



# Worship Works

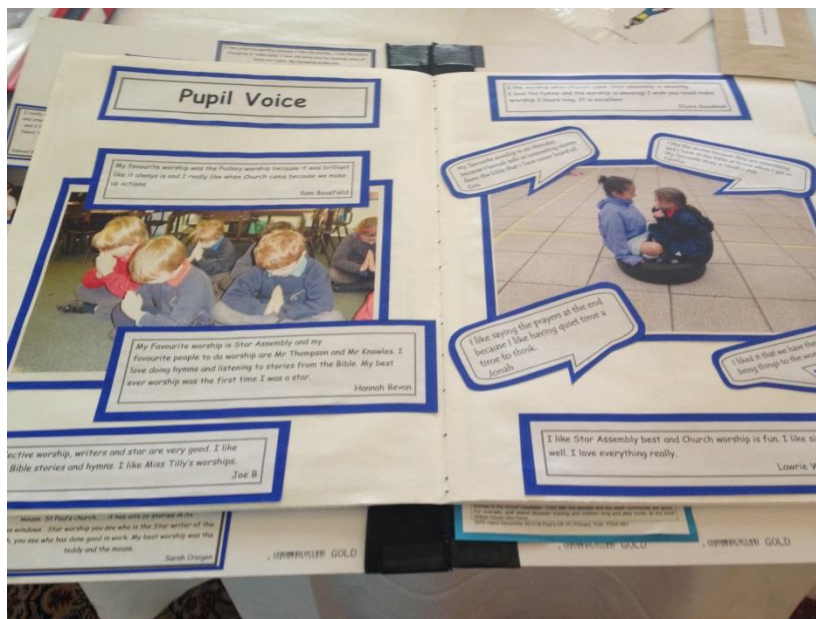
Collective Worship resources and guidance

## Monitoring and Evaluating Collective Worship

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 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.

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



Those with responsibility for Collective Worship should be involved in;

- setting themes for the year
- observing acts of worship led by different people and recording own thoughts on appropriateness & quality
- facilitating pupil feedback
- ongoing monitoring and evaluation
- reporting on Collective Worship to the governing body
- implementing Collective Worship development points with regard to training and resources
- Annual review feeding into planning

The aim is to establish an effective monitoring and evaluation process which informs the development of collective worship through consultation on impact and quality. The system should not be overly time-consuming and should focus on the impact of collective worship on enabling the spiritual growth of pupils and adults in the school community. This will include a focus on the integrity of the content and the quality of the delivery. The views of the pupils are of prime importance and best practice puts them at the centre of as much of the process as possible.

### **An example of best practice in evaluating worship**

1. Creating a small steering group who meet to plan outline themes for the year and involve a range of leaders.
  - themes should reflect the Christian vision and associated values of the school and also the pattern of the church year
  - themes running over several weeks or half a term allow pupils to reflect on different aspects and approaches and can also relieve the planning burden on teachers
  - best practice includes a wide range of worship leaders, including pupils
  - appropriate support should be given to those leading worship, including resources and training.
  
2. Developing the role of pupil leaders for collective worship
  - a group of pupils take on a role of evaluating collective worship
  - a simple sheet could be completed after worship
  - a group of pupils may take on responsibility for planning some collective worship times
  - pupils may be a part of or feed back to the planning group.
  
3. Classes have age-appropriate opportunity to discuss Collective Worship
  - main points recorded in class and collated by pupil leaders
  - the steering group review notes and discuss outcomes.
  
4. Governors, The Collective Worship coordinator and Headteacher observe and review one act of worship every term.
  
5. The steering group periodically look at monitoring and evaluations to identify strengths and next steps.
  
6. The steering group reports annually to the full governing body highlighting any recommendations for improvement and development.

## Collective Worship Observation Form – an example

<b>Observer</b>	<b>Time/ Date</b>
<b>Worship Leader:</b>	
<b>Theme:</b>	
<b>Audience:</b>	
<b>Link to Christian Vision/Values/SMSC</b>	
<b>Link to Church Year</b>	

<b>GERS AREA</b>	<b>CUES</b>	<b>COMMENT</b>
<b>Key Aspect 1</b>  <b>Gathering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the room 'ready for worship?'</li> <li>Does everyone know what they should be doing? Was there a greeting which made everyone feel welcome?</li> <li>Did this reflect Anglican liturgy?</li> <li>Is there a real sense of a marking the start of a very special time in the school day?</li> <li>How was this achieved? Is there a Christian greeting?</li> <li>Has any music used helped support a worshipful beginning?</li> <li>Has a candle been lit?</li> <li>Is the atmosphere one of respect and interest?</li> <li>How does the setting up of the worship space (the worship focus) support the act of collective worship?</li> </ul>	
<b>Key Aspect 2</b>  <b>Engaging</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the worship captured the attention of the children and adults so that they were actively engaged in the content?</li> <li>Was the message distinctively Christian? Was the</li> </ul>	

