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Collective Worship in Anglican Schools

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT marks distinguishing Church schools from others should be the importance placed on the spiritual life of all members of the school community – pupils, teachers, governors and non-teaching staff. This shows itself in the attention paid to the ethos of the school, the careful planning and delivery of the RE curriculum, but above all in the quality of the worship offered in the school.

All schools are required by law to ensure pupils take part in an act of collective worship each day. This is a requirement fraught with difficulties – practical, philosophical and theological, and the subject of much current debate.

The majority of Church schools accept pupils from the local neighbourhood (whatever their faith background.) and see themselves as serving the community. In that respect they share the difficulties of county schools in trying to interpret worship in a context of possibly more than one faith and no general agreement on issues of belief.

In addition, however, the legal basis of church schools (see Appendix A), the Trust Deed, requires the school to ensure that everything it does lies within the framework of the faith and practice of the Church of England. This is both a help and a handicap. It is a help in that it provides a clear, Christian, framework for the values, RE and Collective Worship; a handicap where a school wishes to meet the needs of pupils and parents who are active members of a different faith community.

WORSHIP IN SCHOOLS

There are many, including committed Christians, who would argue that requiring pupils in schools to worship at all is an infringement of personal religious freedom (despite the withdrawal clauses) and educationally unsound.

Clearly, worship as it is understood and practised by believers is not appropriate in most schools. (Much debate about the law governing school worship has focused on the difference between 'corporate' and 'collective' worship).

There have been several ways, in which the requirement has been explored in the primary school context, attempting to meet the obligation to worship while maintaining an educational and inclusive approach.

Some of these ways include education about worship:

- exploring features of worship in a variety of faiths;
- focusing on the activities or intentions of believers (e.g. thanksgiving or confession) in a secular way;
- reflecting on concerns shared by believers e.g. wonder at the created universe;
- desire for justice and peace in a thoughtful, worshipful way;
- using material used by believers in worship as a stimulus to deeper thinking and reflection.

Some of these are reflected in the section 'Developing a Policy: Aims of Collective Worship'.

For most church schools, the Christian context and focus of worship will be explicit. In other words it will be clear that worship is offered to God, through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE CHRISTIAN FRAMEWORK

Despite great variations in practice, some beliefs are common to all Christians.

Unique to Christianity is an understanding of God as *Trinity*: One God in Three Persons. Often expressed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the doctrine points to God's activity and being in Creation, making and sustaining all that is; God's being and redemptive work in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus; and God's continued presence and action for good in the world as Holy Spirit.

Christians believe God is good; that human beings were created for union and relationships with God but that sin consistently prevented that union from being realised. God's action in Jesus broke the power of sin and inaugurated a new age.

A key task of collective worship in church schools is to enable pupils to explore and experience these beliefs and the practices, which flow from them.¹

THE ANGLICAN HERITAGE

Forms of worship within the Church of England do differ, and so provide a rich tradition for schools to draw from.

¹ A more detailed account of Christian beliefs can be found in the Diocesan RE Syllabus and in the Model Syllabuses for RE (SCAA, 1994)

Key elements, which would be expected to form part of the pupils' experience in one form or other, would be:

- The Bible, used in worship as a source of knowledge, inspiration and prayer
- Christian symbols e.g. bread, wine, chalice, cross, crucifix, used in worship as a means of expressing belief and faith
- The cycle of the Anglican year as laid out in the lectionary, observing key festivals
- The authorised forms of Anglican worship, as found in Common Worship, especially the Eucharist
- Collects, traditional responses, prayers and canticles, either learned and used regularly or occasionally
- Prayers and forms of worship from the Anglican communion worldwide

SCHOOL AND CHURCH

Where there are choices, as e.g. the text of the Lord's Prayer or the Eucharist rite, governors and staff will need to think very carefully about what is the most important consideration. The simplest solution is often to have the same version as is used in the parish church. For children who attend both, that is likely to minimise confusion.

There are other issues to be considered, however, including language and imagery that are more accessible to children.

