



# Worship Works

Collective Worship support for Diocesan  
Schools and Academies



Diocese of York September 2022 updated

## Foreword by the Chairman of the Board of Education,

Schools are busy places. For pupils, there is a ladder of achieving and excelling. For staff and governors, there is a whirl of aims and objectives, of outcomes and value for money. All of that is important and right.

And alongside that, there is collective worship. In Church of England schools and academies, we treat the right of children and staff to experience worship with the same seriousness and care as any other part of school life. To be a church school is to be a community where time and effort is gladly devoted to worship.

There are fascinating 'both-and' aspects of worship. It is where we focus on what it is to be a human being, receiving 'life in all its fullness' (John 10.10) but the window onto that is what God has done in the person of Jesus. It can be part of a young person's maturing and learning, but it is not a programme shaped by a curriculum. Collective worship in a church school is open and welcoming to each person irrespective of their individual stance, whilst being clearly rooted in the Christian faith as the Church of England has received it and practises it.

For collective worship to be of the best possible quality, much careful work has to be done by staff, governors and parish leaders – thinking through principles and the place of worship within the whole ethos of the school, planning acts of worship, reflecting and always aiming to improve. All this takes time, energy and attention – good quality worship doesn't 'just happen' – and as part of this foreword I would want to thank you for everything that you are doing to make it a reality for the young people in your care.

I warmly commend these guidelines to you, and I hope that you will find them helpful and inspirational.

+ Paul Whitty

## Collective Worship and The Law

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

A key difference, however, lies in the form of that worship.

In community schools, that worship must be *“wholly or mainly of a Christian character,”* reflecting the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive or any particular Christian denomination.

The legal requirements for worship in voluntary (aided and controlled) schools, Church of England foundation schools and Church of England academies are different: the requirements include that collective worship in such schools must be **in accordance with any provision of the trust deed relating to the school/academy and/or in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Church of England.**

The ethos statement in the Instrument of Government of a maintained Church of England school, or Articles of Association/funding agreements of a Church of England academy in a Multi Academy Trust, reflects its status as a Church of England school. Collective worship is a vital way in which the religious character of the school can be preserved and developed in accordance with that ethos statement. This ethos statement and exemplar Objects from Articles of Association can be found in the Appendix to this handbook.

Parents must be made aware that the school is a Church school and as such collective worship will be based upon the foundations and principles of the Church of England. The governing body should be made aware of their legal responsibilities and be clear of their statutory responsibility to uphold the Christian foundation of the school. In a Church of England Academy the responsibility sits with the Trust Board unless responsibility has been delegated to the Local Governing Committee through the scheme of delegation. This responsibility to uphold the Christian ethos and foundation of the school should also be made clear to staff on their appointment.

### The Right of Withdrawal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Responsibility for the Daily Act of Worship

Arrangements for collective worship in a voluntary school, Church of England school or Church of England Academy are made by the governing body after consultation with the Headteacher. In a Church of England Academy the responsibility sits with the Trust Board unless responsibility has been delegated to the Local Governing Committee through the scheme of delegation. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring requirements are met. Foundation governors have a particular responsibility for ensuring that the character or foundation of the school is reflected in worship.

### Complaints

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



## The Importance of Worship in the Church School

This diocesan guidance is written taking in to account the CEEO Collective Worship Guidance 2021. This is a key document for Church Schools to read in conjunction with this guidance. [Collective Worship Guidance 18052021.pdf \(churchofengland.org\)](https://www.churchofengland.org/collective-worship-guidance-18052021.pdf)

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

Church of England schools are committed to offering high quality collective worship. They are places that recognise and value collective worship as central to fostering a sense of community and to expressing the school's Christian vision. In practice this means that structure, planning, evaluation, participation, collaboration, and inspection of worship are all taken seriously by the school and by diocesan authorities.

In Church of England schools, collective worship is seen as more than a daily 'awe and wonder' moment. It is the unique heartbeat of the school and is offered as part of a wider opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter faith by engaging in conversations about God, both as individuals and together.

*We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way that enhances their lives...Collective worship in schools, including prayer, reading and reflecting on the Bible, liturgy, sacrament and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity, provide a vital opportunity for this.*

This form of encounter through worship should be truly welcoming, inclusive and exemplifying the principles of Christian hospitality. This is an approach that seeks to meet the needs of all, wherever they may be on their journey of faith and belief.

CEEEO Collective Worship Guidance document 2021

### Church schools: the communities they serve

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

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

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

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

### Some Definitions of Worship

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

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

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

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

Used by permission, Chester Diocese Collective Worship guidelines

## Collective Worship that is inclusive, invitational and inspiring

**Inclusive:** Worship is collective in that it involves meeting, exploring, questioning, and responding to others and, for some, to God. In the Church school pupils, their families and other adults can expect to encounter worship that is inclusive of, and fully accessible to, all. Many pupils and staff in our schools will come from homes of different faith backgrounds as well as of no faith background. Moreover, many pupils will naturally be at different stages of their spiritual journey during their time in school. Pupils should be given the opportunity to think and ask questions. There should be space to consent, and dissent: to participate and to stand back; and to consider. It is an expectation that care will be taken to ensure that the language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith in all those participating, listening and watching. Collective worship should not be 'done to' but will involve meaningful contributions from the whole school community, including pupils. It is recognised that pupils will bring their own experience to worship. Inclusion requires pupil involvement in planning, leading and the evaluation of worship. Although part of a national legislative framework, collective worship in the Church school grows out of the local context and out of pupils' experience, including their cultural backgrounds.

