



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

2025–2028



MANCHESTER DIOCESE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

Thank you so much for your interest in this collective worship guidance and support document. I am really excited to be able to share it with you and am sure it will prove invaluable in further developing the approach, content and impact of collective worship within your particular school. Following a request from the Diocesan Board of Education we have put together this document.

Collective worship remains a priority for all of us connected with CE schools. The gift of collective worship is one that many of us treasure in CE schools as a time to be still, to collectively focus on the distinctiveness of the church school community, whilst introducing the tenants of the Anglican church, simple liturgy as well as the stories of Jesus. For many children and young people being involved in CE school collective worship is their first experience of worship. As such it should be uplifting, introduce them to the spiritual, as well as be a means for pupils and adults to reflect on their own responses to what they see, hear and experience.

My prayer is that this document will help you to continue to provide effective collective worship through which all can develop spiritually, whatever their personal faith or belief system. This document presents a series of questions connected with collective worship and suggests answers to such questions. It is meant to stimulate your creative thinking. Please let us know if you feel it could be refined and further developed.

Deborah Smith
Director of Education



CONTENTS

The purpose of this document is to support school leaders in providing quality collective worship. This guidance seeks to make collective worship a priority and ensure its quality. The content of this document has been a drawing together of publicly available guidance while illustrating the contextual needs within the diocese. We hope it's content will be of use to you in defining, partnering, leading and evaluating collective worship within your setting. The guidance is structured to address these key four areas for enquiry.

1.DEFINING

- 1.1 What is collective worship?
- 1.2 Why is collective worship important?
- 1.3 What does collective worship look like?
- 1.4 What does a worship plan look like?

2.PARTNERING

- 2.1 How can collective worship develop partnerships?

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- 3.3 How is collective worship monitored?
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- 4.1 What do collective worship evaluations look like?



1.1 WHAT IS COLLECTIVE WORSHIP?

‘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’. (DfE Circular 1/94 para 57)

Daily acts of collective worship are required by law, though there is no clear definition of collective worship. Corporate worship, is the form most will be familiar with. This is the gathering of people with a shared belief worshipping together in a setting which seeks to promote the set of beliefs shared. Collective worship is different. Collective worship recognises that, though people gather together, they may not share beliefs.

There is no promotion of belief in an attempt to convert but hopefully in an collective worship should be:

“Appropriate to the family backgrounds of the pupils and their ages and aptitudes.”
(DfE Circular 1/94 p.22)

Collective worship in a church school provides the opportunity to gather as a community, to give thanks, to be still, to pause from the daily activities, to explore big questions, to ponder on the character of God, to explore the teachings of Jesus, to engage with ancient texts for spiritual and literary benefit, to affirm the Christian values of the community and to celebrate key events from the Christian year. The list of benefits could go on and they apply to all members of the school community.

1.2 WHY IS COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IMPORTANT?

‘In Church of England schools, collective worship is seen as more than a daily ‘awe and wonder’ moment. It is the unique heartbeat of the school and is offered as part of a wider opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter faith by engaging in conversations about God, both as individuals and together.’ (collective worship in Church of England Schools, ‘Inclusive Invitational Inspiring’ Guidance Document 2021)

The vision and values of our school communities is affirmed in the daily act of collective worship. Through the opening of hearts and minds to worship and the celebration of each child, family, teacher and member of the community as a valued part of creation, collective worship holds significance for the people and the person. Collective worship in church schools aims to reflect the traditions found within the Church of England alongside observance of the liturgical calendar and the Christian year.

The support of the teaching body, leadership and governance of a church school for collective worship is key in ensuring that the ethos of the school is reflected upon daily and that collective worship has a positive impact on the development of personal faith, social interactions and recognition of respect for self and others to foster community and enable all to ‘live life in all its fullness’ John 10:10.