	<p>“engagement” presented in a compelling way? Was it rooted in Bible story / Christian example?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was it well structured?</li> <li>• Was the level of language appropriate for all present?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Key Aspect 3</b> <b>Responding</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was singing or prayer or reflection time used?</li> <li>• Were any hymns or prayers used clearly associated with the theme of the worship and supporting or responding to it in some way?</li> <li>• Was there sufficient time to pause for reflection on the theme?</li> <li>• Was the reflection moment given a particular focus or just a time to be quiet? Were prayers appropriate and understandable by all?</li> <li>• Was there a practical response and how was this encouraged?</li> <li>• Did pupils respond appropriately?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Key Aspect 4</b> <b>Sending</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was the ending of the worship clear and marked by a response or ritual (e.g. Anglican liturgy)?</li> <li>• How did people leave worship? Singing? Silently?</li> <li>• Were worshippers able to leave with a clear understanding of the day’s message to take into their classrooms or homes?</li> </ul>	
<b>Other areas for consideration</b>		
<p><b>Distinctively Anglican</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was clear reference made to the Bible and Anglican Christian teaching and belief e.g. the Trinity - God, Jesus and Holy Spirit and / or a Christian festival?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Children as worship leaders</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did pupils have the opportunity to really lead any part of the worship?</li> </ul>	

<b>Inclusivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would people of other faiths or no faith have felt comfortable in the worship?</li> <li>• Did the language exclude or include people?</li> </ul>	
<b>Personal impact?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did the leader give room for the children to build their own meanings / connections / links?</li> </ul>	
<b>Planning</b>	Quality of planning documentation	
<b>Conclusions</b>	Key strengths	
<b>Conclusions</b>	Key areas for development	
<b>Self-evaluation</b>	Evaluation from Collective Worship Leader	



## Collective Worship and SIAMS

The inspection will focus on the impact of collective worship through Inspection Question 3 - How is collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually?

The sub questions provided help schools to explore the inspection question.

- a) How do the theologically rooted Christian vision and the Anglican/Methodist foundation of the school shape worship and spirituality in the school?
- b) How do partnerships with the DBE and/or MAST, and partnerships with parish/local church/es enhance this?
- c) In what ways is the worship life of the school inclusive, invitational, and inspirational?
- d) In the context of the school as a Church school, what do pupils and adults understand to be the meaning of spirituality? How does this enhance and enrich collective worship and individuals' spiritual development?
- e) How does the trust contribute to and enhance the school's worship and spiritual life?

Things to note

- there is an emphasis on the theologically rooted Christian vision of the school and how this informs decisions about collective worship - How do worship and spiritual flourishing resonate with the school's foundation and vision in ways that are inclusive, invitational and inspirational
- there is an emphasis on the *impact* of collective worship not merely provision
- this is about more than individual acts of worship; it refers to the role of collective worship in the wider life of the school
- the school community includes adults too
- there is an expectation that a representation of governors will be available for interview during the inspection
- pupil and staff views will be sought.
- where pupils lead in collective worship there will be an exploration into how involvement by pupils enhances their spiritual development. What evidence does the school have for this? Involvement does not equal flourishing.

The best prepared schools will include collective worship in their regular discussions on school distinctiveness and effectiveness. All stakeholders should be engaged in dialogue. This includes governors, staff, pupils and parents.

### Questions to ask when evaluating collective worship:

Schools can select from the question bank below when taking some time to reflect on collective worship which you have observed and the wider impact of collective worship. Building in time for stakeholder voice will help you to gather your evidence for some of the areas.

### Impact of Collective Worship

Is Collective Worship inclusive?

Is Collective Worship creative and inspirational in school?

Can pupils articulate its importance for school and home life and what it means to them personally?

Are there opportunities for class worship and personal reflection in addition to whole school collective worship?

Are the artefacts and visual aids used effectively and to enhance collective worship?

Are there a rich variety of styles and grouping of collective worship and are these effective?

How do adults engage with Collective Worship?

What is the relevance of Collective Worship for all members of the school community?

How does Collective Worship link into areas of school life?

What has been the impact of strategies used? How have you gathered evidence?

### **Central attributes of Collective Worship**

How does the school's Christian vision inform the collective worship policy? And how is this lived out?

How is Collective Worship distinctively Christian? Is there a clear understanding of the theological basis of collective worship?

Are Christian themes, Christian people past and present explored and discussed?

In addition to experiencing the sense of belonging to a Parish and the Diocese, are pupils able to encounter the worldwide Anglican family and how Anglicans worship across the world in different countries?