Writing a Collective Worship Policy

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS may help in formulating a collective worship policy.

PROCESS

- Who is to be involved in drawing up the policy?
- Staff will have to deliver worship – at what stage will the whole staff be involved?
- Governors have responsibility for the policy and the practice – how will they be involved in the process?
- Chairs of governors and clergy often have a key role – how will their expertise be tapped?
- Diocesan staff have a wider view – what input can they provide?
- What is the time scale? (overnight is probably a little hasty!) including drafting the policy; staff input; governors' input; final approval by the governors.
- Budget – are any costs to be incurred during this task (e.g. Inset, cover for non-contact time, producing documentation)?

POLICY CONTENT

1. Foundation of the school:

- Status: voluntary aided, voluntary controlled or foundation
- Denominations: Church of England, Church of England / Methodist, Inter-denominational (identify which, if possible!)
- Trust Deed: extract if available or relevant.
- If not, the School Ethos Statement and a general statement about Trust Deeds setting the school up to provide education within the framework of 'the principles and practices of the Established Church'.

2. Place of worship in the life of the school including reference to the mission statement, and the role of worship in maintaining the ethos

of the school, celebrating and exploring the values important to the school.

3. Aims for collective worship within the denominational framework: see sample aims following:

4. Expectations of pupils

A statement of outcomes: what it is intended pupils will gain from the worship programme, with a clear link to their spiritual and moral development.

In multi-faith schools it may be helpful to make some comment about what is *not* intended, and how the worship is to be useful and open to all pupils.

Expectations and rationale of visits to church or school Eucharist's might be stated here.

5. Organisation and delivery

A brief outline of the programme for collective worship including who is responsible for leading it.

6. Records

Where the records of the school's programme are held and a note on availability to parents on request.

7. Relationship to Diocesan policy on collective worship in voluntary schools. A straightforward statement that the provision is in line with Diocesan policy

8. Parental rights of withdrawal

These must be stated in the policy and school brochure, with the procedure that should be followed. In a church school, collective worship is a vital part of maintaining a particular view of and context for education, so it is reasonable to request that parents discuss their position with the head. There is no legal obligation on them to do so, however. Any suggestion that a place at the school was conditional on the child's attendance at worship would be an infringement of parents' legal rights.

Writing a Collective Worship Policy

AIMS FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Use the following as a starter for discussion with staff or governors to work towards a statement tailored to your own particular circumstances.

1. To contribute to pupils' spiritual development, e.g.

- Experience what worship is and what people do when they worship.
- Develop ability to mediate and use silence creatively
- Reflect on and think more deeply about important issues
- Foster a sense of awe and wonder at creation
- Celebrate all that is of value in life – truth, love, goodness, beauty etc.
- Explore mystery and the important questions about life and creation, including the dark side of life, e.g. suffering, loss, death and evil
- Express their concerns, hopes, joys, etc.
- Build up their relationship with God

2. To introduce pupils to the worship of the Church of England/Methodist Church e.g.

- Learn to use the church service books
- Learn the important and famous prayers of Christianity and the Anglican or Methodist Church
- Learn appropriate responses and forms of prayer
- Give pupils a repertoire of prayers to take into adult life
- Experience different forms of Christian worship and worship material

3. To gain in knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith, e.g.

- Explore Christian beliefs about God
- Learn about the place and significance of the Bible
- Learn about the significance of Jesus
- Explore the nature of God as revealed in Jesus
- Share in Church life and Christian practice
- Experience different forms of worship
- Celebrate the festivals and Saints days of the church year

4. To explore and share the beliefs of others, e.g.

- Listen to stories from other faiths and learn about their significance
- Observe special celebrations from other faiths
- Discover how believers from other faiths worship
- Celebrate values and attitudes shared with members of other faith communities

5. To contribute to pupils' moral development, e.g.

- Develop ability to reflect on moral and social issues
- Appreciate the values and beliefs that people live by
- Acknowledge and become more aware of the needs of others

