

Guidance for a Daily Act of Worship (DACW) Policy Vale of Glamorgan Council

This guidance is provided to support schools in fulfilling statutory obligations and promoting good SMSC development. It applies to maintained schools. It does not apply to schools with a religious character which may have guidance from dioceses or other bodies. It does not apply to free schools, where arrangements are governed by the trust deed or funding agreement. However, the basic legal requirements apply to all schools and this guidance/policy may be useful in conjunction with any issued by other authorities.

Summary of legal requirements

The current law is determined by the Education Reform Act 1988, with some requirements deriving from the Education Regulations 1981. In summary the law says this:

- *All learners must attend a daily act of collective worship, except for post sixteen learners who are allowed to decide for themselves whether to attend;*
- *The legal framework outlined here applies to maintained LA schools. In schools with a religious character collective worship is governed by the trust deed. Arrangements in free schools and academies is determined by the funding agreement.*
- *There is no need for an act of collective worship to include the whole school all at once. It may be through year groups, classes, key stages or in any combination.*
- *It may take place at any time during the school day and should normally be on school premises.*
- *It must be appropriate to the age, aptitude and family background of learners.*
- *Responsibility lies with the head and governors, though the precise duties may vary according to the type of school.*
- *Details of arrangements for collective worship, including the policy, must be documented and available to the public.*

The character of collective worship

*The Education Reform Act 1988 states that collective worship must be ‘**wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character**’. It also says that a school will be fulfilling this requirement if it ‘reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief, without being distinctive of any Christian denomination’. This must be taken to mean that it should not be narrow, exclusive or sectarian but must be broad and reflect the school’s context and population.*

Many people feel that DACW needs updating, in line with the pluralistic, critical and objective nature of religion, value and ethics (RVE) in the Curriculum for Wales.

In practice the ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’ allows schools to focus on broad, universal and important themes, common to world faiths and a humanist perspective, such as compassion, forgiveness, generosity and charity. It allows schools to remember specific festivals or stories from both Christianity and all world faiths, as well as to bring secular belief perspectives.

Collective worship should include opportunity for reflection. This may include the use of prayers. Sensitivity should be used to ensure that prayer or other forms of spirituality are as inclusive as

possible. Assumptions or assertions about specific doctrinal beliefs may make it difficult for members of some faith communities, or learners without religious affiliation, to participate. It may be introduced with a phrase that recognises learners will use the words in different ways. Some may reflect the words of the prayer in their own thoughts. Others, with no specific religious faith, will be able to reflect on the theme and the aspiration of the words without necessarily implying belief in a deity conformity to a particular religious tradition.

Quality collective worship will:

- *Be inclusive of learners of all faiths and no religious faith;*
- *Be planned in an organised pattern, also responsive to school, community or world-wide concerns;*
- *Involve practitioners and learners in planning, participation and evaluation;*
- *Inspire and interest learners through engaging with meaningful issues and being delivered creatively;*
- *Includes time for reflection and the opportunity to worship for those who wish;*
- *Have educational purpose and content;*
- *Support spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development and shared humanitarian values;*
- *Be informed by regular evaluation by learners and staff.*

Some considerations and self-evaluation

These six words can be used to describe effective and engaging assemblies and the related questions may be useful in reflecting on a school's provision:

1. *Collective: How does the assembly celebrate and promote a sense of community within the whole school (or group)?*
2. *Educational: Is there a clear aim and focus, with appropriate learning? Does it engage and interest learners and practitioners?*
3. *Spiritual: How does the assembly nurture learners' awareness of their beliefs and values - and those of others (including non-religious beliefs)? How does it develop a sense of the meaning, purpose and value in their lives?*
4. *Reflective: Is there space and opportunity for thoughtful reflection, in the assembly or as a follow up? If prayers are used do these allow for different approaches and responses?*
5. *Inclusive: How does the assembly programme develop understanding of different perspectives and cultures? How does it promote values of tolerance, diversity and equality?*
6. *Responsive: How did learners respond and participate?*

Determinations

Collective worship must be of a '*wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character*'. The determination procedure permits the suspension of these requirements in relation to some or all the pupils/learners in a school/setting where they are deemed inappropriate.

Should the headteacher deem it inappropriate that the daily act of collective worship (DACW) is '*wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character*', they can apply to SACRE/SAC for a determination.

Further guidance on meeting the legislative requirements for DACW can be found on the [CSC website](#).

Sources include:

Collective Worship Revisited, NASACRE and AREIAC, May 2012

Religious Believers Visiting Schools: Guidance and a Code of Practice, NATRE.

