



What is Collective Worship?

'Worship' is not defined in the legislation and in the absence of any such definition it should be taken to have its natural and ordinary meaning. That is, it 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. However, worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common. The legislation reflects this difference in referring to 'collective worship' rather than 'corporate worship'.¹

Collective worship and assembly are distinct activities. Although they may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear' and the content of collective worship can 'be related to the day to day life, aspirations and concerns of the school.'²

Background to Collective Worship at our school

It is a legal requirement that all registered school age pupils take part in an act of worship each day.³ These acts of worship must be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character"⁴ for the majority of the time.⁵ They must also be "appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils".⁶

96% of our pupils and their families identify themselves as practicing religions other than Christianity and 2% identify as being non-religious. We have considered the "circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils which are relevant for determining the character of the collective worship that is appropriate"⁷ for our school community.

Collective worship that is 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character' does not meet our school community needs based on a majority of our pupils and their families not identifying themselves as Christian. For many years we have therefore applied to the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for a 'determination' to lift the requirement under section 394 of the Education Act 1996. This enables the collective worship required by section 70 of the School Standards and Framework (SSF) Act 1998 to 'not be distinctive of any particular Christian or other religious denomination'⁸ and it does not prevent worship from being distinctive of any particular faith.⁹

Interpretation of worship

We have taken a collective inclusive approach to the 'natural and ordinary' meaning of worship that is based on its derivative from the English mid seventeenth century word

¹ Department for Education (1994) Circular 1/94, Religious Education and Collective Worship: DfE (para 57)

² Department for Education (1994) Circular 1/94, Religious Education and Collective Worship: DfE (para 58)

³ School Standards and Framework (SSF) Act 1998, Schedule 20, 2(2) in line with s.70(1) SSF Act 1998

⁴ SSF Act 1998, sch. 20, para. 3(2) with reference to s.70(3)(b) SSF Act 1998

⁵ SSF Act 1998, sch. 20, para. 3(4) in line with s.70(3) SSF Act 1998

⁶ SSF Act 1998, sch. 20, para. 3(6) with reference to s.70(3) SSF Act 1998

⁷ SSF Act 1998, sch. 20, para. 3(6)(a) with reference to s.70(3) SSF Act 1998

⁸ SSF Act 1998 sch. 20, para.4(2)(b) with reference to s.70(3) SSF Act 1998

⁹ SSF Act 1998 sch. 20, para.4 (2) with reference to s.70(3) SSF Act 1998

worship: the condition of being worthy or deserving; worthiness.¹⁰ This can encompass what is offered in a spirit of admiration, celebration and respect to God or people of excellence, worthy of honour and by extension to concepts, principles and conduct which are worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievements. Worship defined in this way draws on news, literature, music, art, drama and other sources of inspiration and reflection for pupils and staff whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none. It is our intention that these approaches contribute to 'introducing [pupils] to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.'¹¹ We recognise the possibilities of providing an approach to inclusive collective worship that can support 'the knowledge and cultural capital that our [pupils] need to succeed in life'¹² which in later life can be 'strategically used as resources in social action'¹³ to enable social mobility.

Collective Worship Intent

At Barham primary school 'no one religious or non-religious tradition takes precedence over another'.¹⁴ Collective worship provides an opportunity for our school community to affirm the values that bind our school community together. This includes valuing the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the 2019 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). Our approach to collective worship simultaneously incorporates the British Values of: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.¹⁵

We see collective worship as an educational opportunity with clear intent. We use this time to encourage our school community to:

- have a dialogue and discussion about and between different faiths and beliefs to explore and review a variety of viewpoints, values and attitudes,
- develop a reflective approach to life and the ability to express reflections,
- reflect upon dimensions of human life – joyful, heroic, sadness, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn . . . ,
- sense of awe and wonder at the beauty, mystery and power of the natural world,
- reflect upon core human values – such as respect, honesty, forgiveness, fairness and justice,
- develop a sense of concern for the needs of others in school, locally, nationally and globally,
- feel a sense of belonging including appreciating ones worth and value in the community.

This contributes to developing self-worth, self-confidence and human values which are essential for personal development, emotional intelligence and spiritual growth in turn contributing to mental well-being and promoting the spiritual, moral, cultural and mental

¹⁰ <https://www.lexico.com/definition/worship> (accessed 8/12/2020)

¹¹ Department for Education (2014) National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4: DfE (para. 3.1 and 3.2) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4> (accessed 8/12/2020)

¹² Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills (2019) Education Inspection Framework: Ofsted (para 26) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/801429/Education_inspection_framework.pdf (accessed 8/12/2020)

¹³ <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095652799> (accessed 8/12/2020)

¹⁴ B. El-Shayyal & L. Prior (2020) Brent SACRE's Model Approach Revised: SACRE

¹⁵ Department for Education (2014) Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools, Departmental advice for maintained: DfE

development of pupils at our school and of society, preparing them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.¹⁶

Implementation

On a minimum of two days of the week collective worship forms part of the daily assembly. Reception together with KS1 and KS2 pupils meet separately on each of these days. Due to there being approximately 120 pupils per year group, there are also year group assemblies where collective worship also forms part of the assembly. This takes place in addition to the Reception, KS1 and KS2 phase group assemblies. The exact detail of what is covered in each assembly will change day to day in response to local and global issues or the individuals or classes leading. Three days of the week collective worship takes place in individual classrooms at various points in the day.

