

Appendix 1

The Legal Requirement for Collective worship in CE Schools

The Schools Standard and Framework Act 1998 (Section 70 and Schedule 20) requires

1. All registered pupils must on "each school day take part in an act of collective worship". (See below for rights to withdraw)
2. The requirement is for "Collective Worship" rather than corporate worship. Corporate worship (e.g. in church) assumes a group of people with shared beliefs. Collective worship recognises the different background, experience and commitment of children and adults gathered together in school.
3. The daily act of collective worship must be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Deeds of the school and the Ethos Statement in the Instruments of Government, and must be consistent with the beliefs and practice of the Church of England.
4. For collective worship, pupils can be grouped in various ways: as a whole school, according to age, or in groups (or a combination of groups) which the school uses at other times. Pupils cannot be put into special groups just for collective worship. This provision is helpful in the case, say, of a swimming group (or a group receiving additional support outside the classroom) which would otherwise regularly miss collective worship. Because such a group already exists as part of the school's delivery of the curriculum they may have their own act of collective worship.
5. Parents have a right to withdraw their children from parts or all of collective worship. Parents do not need to give a reason for this. A similar right exists for children in the sixth form over the age of 16 years who may exercise this right independently of their parents or carers. Where children are withdrawn from worship the school must provide appropriate supervision but is not obliged to provide alternative curriculum provision.

Teachers may also withdraw from collective worship unless their contract is deemed to require attendance of them as part of the requirement to respect the character of the religious foundation of the school.

6. Acts of worship must be appropriate for the pupils, in that they should take account of the pupils' age, aptitude and family backgrounds.
7. The daily worship will normally take place on the school premises. Schools are able to hold their Act of Worship elsewhere (e.g. the local parish church) on special occasions.

8. The daily worship may take place at any time of the school day. However, acts of worship are not curriculum time and should not be subsumed into any part of the curriculum. Acts of worship must be distinct from other aspects of school life and able to be identified as such to meet legal requirements.
9. Responsibility for the arrangement of collective worship rests with the governors in consultation with the headteacher. Foundation governors have a particular responsibility because they are appointed for "the purpose of securing, as far as is practicable that the character of the school as a voluntary school is preserved and developed, and, in particular, that the school is conducted in accordance with the provisions of any trust deed relating thereto." The headteacher has a responsibility to ensure that all arrangements for collective worship are secured.