Guidance produced for Leeds maintained schools, and revised January 2020, written by Alastair Ross (Chair of NATRE)

A Sample Policy for Daily Act of Collective Worship (DACW)

In accordance with the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Welsh Office Circular number 10/94 (**add the name of school/setting**) provides a daily act of collective worship (DACW) for learners. We recognise that an act of collective worship is distinct from an assembly and that:

'It must reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power'.

Welsh Office Circular number 10/94

Organisation

When planning our collective worship, we ensure that most acts of collective worship in each term are 'mainly of a broadly Christian character'.

The school has a clear plan for collective worship that promotes the school's values and religious/belief festivals. However, there is also flexibility to allow practitioners to address current events and issues arising in school, to develop learner's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC).

The daily act of collective worship can take place at any time during the school day.

We recognise the importance of offering our learners a daily act of collective worship as it provides a reflective opportunity of a special and unique experience in the school day.

- To contribute to the opportunities for learners to develop as ethically informed citizens;
- Offer space for the **school community** to learn, grow and celebrate together;
- Provide an opportunity for **personal reflection** on individual life or wider issues;
- Nurture all aspects of **SMSC development**, especially spiritual development;
- Offer opportunities to develop understanding of diverse faiths, beliefs, values and cultures, so contributing to the promotion of **fundamental values**;
- Meet and engage with the **local community** through participants in assemblies;
- Respond to **topical or local issues** in a flexible and sensitive way;
- Provide chances for learners and staff to **develop their own abilities and leadership skills** in preparing, presenting or evaluating assemblies.

Practitioners are allocated a timetabled collective worship to lead. We also encourage learners to lead collective worships under the guidance of practitioners.

Aims of collective worship

In (name of school/setting)... we aim to:

- provide opportunity for learners who wish to worship/connect with God/a divine being/a divine power;
- consider spiritual connections and moral issues;
- encourage learners to explore and reflect on their own beliefs, spiritualism and values;
- encourage participation and response
- develop community spirit

- promote shared values
- reinforce positive attitudes

Delivery

We encourage the children to arrive and leave quietly to reinforce the special nature of collective worship within our school day. To support this we may use music as the children arrive and leave.

Wherever possible we encourage the learners to take a lead in the collective worship.

We ensure that at least one of the following components is included in our daily act of collective worship:

Reflection: We encouraged learners to listen to, watch or reflect on an appropriate stimulus.

Prayer: We encourage learners to say a prayer aloud together or to pray individually in silence. These may be printed prayers or those written by the learners themselves. The school uses its own school prayer in most collective worships.

Song: We encourage learners to sing a hymn or other worship song together.

Reading: We read an extract from the Bible or other religious/moral/spiritual writing.

Visitors

On some occasions, collective worships are led by visitors to school. Visitors can enrich collective worship and build partnership with the local community. We invite members of faith communities, wider worldviews (e.g. Humanist) other ethical traditions and community groups to share in the DACW programme.

The Headteacher and practitioners within the school/setting* are aware of the importance of full safeguarding procedures and ensure they are in place for visitors. It is recognised that scoping meetings with potential visitors are important to ensure that any extremist views, of any political or religious kind, are not allowed to use DACW as a platform.

Right to Withdraw

There is provision for learners to be wholly or partly withdrawn from attending any acts of collective worship, at the request of their parents. Further guidance on the withdrawal of learners from collective worship can be found on the [WASACRE website](#).

Our school/setting* continues to be responsible for the supervision of any child withdrawn by its parent/guardian/carer from collective worship.

There is also provision for teachers to withdraw from conducting, participating or attending in the daily act of collective worship. However, attendance at 'assemblies'* is a legal requirement of all teachers.

**It should be noted that the term "assembly" is never used within the wording of the Education Acts, instead the term used is "collective worship" which is seen as part of a school's balanced and broadly based curriculum. The term "assembly" is usually construed as the time when notices, announcements, etc. are given to the pupils and staff and assemblies often precede or follow a time of collective worship. There is a duty on staff under the terms and conditions of the School Teachers'*

Pay and Conditions Document to attend assemblies, but this duty is subject to teachers' freedom under the 1944 Act not to attend collective worship (Para 141 of Welsh Office Circular number 10/94 directly refers to this prerogative), unless the teacher is in a category of teacher exempted from such a choice by Para 140.

Responsibility

The responsibility for the oversight of collective worship rests with the **governors** in consultation with the **Headteacher**.

The school reviews this policy every three years or even earlier, where required, for example due to changes in legislation.