



# Sir James Smith's Community School

*Aspiration • Ambition • Achievement*

## ***Collective Worship and Assemblies Policy***

***March 2018***

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## **Collective Worship and Assemblies at SJS**

### **1.0 Introduction.**

Every school has to have a daily act of collective worship for every pupil in school, unless withdrawn by their parent. This policy seeks to promote two things, firstly compliance with the law and secondly, meaningful collective worship which positively contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school and development of its pupils. It also seeks to quantify how the school meets these legal requirements whilst operating within certain logistical constraints, of which lack of a suitable space to conduct whole school assemblies is one. The policy seeks to clarify the law and the definition of collective worship as well as give indications of how the law might be fulfilled. This policy is intended to guide and challenge, at time when collective worship appears to be a mere anachronism. Further guidance relating to the law is included as Appendix A.

### **2.0 Context – placing the school into its socio-religious setting**

Sir James Smith's Community School is a comprehensive county school, serving a rural community in North Cornwall. The ethnic and religious survey shows that 94% of the pupils and their parents are white and nominally Christian though in practice this is far the reality; a relatively high proportion of students would classify themselves and their families as not religious. However our students are part of a wider national and global community and we strive to bring the world to Camelford in order to open minds, recognise difference, value other customs and combat bigotry and prejudice.

### **3.0 Aims – what we hope to achieve through collective worship and assemblies**

1. To provide experience of collective acts of broadly Christian worship with particular emphasis on reflection and worship in recognition of all that we do together.
2. To promote a sense of belonging to a thriving school community and extend this to the wider community.
3. To encourage a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for the quality of our community's collective worship. This means involving as many different members of the school and wider community as possible.
4. To encourage the school community to look outwards to recognise a diverse range of experiences in many walks of life both within different denominations and within different ethnic cultures and to learn to value such in a multi-ethnic society.
5. To share our concerns about major issues of the day and place them, where appropriate, in a Christian perspective.
6. To provide opportunities for everyone to enjoy worship, but to recognise that is not spectator entertainment, but participative community activity which requires spiritual involvement.
7. To celebrate the achievements of individual members and groups of the school community.

### **4.0 Objectives – what other specific things do we want to achieve**

- To encourage the active participation of staff and pupils in worship, encouraging different groups to take responsibility for preparation and delivery;
- To relate spiritual and moral values to the daily life of the school;
- To celebrate cultural diversity in forms of music, dance, drama.

### **5.0 Approaches – how do we make it happen**

5.1 There is a programme of daily assembly and Act of Collective Worship in the school during morning registration and/or tutorial session. This is organised in two ways: firstly by Year once a week in the main hall; and secondly by tutor group on the other days in the week.

5.2 Year assemblies are managed by the relevant Year Director and presented by a member of the Extended Leadership Team and other community individuals and groups on a rolling programme.

5.3 When pupils are involved, they receive guidance in their choice of readings, themes and prayers and the atmosphere should always be reflective. Pupils are also advised in how to develop their skills of presentation. Students presenting assemblies receive a special Headteacher's commendation.

5.4 There are tutor group and/or year assemblies, as an adjunct to House assemblies, delivered at the times when the main hall is unavailable, as detailed on the Assembly Rota. This provides an opportunity for tutors to explore and offer extensions to the weekly theme with their tutees. For these assemblies, tutors are encouraged to initiate discussion and reflection amongst students.

5.5 Whole school acts of worship in assembly present logistical problems owing to the lack of a suitable space. It is not possible to use the hall due to lack of capacity set by fire regulations and the sports hall presents considerable problems with acoustics preventing its use to assemble the whole school.

## **6.0 Overview of scheme /plan for the year**

6.1 This consists of: a statement of themes and topics which are based around key elements such as citizenship, spirituality, visitors, festivals, special days and reflecting on self. The overall aim is to support the philosophy (mission, aims, values and beliefs) underpinning the ethos of the school (refer to separate document detailing ethos).

