10. Where such a determination is made in respect of all or some of the pupils in the school, daily Collective Worship must still be provided for them. Where a determination has been granted in respect of a class or description of pupils of a particular faith or religion, the alternative Collective Worship may be provided for those pupils as a whole. It may not be distinctive of any particular denomination of any faith or religion, but may be distinctive of a particular faith or religion. Parents continue to have a right to withdraw their children from the Collective Worship.

Please note: Although North Somerset Council encourages and supports 'inclusive' acts of Collective Worship which should be appropriate for the whole school community, irrespective of belief, non-belief or life stance, this does not remove a school's right to apply for a Determination.

[Back to Contents >](#)

4. Spiritual Development through Collective Worship

Collective worship has an important part to play in providing opportunities for pupils to focus on matters 'of the spirit'. Any definition of spirituality must acknowledge the difficulty in pinning the concept down. Spirituality has been likened to a bird – hold it too tightly and it chokes; hold it too loosely and it flies away. Others have likened it to the wind – you can't trap it in a jam jar and bring it into the classroom for analysis.

Here, we say that spirituality has to do with the following:

- awareness of the self;
- awareness of all that is not the self;
- the purpose and meaning of life;
- delight in the strangeness and wonder contained even in the commonest things of daily life;
- sensitivity to change, suffering and the processes of life; values in action.

It may be helpful to think of spiritual development in terms of balancing the cool *inner life* of the reflective person with the heat of worldly activity in *outward expression*. Together, the desired combination of wisdom and active compassion may be achieved.

Inner life

Pupils demonstrate an interest in this where they:

- engage in activities which involve listening, reflecting, puzzling;
- develop an understanding of their own feelings, likes and dislikes; develop personal beliefs and values;
- show insights into deep questions about life, change and death.

Outward Expression

Pupils demonstrate an interest in this where they:

- engage in activities which involve questioning, valuing, creating, envisioning, empathising, imagining;
- immerse themselves in constructive work, sacrificing immediate self-interest;
- develop an understanding of their relationships with those near and far;
- enjoy exploring diversity and difference.

In assemblies and acts of collective worship, a number of these sorts of activities might take place, particularly where pupils are involved in presenting, contributing to, or responding to an assembly theme.

Over a period of time, assemblies and acts of collective worship might encourage pupils, for example, to:

- use all their senses;
- use their imagination;

- reflect quietly;
- express their thoughts and feelings in a variety of ways, e.g., diaries of reflection; to appreciate that we arrive at some of our deepest insights through stillness and silence;
- appreciate that silence can be a means of communication, e.g., in showing respect;
- respond to information and/or stories with thoughtful questions;
- participate in musical or dramatic items illustrating a chosen theme;
- present a positive image of unfamiliar cultures, religions and traditions.

One school, Hugh Sexey Middle School, Blackford, Somerset, developed ideas to show how their acts of collective worship could contribute to pupils' spiritual development:

1. celebrating what is 'good' and 'lovely' about life, e.g., beautiful natural surroundings;
2. pupils sharing what is meaningful and significant to them;
3. giving time for silent reflection and exploration of 'inner space';
4. using forms of worship that others have found helpful in their spiritual development, e.g., silent contemplation, dance, singing;
5. providing an environment that is conducive to worship;
6. exploring beliefs – development of personal beliefs including religious beliefs, appreciation that people have individual and shared beliefs on which they base their lives, appreciation of how beliefs contribute to personal identity;
7. encouraging a sense of awe, wonder and mystery, e.g., through consideration of the natural world, mystery or human achievement;
8. exploring feelings of transcendence – feelings that may lead to the belief in God, or the belief that one's inner resources provide the ability to rise above everyday experiences;
9. searching for meaning and purpose to life – asking questions such as, 'Why me?' at times of hardships, reflecting on the origins and purposes of life, responding to experiences of life such as beauty, suffering and death;
10. developing self-knowledge – awareness of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences, awareness of own developing identity, development of self-respect;
11. exploring relationships – recognising the value and worth of each individual, developing a sense of community, building relationships with others;
12. encouraging creativity – expressing thoughts and feelings through, e.g., art, music, poetry, crafts, exercising the imagination, inspiration, intuition and insight;
13. exploring feelings and emotions – being moved by beauty or kindness, control of emotions and feelings, feelings associated with injustice or aggression, using feelings as a source of personal growth.

