

# **PLANNING A SCHOOL POLICY FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

It is suggested that all community schools should appoint a Collective Worship Co-ordinator to lead a working party and/or the whole school staff in preparing and developing a policy document for Collective Worship.

The Framework suggested below may offer some support in drawing up such a policy and could be used by a range of different schools.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

a) The school's current policy

- Is there an existing policy in school?
- What is the current practice in Collective Worship in the school?

b) The legal requirements

- What are the legal requirements for pupils in your school?
- Does your school meet these legal requirements?
- What and where are the gaps?

Refer to *"Collective Worship - The Legal Position", Appendix A*

## **2. THE ROLE AND PURPOSE OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN THE SCHOOL**

- The policy should include a rationale describing the contribution made by Collective Worship to the life of the school.

Refer to *"Principles and Aims of Collective Worship"* and *"Collective Worship and Spiritual Development" Appendix B*

## **3. PLANNING ISSUES**

- Some information should be given to explain the way in which Collective Worship is organised within the school, with reference to groupings, locations, times, leaders etc.
- Example of the proforma used for planning and details of where planning/record sheets are stored in the school.

#### **4. THE ROLE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR**

- Name the person responsible for Collective Worship in the school.
- What are her/his responsibilities?

N. B. Refer to her/his job description

#### **5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- What issues need to be considered in connection with Collective Worship?

#### **6. RESOURCING**

- What resources already exist and where?
- What are the priorities for future resourcing for inclusion in the School Development Plan?

#### **7. SACRE DETERMINATION**

- Does the school have a Determination? (details should be given)
- Is the school planning to apply for a Determination?

Refer to "*Guidance on Applying for a Determination*", provided by the Clerk to LB Camden SACRE

**Schools which have completed a policy document for Collective Worship are invited to send a copy to Camden SACRE for reference.**

# **APPENDIX A: COLLECTIVE WORSHIP - THE LEGAL POSITION**

This summary is based upon legislation enacted in 1944, 1988 and 1993.

Where guidance is based on Circular 1/94 it should be noted that it does not constitute an authoritative legal interpretation of the provisions of the Education Acts or other enactments and regulations; that is exclusively a matter for the courts.

## **1. Provision**

All maintained (i.e. LA) schools must provide a daily act of Collective Worship for all registered pupils; this includes pupils in Reception classes who are five years of age and sixth-formers except pupils over compulsory school age who are receiving part-time education in school. This provision applies to maintained special schools "*so far as practicable*".

The responsibility for securing this lies with the Headteacher in consultation with the Governing Body in the case of maintained schools.

## **2. Assemblies and Collective Worship**

The 1988 Education Act made a legal distinction between assemblies and Collective Worship. The assembly is part of the secular curriculum and is not required by law. Pupils may not be withdrawn from it and teachers can be required to attend it. The 'assembly' and the 'act of Collective Worship' are not synonymous although 'worship' is not defined in legislation and Circular 1/94 advises that "*it should be taken to have its natural and ordinary meaning*".

## **3. Time of Day**

The act of Collective Worship can be held at any time of day.

## **4. Length of the School Day**

The Government's recommendations concerning the length of the teaching week for different age groups exclude the time for Collective Worship.

## **5. Grouping of Pupils**

There may be a single act of Collective Worship each day or separate acts for different age or school groups (e.g. classes or year groups). Grouping by different faiths is not permitted unless the school has sought a Determination which has included this specific provision in its application.

## **6. Right of Withdrawal**

Parents/guardians have a right to withdraw their child wholly or partly from Collective Worship. They do not have to state their reasons for this. The school continues to be

responsible for the supervision of a pupil withdrawn from Collective Worship. A pupil withdrawn from Collective Worship may take part in worship according to a particular faith or denomination during this time provided that this does not entail any cost to the school.

## **7. Character of School Worship for Community Schools**

The act of Collective Worship must *"in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power"*.  
(Circular 1/94).