6.2 Where possible chosen themes will reflect national and international events/celebrations, some of these will be perennial e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day

## **7.0 Implementation of assembly – practical considerations**

To achieve the above:

1. There is an expectation that assemblies are not just "another job". Every member of staff and pupils is encouraged to make a contribution. Staff are asked to volunteer to lead one House assembly per year. Pupils are encouraged to lead a Year assembly.
2. Requires each House or year group to organise at least one House or year group assembly per year in which they are facilitated by YD and form tutors. Tutorial time is available for preparation and evaluation.
3. We show respect for religions and one another in the manner in which we behave and respond during assembly times.
4. We allow a diverse range of worship style including prayers, singing, dancing, instrumental playing, drama, personal reflection and listening.
5. We invite outside speakers to share their experience of different times and places. Outside speakers may well offer some form of prayer; most will encourage students to reflect on what has been said and give time for that reflection.
6. We emphasise the importance of the 'liturgical' part of school assemblies (the main part) and it not becoming swamped by the administrative element (notices, etc.). Routine notices should happen before or after the presentation.
7. The Head Teacher is responsible for collective worship within the school and has the following responsibilities:
  - preparing the Main Assembly Rota;
  - arranging a rota of leaders of Collective Worship;

- establishing and maintaining an up to date resource bank;
  - liaising with the local community in terms of visitors, etc.
  - monitoring the quality and consistency of assemblies.
8. The Year Director and team will managed the Year assemblies and manage staff and students to a prompt start of the assembly.
  9. On occasions, Year tutors may be required to coach their form to present a student-led assembly to their year group.
  10. The rights of members of staff to not to participate has to be respected.

#### **8.0 Resources available**

The school will maintain a resource base for collective worship located in the Headteacher's office and on the staff website to which will be added new resources as allowed by the budget for collective worship and assemblies.

#### **9.0 Monitoring and evaluation**

Time will be spent annually evaluating the assembly programme and considering the appropriateness of the weekly themes. The school recognises the importance of involving new community partners and will consider all approaches as well as being proactively seeking new inputs.

*If you would like this in a different format please contact the school*

*First Adopted – September 2012  
Reviewed & Amended – March 2018  
Reviewed by – Jon Lawrence  
Ratified by Governors – March 2018  
Next review due – March 2020*

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Collective Worship – Draft Advice from SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education)**

#### **Introduction**

Collective Worship is probably one of the most peculiar elements of the current education system. Every school has to have a daily act of collective worship for every pupil in school, unless withdrawn by their parent. Yet few people appear to worship in their daily lives and this law seems a throw back to when Great Britain was a Christian nation and everybody was signed up to that concept. Nevertheless the requirement remains. This advice seeks to promote among Cornwall Council schools two things, firstly compliance with the law and secondly, meaningful collective worship which positively contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the school and development of its pupils. The advice will clarify the law and the definition of collective worship for schools as well as give indications of how the law might be fulfilled. This advice it is meant to guide and challenge and SACRE hopes that it will fulfil both of these challenges in a time when collective worship appears to be a mere anachronism of the system.

#### **Collective Worship and the Law – the basics**

The current legislation governing collective worship is to be found in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 which simply states: “each pupil in attendance at a community, foundation or voluntary school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship.”

Section 71 goes on to allow a certain exemption:

If the parent of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school requests that he may be wholly or partly excused from attendance at religious worship in the school, the pupil shall be so excused until the request is withdrawn. The right to withdraw on the basis of conscience has long been established, going back to the 19th Century.

The Act in Schedule 20 goes on further to define the nature of worship, firstly for schools without a religious character in Section 3:

- Subject to paragraph 4, the required collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.
- For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2), collective worship is of a broadly Christian character if it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.
- Not every act of collective worship in the school required by section 70 need comply with sub-paragraph (2) provided that, taking any school term as a whole, most such acts which take place in the school do comply.

Here we see that the law recognises that the majority of acts of collective worship should be mainly of a broadly Christian character with no denominational bias and that a single act of collective worship might be different in character to that general specification.

The Schedule goes one step further, though, with regard to the situation of the school and that the school should consider:

(6) (a) any circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils which are relevant for determining the character of the collective worship which is appropriate in their case, and (b) their ages and aptitudes. In this sense schools need to think carefully about the collective worship they have in their school and that it should meet the needs of families and pupils in a definite way.

With regard to foundation schools with a religious character and voluntary schools, they are governed by their trust deeds and should comply with the direction given within such deeds.

### **Are there exceptions?**

The Act does allow an exception from the requirement for a school to have a daily act of collective worship which is broadly Christian in character with regard to the needs of specific groups of parents and their children. The exception is called a determination. The school must be able to make a case to its local SACRE that parents want a particular form of collective worship for their children. If SACRE agrees with the school on this issue then it is possible to have a particular form of collective worship for a specified group of pupils.

