



CARLISLE
DIOCESE

Guidance for staff when religious or faith
visitors are taking part in Collective Worship
or Religious Education lessons in Carlisle
Diocese CE Schools

Introduction

This guidance is to help support staff as you seek to liaise with religious visitors as they contribute to children's learning in school. We hope all enjoy their visit and that learning, is enhanced. We hope you find this guidance helpful as you consider ways in which they might support Collective Worship or Religious Education in school.

Our vision for education 'embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of all children and young people.' (CEEO, 2016:p2) Our desire is for all children and adults to experience "life in all its' fullness." (John 10:10) Four theological concepts: wisdom, hope, community and dignity run through the Church of England vision for education. The vision 'is hospitable to diversity, respects freedom of religion and belief, and encourages others to contribute from the depths of their own traditions and understandings.' (CEEO, 2016:2) Church of England schools are inclusive, in that they are there for those of the Christian faith, those of other faiths and those of no faith.

We recognise the vital contribution to learning, representatives of religious communities can make when visiting schools. Encounters with people of faith help support pupils' understanding and knowledge of the faith and why it is important to those who practice it. Therefore, the Board of Education encourages visits from individuals of the major world religions, including specifically representatives from Christian, Jewish, Islam, Hindu and Buddhist traditions to contribute to Religious Education and other lessons or activities as appropriate. In order to avoid confusion for children and remain true to the school's trust deed, where contributing visitors are representing the Christian religion, we would expect them to reflect mainstream Christianity. This would include all who believe in the Triune nature of God, i.e. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as well as other central tenants of the Church of England and mainstream Christianity. It is worth noting these are not beliefs shared by all Christian groups, such as, Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons. Further guidance regarding Jehovah Witnesses' stance on Collective Worship and Religious Education in Schools can be found on the Diocesan website. (See reference below)

Code of Conduct

Religious visitors taking part in the life of the school should:

- Be familiar with the school's distinctive Christian vision, values and ethos
- Plan their involvement in the curriculum in light of the above
- Be willing to respect and value the beliefs of pupils and adults in the school
- Be willing to share their own experiences, beliefs and insights

Collective Worship

Collective Worship is central to the life of the school community and in line with the school's trust deed **must be** Christian in nature, generally within the Anglican tradition, whilst being welcoming of other mainstream Christian traditions. Therefore content, whoever it is delivered by, should reflect this. The content of prayers, acts of worship or faith stories shared during Collective Worship should reflect or be consistent with the Christian faith.

Religious Education

In Church of England schools RE involves exploration of the beliefs and practices within Christianity and other major world faiths as detailed within the Statement of Entitlement (CEEO, 2019) and reflected within the school's individual RE policy. It is therefore appropriate that visitors contribute to the curriculum to aid children's knowledge and understanding. Prior to a visitor contributing to the RE curriculum the teacher/RE lead/Head teacher should discuss what they wish a visitor to cover during the lesson and how this will fit into the RE topic the children are studying. Visitors should be open to teachers' suggestions and make any adjustments to input as requested.

NB: We recommend that all visitors contributing to RE are provided with a copy of the school's RE policy.

Lesson contributions should:

- Reflect directly RE programmes of study
- Take account of the differing needs of pupils
- Demonstrate engaging teaching and learning methods that involve pupils actively
- Make use of methods of communication appropriate for the age groups concerned
- Encourage pupils to respect others' beliefs
- Include insights into the visitor's beliefs and practices.

Please note: We recognise that by being involved in demonstration children are not taking part in actual religious practice or prayer. However, where demonstration of religious practices involve children, visitors and staff must be sensitive to the fact that not all children (and their families) may want to be involved in this way. For example, some families would object, on religious grounds, to children dressing up in religious traditional dress or being involved in simulations of ritual practices. The same could apply if involved in reading or reciting prayers from faiths other than the Christian religion. Therefore, schools should ensure parents are made aware of the nature of content of the curriculum visitors from other faiths will be delivering. Such information sharing will help address any misconceptions as well as promote the importance of such input to children's learning and development.

The Right to Withdrawal

Parents have the right to withdrawal for all or part of RE lessons, and Collective Worship, by writing to the headteacher. However, as both are central to the life of a Church of England school Head Teachers should encourage parents to discuss any concerns they have, prior to making such a decision. Through discussion, the educational objectives of Religious Education, including how it is linked to whole school policy, as well as the invitational and inclusive nature of Collective Worship can be further explored, in the hope withdrawal can be avoided.

Concluding thoughts

A Church of England school is a 'hospitable community that seeks to embody an ethos of living well together.' (CEEEO, 2016:11) We want visitors to feel welcomed into the school community, even if it is for a short period of time. Adults and children alike are valued and encouraged to 'live life to the full.' (John 10:10) We hope visitors feel blessed by the opportunity to share their beliefs and faith practices with children and adults in the school community. It is appropriate for schools to formally thank visitors for the contribution they have made to children's knowledge and understanding as a result of their visit.

Further Information and Advice

- Church of England Education Office, (2016) *Church of England Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good*
- Church of England Education Office (2019) *Religious Education in Church of England Schools: A Statement of Entitlement*
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/RE%20Statement%20of%20Entitlement%20for%20Church%20Schools.pdf>
- Cumbria SACRE (2002) *Jehovah's Witnesses: Guidance for Schools*
https://www.carlisle-diocese.org.uk/uploads/103/CW_JW_guidance.pdf.html
- NATRE (2007) *Religious Believers Visiting Schools: Guidance and a Code of Conduct*
<https://www.retoday.org.uk/media/display/rbvs.pdf>
- *Withdrawal: Withdrawal from all or part of RE*
<http://www.reonline.org.uk/leading/policy/withdrawal/>