We choose from a range of strategies to engage our school community with collective worship including the use of:

- pupil's contributions; writing their own prayers or sharing their beliefs and values,
- reading sacred and secular stories,
- songs, hymns or music from a range of times, places and cultures,
- artefacts or natural materials,
- visual aid or focal point such as a burning candle,
- providing a moment for silent reflection, prayer or meditation,
- examples of lives of people of faith and noteworthy individuals,
- responses to key local, national and international events: Black History Month, Remembrance Day or World Women's Day,
- 'Thought for the day' discussions: considerations of questions you wouldn't think about elsewhere which do not have definitive answers,
- putting things into practice - e.g, supporting charity projects such as Comic Relief or Children in Need,
- gather with others (year group, whole phase or whole school) for a common purpose: celebrations, performances or presentations from members of the school community that demonstrate shared community values.

The Brent model approach to collective worship is applied where applicable dependent on the strategy used.

Collective Worship School Community Outcomes

We have collective worship outcome expectations as we believe that our implementation of collective worship enables our school community to:

- use language which people use to express their feelings,

¹⁶ Education Act 2002 s.78

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/section/78>

Department for Education (2014) National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4: DfE (para. 1)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4>

(accessed 8/12/2020)

- distinguish right and wrong,
- respond politely and respectfully when views, values or religious beliefs are challenged,
- demonstrate respect and tolerance for views, values or religious beliefs which are not the same as our own,
- have confidence with presenting views and values to the class, year group, phase group or whole school,
- have confidence to respond freely to religious or spiritual stimulus,
- identify core values and principles from a range of religious and non-religious beliefs that have similarities,
- contribute positively to individual and community sense of well-being in the locality of the school and to society more widely,
- appreciate the range of talents and gifts found within the school community and beyond,
- demonstrate a positive response to shared experiences,
- demonstrate a deepened sense of wonder about the world around them,
- engage with the concept of human values appreciating its commonality between everyone regardless of religion or beliefs.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Headteacher is responsible for Collective Worship¹⁷ policies and guidelines.
- The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for planning the calendar of themed activities at the beginning of every academic year, this is discussed with the Headteacher.
- All class teachers are expected to implement collective worship in their class on days when collective worship does not form part of an assembly. They are also expected to record what took place during collective worship in their class collective worship book.
- Members of the SLT monitor Collective Worship on a termly basis. This monitoring includes the collection and scrutiny of each class collective worship book.
- The Governing body are aware of their legal responsibilities in regard to Collective Worship taking into account the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988, the Education Act 1996 and the School Standard Framework Act 1998. They ensure that Collective Worship is appropriately reviewed as part of the whole school development plan. They select a governor with specific responsibility for monitoring the provision and quality of acts of Collective Worship who may request an annual report on Collective Worship from a member of SLT. It is the selected governor's responsibility to be familiar with all documentation regarding Collective Worship issued by the school on their behalf.

Withdrawal from Collective Worship

Barham primary school acknowledges that parents have the statutory right to withdraw their children from school collective worship.¹⁸ This can be a total withdrawal – that is where the children would be wholly excused from all acts of collective worship or a partial withdrawal – that is, where children are excused from certain kinds of collective worship only or from certain elements within an act of collective worship.¹⁹ Parents do not have to give a reason for withdrawing their children from collective worship. Schools must comply with parents' wishes to do so unless the request is withdrawn by parents. Any parent who wishes to exercise this right at Barham primary school should consult the headteacher.

¹⁷ SSF Act 1998 s.70 (2)(b)

¹⁸ SSF Act 1998 s.71(1)

¹⁹ SSF Act 1998, s.71 (1)

As a community school Barham primary school also acknowledges that teachers may withdraw from collective worship. Though teacher's attendance at assemblies is part of their contracted duties, this duty is subject to their freedoms under the Education Act 1944 section 30 not to attend collective worship or the collective worship element. Staff at Barham primary school wishing to discuss this are asked to talk with the Headteacher at the earliest opportunity.

DISSEMINATION:

This policy is shared with all staff and parents via the school website.

Success Criteria

We evaluate our acts of worship against some of the following:

- providing a sense of intellectual challenge,
- enriching pupil's experience with resources used,
- involvement, enjoyment, attention and reaction of pupils to the strategies used,
- monitoring the quality of collective worship provided and frequency it is implemented,
- achievement of collective worship outcomes.

Written by Ms L. Murray: 2021

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: Autumn 2024