### **Does the law say anything else?**

The law does further define three areas that schools should be aware of. Firstly, what constitutes a 'collective' for collective worship and secondly, where collective worship should happen and finally the issue of when it should happen.

2. (2) The arrangements for the required collective worship may, in respect of each school day, provide for a single act of worship for all pupils or for separate acts of worship for pupils in different age groups or in different school groups.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) a "school group" is any group in which pupils are taught or take part in other school activities.

(4). The belief, held by some, that collective worship is a whole school or key stage or year activity is erroneous. Collective worship can happen in any recognisable group in the school, such as a class or tutor group. As all pupils tend to be in these groups fairly constantly then there is no excuse for not having a daily act of collective worship for pupils not withdrawn by their parents.

(5) Subject to sub-paragraph (6), the required collective worship shall take place on the school premises.

(6) If the governing body of a community, foundation or voluntary school are of the opinion that it is desirable that any act of collective worship in the school required by section 70 should, on a special occasion, take place elsewhere than on the school premises, they may, after consultation with the head teacher, make such arrangements for that purpose as they think appropriate.

(7) The powers of a governing body under sub-paragraph (6) shall not be exercised so as to derogate from the rule that the required collective worship must normally take place on the school premises. This law is important because it preserves the general character of collective worship as non-denominational.

And finally, the timing of collective worship is a matter for the school. It need not be at the same time for all pupils but it must be part of the school day. As part of the school day it should not be confused with curriculum time and should be calculated relative to time outside of the school's curriculum framework.

### **Who is responsible for collective worship?**

The School standards and Framework Act is quite clear on this matter:

(2) Subject to section 71, in relation to any community, foundation or voluntary school-

(a) the Local Authority and the governing body shall exercise their functions with a view to securing, and (b) the Headteacher shall secure, that subsection (1) is complied with.

Responsibility for collective worship is a partnership between the LA, the governing body and the Headteacher. Legislation does allow teachers themselves not to participate in or lead collective worship and Headteachers should work closely with their staff to ensure both the requirement of the law and the needs of teachers are met without discriminating against teachers for the choice that they have made in good conscience. Here Headteachers may need to be creative with the way they deploy staff with regard to collective worship.

### **What is the aim of collective worship?**

The DfES Circular 1/94 gives the current advice of the Department on RE and collective worship. It clearly sets out the aims of collective worship in the mind of the government:

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 (Paragraph 50)

In this sense collective worship is something which should be distinctive in the life of the school and should provide a particular sort of experiences for pupils which are different to what they would get in a lesson as part of the curriculum.

SACRE recognises that there is no ‘recipe’ that constitutes an act of collective worship and that such acts will be different in different schools and contexts.

Nevertheless the DfES’s aims provide a good basis for asking whether or not an act of collective worship has occurred or whether the activity could be better described as an assembly. Indeed Circular 1/94 clearly states that ‘collective worship and assembly are distinct activities’ (Paragraph 58) although it recognises that both might occur as part of the same gathering.

### **How is worship to be defined?**

Circular 1/94 is quite clear on this issue too, worship has its ordinary meaning: ‘it 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). The Circular does, though, recognise that what happens in a school is not what will happen in a faith community as the nature of the school is different.

### **What about prayer?**

In light of the DfES’s definition of worship it is reasonable to expect prayer to be a part of an act of collective worship, although not every act of collective worship need have one. An alternative to prayer in an act of collective worship might be the singing of a hymn or a time for reflection, nevertheless there should be some reference to a ‘divine being or power’ during the act.

This may cause problems for some teachers. There is a general reluctance in some schools to pray with pupils and this is understandable in what is often seen to be a post-Christian Britain. SACRE advises on this issue that pupils may be invited to pray, or listen to a prayer which they may wish to assent to but should not be forced to say a prayer against their will.

Some have argued that in light of the Human Rights Act 1998 that expecting pupils to pray at all is something that should be dropped. In fact the legislation regarding collective worship does not infringe the rights of parents to hold beliefs or have an education that supports their beliefs, with the appropriate safeguards for the state. Indeed if parents wish to remove their child from collective worship then they can and their rights have been preserved. Schools should not confuse the wishes of parents with the desires of pupils. Most parents do not remove their child from collective worship and schools should be confident in what they do, even though pupils might not always agree. Listening to pupils on how collective worship might be improved, though, is a different matter.

