

## Wandsworth SACRE Guidance on Collective Worship

Wandsworth is one of the largest inner London boroughs, with a strong tradition of community cohesion and integration within its richly diverse population. One of the Council's strategic objectives is:

“Building a prosperous, vibrant and cohesive community”

The Council is proud of its schools, who promote respect and value the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of their school populations.

Collective Worship can make a significant and valuable contribution to both continuing this tradition and achieving this objective.

### Aims of Collective Worship

*“Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes.”*

(DFE Circular 1/94, page 20, paragraph 50)

- 1.1. Good collective worship makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. It stimulates intellectual curiosity and can create a sense of awe and wonder. It enables pupils to think about and reflect upon a variety of situations and issues and make a personal response. It encourages pupils to develop awareness of the universal moral principles of right and wrong, fairness and justice and concern for the fate of others and the world. It can strengthen, affirm and celebrate the values and ethos of the school. It enables pupils to reflect on what it means to be human, explore questions of meaning and purpose and deepen their understanding of personal beliefs and values. It can add to the pupils' development of both an awareness of and a sense of belonging to the school community. Good collective worship embraces the cultural and religious diversity of the school population and builds a more cohesive school community. It allows pupils to reflect quietly and make an internal response in the light of personal beliefs; this may include worship of God within each participant's own faith understanding. Indeed quality collective worship can affect adults present in these ways too. Underlying all of this is the principle that all collective worship needs to be inclusive so that all feel comfortable within it, their integrity is recognised and no-one feels threatened whatever faith they hold or, indeed, if they hold none.

## 2. Legal requirements

2.1. The legal requirements for collective worship are set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and the Department for Education Guidance of 1994, pages 20 - 25

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/281929/Collective\\_worship\\_in\\_schools.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281929/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf)

2.2. The law requires that:

- All pupils of the age of five and over who attend a maintained school should take part in a daily act of collective worship;
- This includes special schools (*so far as practicable* – Education Act 1993);
- Collective worship should be “*wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character*;”
- It should be appropriate to the age, aptitude and family backgrounds of pupils.

2.3. It should be noted that:

- Collective worship may take place at any time of the school day.
- Schools may decide on the grouping of pupils and this may vary from day to day.
- Collective worship should usually take place on school premises, but can take place at other locations on special occasions.
- Time for the collective act of worship is not curriculum time, but the rest of the assembly may be. The collective act of worship may only take up a short time, probably between 5 and 15 minutes each day.
- Collective worship and Religious Education (RE) are separate areas of school practice, each having a different purpose.
- Every maintained school is required to provide information about the collective worship provided by the school.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from all or part of collective worship.
- Teachers do not have to participate in or lead acts of worship. Attending assemblies is a contractual duty however.

2.4. Voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools are also required to have a daily act of collective worship, but the content and character of this is determined by the governing body and/or trust deed. The advice in this document refers to community schools.

### 3. What is collective worship?

- 3.1. Collective worship is not the same as an assembly, although they both include a gathering of pupils. An assembly can however be considered an act of worship, if there is time for pupils to reflect or pray within the time together. Celebrating achievements, singing practices, classes leading assemblies on a curriculum topic or using the occasion as teaching opportunity on subjects such as internet safety, fundamental British values (FBV) or antibullying are common “assembly” occasions when the whole school or a key stage come together. This cannot be considered collective worship unless provision is also made for a relevant prayer and/or reflection time.

*“ ‘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. 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'.”*

(Circular 1/94, page 21, paragraph 57)

- 3.2. In this way, collective worship is a key driver to promote SMSC. It should also require an active response from children. They may:
- answer questions posed by the leader;
  - act out bible stories, stories from other faiths or stories with a moral used to illustrate the message of the assembly;
  - prepare and present the material;
  - join in with an appropriate song or hymn.

### 4. “Broadly Christian” worship

- 4.1 Most acts of worship (i.e. over half) should be “*wholly or mainly of a Christian character*” (ERA 1988). The Act then further defines collective worship of a ‘*broadly Christian character*’ as *being worship which reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief. Any such worship should not, however, be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.* (Circular 1/94, page 21, paragraph 61.)
- 4.2 *“It must, however, contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ.”* (Circular 1/94, page 21, paragraph 63.)