1.3 WHAT DOES COLLECTIVE WORSHIP LOOK LIKE?

'Collective worship does not always look the same but often it does have a familiar structure. Usual elements found in collective worship would include times of prayer (perhaps based on a psalm), storytelling (often from or inspired by the Bible), a time of silence, reflection, music and singing. The theme is consistent with the trust deed of the school and may be related to the church year, an event, a teaching of Jesus, the school vision or values.

All members of the school should be encouraged to attend acts of collective worship and as far as is possible, school staff structures and timetables should enable the maximum number to do so. Pupils' and students' attendance at collective worship should be prioritised above any other school activity. School leaders should seek to timetable provision in such a way that they do not clash with collective worship unless the availability of external professionals prevents this.

Collective worship is overseen by a coordinator or lead but is often planned by a group. This group would normally include pupils, teachers, the local incumbent or perhaps a visitor. Often, the time of collective worship is led by those who have planned it. There are various approaches to planning collective worship.

For example, a worship model that could be used includes the following:

- Gathering – an invitational welcome including music,
- Engaging – an inclusive approach made accessible for
- Responding – Inspiring an opportunity for response in the moment.
- Sending – Inspiring an opportunity to respond in the future.

An alternative approach may be to explore abstract concepts from a concrete position. This is much like the way we teach fractions in Maths. We start with familiar things like cake and pizza and we move from sharing pieces to sharing values. This approach may be structured as following:

- Concrete – Introduction of familiar concept.
- Connection – Links to the abstract value or teaching.
- Bible Connection – Exploration of the value through story telling.
- Challenge – Application of the abstract value to daily life.

1.4 WHAT DOES A WORSHIP PLAN LOOK LIKE?

Here is basic example of a worship is plan. It illustrates the distinct sections within worship and highlights how each section leads pupils and adults through an exploration of the theme/value.

Gathering	<p>Welcome everyone and introduce the time together.</p> <p>Perhaps light a candle to aid focus and represent a time that is different from the rest of the day.</p> <p>Invite those gathered to sing together.</p>
Engaging	<p>Questions to explore together:</p> <p>Have you ever made anything you thought was really good?</p> <p>Did you take care of it? How would you like other people to treat it?</p> <p>Add a teacher example – perhaps bring something along from home.</p> <p>Where would you keep the thing you had made? Images of safe, a vault, a tower etc.</p> <p>What do Christians believe God made? How do they believe he made it?</p> <p>If needed, watch this video to recap: Creation (Genesis 1-2) – YouTube</p> <p>Bible verse: Genesis 1:31 ‘God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.’</p> <p>Sing the Genesis 1:31 song EARLY CHILDHOOD worship (Genesis 1:31) – YouTube</p> <p>Christians believe that God made everything, but on day six, he made people. How do you think God felt about people? God thought people were really good! God wanted to keep His creation safe, but he didn’t put it in a safe or a vault or up a tower, he made people to look after it and keep it safe which makes people very special too.</p>
Responding	<p>Do you think the world is good? How do you feel that God chose people to take care of His creation? What could we do to take care of the world?</p> <p>Activities could be completed in the classroom:</p> <p>Write prayers on paper leaves or ribbons and dress a tree with them. Get a map of the world and write prayers on the map. Plan a litter pick to tidy up the outdoor space. (Ensure children are given appropriate gloves, litter picks etc). Go on a prayer hunt: We're Going on a Prayer Hunt – outdoor prayer stations – engageworship</p> <p>I am going to pray, feel free to say Amen at the end of the prayer if you would like to make this prayer your own.</p> <p>Dear God,</p> <p>Thank you for making the world.</p> <p>We are sorry for the times we have forgotten how good it is. We are sorry when we forget how special we are.</p> <p>Please show us ways to take good care of our world today and every day.</p> <p>Amen.</p>
Sending	<p>Look out for ways to share the love of God with others this week.</p> <p>You may wish to say some words to dismiss, these may be connected to your school vision.</p> <p>Blow out the candle</p>

2.1 HOW CAN COLLECTIVE WORSHIP DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS?

Worship in schools provides an opportunity for partnership between the different parts of the community. This partnership is often between school, church, and home. Approaching the planning, delivery and evaluation of collective worship together, a safe space may be created across the community. This creates a culture where children and young people are free to explore faith & spirituality, ask challenging questions and develop personal perspectives and beliefs.