Are learners offered the opportunity to participate in the mission of the worldwide Church and in the wider community? For example, social action and charities, ecological awareness, peace and justice issues.

Do pupils contribute confidently and sensitively, through planning and delivering and evaluating worship? How is the school's Christian vision and associated values integrated into Collective Worship?

How do pupils participate in using liturgy, the celebration of Christian festivals and seasons, the valuing of sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, and the use of liturgical colours?

Do pupils understand the importance of sacraments to the life of the Church and their own lives where appropriate?

Are themes used in Collective Worship to raise aspirations and inspire SMSC and RE?

Do the themes challenge learners to take responsibility for their own conduct and take part in charitable sociable actions?

### **The centrality of prayer and reflection**

How well does Collective Worship develop personal spirituality within the school community?

What range of experiences are provided for personal spirituality? Is there a focus upon prayer?

What opportunities are provided for spontaneous prayer?

Are there areas in school that encourage pupils to reflect and think?

Do children understand the importance of the value of personal prayer / reflection in their own and others' lives?

Does prayer and reflection contribute to pupil's spiritual development?

Is there a school prayer? Do school meetings begin with a prayer?

### **The theological basis of Collective Worship**



Is the Bible central to collective worship?

How well does Collective Worship enable participants to develop an understanding of Jesus Christ, and a Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

Can pupils relate Biblical material and Christian teaching in Collective Worship to their daily lives and the school's Christian vision?

Do pupils use vocabulary of liturgical texts such as the Lord's Prayer, simple Responses, Collects and 'Classic' prayers and understand some of the symbolism used in worship?

### **Leadership and Management of Collective Worship**

What are the policies and procedures for monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and how is this led by governors?

How effectively is the whole school community involved in the planning, leadership and evaluation of Collective Worship?

How do you communicate what is happening in collective worship to the wider school community?

What has been the impact in school, the parish and in the wider community?

How are staff supported and equipped to plan and lead collective worship with confidence?

Do staff have access to high quality training and resources?

What training has been attended to keep updated with best practice?

How is pupil leadership of collective worship developed and encouraged?



# What paperwork do I need?

## Policy

- It is important that the school has an up to date collective worship policy. A model policy can be found on the Diocese of York Website here [Collective Worship - Diocese of York](#)
- Give careful thought to the description of collective worship on your website and in the school policy. There should be some sense of the role that worship plays in living out the vision of the school  
In your policy, parents must be made aware of their legal right to withdraw their child.

## Planning

- It is helpful if yearly themes are determined well in advance to facilitate staff long term planning but other planning may be shorter term
- planning documents will not necessarily contain all details for every act of worship but support staff and those leading collective worship to understand the intent and theme.

## Monitoring and evaluation

- Consider how governors are involved in monitoring and evaluating collective worship. This might include visiting collective worship, stakeholder voice, Headteacher report etc
- Consider how pupils are involved in monitoring collective worship. Do you have a child friendly evaluation sheet? Do you have a pupil leadership group?
- How do you gather class feedback? Focus on agreed questions or criteria. You may choose to have a different focus each term.
- How do you gather staff feedback?
- Remember the focus is on impact and the spiritual growth of pupils and adults in your school community. How do you know?



## Pupils as Collective Worship Leaders

In Church schools the school community gathers daily for an act of Christian collective worship. Probably in most schools pupils are already involved this activity in a number of practical ways:

- as “caretakers” – preparing the room for worship and clearing up afterwards
- as “technicians” – working the projector and the CD player
- as “welcomers” – holding open doors, lighting candles, speaking opening sentences.
- as “props” – being called up by adults to take part in a drama, lead actions to songs etc

but are they really involved in planning, delivering and evaluating collective worship? Pupils are as much a part of the worshipping school community as are the staff, and can have an equally important role in leading the school community. Remember, Jesus welcomed children and used them as models of faith when speaking to his followers (Luke chp 18 v 15-17).

Of course, pupils may plan a section of worship e.g. by writing prayers or reflection, or move worship along by asking and answering questions, but many schools are considering how groups of pupils plan and deliver whole acts of worship on a regular basis – if this is something your school wishes to introduce, then you may like to think about the following questions:



### **Should we form a pupil worship committee or ask a different group of pupils to lead each time?**

There is no right answer to this question, but you need to be sure that the pupils are volunteers, collective worship is invitational and inclusive and nobody should be forced into this role. A group of no more than six or eight pupils is often best, and if you have decided to go for just one worship group (or one per term), think about succession planning and make sure it is made up of mixed age groups.