- 4.3 Worship may therefore contain some aspects of Christian belief, for example, acknowledging the special nature of Jesus Christ. It can mean incorporating elements that Christians might recognise from their worship, e.g. hymns / songs, music, stories, learning from the good examples of others, readings from holy books, etc. However, as stated, collective worship should not be denominational nor alienate pupils from different Christian denominations or non-Christian families. Collective worship is therefore broad rather than specific or exclusive, reflecting plurality. It is not about creating pretence of Christian worship.
- 4.5 Acts of worship may contain non-Christian elements or beliefs and values which are shared between Christianity and some other faiths, as for example those of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Many Christian beliefs are shared by other world faiths, such as belief in a Creator God and humans as stewards of the Earth. There are religious and human values that many faiths and non-faith world beliefs, such as Humanism, have in common, for example justice, peace, charity, love and hope etc. As not all acts of worship need to be Christian, it follows that some acts of worship within a term may be of the character of another world religion.

## **5. Prayer and reflection within collective worship**

- 5.1. A prayer may be spoken by the leader or a pupil taking part in the collective worship. Pupils can be invited to join in the prayer if appropriate for them, or otherwise to spend the time reflecting on the subject of the worship. This activity should encompass the diversity of faiths and/or include those with none. Some ways of expressing this are as follows:

“Those who wish to join in this prayer please do so. Otherwise please think about what today’s message means to you.”

“We will now have a time of silence. You may wish to pray or think about God at this time. If not, please reflect on what we’ve said today.”

"And now, in a moment of stillness, listen to the words of a well-known prayer..."

"And now, in a moment of quietness, I want you to listen whilst I say a prayer which, as a Christian (Muslim, Sikh, Jew...) is very special to me. Those of you who know the prayer and want to, might like to say the words with me..."

- 5.2. In ways like these, pupils are given an introduction to the notion of prayer traditions whilst not being required to respond in an inappropriate way.

- 5.3. Prayers may include references to Jesus, as in “Dear Jesus”, or “in Jesus’ name”. This is in order as long as it is introduced as a Christian prayer, e.g. “Christians say this prayer...” The word “Amen” is Aramaic and means “so be it” expressing agreement. It is used in Jewish, Christian and Sunni Muslim worship and is a good way to end a prayer.
- 5.4. It is not always necessary to have a prayer and the use of regular moments of silence and/or reflection also provides opportunities for pupils to respond in a personal way.
- 5.5. Suitable music can be played during a reflection time. See appendix for suggestions.

## **6. Responsibilities for collective worship**

- 6.1. The headteacher and governors have the shared statutory responsibility for the provision of collective worship. It is good practice to have a co-ordinator in charge of planning and organising collective worship. This person should ensure that there is a systematic coverage of themes; continuity and progression; timely celebration of major world faith religious festivals; and the required balance between broadly Christian and other or non-faith worship. There should also be a policy for collective worship, and as with other areas of school life, procedures for monitoring and evaluating its effectiveness. It should ensure equality of provision across classes, year groups and key stages. Consideration should also be given to the provision of continuing professional development (CPD) for those involved in planning and leading worship.

## **7. The right of withdrawal**

- 7.1. Parents are allowed to request that their child is wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship. If a school receives such a request, it is recommended that the school has a discussion with the parents concerned. It is possible that once the aims of collective worship are explained to the parents – for example that it is not about indoctrination or evangelisation – then they may be happy for their child to attend. If a child is withdrawn, however, the school is responsible for the supervision of the child during this time.

## **8. Determinations**

- 8.1. If a school feels that the provision of collective worship within the broadest interpretation of the law is still not suitable for their particular context, then the school can consider applying for a determination. This allows the school to organise its

collective worship in a way that suits its pupil population and removes the requirement for it to be *“wholly or mainly of a Christian character.”*

If a Headteacher wishes to apply for a determination, the governors must be consulted and an application formally made to Wandsworth SACRE. Full details are in Circular 1/94, pages 22 – 24, paragraphs 68 -80 and Wandsworth’s SACRE constitution.