Partnering through collective worship enables:

- Spiritual communities: looking for meaningful community connections in the intersection between church, school and home.
- Spiritual encounters: encountering faith and belief by engaging in conversations about God, individually and together.
- Imaginative practices: drawing on wide experience and a variety of skills enables creativity, new ways of thinking and new expressions of worship.

This partnership has been described as developing 'faith talk' ('Faith in the Nexus'). Specifically, the Church school is a place for 'faith talk' where spiritual encounters may happen. The local church should normally expect to be part of a church school partnership that encourages and supports the school leaders in effectively developing the impact of and provision for worship. This document contains case studies illustrating the impact of positive partnerships around collective worship.

'OUTSIDE VISITORS CAN PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILDREN IN OUR SCHOOLS AS THEY BRING A DIFFERENT VOICE AND APPROACH, AS WELL AS THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES AND EXPERTISE. THEY CAN SPEAK TO THE CHILDREN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FAITH, TALKING ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH, WHILST AFFIRMING THOSE PUPILS WHO SHARE THAT FAITH.'

**MARY BUTT
GROUNDBREAKERS**

GROUNDBREAKERS IS A PRIMARY SCHOOL PROJECT THAT SEEKS TO ENABLE CHILDREN TO EXPLORE THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN FUN AND INTERACTIVE WAYS.



3.1 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR COLLECTIVE WORSHIP?

Responsibility for the provision, and therefore monitoring, of collective worship in a Church of England school/academy rests with the Local Governing Body in consultation with the Principal/Headteacher.

3.2 WHAT ARE PARENTS' RIGHTS?

Parents in England and Wales have a legal right to withdraw their children from collective worship in schools. This right is enshrined in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and is confirmed in government guidance Circular 1/94 on Religious Education and collective worship. Parents do not need to provide a reason for their request. The school must make arrangements for the continued safeguarding of pupils who are withdrawn. Students have the right to withdraw from the age of 16. Good practice would suggest that any formal arrangement to withdraw a pupil from collective worship is reviewed termly. This provides an opportunity to update parents regarding planned content and approaches to worship which may change over time and support parents in making informed decisions. Regular reviews should also support in identifying any possible impact withdrawal may have on the mental health and wellbeing of the pupil.

3.3 HOW IS COLLECTIVE WORSHIP MONITORED?

In Church of England schools, governors play a key role in monitoring collective worship. The designated governor with responsibility for collective worship usually coordinates this. Collective worship in schools is monitored in a variety of ways to ensure it aligns with legal requirements, school policies, and its intended purpose. Monitoring usually involves regular observation, and record-keeping, often involving governors, staff, and pupils/students. Specific monitoring processes can vary, but generally includes ensuring compliancy in preparation, content and delivery. This may be completed alongside evaluation processes.

3.4 WHAT IS INCLUDED IN A COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY?

This document includes a policy template. Leaders may use this to create a bespoke school policy which reflects the school's context, vision and associated practice. Leaders should ensure the policy reflects the school's distinctive Christian vision and explains how collective worship (its aims, planning, structure etc.) is an expression of the school's vision.

[School Name & Logo] Church of England (Primary) School collective worship Policy

Date of Policy: [Insert Date]

Date of Review: [Insert Review Date]

Approved by: [Governing Body/Headteacher]

Statement of Intent

As a Church school/academy, worship is an affirmation and celebration of our Christian ethos where children have the opportunity to learn, worship and grow in their understanding, worldview and knowledge of themselves. worship in our school/academy is not simply a statutory duty. It is the heartbeat of our school life – a time to gather together, reaffirm our vision and Christian values and celebrate the central role that each pupil and adult have to play in our community.