[Back to Contents >](#)

5. Producing a Policy for Collective Worship

In creating a policy for collective worship in the school, consultations should be held with members of staff, pupils, governors and parents. A draft policy could be constructed around which such discussions could take place. The draft should consist of such features as:

- a statement of the main aims and purposes of collective worship at the school (rationale);
- how the school meets the legal requirements, including those on the right of withdrawal and on providing act of collective worship that are ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’;
- how the school’s programme for collective worship contributes to pupils’ spiritual (and moral, social and cultural) development;
- how the collective worship is organised (when, what, where, how, who);
- date of policy and of next review.

EXAMPLE AIMS OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

The planning and delivery of a programme of collective worship should allow all those taking part to experience:

- a shared sense of belonging by coming together to celebrate the values and ethos of the school and community;
- a shared sense of the wonder and awe of creation and the beauty, power and mystery of the world in which we live;
- a shared concern for the needs of others locally, nationally and globally;
- a shared insight about the varied aspects of life and the ability to foster empathy for others.

Collective worship should provide:

- the experience of being a part of a caring community;
- the opportunity for celebration, thanksgiving and sharing emotional experiences and time to share successes and failures in personal, school and community life.

The act of worship should:

- allow a time of reflection on the fundamental questions of life, and focus attention away from the concerns of the moment to those things which are of eternal concern to human beings;
- enable pupils to experience ‘spirituality’ by enabling them to develop a worshipful attitude as demonstrated by feelings such as awe and wonder, feelings of elation, appreciation, gratitude, respect, reverence and trepidation and of being uplifted.

See [sample policy on page 25 below >](#)

[Back to Contents >](#)

6. Planning a Collective Worship Programme

Long Term Planning involves:

- being aware of specific calendar events, e.g., festival celebrations and anniversaries or special occasions relevant to the school's community.

Medium Term Planning involves:

- a timetable of who will lead each act of worship, ensuring that visitors are invited and briefed well in advance;
- ensuring that varied resources and equipment are ready and available.

Short Term Planning involves:

- adequate planning time to create an effective act of collective worship that takes into account the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the students;
- creating the right atmosphere for the theme of the act of collective worship, e.g., venue, use of background music, a focal point, lighting etc.

MONITORING, RECORDING AND EVALUATING:

- Keep a simple record of the themes covered and the content of each act of worship.
- Evaluate against your aims. Evaluate by talking to other staff and to the pupils. Evaluate each theme covered but also evaluate over a longer term to see if your acts of worship are varied and engaging for the pupils.

[Back to Contents >](#)

7. Themes for Collective Worship

It may be helpful to plan acts of collective worship around a series of themes, for example:

- **creation and the world around us:**
 - the idea of God as a loving creator;
 - the idea of an underlying purpose to creation;
 - the idea of human responsibility for the world, including thoughts about ecology, conservation and pollution and issues of stewardship of the Earth's resources in relation to this.

- **human beings and social responsibility:**
 - the uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings and acknowledging the value of human life in a cooperative and respectful way;
 - responses to social issues like prejudice, cruelty, violence, racism, medical ethics and tolerance;
 - the example and teachings of great religious leaders and other inspirational people, who have promoted concern for the needs of others (particularly minorities), those who have demonstrated the qualities of gratitude, fortitude, forgiveness and self-sacrifice for others, those who have opposed hypocrisy, exploitation, injustice and harsh judgements of others.

All these themes are reflected in Christian beliefs but also give rise to values which are in harmony with the broad spiritual and moral concerns that are shared by all the world's major religions and also by the majority of those with no religious affiliation.

CONTENT AND PRESENTATION

The unifying element for each act of collective worship will be a central theme focusing the attention of all those taking part on a single idea and the school should endeavour to involve as many staff and students as possible, although the headteacher or collective worship co-ordinator will be aware of the various contributions.