**Invitational:** Parents, pupils and adults can expect to encounter worship that is consistently invitational. There should be no compulsion to 'do anything'. Rather, worship should provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. The metaphor of 'warm fires and open doors<sup>3</sup>' captures this idea. The warmth of the fire derives from the clarity and authenticity of the Christian message at its heart. There is no value to an encounter with a watered down, lowest common denominator version of faith. Importantly the door is open, all are welcome to come in and sit as near or as far away from the fire as they feel comfortable. Pupils and adults should always only be invited to pray if they wish to do so and should be invited to pray in their own way. Prayer should always be accompanied by the option to reflect. Music and liturgies<sup>4</sup> used in worship should reflect the best of traditional and modern Anglican worship, it should connect with the theme and explore the sacred to educate and engage. Music used should reflect the diverse worship experience of the wider Christian community. Care should be taken with the music and liturgy: the traditional and modern riches of Christian hymnody and music will be drawn upon, but schools should think about what is most appropriate, at a given time, for the spiritual life of their particular community.

**Inspiring:** Pupils and adults can expect the worship they encounter in a Church school to be inspirational. Worship should be formational and transformational: it should enable pupils and adults to ask big questions about who we are and why we do what we do. It should motivate pupils and adults into action, into thinking differently, and into reflecting on their and the wider community's behaviour and actions. As a result of inspirational collective worship, they should be inspired to become courageous advocates of causes. It

should encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and/or philosophical convictions.

There will always be those who are uncomfortable to enter through this open door of worship in our schools and so the Church of England recognises the right of withdrawal from collective worship for those parents or pupils<sup>2</sup> who wish to exercise this option. This, and how to exercise this choice, should be explained fully in the school's collective worship policy and referenced on the school's website

<sup>2</sup> Education Reform Act 1988 section 7(1) and the corresponding section of the Education Act 1993

<sup>3</sup> *Speech by David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon 2014 quoted in The Fruits of the Spirit: A Church of England Discussion Paper on Character Education (The Church of England Education Office 2015) page 13*

<sup>4</sup> *Where there are joint schools the liturgies should reflect this status*

## Collective Worship Should Aim To:

- Explore the school's vision and how that underpins shared values and virtues. In doing so, it will reflect on moral values such as compassion, gratitude, justice, humility, forgiveness and reconciliation; and develop virtues such as resilience, determination and creativity that develop character and contribute to academic progress.
- Help pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world by encountering the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and developing understanding of the Christian belief in the Trinitarian nature of God.
- Offer the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection.
- Enable all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, as well as through the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican worship, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- Enable pupils to develop skills through engaging in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice
- Be inspirational and inclusive, engaging all learners. They can talk about the impact it makes on their relationships and on life in the school
- Help all learners to understand Anglican and other Christian traditions found in the UK and worldwide.
- An opportunity to celebrate and give thanks for achievements within the school, local and international community and occasions of significance, including festivals

## Diocesan Expectations: A Summary

### Worship in our Church schools should always:

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

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

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

### Responsibility

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



## Documentation

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

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

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

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



# The Shape of Collective Worship

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

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

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

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

## Gathering

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

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

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



## Engaging

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

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

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



## Responding

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

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

Think about...

Will you spend time thinking or reflecting?

Will you pray?

Will you do something practical as a response? How?



## Sending

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

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

Think about...

How will people be sent out of worship?

Will there be special words? A blessing? A dismissal?

Who will lead this?

## The Role of the Collective Worship Coordinator

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

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



# Collective Worship Policy

A collective worship policy should contain the following sections:

## **Introductory Statement**

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

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

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

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

## **Statement of Withdrawal**

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

This should also be included in the school prospectus.

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

## **Aims**

A statement of aims for collective worship should be included.

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

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

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

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

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

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

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

## **Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**

This section should include how the policy deals with matters of inclusion and it should make reference to the school inclusion and equal opportunities policy.



It should also refer to the arrangements for right of withdrawal and what provision is made for children who are withdrawn.

### **Responsibilities**

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

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

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

### **Organisation of Collective Worship**

This section should contain an outline of how collective worship is planned and organised; Who is responsible for organising collective worship on a day to day basis?

Do clergy and other visitors contribute?

When does collective worship take place in church?

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

When and how do children plan and lead worship?

### **Visitors**

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

### **Resources**

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

### **Planning and Record Keeping**

This section should outline school practice for planning and record keeping

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

### **Conclusion**

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

### **Signature and Date**



## Appendix 1

### Ethos Statement in an Instrument of Government

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

### Company Objects for Multi Academy Trusts in Articles of Association

*The Company's object ("the Object") is specifically restricted to the following:*

*to advance for the public benefit education in the United Kingdom, in particular but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing by establishing, maintaining, carrying on, managing and developing Academies which shall offer a broad and balanced curriculum and which shall include:*

- (i) Academies other than those designated Church of England, whether with or without a designated religious character; and*
- (ii) Church of England academies designated as such which shall be conducted in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Church of England both generally and in particular in relation to arranging for religious education and daily acts of worship, and in having regard to any advice and following any directives issued by the Diocesan Board of Education,*

*but in relation to each of the Academies to recognise and support their individual ethos, whether or not designated Church of England.*