Unless the school has been granted a Determination the majority of acts of Collective Worship must be *"wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character"*. Circular 1/94 interprets this as meaning that *"it must ... contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ"*. Other acts of worship can include those broadly in the tradition of another religion and those containing elements drawn from different faiths. Collective Worship must not be distinctive of any particular denomination of any faith or religion in an LA maintained school.

## **8. Worship off School Premises**

All acts of Collective Worship must take place on school premises.

## **9. Determination**

A school may seek an exemption from the requirement that the majority of acts of Collective Worship must be *"wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character"*. This exemption is what is meant by a Determination.

If a Headteacher considers that such an exemption should be sought the Governing Body must first be consulted. The Determination may be for the whole school or for a defined group of pupils. Where the Determination is for a group of pupils of a particular faith or religion, the alternative worship provided may be distinctive of that faith or religion but may not be distinctive of any particular denomination of that faith or religion.

An application for a Determination should be made to the LA's Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education. In considering the application the SACRE must have regard to the circumstances relating to the faith backgrounds of the pupils. The SACRE may accept or reject the application; it may not modify it. The SACRE must inform the Headteacher in writing of the outcome and, where a Determination has been granted, it must specify the starting date. SACRE must review each Determination no later than five years from its introduction.

A Determination does not exempt a school from the requirement to provide a daily act of Collective Worship and, where a Determination has been granted in respect of a group of pupils, the acts of worship of the remainder of the pupils must be *"wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character"*.

## **10. Teachers**

Head teachers have a duty to see that the law on Collective Worship is complied with in their school.

Teachers in LA maintained schools, cannot be required to attend Collective Worship and cannot be discriminated against in terms of pay or promotion for not doing so.

## APPENDIX B: THE NATURE OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AND PRINCIPLES AND AIMS

Schools should be aware that there are key differences between **collective** worship and **corporate** worship.

Corporate worship is appropriate to a *corpus* or body of people, who have come together because they share the same religious beliefs; for example, this is the type of worship which may be found during Divine Liturgy in an Orthodox Church or in an observant Jewish home with the celebration of Shabbat. Those participating in collective worship in a school have **not** necessarily come together because they share the same religious beliefs; they are simply part of the same educational community and may possess a wide diversity of religious, agnostic and non-religious life stances.

Collective Worship can give pupils a broader understanding of a variety of religious forms of worship. However, it should not **impose** forms of worship which are inappropriate to their own faith tradition or belief system. Therefore, where the form of worship used is drawn from an explicit religious context, it must be seen as purely educational and within its own context.

While pupils may respond to a moral question, symbol, human experience or universal religious value raised within that context, this is not considered to be their act of worship. The act of worship is in their response to that which is accepted within their own religious context or individual belief system and is personal to them. Certain children may be representative of the religious context presented and they therefore have the opportunity to respond personally here.

On those occasions where a non-religious mode of presentation is used, it should only address the spiritual in terms of an implicit human understanding. This gives pupils the freedom to respond in a personal religious way.

However, if a non-religious mode of presentation becomes spiritual in an explicit way, it must be given a context and take on an educational format.

The following aims and principles have been produced in order to help schools to understand the nature and the role of Collective Worship and may be a useful focus for staff discussion when a policy document is being planned.

# **PRINCIPLES OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

**An act of Collective Worship should ....**

- respect the integrity and dignity of pupils and staff
- be appropriate to the needs and interests of the pupils
- be clearly distinguished from the everyday activity of the school
- be inclusive so that everyone can both contribute to it and gain from it and participate in it if this is appropriate.

## **AIMS OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

- To offer the time and opportunity for reverence, reflection, contemplation and if appropriate, prayer
- To provide a context for a consideration of moral, ethical, social and cultural issues
- To help pupils to develop thoughtful and extended responses to key questions
- To promote the spiritual growth and development of pupils
- To foster a sense of community within the school and beyond it
- To enable pupils to explore a variety of forms of worship - those with a religious commitment should have their experience broadened and deepened and those without should learn to appreciate what it may mean to others
- To illuminate, celebrate and commemorate what has meaning, value and purpose for individuals, the school and the wider community
- To celebrate difference and diversity.