Our acts of collective worship reflect the variety of traditions found in the Church of England and recognise and follow the Christian liturgical year. The daily act of worship is central to our ethos and is supported by all staff and governors. It makes an important contribution to the overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the whole school community.

The aims and purpose of collective worship are:

- To provide an invitational opportunity for the children to worship God
- To enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues
- To encourage inclusivity, access, participation and response
- To inspire an exploration of personal beliefs
- To inspire a sense of community spirit
- To promote a common ethos with shared values and to reinforce positive attitudes

The Legal Requirements

We seek to comply with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Section 70 and Schedule 20) which requires that:

- All registered pupils (apart from those whose parents exercise the right to withdrawal) must on each school/academy day take part in an act of collective worship.
- The daily act of collective worship should be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Deeds of the school/academy and the ethos statement in the Instrument of Government, and should be consistent with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England.
- All acts of collective worship in Church schools/academies must be broadly and mainly, Christian in character. Pupils and adults can be grouped in various ways for worship such as the whole school, year groups, tutor groups, classes, or other combinations.
- Acts of worship must be appropriate for the pupils in that they should take account of the pupils' age, aptitude and family backgrounds.
- The daily act of collective worship will normally take place on the school/academy premises but all schools/academies are able to hold their Act of collective worship elsewhere (e.g. the local Parish Church) on special occasions.
- Responsibility for the arrangement of collective worship in a Church of England school/academy rests with the Local Governing Body in consultation with the Principal/Headteacher.

Principles of collective worship

Each adult and pupil will experience worship that is truly welcoming, inclusive and exemplifying the principles of Christian hospitality. Collective worship therefore will be:

- Inclusive – Our acts of worship recognise that pupils and adults come from different religious and non-religious perspectives. Though collective worship will remain broadly Christian in nature, it will be fully accessible to all. Care will be taken to ensure that language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith of those participating, listening or watching.
- Invitational – In our acts of worship, there is no compulsion to 'do anything'. Rather, worship will provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. Pupils and adults will only be invited to pray and sing if they wish to do so.
- Inspiring – By asking and discussing big questions about who we are and what we do, we hope to motivate and inspire pupils and adults into living out our values. There will be opportunities to think, reflect and ponder on their and the wider community's behaviour and actions.

Implementation

In addition to the above, we seek to provide acts of collective worship that reflect the faith and practice of the Church of England. Therefore:

- We use the Bible for inspiration and learning and make pupils familiar with the Lord's Prayer, psalms, liturgy and other verses of scripture. We also introduce them to a variety of well-known prayers – many of which express the central beliefs of Christians throughout the ages.
- We use aspects of Anglican liturgy to create a framework for worship (articulate here – e.g. gather, engage, respond, send). We observe the cycle of the Anglican year including celebrations of the major Christian festivals.
- In [*School/Academy Name*], we aim to provide a worship space which is attractive and well prepared with appropriate thought having been given to colour, space, seating, ambience and music.
- We foster links with [*insert name of Church*], involving the Reverend [*insert name*] in leading collective worship and providing coherence between worship in church and school/academy and visit at insert – least four times per year as part of the Christian calendar.
- We recognise that different members of our school community reflect in different ways. Music, story, silence, prayer, drama and other approaches are incorporated within a varied collective worship offer.

Connections with other Christian denominations and faiths

The Anglican Communion sees itself as part of a global church and promotes ecumenism. At [School/Academy Name], we work to promote links with other local churches and Christian organisations and welcome their clergy and leaders as contributors to acts of collective worship. We recognise that while some of our pupils and families belong to Anglican churches, many worship regularly at churches of other Christian denominations, while others come from different faith backgrounds or none. We endeavour to provide a setting in which the integrity of those present is not compromised, where everyone finds something positive for themselves and there is no pressure to participate or to believe.