## **APPENDIX B**

Example of assembly plan for Spring Term 2018

**ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE Spring Term 2018– Version 2**  
**Monday Y11, Tuesday Y10, Wednesday Y9, Thursday Y8, Friday Y7**

Wk No	W/B	Theme / Thoughts	Who	Did you know?
15/A	01/01/2018	Whole school weekly theme: Welcome to 2018 Return to school on Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> January	JL	4/1 Sir Isaac Newton’s birthday 4/1 World Braille Day 5/1 Twelfth Night 6/1 Epiphany <i>“Some are born great, others achieve greatness.” Newton</i>
	NB: Assembly will take place for Yr8 Thursday and Yr7 Friday			
16/B	08/01/2018	Whole school weekly theme: Welcome to 2018	JL	<i>“What the New Year brings to you will depend a great deal on what you bring to the New Year.” - McLellan</i>
	NB. Assembly Monday – Wednesday. NB: Mock exams Thursday 11 and Friday 12 January – no assemblies			
17/A	15/01/2018	Mock exams week – no whole school assemblies	n/a	16/1 Martin Luther King Day 17/1 Anne Bronte’s birthday <i>“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” MLK</i>
	NB:			
18/B	22/01/2018	Whole school weekly theme: Holocaust Assemblies on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday only – <i>see NB below</i>	KC	24/1 Belly Laugh Day 25/1 Burn’s Night 27/1 Holocaust Memorial Day <i>“For the dead and the living, we must bear witness.” Primo Levi</i>
	NB: No assemblies on Monday or Tuesday due to mock exams			
19/A	29/01/2018	Whole school weekly theme: Litter and the environment	EM	30/1 RNLI SOS Day 31/1 Up Helly Aa (Shetland) 2/2 Imbolc – time for a spring clean <i>“Only humans make waste that nature can’t digest.” SAS</i>
	NB:			

20/B	05/02/2018	Whole school weekly theme: Year Focus	YD	6/2 UNICEF Day for Change 7/2 safer Internet Day 7/2 Charles Dicken's birthday <i>"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Charles Dickens</i>
	NB:			
<b>FEBRUARY HALF TERM Monday 12/02/2018 to Friday 16/02/2018</b>				
21/A	19/02/2018	Whole school weekly theme: Dyslexia & Dyscalculia	MD	22/2 World Thinking Day 22/2 Eating Disorders Awareness Week <i>"Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it." Henry Ford</i>
	NB:			
22/B	26/02/2018	Whole school weekly theme: No assemblies this week Mon –Wed available for year specific assemblies	N/A	27/2 Fairtrade Fortnight begins 1/3 World Book Day <i>"A book is a device to ignite the imagination." Alan Bennett</i>
	NB: ARD on Thu 1 <sup>st</sup> March and PD Day on Fri 2 <sup>nd</sup> March			
23/A	05/03/2018	Whole school weekly theme: HERBs update – lessons to learn	YD	8/3 International Women's Day 10/3 National Science and Engineering Week begins <i>"The important thing is to never stop questioning." Einstein.</i>
	NB:			
24/B	12/03/2018	Whole school weekly theme: The Commonwealth	JL	British Science Week 12/3 World Maths Day 13/3 Commonwealth Day 14/3 National SingUp day <i>"Mathematics is a place where you can do things which you can't do in the real world." Marcus du Sautoy</i>
	NB:			

25/A	19/03/2018	Whole school weekly theme:	KC	Climate Week Down's Syndrome Awareness Week 20/3 Vernal/Spring Equinox 21/3 World Poetry Day 25/3 British Summer Time (BST) begins <i>"Down Syndrome isn't a burden. How people react to it is."</i>
	NB:			
26/B	26/03/2018	Whole school weekly theme: Charity fund raiser	School Council	26/3 Mother's Day  <i>"God could not be everywhere and therefore he made mothers." Rudyard Kipling</i>
	NB: No Year 7 Assembly on Friday 30 <sup>th</sup> March 2018 as school is closed			

**EASTER HOLIDAY Friday 30/03/2018 – Friday 14/04/2018**  
**School reopens Monday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018 – Week 27/A**