## **9. Some suggestions for variety in collective worship**

### **9.1. Music**

- Music is an important element of Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Sikh worship and so in collective worship, pupils could be introduced to music from the faiths in appropriate contexts.
- Use for entry and exit of pupils or during periods of reflection.
- Suitably chosen recorded music can really and deeply enhance spirituality.
- Singing songs or hymns gets all children actively involved; texts chosen should relate to the message of the worship.
- Dance or movement may be used to illustrate the assembly theme.

### **9.2. ICT**

- Film clips or videos can be used instead of telling a story.
- Photos or pictures of paintings can set the scene.
- PowerPoint presentations can help illustrate the message, but beware of making them too text heavy.

### **9.3. Lighting and Resources**

- A candle could be lit to signify the change from the “business” part of an assembly, for example giving out notices and certificates, to the prayerful or reflective part of collective worship.
- Other lighting could be used to create a spiritual mood / atmosphere.
- There should be a budget for collective worship resources; some of these, e.g. religious artefacts from different faith traditions, could be shared with the RE budget.
- There are a number of very good websites with assembly ideas; see appendix for suggestions.

#### **9.4. Visitors and guest speakers**

- They may or may not be from a faith tradition, but either way must be properly briefed on the age of the children, the time allowed for the collective worship, the subject matter to be covered and the context and values of the school.
- They may bring religious artefacts or other materials to illustrate their talk.
- They enhance the children’s understanding of their community.
- Ensure the school’s safeguarding procedures are followed; see also guidance for religious believers visiting schools  
[https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Guidance%20on%20Resources/7\)%20Visits%20and%20visitors/\(8.2\)%20Checklist.pdf](https://www.natre.org.uk/uploads/Guidance%20on%20Resources/7)%20Visits%20and%20visitors/(8.2)%20Checklist.pdf)

#### **9.5. Groupings**

- Varying the group sizes and ages of those coming together can enable concepts to be explored at different levels.
- Assemblies may be for a year group, key stage or the whole school.
- They may be led by a class teacher with their class or by a senior leader.
- Collective worship can also take place within a class and be led by members of the class in turn.

#### **9.6 Our Hopes for Collective Worship in Wandsworth’s Schools.**

It is hoped that collective worship in Wandsworth schools will be transformational in the sense that the people present – both pupils and adults – are affected positively and leave a little bit different from when they came in, gently challenged and with thoughtful reflection to inform their daily life, both in and out of school.

## APPENDIX

### Some Resource Ideas for Collective Worship /Assemblies

*These resources are not exhaustive of course, but just a selection that may be useful for schools in planning and enhancing their Collective Worship provision.*

#### Websites

The following websites provide some assembly ideas:

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk> -

<http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk>

<https://www.spinnaker.org.uk/resources/assemblies>

<http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/assemblies/contents.htm>

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/schools>

<http://www.worshipworkshop.org.uk/>

[www.bibleforchildren.org/languages/english/stories.php](http://www.bibleforchildren.org/languages/english/stories.php)

<https://www.biblegateway.com/>

<http://www.reonline.org.uk/supporting/festivals-calendar/>

<http://re.bahai.org.uk>

Specific Baha'i assemblies :

For primary: "Ye are all the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch, the flowers of one garden." *Bahá'u'lláh* [Pronounced *Ba-how-la*], introducing the Baha'i Faith and its core concept of 'unity' with separate versions for KS1 and KS2.

[KS1 assembly on unity](#)

[KS2 assembly on unity](#)

For secondary schools: "Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value."

*Bahá'u'lláh*

[KS3 assembly on virtues](#)

[KS4 assembly on virtues](#)

“A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men.” *Bahá'u'lláh*

[KS3 assembly on the 'creative world'](#) (1.5 Mb)

“Strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers.” *'Abdu'l-Bahá [son of the prophet founder of the faith, Baha'u'llah]*

[KS3 assembly on pilgrimage and kindness](#)

[KS4 assembly on pilgrimage and service](#)

**Music for Reflection**

Margaret Rizza - Instrumental Music Icons 1

Samuel Barber – Adagio for Strings

Beethoven – Moonlight Sonata J

S Bach - Air on a G string

Albinoni – Adagio for Strings

Pachelbel – Canon in D Major

John Tavener – Song for Athene

Enya

Libera

Choral music from cathedral choirs

Taizé Chants

Music from The Iona Community

**Hymns and Spiritual Songs**

Kumba yah

He's got the whole world in his hands

This little light of mine

Amazing grace

Morning has broken

If I were a butterfly

Shine Jesus shine

Shalom

All Things Bright and Beautiful

As the Deer Pants For The Water

Be Still

Father I Place into Your Hands

When I Needed a Neighbour

The Servant King

Beauty For Brokenness

Let There Be Love Shared Among Us

Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace

Like A Candle Flame

Christ, Be Our Light

Sing Hosanna!