Rights and Responsibilities

As established by the 1944 Act and reinforced through this policy, parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship. However, having chosen to send their children to [School/Academy Name], it is hoped that no one will exercise this right. Should such a situation arise, appropriate arrangements would be made in keeping with the requirements of the Act.

Planning

Planning for collective worship is led by the Principal/headteacher/CW lead and is undertaken in consultation with the school/academy's adult community. Plans follow the cycle of the Anglican year, [insert any relevant school/academy specific information]. The Principal/headteacher ensures that leaders and visiting speakers receive copies of the long-term plans. Individuals and groups are responsible for using the plans as a basis for developing their own short term plans for individual acts of worship.

Organisation

An act of collective worship is held daily. This may involve the whole school/academy or smaller class or key stage groups. Where collective worship forms part of an assembly, we ensure that there is a clear distinction between the two elements of gathering. Information sharing takes place first and is followed by the time of worship.

The Principal/headteacher and other members of staff, together with groups of children take turns to conduct collective worship. The local vicar, Reverend [insert name] takes an [insert specific arrangements].

We conduct collective worship in a dignified and respectful way expecting all to engage respectfully, even if not actively. We create a suitable atmosphere by using music, pictures or other artefacts to act as a focal point.

[Add in any school/academy specific approaches – for example: We use Friday afternoon Celebration worship as an opportunity to share children's work and to celebrate their successes. These culminate in an act of collective worship and play an important role in promoting the ethos of the school/academy. We invite parents to our Friday morning assemblies to see their children receive their awards. Governors are also welcome to attend acts of worship at any time.]

Resources

The budget for collective worship is distinct from the budget for Religious Education. There is a wide selection of assembly books and artefacts which we regularly update and improve. We have a collection of CDs which are used to provide suitable music as children enter and leave the hall as well as to accompany singing. Those leading worship also access professional development opportunities.

Contribution to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

We recognise that although SMSC development should be fostered across the whole curriculum, acts of collective worship provide a multitude of opportunities in this area. For example, children will be encouraged to reflect on and celebrate the deeper meanings of life, consider their own behaviour and recognise the need for forgiveness, appreciate the contributions of others and respond to their needs, value their own culture and the cultures of others.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We aim to develop the monitoring and evaluation of collective worship by continuing to keep records of collective worship and surveying adults and children as to their views on its effectiveness. We intend to make the criteria for successful worship available to all those who plan and lead it before asking them to submit short term plans. The coordinator and others will routinely observe and monitor acts of collective worship in line with these criteria.

Inclusion

We are committed to equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, sexuality, cultural background, ability or any physical or sensory disability. We therefore aim to make collective worship accessible to all and accommodate ourselves to individual needs when appropriate.

Implementation of Policy

The Principal/headteacher as collective worship Coordinator is responsible for this policy which will be reviewed every two years. Its implementation is the responsibility of all those planning and leading collective worship.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Links to Other Policies:

·Spirituality/Spiritual Development Policy

4.1 WHAT DO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP EVALUATIONS LOOK LIKE?

Collective worship monitoring and evaluation may be completed in many different ways. To aid this process, here are a selection of possible approaches and templates.

Collective worship Monitoring		
Name of Leader:		Theme:
		Date:
Aspect	Exploration	Comment
Gathering together	<p>Is there a real sense of a marking the start of a very special time in the school day?</p> <p>Immediate impact, relevant welcoming, stimulates interest or dull, uninteresting, lacks focus</p>	
Engaging together	<p>Does the worship leader capture the attention of the children and the staff so they become actively engaged in the content?</p> <p>Excellent, well expressed, stimulating or poor communicator</p> <p>Convincing, enthusiastic, warm or lack of rapport.</p>	
Responding together	<p>Does the leader allow for a response from the children and adults – whether active, passive, noisy or quiet?</p>	
Leaving together	<p>Does the leader send us out with a clear 'thought' or 'action' for the day something that changes our feeling, thoughts or behaviours in some way?</p>	

