

LAIRA GREEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP



Policy Statement

Our collective Worship should seek to involve all students regardless of their Religious values or cultural background whilst reflecting the broad traditions of Christian belief.

Christian belief encompasses, for example, the importance of ideas common to all humanity - of love, joy, peace, hope, truth, trust, forgiveness, service, compassion, justice, respect for individuals, respect for life, personal and social responsibility.

The focus of Collective Worship should aim to evoke senses and feelings from which it might be agreed that worship most naturally arises whilst encompassing commonly accepted personal and social values. The contents should not encroach upon the integrity and beliefs of the individual.

It should be seen and resourced as an intentional and integral part of the learning experience within the whole school curriculum. The school should maximise upon a variety of experiences and opportunities to enhance corporate identity.

Collective Worship should provide a period for quiet reflection and physical calm. It should foster a sense of personal and social responsibility and become a focal point of the school community in its widest sense.

Defining the aims and purposes of collective worship

1. What is Worship?

The Anglo-Saxon word *weathscipe* is a useful starting point for county schools in their consideration of the issue. Worship has to do with worth and worthiness. It is recognising, affirming and celebrating that which is worthy of honour and respect - ideals and the highest achievements of which humanity is capable, matter of truth, goodness and beauty, an appreciation of the world, a recognition of the interdependence of human beings, a response to the plight of those in need.

The word "worship" has at least two distinct meanings:

- a) Adoration offered by believers to the Supreme Being:
- b) Concerns, concepts, principles, conduct worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit.

2. What is collective worship?

Collective worship is not for example like corporate worship in churches - the latter is an activity of a faith community. Worship in churches is a corporate act in which members share common beliefs. The school serves pupils from a wide diversity of backgrounds - some theistic, some non-theistic, and therefore the 1988 Education Reform Act requires schools to conduct collective worship (not corporate worship). Thus a school's act of worship should seek to involve all pupils - it should be an inclusive activity. The wide variety of backgrounds from which pupils come must be recognised. the act of worship in Community schools should allow people of different (or of no) religious beliefs to be included.

3. What is meant by "wholly or mainly Christian?"

The question of the nature of collective worship has to be addressed. The Act requires it to be "wholly or mainly Christian", and "not to be distinctive of any denomination". In section 7.2 the Act requires collective worship to be broadly Christian and for this to be so it should "reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief". An outline of Christian belief may take many forms. One possible example is that Christian belief centres around the origin of life, the human condition (the potential and frailty of human nature), and the endless opportunities for forgiveness and fresh starts which human beings have at their disposal. Christians may be more familiar with explicit theological expressions such as the Creation of the world by God: the Fall: the Incarnation: the redemptive work of Jesus through his life, death, resurrection and ascension: the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides, sustains and gives life to the people of God. Not all members of the school community will be able to subscribe to these doctrines, but they are more likely to be able to accept the underlying principles.

Fundamental

Christian belief encompasses, for example, the importance of ideals common to all humanity - of love, joy, peace, hope, truth, trust, forgiveness, service, compassion, justice, respect for individuals, respect for life, personal and social responsibility.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP ITS EDUCATIONAL VALUE

1. What is the intention of collective worship at Laura Green Primary School?

The act of worship should seek to:

- a) promote the five aims of 'Every Child Matters'
- b) reflect, express, affirm or challenge commonly accepted personal and social values; and
- c) provide experiences so that those with a commitment to a religious life may worship adequately without violating the integrity of those without a religious commitment; and
- d) provide experiences for those not committed to religious beliefs without violating the integrity of those who have religious beliefs.

Laura Green Primary School will sensitively try to evoke those senses and feelings from which it might be said that worship most naturally arises: e.g.

- ◆ sense of beauty
- ◆ sense of wonder and awe
- ◆ feeling of pride
- ◆ sense of pity
- ◆ sense of smallness in the face of greatness
- ◆ feeling of shared sadness
- ◆ sense of shared loss
- ◆ sense of peace
- ◆ sense of thankfulness
- ◆ sense of stillness in the midst of a busy existence"

2. **What will be the positive outcome of collective worship at Laira Green Primary School?**

The act of worship in schools is conducted within an educational context. It therefore follows that evangelism (an attempt to persuade the participants to adopt a particular religious belief), is not appropriate.