6. To contribute to the general development of pupils, e.g.

- Provide them with opportunities for leadership and developing presentation and performance skills
- Learn the skill of choral speaking
- Develop pupils' singing ability
- Participate in group planning, preparation and presentation

7. To celebrate and take note of the life of the school in the presence of God, e.g.

- Celebrate work undertaken by pupils in all areas of the curriculum
- Build up sense of community of the school
- Develop and reflect on the values of the school
- Share achievements, joys and difficulties of all members of the school community

8. To look out to the wider world

- To take note of events in the world and express joy or sorrow as appropriate
- to celebrate and give thanks for God's world

Planning or Reviewing a Programme

PLANNING STRUCTURES

Who is involved?

- Governors – especially foundation and clergy
- Senior Staff / Worship / Music / RE Co-ordinators / whole staff – older pupils?
- How often do planning meetings take place/ Monthly / Half-termly / Termly?

PLANNING ISSUES

Pattern

- What is the weekly pattern?
- Whole school / Part school / special occasions?

Leadership

Who leads Worship?

- Parish or local clergy
- Senior staff / Head / deputy / Key Stage Co-ordinators / year heads / class teacher / pupil(s) / secondary school pupils
- Visitors

Participants

Who is invited?

- Regularly / special occasion
- Parents / Governors / friends of the school / Diocesan representatives

Environment

Where does worship take place?

How is the appropriate atmosphere created?

- Music / focus / decorations / flowers
- fixed / changing focus
- cross / other Christian symbols

How are pupils disposed?

- sitting / chairs / floor / comfortably?

How do staff behave?

- like prison guards / participating / neutral observers?

Themes

How are themes related to the aims? To the curriculum? To general life of the school and the neighbourhood?

How long is theme to be followed?

- Single session / a week / half term / longer?

Where are themes drawn from?

- The Church's year / Calendar / national events / local events / school events or issues / related to the curriculum / free floating

Components

- Story: from Christianity / from other faith traditions / novels / storybooks / children's fiction / biographies / 'true life'
- Music:
Song / traditional / hymns / carols / chants / folksong / children's songs
Recorded music / anything and everything!
Performance / as accompaniment / and 'recital'
- Drama / Dance: prepared or improvised
- Film, Video, Radio
- Art: Slides / picture / sculpture
- Prayer
Formal, traditional: Lord's Prayer, Grace Prayers learnt or listened to from the Christian tradition: Common Worship, Collects, Celtic, other schools / prayers arising from work or thoughts prepared in advance or elicited during worship
Silence / meditation / reflection
Developing the 'skill' of inwardness
- Pupil involvement: taking a lead / musical / drama and role-play

Visitors

Who? Regular / friends of the school

Occasional / experts / representatives?

Guidance for visitors: Timing / aims of worship / programme / pupils / previous knowledge and experience / talk or interview format

Preparation and follow up with pupils

Provision for expenses or thank-you gift

Putting it all together

Stability: What happens every time?

Certain prayers / routines of coming in and going out / habits of behaviour / establishing school rituals / lighting a candle / marking birthdays / recognising achievement

Planning or Reviewing a Programme

How are these built in?

Some time for thinking / listening / sharing / stillness and silence

Variety: How are a range of activities and experiences incorporated into a known framework?

How do we vary the traditional format of song, talk, prayer, song?

Review and evaluation

- How often?
- Whose responsibility?
- Who is consulted?
- What criteria are used?
- What outcomes are looked for?

Resources

- What budget is allocated to worship?
- Who oversees the spending?
- What targets in the development planning is the spending matched to?
- What resources are there for worship? Books / artefacts / other?
- How is what is available discovered? Diocesan Resources Centre / publishers
- What inservice provision is offered? Diocesan RE Adviser

Records

- How are records kept? proforma / file notes
- Who keeps the records?

Is it clear how parents can have access to the records if requested? Note in school brochure / informal communication.