collective worship in Church Schools – Self-evaluation

Collective worship...	Already a strength/evidence available	We could improve this by	The biggest barriers to improvement are
Is given a high priority			
Meets legal requirements			
Is valued as an important community event and enjoyed nurturing wider partnerships			
Is held within a helpful environment			
Has a budget for resources			
Has a written policy, agreed by governors			
Staff receive in-service training			
Is jointly planned by leaders			
Children plan, lead and evaluate collective worship			
Clergy contributes and members of the parish are involved			
Parents are invited when appropriate			
Has a Christian character			
Provides a positive experience of Christianity			
Contributes to spiritual, moral, social, cultural development			
Is monitored by staff, governors, trustees.			

Children's & Adults' Verbal Feedback

Possible considerations:

Did you understand everything that was shared? (Inclusive)

Was there anything from today that you didn't understand? (Inclusive)

Did you feel you could get involved if you wanted to? (Invitational)

Was there any part where you felt pressured to participate? (Invitational)

How have you been changed by today's collective worship? (Inspirational)

How will you think, feel or behave differently because of today's collective worship?
(Inspirational)

Further Consideration

In many schools, additional floor books or journals are used to capture and evidence the reflections following the collective worship. This may be completed within the classroom. If these are used, inclusion of a sample of floor books will aid any evaluation process as it widens the evidence base and illustrates the impact of collective worship on pupils and adults.

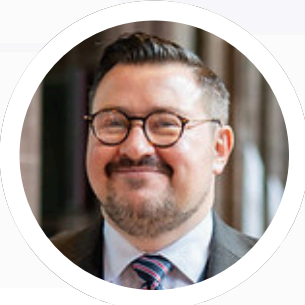
'AT ST. PETER'S SMITHILLS DEAN PRIMARY SCHOOL WE HAVE A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ST. PETER'S CHURCH. ONE KEY REASON IS TO ENHANCE THE COLLECTIVE WORSHIP WE OFFER AT SCHOOL. ONCE A WEEK A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH COMMUNITY LEADS A WHOLE SCHOOL WORSHIP SESSION – BRINGING A FRESH PERSPECTIVE AND A DIFFERENT VOICE TO THE CHILDREN. ON TOP OF THIS, OUR VICAR HOLDS A TERMLY COMMUNION SERVICE (WOW WORSHIP) IN SCHOOL FOR OUR OLDER CHILDREN (Y4 TO Y6) – GIVING THEM AN UNDERSTANDING OF ANGLICAN TRADITION AND THE MEANING BEHIND THIS IMPORTANT SERVICE.'

'FOR OUR YOUNGER CHILDREN (Y1 TO Y3) WE HOLD A TERMLY WIZZY WORSHIP WHERE PARENTS ARE INVITED IN TO WORSHIP TOGETHER WITH CHILDREN IN A FUN, CREATIVE WAY. OUR RECEPTION CLASS CHILDREN HAVE A SPECIAL WIGGLE WORSHIP FORTNIGHTLY, BEING INTRODUCED TO GOD'S WORD AND LEARNING HOW TO WORSHIP WITH THEIR WHOLE BODIES. WITH THIS STRONG PARTNERSHIP IT MEANS CHILDREN EXPERIENCE WORSHIP IN A VARIETY OF WAYS.'

**MATT HARDING
HEADTEACHER**

CONTACT US

To find out more about any aspect of collective worship please contact the relevant team member:



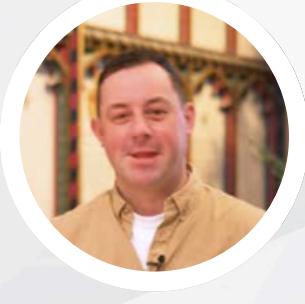
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THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Manchester

CHURCH
FOR A
DIFFERENT
WORLD