### **What about adult participation in the worship planning?**

Best advice is to have one adult take this on as their responsibility, and this could be a TA, a Foundation Governor or someone from the local church community who works with the school. The adult is there as an enabler or facilitator who may make suggestions out of their wider knowledge and keep the children on track, but is not there to organise the content of the worship to fit a predetermined idea. Their first role will be to check that children understand the purpose of collective worship (i.e. that it is in some way God focussed) and the elements and structure which make up an act of worship (namely gathering, engaging, responding, sending), and what these look like.

### **What topics should children work on?**

It always seems best not to make a fuss about the pupils leading worship, or think of it as a performance, but rather that it is a natural part of the worshipping life of the school – thus it is best to timetable the pupil led worship to occur regularly (anything from once a

fortnight to once per half term) and to follow whatever the school's worship theme is at that point.

### What can pupils do in their worship?

The answer to this question is “whatever the adults can”! Ideally a pupil worship group will plan the content of the worship in its entirety and deliver all of it without any adults taking on roles other than thanking them at the end:

- Beginnings and endings – pupils can select or even write liturgical greetings to “top and tail” worship; these will be based on the school's current practice, or children could introduce new ones, using a stimulus such as ‘Flippin Praise’
- Engaging – the core of the worship – often in the early stages it is best for pupils to re-tell Biblical or Christian stories in whichever way they want (drama, PowerPoint etc) with a summary of the teaching they have drawn from it and how this links to the theme. As pupils become more practised, they will become more adventurous and learn from the ways that they see staff and church visitors putting together the acts of worship.
- Responding- pupils are familiar with the idea of writing prayers or reflections for a purpose, but may need more help in thinking about selecting songs and hymns which clearly link with the theme, rather than their favourites. The entry and exit music may also be used in this way.

### Evaluating collective worship

Pupils can have valuable input into this process. This can be done in a number of ways, including governors meeting with the School Council or annual class questionnaires. Pupils can also fill out simple evaluation grids of individual acts of worship on a more regular basis

### William & Lucy Lead Collective Worship – A Resource from Diocese of Canterbury to support Pupil Leadership

Meet Lucy and William, who are worship leaders in their primary school. Join them as they explain the structure and pattern of an act of collective worship in their school. Through story, images and reflective questions, this book seeks to support teachers and children in planning and leading acts of worship in Church of England Primary Schools.



This resource book has been written by Rebecca Swansbury, who is the Schools Officer for the Diocese of Canterbury. The book was written to support the ‘Enabling and supporting pupil leaders in collective worship’ resource pack.

To purchase a copy of the book and the downloadable resources [visit the Church Print Hub](#). The resources focus on enabling and supporting pupil leaders in collective worship. They are designed to support schools in training and preparing young people in leading and planning acts of collective worship. Child led worship means they are involved in the whole process; planning, creating and leading the act of worship. Through



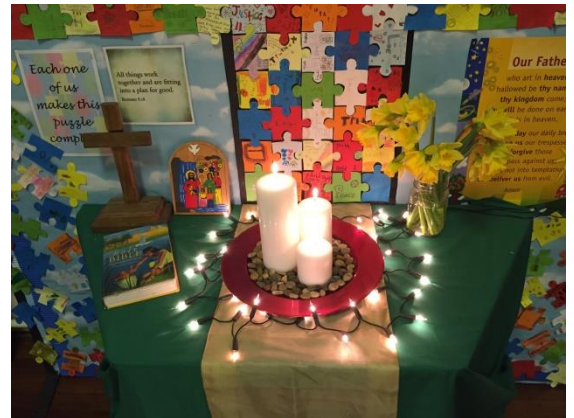
the sessions and activities we hope that children will develop a fresh understanding of what worship is, the value of it in school and how they can genuinely contribute to the acts of worship in school.

### Included in the resource pack are:

- 6 session outlines:
  - What is worship?
  - Different roles in leading worship
  - What happens in collective worship?
  - Does everyone like to worship in the same way?
  - Planning collective worship
  - Strategies to lead collective worship
- Images of William and Lucy to use in your worship leader sessions with children
- 'What is happening in Collective Worship?' observation sheet

### What other activities can a pupil worship group be involved in?

- Pupils can have a role in contributing and maintaining collective worship displays and reflection spaces around the school.
- Write articles for the school newsletter, parish magazine or the school website, tweets and blogs.
- The work of this group can be celebrated on the school website. This page might include 'meet the team', photographs of collective worship and special services, quotes and articles written by the children.



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**Selby Abbey CE (VC) Primary School**  
Believe and Achieve

High praise for Abbey school

Harvest festival at Abbey

Archbishop of York visits Selby district as part of pilgrimage

Abbey alive with sounds of singing

Welcome to the Church School Ambassadors Page

Quick Links

Our Church School ambassadors are a group of key stage 2 pupils who work with us to help promote our Christian ethos and enhance our distinctiveness and effectiveness as a church school.