Hosanna, Hosanna

Lord of The Dance

Lord of all Hopefulness

Siyahamba

Jubilate Everybody

Lord, For The Years

You Shall Go Out With Joy

One More Step

Other hymns and songs to mark particular Christian festivals such as Christmas carols and Harvest hymns.

Hymns and songs in: Come and Praise Beginning

Come and Praise

Come and Praise 2

The Complete Come and Praise

*Published by Pearson and available from:*

[Pearson UK Schools Shop \(pearsonschoolsandfecolleges.co.uk\)](http://www.pearsonschoolsandfecolleges.co.uk)

[www.outoftheark.co.uk](http://www.outoftheark.co.uk) has a range of seasonal songs, CDs and backing tracks.

<https://www.fischy.com/> Fischy Music nurtures the emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of children through song.

<http://www.ruhi.org/resources/songs.php> Songs used in Baha'i children's classes

## **Books**

The Lion Bible for Children

The Lion Storyteller Bible

The Beginners' Bible

Other different versions of The Bible, particularly: the Good News Translation, Revised Standard Version, King James Version or New Revised Standard Version

Other sacred writings from the world faiths

My First Quran Storybook by Saniyasnain Khan

Prince Siddhartha: the Story of Buddha by Jonathan Landaw and Janet Brooke

Sikh Stories by Anita Ganeri

Jewish Fairy Tales by Gerald Friedlander

Who Knows Ten? Children's tales of the 10 Commandments by Molly Cone

Faith Stories for Today by Angela Wood

### Other resources

Wandsworth's Learning Resources Centre (LRS), a subscription service, has books, artefacts and DVDs available to borrow. These can support assemblies as well as the teaching of other faiths.

[Welcome to Learning Resources Service | Wandsworth | Services for Schools](#)

### Prayers

**Christian** – the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)

*"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours  
now and for. Amen"*

The Grace

*"May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with us all  
this day and evermore.  
Amen."*

**Jewish** – Aaronic blessing (from the Torah, Numbers 6: 24-26)

*May God bless you and keep you  
May God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you  
May God's face turn towards you and give you peace.*

- from the Talmud:

*My God, keep my tongue from causing harm and my lips from telling lies.*

*Let me be silent if people curse me, my soul still humble and at peace with all.  
Open my heart to Your teaching, and give me the will to practise it.  
May the plans and schemes of those who seek my harm come to nothing.  
May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable to You.  
O God, my Rock and my Redeemer*

Muslim –

**AL-FĀTIḤAH**  
(Revealed before Hijrah)

1. In the name of Allāh, the Gracious, the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾

2. All praise belongs to Allāh, Lord of all the worlds,

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

3. The Gracious, the Merciful,

الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾

4. Master of the Day of Judgment.

مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾

5. Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help.

إِيَّاكَ تَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾

6. Guide us in the right path—

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾

7. The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed *Thy* blessings, those who have not incurred *Thy* displeasure, and those who have not gone astray.

صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ  
غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾

### Religious Festivals Calendar

Religious festivals may be the starting point for collective worship and there are many festivals in each month of the year. Some fall on the same day each year, for example Christmas Day on the 25<sup>th</sup> December. Some festivals may change according to the lunar calendar, such as Pesach (Judaism) and Easter (Christianity), but these will always fall in March or April. Other festivals, such as Eid al Fitr, the Muslim celebration at the end of Ramadan, falls 11 days earlier each year and so can be in any month. A link is given to a festival calendar below:

<http://www.reonline.org.uk/supporting/festivals-calendar/>

Further information on the main festivals for the major world faiths can be found in SACRE's Locally Agreed Syllabus, in the appendices for each faith beginning from page 65.

[wandsworth locally agreed syllabus for religious education.pdf](#)

This guidance was reviewed by SACRE, March 2022.