



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

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Principal: Dr. M. Stevens

Saracens High School
Lanacre Avenue, NW9 5FN

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1. The Legal Framework

The following is a brief summary of the legal requirements set out in the Education Reform Act 1988, together with interpretation offered in DCSF Circular 1/94 and subsequent acts.

- DFES Circular 1/94 contains the current requirement for a daily act of collective worship, the majority of which should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character that is "reflecting" the "broad traditions of Christian belief" without being denominationally biased (c.f. Education Reform Act 1988). However, school leaders must take into account the pupils' ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds.
- This must be provided for all registered pupils of compulsory school age or above. The term 'registered pupils' includes those in the Sixth Form but not pupils in nursery schools or classes.
- The act of collective worship can take place at any time during the school day and with any grouping of pupils the school wishes to use (though not faith groupings).
- Parents in all schools have a legal right to withdraw their children wholly or partly from collective worship. Any such request must be complied with.
- The Education and Inspection Act 2006 makes provision for pupils in post-16 education to exercise the right to withdraw themselves from the daily act of collective worship.
- Teachers have a contractual duty to attend assembly but they have the right to withdraw from collective worship and cannot be discriminated against for doing so.
- If a school believes that the Christian character clause is inappropriate for the whole school or certain pupils within it, application can be made to the Barnet Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for a determination order to have the clause lifted or modified.

2. What is Worship?

- 2.1** While there is a legal requirement for schools to conduct a 'daily act of collective worship' (the 1988 Education Act and subsequent Acts), none of this legislation actually defines what is meant by the term Collective Worship.
- 2.2** SACRE recognises that schools need to clearly differentiate between Corporate Worship and Collective Worship. Corporate Worship takes place within a faith community context e.g. in Churches, Gurdwaras, Mosques, Synagogues, Temples. Corporate worship implies a community with a shared set of beliefs and values. For most faith communities, worship is concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.
- 2.3** Few schools can expect that all their members will subscribe to a set of beliefs which enable the entire school community as such to constitute a worshipping community.
- 2.4** School Collective Worship should recognise that the school community is a collection of people. Thus, acts of Collective Worship should be sensitive to the collective character of individual schools and to be inclusive the term must be interpreted in a way which is meaningful to the range of communities it serves.

- 2.5** The school community will usually include people from a variety of cultural and faith, and non-faith backgrounds.
- 2.6** Therefore:
- a) The term "collective" when used in relation to worship in schools refers to the gathering together of a school group or groups for worship; it does not in any way suggest an act of worship which involves a group meeting to subscribe to any particular faith or denomination of a faith;
 - b) Collective worship does not pre-suppose shared beliefs, nor should it seek uniform responses from pupils.
 - c) Collective Worship caters for a diversity of beliefs and points of view, allowing individuals to respond as individuals.
- 2.7** A broad definition which has been referred to as 'worth-ship', might encompass what is offered in a spirit of admiration, celebration and respect to people of excellence, worthy of honour and by extension, to concepts, principles, and conduct which are worthy of celebration, as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit.
- 2.8** Worship thus defined draws on literature, music, drama, art and other sources of inspiration.
- 2.9** It can provide a focus for thought, inspiration and reflection for pupils (and staff) whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none.

3. Worship of a Broadly Christian Character

- 3.1** The majority of acts of collective worship must be of a 'broadly Christian character', and those that are must reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief without being denominationally biased.
- 3.2** The interpretation of this aspect of the law in paragraphs 60-63 of DCSF Circular 1/94 presents particular problems of application.
- 3.3** Sensitivity to the faith background of pupils is enshrined in the law requiring Principals to have regard to family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes.
- 3.4** Thus, when according special status to Jesus Christ, all pupils whatever their beliefs, need to be respected.
- 3.5** For example, it may be appropriate to tell stories of the life and teachings of Jesus, but inappropriate for all pupils to be required to address Jesus directly in prayer (see Section 4).
- 3.6** In order to achieve an act of worship which meets legal requirements as well as educational principles, leaders may wish to concentrate on those characteristics which are shared by faiths as well as those which are specific to Christianity.
- 3.7** These include:
- a) that there is one God, a supreme spirituality, the source of all life who created the world and all that lies in and beyond it;

- b) that the nature of God may be found through love and selfless caring for others;
- c) that all relationships between human beings should be guided by love;
- d) that the spirit of love be used by those with power to value and care for the world and all that is in it.