Church School Ambassadors

Our Church School Ambassadors

- Newspaper articles
- Pupils' newsletters
- Sound or movie clips
- Photos of special Worship

## Widening involvement of pupils across the school in planning and delivery of collective worship.

There may be times in the year where you want groups of children with special responsibilities to share their work with the whole school. These groups might include:

- School council (wisdom, community, service)
- Peace Pals/Play buddies/Peer support (forgiveness, courage, love)
- School journalists (school newspaper) (community, service, thankfulness)
- Ambassadors ( eg French; PE; ECO/Green/ Fair trade ) ( wisdom, creativity, honesty, courageous advocacy )
- Young Leaders Award ((community, service, courageous advocacy )

These groups could lead collective worship and talk about their role and how the school's Christian vision is being lived out in daily school life. These might link with the associated values or other values being explored in the collective worship themes.



**Before you undertake pupil voice you might want to consider the following questions.**

- Who will participate and why?
- What is the role of governors, and how can they effectively be involved?
- How and when will you feedback the evidence collected to staff?
- How will next steps be identified?
- Who is responsible for planning the next pupil voice?
- How will you decide the focus for the next pupil voice?
- How will your school provide an overview of the next steps, including a description of learning opportunities for staff?

Paying attention to these questions as part of the planning of pupil voice will help the activity to be a successful and useful learning experience for all those involved.

### **A list of questions you could choose from:**

1. Tell us what happens in your collective worship time.
2. Do you think collective worship is important in your school?
3. When you are told it is time for collective worship what do you think that collective worship is?
4. In what ways does collective worship time in your school help you to understand more about your school vision? What would the whole school miss if there was no Collective Worship? What would you miss?
5. What sort of ideas are you able to explore in Collective Worship? Is there any other time in school that you can explore these ideas?
6. What's it that makes it collective worship and not just, for example, singing?
7. What do you like most about collective worship?
8. Can you finish this sentence Collective Worship is a time for..... Collective Worship could/should include.....
9. Think about times when you have thought at the end of Collective Worship that was really great, I am glad I was in the hall/ in class worship today! What made it so good?
10. What is your favourite type of collective worship e.g. whole school; smaller groupings; class worship; in church; children taking part in worship; the vicar leading worship; visiting speakers; visiting groups; Communion or Eucharist?
11. What do you like about it / them?
12. Do you have anything special to look at during collective worship? Why do you?
13. How do you feel about collective worship? How does it help you? Does it encourage you in any way?
14. Who leads these collective worship times?
15. Do you have opportunities to create and lead collective worship?
16. Do you have any chance to make comments about collective worship?
17. Do you learn about church seasons and festivals?
18. How and when do you say prayers/reflect in school (start of day, lunchtime, race, end of day, collective worship, etc)?
19. Do you know any special prayers or hymns/songs?
20. Do you ever say prayers/have opportunity to reflect for special reasons?
21. Do you ever say prayers/pause and reflect yourself?

## Exemplar Pupil Collective Worship Monitoring Sheet

Name / Year Group	
The theme was:	
It was led by:	
Where did the worship take place?	
Who was there?	
How were you greeted to make you feel welcome?	
I think the main message of today's collective worship was:	
What happened in worship which helped you to remember this message?	
Different children took part in our collective worship by:	
Did you pray or reflect during collective worship?	
What did you pray or reflect about?	

How did you know that collective worship had ended?	
How did collective worship help you to think about the way you think and behave?	
The thing I remember best from today's collective worship is:	
I think collective worship would have been even better if:	

# Collective Worship in Different Settings

## Collective Worship in Classrooms

Class based collective worship can enhance individual response and offer more time for reflection. It can be developed to closely match the needs, ability and the interests of the children. In addition, children often feel more comfortable in planning and delivering pupil led worship in a class based setting.

There are some important considerations to take into account:

- How can classrooms become a sacred place? How can it feel special and different from the lesson before?
- What are the implications of timetabling worship in the classroom?
- What resources and displays support classed based worship?
- How well supported do staff feel in delivering class based worship?
- Will you have a class prayer?
- And how will the planning of class worship fit in with planning of whole school collective worship?



## Collective worship beyond the classroom

Whether you are on the playground, in the school's peace / spiritual garden, prayer barn or as part of forest school activities, outdoor collective worship can offer a special and memorable experiences. Providing children with opportunities to connect with nature may be planned or spontaneous – as a whole school or just in age groups/ classes.

Use of silence is especially powerful outdoors, and its space opens up opportunities for activities. Resources such as 'Experience Easter outside' [Experience Easter Outside – New Edition – Jumping Fish Publications](#) provide guidance for outdoor stations to share the Easter story.