Themes could be based around school or local events, around a topic being focussed on in the curriculum, the lives and experiences of people past and present, current religious festivals, or national and international days.

A variety of presentation methods could be used to engage the students and evoke a response. Some useful methods may include:

- **silence:** stilling, time for reflection, contemplation, meditation, prayer;
- **the spoken word:** through story, current news items, poetry, personal experiences and anecdotes, interviews, discussion, readings from religious and non-religious texts, thoughts for today quotations, prayers, guided fantasy, visualisation etc.
- **music:** hymns, pop songs, folk songs, classical etc;
- **visual features:** art, posters, photographs, artefacts both religious and non-religious, toys, use of digital presentations, video recordings, slides, etc;
- **performance:** dance, drama, improvisation, stunts, puppets, etc;
- **visitors:** focussing their talks on inspirational human qualities such as courage, ability to forgive, perseverance, bring happiness or relief to others;
- the use of specific on-line assembly packages, e.g., Assembly File or Thought for the Day.

See also, the ideas for linking collective worship to [opportunities for pupils' spiritual development >](#)

Plus list of [websites containing further ideas for assembly / collective worship themes >](#)

[Back to Contents >](#)

8. Guidance for Visitors

A CODE OF CONDUCT FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS

Representatives of religious communities can make a vital contribution to learning when visiting schools or acting as guides to their place of worship or community activity.

Like other organisations that work with children, churches, other places of worship and faith-based organisations need to have appropriate arrangements in place for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

In particular, these arrangements should include:

- procedures for staff and others to report concerns that they may have about the children they meet that are in line with “What to do if you are worried a child is being abused”, North Somerset Safeguarding Children’s Board (NSSCB) and South West Child Protection Procedures (SWCPP), as well as schools “Safeguarding Children Policy”;
- appropriate codes of practice for staff, particularly those working directly with children, such as those issued by the Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS), and the Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS) or other denomination or faith groups; and
- recruitment procedures in accordance with safer recruitment guidance and NSSCB procedures, alongside training and supervision of staff (paid or voluntary).

(Working Together, 2010)

Spiritual and moral development and religious learning can be stimulated through encounters between people of faith and school pupils of all ages.

This code of conduct is offered to help schools and representatives of religious communities make the most of the opportunities available, and to avoid some of the pitfalls which are sometimes encountered. It is based on guidance published by the Professional Council for Religious Education (PCfRE) in 1997 – now known as the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE). The complete guide is available from: retoday@retoday.org.uk.

AWARENESS

When working with school pupils, representatives of religious communities should be aware that:

- schools are *plural* communities: they usually include members of different faith groups, children from secular families and (within Christianity or other faiths) different denominational allegiances, and that it is important to show sensitivity to this plurality. Each child's beliefs and experiences must be respected;
- in religious education, all community and voluntary controlled schools follow the local education authority's agreed syllabus. Church of England voluntary aided (VA) schools follow the syllabus with a few adjustments to reflect their aided status. In North Somerset, the agreed syllabus is called Awareness, Mystery and Value (AMV). Relevant extracts from the syllabus, such as the introductory and explanatory materials on pages 6-21, can be requested from the school;
- North Somerset's agreed syllabus, in common with most others, insists that, whilst pupils are encouraged to respect the rights of different people to hold different beliefs, it would be wrong (a) to teach a belief as if it were a fact and (b) to urge a particular religion or religious belief on pupils. This applies as much to adults other than teachers as to teachers themselves.

PREPARATION

In order to make their presentations to school pupils effective, representatives of religious communities should:

- comply with "Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children and Young People" ethos of the school;
- be familiar with the school's aims, ethos and policies, and plan their involvement in the light of the aims and curriculum of the school;
- plan their presentation carefully. Religious visitors and schools need to be clear about the purpose of the visit and how the visitors' contribution links to:
 1. the school's provision for religious education;
 2. collective worship;
 3. more general awareness i.e., a contribution from a voluntary group;
- discuss their input with teachers in advance, and be open to teachers' suggestions;
- take account of the differing abilities of the pupils;

- where appropriate, use a variety of teaching methods and styles, including those which elicit a response from all the pupils;
- select the content of their presentation carefully, avoiding the temptation to try and get the whole of their faith across (for example, teaching six year olds all there is to know about Jesus in a 35 minute session!).