- Collective worship makes a major contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Pupils enjoy collective worship and are involved in a variety of ways
- Staff take an appropriate part in worship
- The worship clearly relates to one or more of the aims of the school collective worship policy

Inspecting Collective Worship

HOW EVIDENCE IS TO BE COLLECTED

Inspectors will

- Evaluate policy statement and guidelines on collective worship
- Examine planning sheets and records relating to worship
- Note details of budget and inservice support for worship
- Evaluate resources for collective worship
- Observe a minimum of two acts of worship
- Interview staff member responsible for collective worship, headteacher and Chair of Governors

Inspectors may

- Interview other members of staff who lead collective worship
- Talk with pupils

Evaluating Individual Acts of Worship

Worship according to the Trust Deed will be judged to be of a satisfactory standard or better when:

- The school takes collective worship seriously and monitors and evaluates its provision
- Care has been taken in organising the physical environment, e.g. cleanliness and tidiness of the hall or room / comfort of the participants / appropriate visual focus which for the most acts of worship will be explicitly Christian
- An attempt is made to create a worshipful atmosphere, e.g. use of music, quiet reflection, behaviour and movement of pupils, staff, visitors
- Christian material (hymns, prayers etc) is used in an appropriate way i.e. according to the school's policy statement
- There is evidence of pupils' familiarity with denominational worship material (e.g. Lord's Prayer, Grace, section of the Eucharist)
- The worship takes account of pupils' ages, aptitudes and backgrounds

Worship according to the Trust Deed will be judged to be of an unsatisfactory standard when:

- The physical environment is poor, distracting or uncomfortable
- No obvious attempt is made to create an appropriate setting, mood or atmosphere
- Content is not clearly Christian where this would be expected nor related to the school's collective worship policy
- The worship is inappropriate for the ages, aptitudes and backgrounds of the children
- The worship makes a poor contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Staff do not participate
- Pupils are not attentive or involved
- Notices or other administrative matters are allowed to offset or lessen the impact of the worship

Evaluating the whole Worship provision of the school

Inspectors will be looking for:

- A clear, carefully thought out collective worship policy, arrived at after detailed discussion by staff and governors, reflecting the requirements of the Trust Deed and consideration of Diocesan guidelines
- A regular and well understood pattern of worship that meets the legal requirements
- Planning for worship that is both detailed and also has the flexibility to respond to events within and outside the school community
- Records which demonstrate a variety and range of experience for pupils to participate in

- Suitable links with the parish, through the clergy, other members of the congregation, services in church etc.
- Recognition of the importance of collective worship in the life of the school through SMT or responsibility allowance, adequate resourcing – budget, resources and inservice, support for tutor-group or classroom worship.

Appendix A: The Legal Framework

IN MOST RESPECTS, the legal requirements for acts of collective worship in voluntary schools differ from those applying to community schools. Voluntary schools are: aided, controlled, special agreement and foundation schools which were formerly any of those.

1. The requirement for a daily act of Worship and the right of withdrawal

All schools are covered by the requirement to provide an act of collective worship each day for each pupil, unless parents have requested that a pupil may be wholly or partly excused from worship.

The whole school need not necessarily meet together for worship but may gather in classes or groups of pupils. Legislation does not, however, permit these groups to be drawn together on the basis of the faith of the pupils.

Parents' right to withdraw their children from collective worship should be stated in the school brochure and in policy statements on worship. There is, of course, no guarantee that pupils can be withdrawn from the Christian ethos of the school!

Teachers also have the right to decline to lead worship, even in aided schools. (The National Society contracts also include at clause 8 a recognition of the obligation on teachers to respect the character of the foundation).

2. Responsibility for arranging Worship

In a voluntary school, arrangements for the collective act of worship are made by the governing body after consultation with the headteacher.

Within the governing body, the foundation governors (i.e. those appointed by the Church, P.C.C. or Diocese) have particular responsibility for seeing that the character of the school is reflected in the worship.

Voluntary schools were normally provided by a conveyance of land to be held in trust for the purpose of providing education for the poor of the parish in accordance with Church of England teaching. This conveyance is the school's Trust Deed. It is the duty of the governing body to make the necessary arrangements, within the law, for the act of worship to be consistent with the purpose of the school, within the terms of the Trust Deed.