Moments of awe and wonder during residential visits and school visits can also be shared in collective worship. The same law on collective worship applies, and schools will have to carefully plan the daily act of collective worship into the programme. They may focus upon giving thanks, sharing experiences, stilling and time for reflection.



Forest Schools

Prayer Barns

Outdoor reflective areas

Prayer Labyrinths



Day visits are often difficult to cope with when considering daily entitlement, as there is often very little time in the busy day's schedule. Could pupils write and share travel prayer at start of day? Or share a time of thanks and reflection at the end of the day?

For some schools, collective worship in Church is a regular experience, for others this is planned for special times of the Church year or special school events (Welcome and Leavers' services for both children and staff; blessing new developments in the school etc.)

For some day visits, collective worship might be the focus of the visit. (See right 'Experience Christmas')



For supporting resources: [Experience Journeys – Jumping Fish Publications](#)



# The Role of Clergy in Collective Worship in a Church School

Although the arrangements for collective worship in a church school are the responsibility of the governors in consultation with the headteacher, clergy have an important role in helping to make relevant and engaging the rites and practices of the Church of England in the contemporary life of the school. Through their own personal Christian faith, and their knowledge and experience of past, present and developing practice within the Church and the wider Christian community, clergy have a unique and exciting opportunity to inform the school's worshipping life. The clergy can assist in interpreting the guidance in this document and other authorised guidance of the Church in a way that makes sense to the school, and critically, ensure that the Christian faith is presented in a meaningful and lively manner so that the whole school community is inspired and enabled to engage dynamically with it.

They can contribute to staff development and the planning of worship by exploring Anglican worship in all its variety and richness, as well as helping the school make the most of less familiar Christian sources e.g. Iona, Taizé, South American and African worship. Ideally, clergy should seek to lead worship prayerfully, reliably and regularly, with creativity and inspiration. Incomprehensible, boring, irrelevant or banal approaches to worship can do enormous harm to children's developing sense of God and his place in their lives. Realistically, committing to one act of worship a week will be for many clergy simply impossible, particularly those with more than one parish or more than one school in their parish, so the extent of clergy involvement will vary from clergy to clergy. Whilst reliability is important, it is the clergy person themselves schools value hugely, above all their approachability and warmth. Whatever pattern of involvement is agreed, it should be one that enables the clergy person to become a regular and welcome part of the school's life.

Making the most of other opportunities to connect with children and staff outside of collective worship is important. Clergy involvement, for example, in attending school events such as sports days and school productions helps to foster relationships. Having lunch with the pupils on a regular basis is an excellent way of coming alongside the children in a natural and accessible way. Making a personal connection with the children by chatting together over spag bol, treacle sponge and custard will mean they are more likely to be receptive and willing to engage when they encounter clergy more "formally" when they're leading collective worship.



## Preparation and practice

Offering meaningful and engaging experiences of worship obviously takes thought and can be more challenging for someone leading worship when they are not with the children day by day as teachers are. For those who have little experience of working with children and young people leading collective worship can be especially challenging, indeed daunting! It is important that clergy are open with Headteachers about their lack of confidence or experience and seek advice and help from them and other experienced



staff. In addition, other clergy and Readers who are experienced in leading collective worship can also be a valuable resource.

There are particular skills required in planning and leading effective worship with schoolchildren. Some are theatrical:

- being able to tell a good story
- to play things a bit larger than life
- to engage and hold the audience
- to shape ten minutes so that there is a beginning and an end.

Others are intellectual and theological, and the younger the children the more demanding the task. Most important is to develop the ability to distil the essence of theological truth from the biblical record or other Christian revelation and convey it in terms that are accessible to the children involved. The dictum “less is more” is important here i.e. rather than trying to make several points, identify one “Big Idea” for a particular worship time, stick to that and do it well.

To communicate effectively whatever “Big Idea” has been identified requires awareness of the vocabulary that Christian adults use but which will bamboozle children. Being alert to what needs explaining and what background knowledge is required, and being able to understand off-the-wall questions or answers, and to spot the missed connections, are all part of the well prepared worship leader’s toolkit. But all of this comes with experience and practice, so having realistic expectations of yourself is critical to avoid discouragement.

It is daunting for anyone to consider a whole school act of collective worship. To keep three to eleven-year-olds engaged is probably the most difficult thing anyone ever does in a primary school. Disruption can be minimised by being aware of and using the usual conventions and habits of the school:

- ways of starting and finishing;
- verbal cues for prayers, standing and sitting;
- general pattern/balance of singing, listening, answering questions;
- what prayers are regularly used.