TALKING WITH PUPILS

When talking with pupils, representatives of religious communities should:

- make clear to pupils who they are, who they represent, and what they are offering to the pupils;
- be willing to share their own experiences, beliefs and insights, but avoid (1) criticising the experiences and insights of others and (2) imposing their views upon pupils in any way. Representatives must not take the opportunity to try to convert pupils or cast doubt on the validity of pupils' own beliefs;
- seek to use engaging teaching and learning methods which involve the pupils actively, and to communicate at appropriate levels for the age group(s) concerned;
- make clear to pupils who they are, who they represent, and what they are offering to the pupils;
- be willing to respect and value the faith of pupils when it is different from their own;
- develop ways of speaking to pupils which communicate an open approach, avoiding any hidden agenda to convert them.

This question will help representatives of religious communities to reflect on their approach: *If a member of another religion visited my child's school and contributed in the same way that I have done, would I, as a parent, be happy with the education given?*

Communications between children and adults, by whatever method must take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, emails, digital cameras, videos, web cams and blogs. Schools Communication Policy which specifies acceptable and permissible modes of communication must be adhered to and "Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People" adopted.

It should be noted therefore that these professional boundaries extend beyond a visitor's contact with pupils within the school premises and include any further contact that may be made with pupils in the wider community.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOLS

First and foremost, responsibility for the pupils, including their health and safety rests with the teacher. It is important when engaging representatives of religious communities, therefore, that schools:

- ensure that any visitor to the school is suitable. Checks should be carried out to verify the visitor's identity and suitability. Requesting a reference of support from their religious body, checks with the Independent Safeguarding Authority and Criminal Records Bureau must be carried out in accordance with Schools Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education (2010). No visitor should, in any case, have unsupervised access to pupils;
- ensure all visitors knows the name of the Designated Teacher responsible for Child Protection and understands their responsibility to refer any concerns regarding any pupil to that person;
- ensure that all visitors engaged to work within the school are made aware of "Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who work with Children and Young People";
- ensure the visitor(s) is committed to supporting a safe environment which supports all pupils;
- notify parents in advance that religious visitor(s) will be visiting the school, the purpose of the visit and the curricular aims. It may be that parents are informed that a programme of visits will be planned over a year as part of the schools arrangements for delivering RE or providing collective worship. Parents may need to be made aware of their right to withdraw their child from RE and/or collective worship under Section 71 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998;
- plan and evaluate the event jointly with the contributor(s);
- meet agreed expenses;
- make visitors welcome; it is good practice to ensure any visitors are accompanied by a member of staff at all times;
- keep to agreed time schedules when making visits;
- provide opportunities for pupils to thank the hosts for their visit;

- brief pupils in advance; for example, by providing information on how the visitors' work is expected to contribute to the relevant programmes of study (or worship experience) for that group. This may include:
 - an explanation of how the event will contribute to their knowledge and understanding of religion and religious experience;
 - time to reflect on what questions they may wish to ask;
 - guidance on appropriate dress and behaviour for the event (particularly when visiting a place of worship);
 - time to reflect on and express their feelings, experiences and views after the event;
 - how the work they are to undertake will be assessed and/or contribute to the pupils' programme of study.

North Somerset Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) June 2010

[Back to Contents >](#)

9. Headteachers' and Governors' Guide to Collective Worship

Headteachers and schools governors have a responsibility to ensure that RE and collective worship are being well provided in the school, so it is important to include these areas of school life on the agenda for at least one meeting a year. This could be placed in the wider context of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is important to distinguish between RE and collective worship and to ensure that RE is given specific curriculum time in order to meet the requirements of the appropriate agreed syllabus. In community and voluntary controlled schools this will be ['Awareness, Mystery and Value' \(AMV\), the locally agreed syllabus for RE](#) in North Somerset. In Church of England voluntary aided schools AMV is also used, with some additional emphasis on Christian studies and in Roman Catholic VA schools the diocesan syllabus is used. The diocesan education authorities should be consulted for further detail.