For schools which do not have a Trust Deed, or whose Deed has been mislaid over the course of time the following ethos statement should be considered as the alternative:

'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 experiences it offers to all pupils.'

Further guidance may be obtained from the National Society. The founders of many church schools received grants from the National Society in return for which their Trust Deeds include a requirement that the school 'shall always be in union with and conducted upon the principles and in furtherance of the ends and designs of the incorporated National Society for promoting the education of the Poor in the principles of the Established Church'. The National Society has since amended these 'Terms of Union', which now state:

'The daily act of collective worship required by law in the School shall be consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England and the basic curriculum required by law in the school shall include religious education consistent with the faith of the Church of England'. For most Church schools this acts as a reliable statement of the legal basis for worship, whether or not they have a Trust Deed, because it reflects the purpose for which most church schools were established and takes account of all legislation

3. Curriculum time

The act of collective worship is not designed as curriculum time under regulations and should not be subsumed into any part of the curriculum.

To meet legal requirements it must be distinctive and identifiable. Schools may hold their collective act of worship in a church 'on a special occasion', but this is not counted as curriculum time.

Appendix A: The Legal Framework

4. Additional information

Foundation schools, which were voluntary aided, special agreement or controlled schools are covered by the same provisions as voluntary schools for worship and religious education.

The provisions of the 1988 Act concerning 'determination' (section 12) and 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (section 7) do not apply to voluntary schools.

5. Complaints/ Appeals

In all other curriculum areas, if parents fail to be satisfied by their appeal to the governing body they then have the right of appeal to the LEA.

Where policy relates to an area of the school conducted in accordance with the Trust Deed (i.e. RE or Worship) the appeal should be channelled to the Diocese, as the only person who can arbitrate on Trust Deed issues is the Diocesan Bishop.

The process would probably involve the Bishop seeking the advice of the Board of Education and it is likely that a sub-committee of the Board would conduct a hearing on behalf of the Bishop.

Christianity or any other faith by attempting to create a vague, unfocused activity, well castigated as multi-faith mish-mash.

(3. Aims for Worship)

4. Questions for Planning

4.1 Are we asking pupils to do anything that would fall under 2.3? e.g. join in songs that express beliefs they don't share; say 'Amen' to or recite prayers from a tradition not their own, be given a Trinitarian blessing, thus implicating some pupils in a blasphemy; assume such an approach to a sacred text that is not

Appendix B: Worship in Multi-Faith Church Schools

Extract from MDBE guidance of 1992: full document available from MDBE offices

(1. Legal Framework)

2. General Principles governing Collective Worship in Church Schools

There are not just legal constraints on worship in schools; there are educational and ethical considerations that should be brought to bear. Some of these might be:

- 2.1 School worship, by virtue of the nature of the community is not the same as worship within a faith setting. (The difference between 'collective' and 'corporate'). So it would not usually be appropriate to transport forms of worship directly from Church to school. (It would need to be very clear to parents and pupils, for example, why a school Eucharist was taking place).
- 2.2 The Education Reform Act requires that school worship must be appropriate to the 'age, aptitude and family background' of pupils, which is clearly important to all schools and part of the general principle that *everything* that happens in school must be educational.
- 2.3 School worship should not demand of any pupils (or staff) participation they cannot give with integrity, nor require them to take part in activities that may be offensive to them or their parents.
- 2.4 School worship should not, on the other hand, seek to fudge the distinctive character of

shared; require them to participate in an act of worship in a building dedicated to worship in a faith other than their own.

All of these might create problems for some pupils, so governors and staff would need to be very clear why they might be requiring them.

4.2 How is the Christian framework for worship to be maintained without violating the integrity of pupils from other faiths? The explicit material used in worship will regularly be drawn from Christian sources, inviting pupils to explore and respond to Christian stories and Christian values; inviting pupils to see what is important to Christians through thinking about prayers, beliefs and practices.