With confidence, these elements can be altered, but making use of an established pattern at first is easier for clergy and the children. As well as seeking advice and help from the Headteacher, especially for clergy lacking experience and confidence in working with young people, it is enormously worthwhile taking the time to observe a variety of school staff leading worship, especially the head, and other experienced clergy and Readers too. When observing in this way, look out for answers to the following questions:

- How do they speak to the whole school? (Avoid having a special voice for addressing younger children.)
- What is the attention span of the youngest children? How is their interest and attention maintained beyond that?

- How do you engage infants and juniors at the same time? How is the trap of talking only to the four-year-olds and losing Year 6 after three minutes avoided in practice?
- What happens when it goes wrong and everyone's interest is lost? What strategies are there for rescuing that situation?
- What is a good act of collective worship from the children's point of view?
- What do they enjoy or recognise as the real thing?

Worship that involves use of ICT such as PowerPoint can be effective and is very familiar to children. Worship that involves children being physically active in some way for part of the time is also hugely effective with children generally responding well to a more active time of worship rather than one which sees them seated throughout. For example, asking for volunteers to help with a drama, mimes, games, and injecting some light hearted competition into the proceedings can all make for collective worship that is fun and memorable. It also lends itself to using different age groups for different tasks so that the whole age range can be kept engaged. Clergy will need to test the waters in terms of the capacity of a particular school's children to cope with more energetic worship, and gradually building towards a more lively time of worship may be appropriate, however, the rewards can be great in terms of increasing the engagement of children in matters of faith and enhancing their relationship with clergy.

The clergy are in school to work alongside staff, governors, pupils and parents rather than dictating the terms, though sometimes firm advice and direction is needed, for example, clergy should not find themselves leading collective worship with no member of staff present. Indeed, ideally, Headteachers should be encouraged to be present at clergy led worship and to encourage all, or at least the bulk, of their teaching staff to be present. The pressure to find non-contact time for teaching staff can make this a difficult issue, however, the more staff there are present at collective worship the more effectively the message is conveyed to the children that collective worship is something of value and a fundamental part of their common life.

## Conclusion

Worship in schools is about facilitating children's and staff's spiritual search, a means to explore faith and above all God's love for them and his purpose for them and the world. Church Schools especially, though not exclusively, are often the place of catalyst for this for many associated with the school community. Clergy contribute to that process first and foremost as Christians and then as representatives of the Church, resourcing the faith journey of the school creatively, dynamically and thoughtfully from the Christian tradition. They are there to enable children to encounter with joyful curiosity the Christian faith, to tell warmly the story of their own faith journey and life with Jesus, to offer with enthusiasm something they feel is of profound value. Clergy embody the credibility and attractiveness of the Gospel, enabling the whole school community to see itself reflected in the light of God's love in Jesus. It's an amazing opportunity, it's a joy and it's a challenge!

# Advice for Visitors to Collective Worship

## What is collective worship?

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. It is educational and inclusive in its nature, rather than being a gathering of believers.

The school community is a collection of people from different backgrounds and if school collective worship is to be meaningful, it must be sensitive to this.

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 to provide opportunities for all to share in collective worship in a way which make sense to them and is appropriate to their stage of development.

Visitors to collective worship are a valued and important part of what a church school provides for its pupils. It enriches pupils understanding of a diversity of beliefs and responses to the world around them. In church schools, worship should be Christian but it is important not to assume that people share your beliefs. If you explain your personal beliefs, make it clear that it is what you believe and not necessarily what others believe.

## Things to consider as a visitor when offering to support collective worship in a school

### Making contact

- Contact the Headteacher in the first instance
- If invited to lead worship, ask to meet the worship co-ordinator, to see policy documents/themes/any resources which they may wish you to use
- Try to visit an act of collective worship before you lead one
- You might want to offer to lead a part of a collective worship to collective worship in a smaller setting e.g. class worship before leading a whole school collective worship.

### Planning and delivering worship

- Collective worship usually lasts between 10 and 15 minutes
- It should be suitable for all to be able to participate whether by actively taking part or reflecting on questions or story
- Share one simple and clear point from which all can learn, whatever their background
- Find out if there are certain actions or routines that the school follows and build them in to your planning where possible (e.g. do they have a worship table? do they light a candle? Do they have a set response?)
- Consider using pictures, video, story and/or music etc. to support your main idea
- Use visual aids large enough to be seen by all-preferably using PowerPoint
- Prepare questions carefully
- Try to involve pupils as much as possible (further guidance on pupil involvement can be found in this booklet). If it is whole school collective worship, consider what will be appropriate for the youngest to the oldest pupils
- It is common for school themes and topics for collective worship follow a yearly plan. It is helpful if visitors can make a distinctive Christian contribution to the theme for the day. If you would like to do something that is not part of the school plan, it is important for the visitor to check what and how much is expected

- Collective worship should follow a basic shape or structure. Diocesan Guidelines give further support on this [Collective Worship - Diocese of York](#)
- Plan a balance between quiet and talking. Think about including a period of quiet reflection in any act of worship which may encourage prayer, awe and wonder
- Think about what you are sending pupils away with. A question? A challenge?
- Good communication – always let the Headteacher know what you are going to do
- Before you try something new check with the Headteacher
- Consider asking for feedback. It can help us plan worship that most effectively meets the needs of the school community.

