

Collective Worship in Schools – Department for Education

FAQs about Collective Worship

The Education Act of 1996 provides statutory guidance about Collective Worship and sections from the Act have been used to answer frequently asked questions which we hope you find helpful.

What is Collective Worship?

Collective Worship is about the growth of the person, their character and social outlook, whatever their academic aptitudes.

What are the requirements to provide collective worship?

The legal requirements for collective worship are laid down in the Education Reform Act 1988 (the 1988 Act) and in the [Collective Worship Circular 1/94](#) (1993 – 1994), which was essentially an attempt to explain and enhance the 1988 Act. It states that 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; to encourage participation and response, 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'.

Worship is an old English word which translates to worthiness – often in the past this has always meant recognising the worthiness of God, but in terms of a school context where there are different beliefs about God, time spent focusing on things of worth is what essentially the law is referring to.

What constitutes collective worship?

The DfE published non-statutory guidance on collective worship in 1994. This guidance remains current.

The [guidance](#) explains in paragraph 60 that collective worship in schools without a designated religious character will be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature".

Al John Perry, collective worship reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination. For example, an assembly themed around how to treat others well, would be broadly Christian. Broadly Christian means that most Christian people would be in agreement with the sentiment or teaching or practice presented to the pupils.

Elements of collective worship could include:

- Developing a sense of awe and wonder about the world
- Affirming positive values, such as honesty or self-sacrifice
- Encouraging responsibility for making personal decisions
- Celebrating achievement and special occasions

As collective worship takes place in schools, its primary function is an educational one, that is to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) – as well as intellectual – development of pupils.

Where can collective worship take place?

Paragraphs 55-56 of the [DfE's guidance](#) on collective worship say that, as a rule, acts of collective worship should take place on the school premises. It also explains that there can be separate acts of worship for pupils in different age groups or school groups.

At John Perry, collective worship is present in our assemblies (Word of the Week assembly and Celebration assembly) and permeates throughout our curriculum. Therefore, collective worship takes place in our halls and classrooms.

Can parents withdraw their children from collective worship?

Parents can request that their child be totally or partially withdrawn from collective worship. Please contact a member of SLT via the school office for more information.

Is Collective Worship the same as Religious Education (R.E.)?

Collective worship (for instance, assemblies or practical examples as shown in our SMSC Policy) and RE are separate areas of school life. The legal requirements for RE and collective worship are distinct and should not be confused.

The only part of the law which is similar for both areas is that of withdrawal.

Nevertheless, there may be opportunities for pupils to use their R.E. work in collective worship or for collective worship to reinforce the learning taking place in R.E. e.g. at times of religious festivals.

What is the link between Collective Worship and fundamental British Values?

Collective worship makes an important contribution to developing pupils' understanding of fundamental British Values as defined by Ofsted (democracy, individual liberty, rule of law, respect, and tolerance). Effective pupil development can support pupils to be prepared for "the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life." ([Ofsted handbook](#), last updated January 2024)

Who is responsible for Collective Worship in school?

It is the shared statutory responsibility of the Head Teacher and Governors to ensure there is appropriate provision for collective worship.

For more information, please read the document [Collective worship: SACRE guidelines for schools in Barking & Dagenham, 2023](#)

We invite you to read our SMCS Policy where you will find a comprehensive list of how SMSC is present in our curriculum: [SMSC Policy](#)

Here is an overview of some of the assemblies held with our children to help them gain a better understanding of British Values, School Values, equality, diversity and inclusion as we strive to help our community gain cultural capital and a better understanding of the wider world:

Word of the Week Assemblies (every Monday)- 2023/2024	
September	Our School Values: Kind and Thoughtful Our School Values: Respectful and Tolerant (linked to Jeans for Genes Week)
October	Our School Values: Positivity (linked to Black History Month) Mental Health

	Our School Values: Responsibility
November	Remembrance (lined to Remembrance Day) Anti-bullying awareness: social bullying Anti-bullying awareness: verbal and physical bullying Anti-bullying awareness: cyber-bullying
December	Charity Empathy Gratitude
January	British Values – Individual Liberty British Values – Respect and tolerance of others (linked to World Religion Day 21st January 2024) British Values – Rule of Law British Values - Democracy
February	Let's Connect (linked to Children's Mental Health Week 5th to 11th Feb 2024) E-Safety (linked to Safer Internet Day 6h February) A love for Reading (linked to World Book Day)
March	Teamwork Inclusion (linked to Down Syndrome Awareness Day 21st March) Diversity (linked to Holi Festival of Colours 25th March)
April	Honesty Independence
May	Maturity Courtesy Mindfulness

In addition to this, every Friday during **Celebration Assembly** we celebrate best punctuality and attendance, School House with the most points for the week and overall, Star of the Week (that child in every class who has demonstrated the value discussed at the Word of the Week Assembly), best behaviour in the dinner hall and we focus on one of the 5 Steps to Wellbeing.