As important, is the witness to the Christian faith carried through the life of the school, the way adults and children relate to each other, the expectations of all members of the community, the life of service lived day by day. The 1983 Diocesan Guidelines state the hope that 'through the love they receive from their teachers and clergy and from their understanding of the Christian faith, the lives of those who are followers of other faiths will be enriched and their trust in God strengthened'.

4.3 Is it possible to use material drawn from other faiths in worship in a church school?

(See 1.5) It is not possible to have worship according to other faiths as the daily act of worship. Using stories and prayers to think about (or join in if they belong to that tradition) could be included under a number of the aims and seen as contributing to the process of dialogue.

5. Issues of particular concern to Muslims

5.1 Requiring Muslim pupils to attend services in Church is problematic. Clearly, however carefully

the service is devised, holding it in a building consecrated to Christian worship may signify to some participants a level of agreement with Christian beliefs especially about the nature of God and the person of Jesus Christ.

Under what circumstances can this be justified in relation to Muslim pupils?

If Governors see this as a fundamental demonstration of the character of the school, parents need to be aware of this and what the arrangements are if they do not wish their children to attend.

Appendix B: Worship in Multi-Faith Church Schools

Visiting a church as part of a religious education topic (e.g. Unit 3 of the Diocesan syllabus) is quite different and part of each child's education. Learning about Christian places of worship is part of the RE curriculum in the same way that learning about e.g. Jewish or Muslim places of worship is.

5.2 Singing Hymns

Hymns with obviously Trinitarian or Christological content clearly present grave problems for Muslim families. Referring to anyone as the Son of God is the gravest blasphemy in Islam, where the fundamental belief is that Allah is one.

Offering pupils the choice or not of singing Christian hymns would then place children in the position of deciding for themselves on the basis of uncertain levels of understanding of both their own faith and Christianity.

It would seem that for some Muslims there is also a broader problem with singing as part of worship. For them it appears to fall under the general prohibition of dance and pictorial images. Regardless of content, the act of singing in worship can be problematic.

This would need to be pursued with each particular community, as there does seem to be a division of opinion here. Certainly the Islamic worship as followed at one community Primary School contained much singing of Muslim songs.

(Singing in general (not in worship) is a requirement of the National Curriculum and as such there is no mechanism for withdrawal)

5.3 Christian indoctrination of Muslim pupils

There was a claim, in a document published by a Muslim group within the Diocese, that church

schools deliberately set out to convert Muslim pupils.

A softer version of this would express great anxiety that the direct teaching about Christianity given at school has the effect of diluting the impact of teaching given at home and in the Mosque, and of confusing children about what they believed and about their identity as Muslims.

Schools that incorporate the statement on the Multi-Faith Community from the 1983 Guidelines¹ are

~~signaling to their communities that the intention to convert is not the basis of RE in the school.~~

If RE and worship policies clearly set out the aims and programmes of study, then it will be clear what the children are expected to take part in and to learn. Parents are then in a better position to decide if that is what they want for their child.

If Church schools wish to continue to admit pupils of other faiths and to do their best by them, it would seem sensible in some way to involve members of the communities in the process.

Help is always of course, available from the Diocese through the RE Adviser.

5.4 Jesus and the Old Testament Prophets in the Qur'an

In summary, the Qur'an refers to Jesus as a 'sign', a 'mercy', a 'witness' and an 'example'. He is called by the names of *Messenger, Prophet, Servant, Word and Spirit of God*. His promise that another Comforter would come (John 14:16 etc) is taken by Muslims to refer to Prophet Muhammad. Muslims would reject absolutely the doctrine of the Trinity, and therefore the divinity of Christ.

They do accept the sinlessness of Jesus; the Day of Judgement; the Forgiveness of Sins and the Resurrection of the Body.

6. Further Reading

The Multi-Faith Church School: Alan Brown (National Society) 1992

Primary School Worship: Alan and Erica Brown (National Society) 1992

Religious Education: Alan Brown (National Society) 1992

¹ p4: 'We do not consider it right and proper to seek to convert those who are of other faiths to the Christian faith while they are pupils at our school'.