Collective worship is 'special or separate from ordinary school activities' (DfE circular 1/94, para. 57) and should be provided outside of curriculum hours. Collective worship is not to be counted instead of time for any curriculum subject: 'schools [should] make adequate time available for collective worship in addition to the suggested minimum hours for lesson time' (DES circular 7/90, para 2).

CHECKLIST FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Here are some questions about collective worship and spiritual development that could form the basis of a discussion amongst governors, the headteacher and any other members of staff involved in organising collective worship. Note that it is not the RE co-ordinator or Head of RE's role to be involved in organising or presenting collective worship. That is a separate responsibility.

- is there a daily act of collective worship? If not, why not?
- do we keep any records of acts of collective worship?
- how is the collective worship organised? (Where, when, who, what?)
- are most acts of collective worship 'broadly Christian'?
- how do we distinguish between collective worship and assembly?
- do we know what we mean by *collective* as opposed to *corporate* worship?
- do we have policies on collective worship and spiritual development? How do they reflect the aims, ethos and (religious) character of the school?
- do we know what we mean by spiritual development?
- how does the act of collective worship contribute to pupils' *spiritual* (as well as their moral, social and cultural) development?
- is parents' right to withdraw their children from collective worship included in the school prospectus?

- why do parents have such a right and what is the school's response to parental requests to withdraw children from collective worship?
- how are pupils and parents involved in the collective worship programme?
- are there pupils in the school who belong to religious communities for whom an alternative to 'broadly Christian' collective worship should be made available?
- how do we know if our provision of collective worship is successful?
- how can we improve collective worship further?

Governors could keep a record of these discussions and this could become the basis of an annual review.

[Back to Contents >](#)

10. Websites for Collective Worship

The following websites provide suggestions for schools to supplement their collective worship programme. North Somerset Council is not responsible for the reliability of these links or for the content of these sites.

http://www.bathandwells.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=diocese.content&cmid=9	The Diocese of Bath and Wells Resource Centre has a comprehensive list of collective worship resources available for schools to borrow.
http://www.worshipworkshop.org.uk/	The National Society's Worship Workshop website. Intended for CofE schools but others may find useful material here for collective worship that is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.
http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/	Culham Institute in association with The National Society (of the Church of England) weekly collective worship and assembly resource.
http://cowo.culham.ac.uk/links/index.php	Links to even more collective worship websites!
http://www.hibbert-assembly.org.uk/	Sensitively constructed assemblies from the Hibbert Trust, including advice to those leading assemblies by the Reverend John Harley.
http://learn.christianaid.org.uk/	Teaching resource from Christian Aid, with 'Assemblies of the Month' for primary and secondary.
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110218194057/http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/assemblies/	Teachernet resources are now held on the national archives database. This is a bank of over 100 resources written by teachers for teachers. The search engine no longer works but you can access the examples via 'Assemblies A – Z'.
http://public.merlin.swgfl.org.uk/establishments/803/QandS/REandSACRE/Alldocuments/CollectiveWorshipCompFeb08.pdf	Direct link to download South Gloucestershire SACRE's excellent collective worship pack. Contains collective worship themes, sample assemblies and policy. Note: you may need to copy this link into your browser if the direct link fails.
http://www.assemblies.org.uk	Primary and secondary school assemblies with a broadly Christian perspective 'for every season' from SPCK. Contains a section on assemblies to celebrate festivals of a good range of religions and a 'rapid response' feature to help schools address big issues in the news.
http://www.staplefordresources.co.uk/assemblies/assembling-citizens	Secondary school assemblies for active citizenship & personal development from The Stapleford Centre, a Christian education organisation. Some free samples but requiring subscription for full