We should identify the educational benefits of good assembly practice. These may include providing opportunities for:

- ◆ the whole community to celebrate
- ◆ sharing and experiences differences
- ◆ building a sense of group identity
- ◆ encouraging a sense of personal and social responsibility
- ◆ a break from the busyness of life (for stillness and quiet)
- ◆ learning how to behave in a large social group
- ◆ learning how to perform in front of an audience
- ◆ learning how to respond to a leadership
- ◆ making visible the school's leadership
- ◆ developing inner awareness
- ◆ exploring feelings and emotions

3. **Is the act of worship an isolated event within the life of the school?**

The act of worship should be seen as part of the whole school curriculum. It is therefore an excellent cross-curricular opportunity. It follows that, like other parts of the curriculum, it should be an intentional learning experience which requires planning, resourcing, preparing and evaluating. It is an opportunity for a focal point, a sharing of classroom and departmental work across the larger group.

4. **In Conclusion**

The act of worship in schools is a unique opportunity for presenting as aspect of life to pupils. "If interpreted sensibly and not dogmatically, spiritually but not confessionally, and always consistently with dialogue, the results will be the renewal of central part of the British school experience.

Act of Collective Worship: Legal Requirement

- ◆ The Education Reform Act (1988) requires schools to provide a daily act of collective worship for all registered pupils.
Nursery schools and classes are exempt for the requirement.
- ◆ Pupils in special school should attend acts of collective worship as far as practicable.
- ◆ Headteachers in community schools must consult the governors, but are themselves responsible for arranging acts of worship and ensuring that they take place, even if on grounds of conscience, they absent themselves.
- ◆ Parents have the right to withdraw their children from acts of worship.
- ◆ Teachers, including headteachers, have the same right of withdrawal.

- ◆ In Community schools collective worship is to be "wholly or mainly Christian" and "not to be distinctive of any denomination" (ERA Section 7.1)
- ◆ Section 7.2 of the Education Reform Act requires collective worship to be broadly Christian and for this to be so it should "reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief".
- ◆ In providing acts of collective worship the ages, aptitudes and family background of the pupils should be taken into account.
- ◆ A whole school or part of a school can be excused from acts of collective worship which are "wholly or mainly Christian" but not from daily worship. This determination can only be granted by the Devon Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE).
- ◆ Strictly, County and Voluntary Controlled schools must not hold the daily act of worship off school premises. However, events of a non-denominational character may be held in a local church in addition to daily worship in school.
- ◆ The role of SACRE includes:

advising the Local Education Authority about collective worship in schools and appropriate training for teachers, dealing with determinations, publishing an Annual Report which includes references to collective worship.
- ◆ Any member of the public can use the statutory complaints procedure if concerned that the law is being broken or that powers have been excised unreasonably.

DFE Circular 1/94

Schools should be aware of the guidance on collective worship given in DFE Circular 1/94 paragraphs 50-88. This includes the following statements which are particular to this circular:

- ◆ Collective worship should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs (paragraph 50)
- ◆ 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 (paragraph 57)
- ◆ An act of worship need not contain Christian material..... It must, however, contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ. (paragraph 63)

Collective Worship and Inspection

Inspectors are required to report on whether the school is meeting the legal requirements for collective worship and the extent to which that worship contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This is reported under 5.1 of the Inspection framework. The evidence also includes the ethos of the school and the whole curriculum, including R.E.

Staffing

All members of staff and groups of pupils are invited to lead regular or occasional collective worship assemblies as part of their professional development. We recognise that teachers do have however the right to withdraw.

Linda Mercer holds the responsibility at present for the co-ordination of R.E. and offers support to the Headteacher and Governors in the planning and delivery of Collective Worship assemblies.

Content

A planned programme of themes for each term which enables us to reflect the life and work of the school and our local community are available for the teacher to use as a starting point.

These centre around:-

- Religious festivals and special days
- Annual events, seasons and anniversaries
- Aspect of the school curriculum
- Achievements and developments from classroom activities
- Personal, Social and Moral guidelines
- Published assembly books and other literature

This 'theme' approach leaves room for more topical and spontaneous acts of worship when required.

Daily Provision

A timetable is available, although the majority of assemblies are 10.20-10.40 each day, usually in the School Hall. Assemblies can take place in the Dining Hall, classrooms or playground.

Visitors, speaker & groups

We encourage as many representations from various religious and the local church, charity and cultural agencies, Governors and a wide variety of visitors to participate in our Acts of Worship. We hope that all who lead worship will take the opportunity to read our schools Act of Worship policy and appreciate that while it is not always possible, or appropriate to avoid controversial issues, acts of worship should never be an occasion for promoting a particular set of beliefs. Visitors should be aware that permission should be gained from the school for distribution of literature, raising money or giving invitations to attend out of school activities.

Evaluation

We would hope to bring Collective Worship assemblies to the attention of the School Council in order to receive children's view for the staff consideration.