3.8 In this way, school acts of collective worship can become a purposeful collective spiritual experience which supports the ethos of the school.

4. Practical Considerations

- 4.1** The legal requirements, together with official interpretations appear to point to an intention to apply the narrow definition of worship in schools. However, schools cannot enforce what is, in essence, an inward spiritual experience.
- 4.2** School acts of worship may, therefore, be a time of honouring excellence and exploring and sharing things of value and worth (the broader definition from Section 2).
- 4.3** But during such acts of worship pupils should be given an opportunity to worship inwardly if they wish to do so.
- 4.4** This may be achieved through a moment or two of reflective silence during each act of collective worship.
- 4.5** This will allow a meaningful experience for all pupils while giving time for individuals to worship in the spiritual sense.

5. Good Practice at the Saracens High School

- 5.1** Saracens High School will combine its acts of collective worship with an assembly helping to ensure that the act of collective worship takes place within a broad educational framework. There will also be opportunities for reflective silence in daily Learning Group sessions.
- 5.2** These will have:
 - a) Clear objectives;
 - b) A variety of groupings (year groups, house groups);
 - c) Wide staff and pupil involvement no matter what their personal beliefs;
 - d) Use of visitors;
 - e) Substantial forward planning in terms of themes, leaders, curriculum connections etc;
 - f) Appropriate resources;
 - g) Generating the right atmosphere;
 - h) A time of quiet for personal reflection/worship;
 - i) Having guidance for visiting speakers;
 - j) A contribution to the whole school ethos;
 - k) A variety of methods.

6. Objectives and Methods

- 6.1 The Saracens High School collective worship will encompass aspects of school life and areas of the curriculum such that every member of staff and every pupil may feel involved.
- 6.2 It both reflects and nurtures the whole ethos of the school.
- 6.3 In particular, assembly, learning group sessions, and family service develop the feeling of belonging to a community which is essential for personal development and spiritual growth.
- 6.4 The school views assembly as an educational opportunity with clear objectives:
- a) To show interest in and concern for members of the school community;
 - b) To celebrate special occasions together;
 - c) To show concern for the daily happenings in school life, the local community and wider world;
 - d) To share appreciation of worthwhile activities undertaken by groups within the school;
 - e) To explore and review the variety of values, attitudes and standards manifested in society;
 - f) To reflect upon dimensions of human life.

7. Success Criteria

- 7.1 Saracens High School will evaluate our collective worship against criteria including:
- a) Involvement, enjoyment, attention and reaction of pupils;
 - b) Respect and tolerance;
 - c) Positive response to shared experience;
 - d) A sense of challenge;
 - e) An atmosphere which matches the theme;
 - f) A contribution to individual and community sense of well-being;
 - g) A sense of occasion;
 - h) Good order;
 - i) Staff affirmation;
 - j) Enrichment of pupils' experience;

8. Useful Websites for Collective Worship

<http://www.schoolassemblies.btinternet.co.uk/calendar.htm> - a useful month-by-month calendar of festivals from many different faiths with links to other useful information.

<http://www.assemblies.org.uk> - a great source of ideas for themes and activities for primary and secondary assemblies.

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/assemblies> - you can search for assemblies by theme, school type or year group.

<http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk> - themed assemblies with Christian content.

<http://www.teachingideas.co.uk/more/assemblies/contents.htm> - suggestions from teachers on how to deliver creative and imaginative assemblies.

http://www.natsoc.org.uk/index_fsn.html - a regularly updated resource with assemblies on a Christian theme from the Culham Institute.

<http://www.reep.org/cw/index.php> - a website containing collective worship resources promoting the links between religion and environment.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/collectiveworship> - homepage of the collective worship resources from BBC radio.

<http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentViewArticle.asp?article=1341> - ideas for inclusive assemblies from the British Humanist Association