	access.
http://wncre.bangor.ac.uk/spck/index.php.en	Welsh National Centre for RE: includes link to Welsh language version of the <i>assemblies.org</i> SPCK website.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/stories/	CBeebies stories for primary school age children that could be used in assemblies – includes ‘Seasonal’ stories reflecting religious festivals and ‘World Stories’ reflecting different cultures.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/	Audio programmes from BBC learning for the 5-7 and 7- 11 age ranges. Listen again within 7 days of broadcast or order the CD. Sets of notes for teachers also available for free download.
http://www.bdeducation.org.uk/collective-worship.html	Collective Worship ideas and advice from the Diocese of Blackburn – ‘putting the Wow! into worship’.
http://www.cafod.org.uk/resources/worship	Reflections on social justice and poverty for worship activities from the Catholic charity CAFOD. Prayers, liturgies and reflections across Church seasons and a wide range of themes.
http://www.creativeproverbs.com/	Franklin C. Baer’s ‘Quotations for creative thinking’ searchable website.
http://www.fischy.com/	Music for emotional, social and spiritual health and wellbeing from Fischy Music.
http://www.hmd.org.uk/	National website for ideas on remembering the Holocaust.
http://www.humanismforschools.org.uk/	Assembly ideas and humanist perspectives from the British Humanist Association.
http://www.ibiblio.org/zen/	Zen Buddhist site with ‘Koan of the Day.’
http://www.inspirationalarchive.com/inspirationalstoriesblog/	Archive of mostly Christian inspirational stories – a mixture of material, not all suitable for school assemblies.
http://www.irinnews.org/	Humanitarian news and analysis service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.
http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/	Oxfam’s downloadable resources for primary and secondary assemblies featuring issues of social justice. PowerPoint presentations, ideas for workshops, assembly scripts etc.
http://www.prayingeachday.org/reflect.html	De La Salle Brothers (‘Christian Education in a Christian Community’) collection of reflections and prayers for every day of the year. Click on a date for stories, questions and prayers for reflection.
http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/assembly/assembly.htm	Scripts for primary school assemblies, contributed by teachers.
http://reep.org/cw/index.php	Ideas for assemblies in primary schools from the Religious Education and Environment

	Programme, contributed by experienced advisers and teachers. Searchable by key stage or a small range of themes. Click on the Resources tab for further ideas.
http://www.reonline.org.uk/	Religious education website with search engine to find materials for use in assemblies.
http://www.request.org.uk/	Resources for most of the Christian denominations – not specifically for collective worship but can be adapted.
http://www.retoday.org.uk/	Downloadable resources associated with RE Today publications (<i>password required - available free to RE Today subscribers</i>).
http://www.sln.org.uk/storyboard/	Staffordshire Learning Net's searchable database of stories from different religious traditions.
http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/assemblies/contents.htm	Mark Warner's Teaching Ideas site contains a range of interesting downloads for assemblies for primary schools.
http://www.tere.org/index.php?id=59	Catholic Teachers Enterprise for Religious Education assembly ideas for primary schools.
http://www.tere.org/index.php?id=266	Catholic Teachers Enterprise for Religious Education assembly ideas for secondary schools.
http://www.theotherpages.org/	Quotations, poems and images for personal and non-commercial use.

[Back to Contents >](#)

11. Collective Worship Policy: Example

Schools may use this example as a basis for their policy, if they wish. School policies have to be ratified by the governors every time they are amended. Schools may find that some details which need to be amended more often than a policy is reviewed are better placed in an appendix which does not need to be governor approved every time it changes.

Rationale

The School collective worship policy reflects and reinforces many of the school's aims.

The common strands are:

- care and support;
- respect and responsibility;
- reflective self development;
- relationships.

In keeping with these aims, collective worship at xxx School is planned to:

- contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- provide a worthwhile educational experience which takes account of pupils' age, aptitude and family background;
- provide opportunities for staff, pupils and members of the wider community to contribute to the life of the School;
- provide opportunities for worshipping God, reverence, celebration and reflection; enable pupils to reflect on broadly Christian and other worthwhile values and beliefs;
- provide a worship experience that does not offend the integrity of the non-religious or those of different faiths;
- provide pupils with "something more than the obvious, something to wonder at, something to respond to".