### **Think carefully about the language you use**

- As a visitor to the school, representing the local Christian community, you are given an opportunity to share but not indoctrinate or evangelise. It is important to use phrases such as: Christians believe, the Bible says, in our church, Jesus taught. This ensures everyone know whose ideas you are sharing
- Do not -
  - undermine the school or staff in the remarks that you make
  - use sexist or racist language or behaviour
  - make or imply derogatory comments about other denominations, faiths, agnostics or atheists.

## Church and School working together – a list of ideas

- Hold a service of commissioning for a new teacher in the parish
- Hold a service of welcome for a new member of the school community

- Consider giving new parents and staff to the school, a gesture or symbol of welcome from the parish (A school prayer leaflet and/or bible, for example)
- Rotate worship between the school and the church
- Make liturgical cloths and banners for the school's collective worship
- Church volunteers make up boxes of Christian artefacts that the school can borrow – special times of the church year for example, an activity box could be made up for pupils to take home and share with family
- Support pupils with reflection corners, collective worship boards, resources, and collective worship planning
- Plan joint worship occasions between church and school, in both locations
- Include the school in special services and festivals at Church
- Establish Education Sunday as a major opportunity for church and school to come together, using material circulated to parishes each year
- Establish a core of hymns, song and liturgy that will be used in worship, in both church and school
- Encourage parish musicians to share their expertise and knowledge, and support music in school, and school worship.

Further support and resources can be found in our Churches and Schools in Partnership booklet

## Resources

### Diocesan Collective Worship Guidelines

[Collective Worship - Diocese of York](#)

**Bibles for children** is a charity offering to present free Bibles to all children in a primary school. There is no catch! <http://www.biblesforchildren.org.uk/content/>

**Imaginer** provides a range of resources to support collective worship planning and spiritual development in primary schools including:

Roots and Fruits

Jack in the Box Worship

Out of the Box Worship

<http://www.imaginer.co.uk/>

**Flippin Praise** is a simple A4 flip-book intended to help groups of children plan acts of worship in relation to a given theme for the day. It also helps them become clearer about what Collective Worship is about.

[http://www.cofesuffolk.org/uploads/Flippin\\_Praise\\_Order\\_Form.pdf](http://www.cofesuffolk.org/uploads/Flippin_Praise_Order_Form.pdf)

**Open the Book** has over 100 stories to be used in a programme that can run for four consecutive years. Each story comes with a scripted introduction, conclusion, time of reflection and a final prayer. Volunteer Storytellers go into schools, build relationships with staff and bring the Bible to life through drama. Storytellers are part of a team formed from the local church or churches working together. <http://www.openthebook.net/>

### Prayer Spaces in Schools

'Prayer Spaces in Schools enable children and young people, of all faiths and none, to explore these life questions, spirituality and faith in a safe, creative and interactive way. Taking a broadly Christian perspective as a starting point, prayer spaces give children and young people an opportunity to develop skills of personal reflection and to explore prayer in an open, inclusive and safe environment. A prayer space is usually a classroom sized area that has been transformed for a few days or a week with a range of creative activities that encourage personal reflection on issues such as forgiveness, injustice, thankfulness, big questions, identity and stillness.'

In the Diocese of York, Olivia Seymour, is a regional networker for Prayer Spaces in Schools and can support parishes in developing prayer spaces.

[oseymour@yorkdiocese.org](mailto:oseymour@yorkdiocese.org)

Visit the website at [www.prayerspacesinschools.com](http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com)



**Experience Journeys** is a series of resources created by Jumping Fish for the main seasons and festivals of the Christian year. [Experience Journeys – Jumping Fish Publications](#)

This is an imaginative approach to help children experience the Christian festivals through the year using, on each occasion, easy to assemble, interactive stations set up in different parts of the church. In the series are Experience Easter, Experience Easter Outside, Experience Pentecost, Experience Harvest, Experience Christmas and Experience Church.



The pack gives detailed instructions to church members to enable them to create the stations. Each pack also includes detailed instructions to help the school group leaders introduce and reflect on each part of the story. These resources offer a superb opportunity to strengthen church-school links.

**Grove Education Books:**

eD 11 Prayer in Schools

eD 23 Living the Lord's Prayer: Turning the School Upside Down

eD28 How to Craft Collective Worship

eD30 How to see Collective Worship Anew