The positive educational outcomes of collective worship at xxx School include opportunities for:

- the whole community to celebrate;
- sharing and experiencing differences;
- building a sense of group identity;
- encouraging a sense of personal and social responsibility;
- a break from the busyness of life (for stillness and quiet);
- learning how to behave in a large social group;
- exploring feelings and emotions;
- learning how to perform in front of an audience;

- learning how to respond to a performance;
- making visible the school's leadership;
- developing inner awareness.

Legal Requirements

The law requires the Headteacher and Governing Body of every school to provide a daily act of collective worship which, in community schools, should not be distinctive of the tradition and practice of particular religious denominations.

Schools are obliged to give their reasons if they feel they are not able to comply with this part of the law. Denominational schools should provide CW in line with their foundation.

The School meets this requirement and is explained to all involved in the planning and delivery of acts of worship. [except where:

Insert reasons, if any are required..]

Withdrawal from collective worship

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from acts of worship and **this is stated in the school prospectus and handbook**. Teachers, including headteachers, have the same right of withdrawal.

It is intended that consultation will take place before formal requests are made to withdraw from acts of worship. In the case of parents or teachers contact needs to be made with the Headteacher. Guidance for new parents on non-participation in acts of collective worship is given **in the school prospectus**.

In community schools collective worship is to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.' Denominational schools should provide collective worship in line with their foundation.

The programme of collective worship at this School is arranged so that **in any one term most acts of collective worship will reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief and practice**.

Content of the collective worship programme

According the government guidance (circular 1/94):

- 'Collective worship should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs' (para 50).

This advice is put into practice in our programme.

- ‘Worship must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power’ (para 57), and

Specific time is set aside for this activity and we recognise the importance of marking out the act of collective worship from other assembly activities. We attempt to mark out this special time by ... [e.g., lighting a candle / asking children to reflect quietly..]

We also make ‘space for the spirit’ by using ‘Diaries of Reflection’ in some class assemblies. These also offer specific opportunities for reverence or veneration according to children’s own beliefs and traditions.

[For more information on Diaries of Reflection, see Beesley, M., 1990, ‘Space for the Spirit’ (Salisbury Diocese).]

- ‘An act of worship which reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief need not contain only Christian material. It must, however, contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ’ (para 63).

Material for assemblies comes from a wide variety of sources including Christian. Most assemblies in any term reflect traditions of Christian belief and the special status accorded to Jesus Christ.

Organisation of collective worship

It is for the school to decide how best, in its own context, how pupils should take part in collective worship, e.g. in year groups, key stage groups, upper / lower school, tutor / class groups, whole school.

- 1. The programme of acts of collective worship is coordinated by ...**
- 2. Year / Key Stage Assemblies are held once a fortnight. These are taken by ...**

Visitors have included ...

The assemblies generally follow themes that are aligned to the delivery of personal and social development programmes, although topical or other relevant issues may be picked up as appropriate. The content of these assemblies would be varied but include a significant Christian input within any term.

- 3. Tutor / Class Teacher-led Reflections, e.g., Diaries of Reflection**

Each week pupils meet in tutor groups for this act of worship. Pupils reflect on statements, thoughts or ideas, provided or approved by tutors. Pupils may also contribute ideas for reflection.

A response may be made in diary form. Subject to usual conditions, these responses are confidential between the pupils and his/her tutor. Pupils who believe in God are invited to reflect that, through these thoughts, God may be helping them to discover the most important directions and values for their lives.

4. Whole School Assemblies

Once a week the School gathers for this assembly, in which achievements of pupils at the school are celebrated. Staff and pupils may contribute music, drama and dance. This assembly will normally provide opportunities for spiritual development.

5. Visitors

Visitors should understand the educational aims of collective worship at the school and the need to avoid any proselytising. Attempts to persuade pupils to adopt a particular religious belief are not appropriate. In general the Headteacher is consulted before a visiting speaker is confirmed.

Visitors should not speak about raising money for any particular cause(s) without the prior permission of the headteacher.

6. Staff and Community Involvement in Collective Worship

Certain named individuals [NAMES of staff, ministers, parents or friends of the school who are involved.....] are involved on a regular basis with the assembly programme. Other staff are given the opportunity of being involved in this programme every term.

Policy agreed by Board of Governors on [date]

[Back to Contents >](#)