Diocese of Guildford

Collective Worship in Church Schools in the Diocese of Guildford

A guide for parents and carers



What is Collective Worship? Why is it special?

- Collective worship is an important part of the school day, outside curriculum time, when pupils and staff pause and reflect on shared values and big questions in life. It is sometimes called an ‘assembly’.

- Collective worship is often referred to as ‘the heartbeat of the school’. It’s an opportunity to bring the whole school community together around the Christian vision and values that underpin the life of each school and the things that are important to them.

- Collective worship is different from Religious Education.

What do SIAMS reports say about collective worship in our Church schools?
“Collective worship is joyful, inspiring and engages pupils and staff.
It brings the school community together.”

Why do schools have Collective Worship?

- *It is a time when the **school family** comes together, creating a sense of identity and belonging.*

- *It's like a **warm fire**; a place where all members of the school community are drawn together.*

- *It's like an **open door**: a time that welcomes everyone, from any religion, or none.*

- *It provides **space for pupils to reflect** on their own ideas and develop their thoughts about some of the big questions in life.*

All schools must provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils **by law.**

Many pupils say Collective Worship is important to them.

Here are some of their words





Collective Worship in church schools is

- **Inclusive** - Children and adults in our schools come from many different backgrounds — some follow a faith, some follow different faiths, and some have no religious belief at all. Collective worship provides the opportunity to encounter the Christian 'story' but is designed so everyone can take part comfortably. It's a time for the whole school to come together, share thoughts, and feel included, without anyone having to pretend to be something they're not.

- **Invitational -** Everyone is invited to join in, but no one is ever forced to take part in anything they don't want to. Collective worship offers space to listen, reflect, and join in if they choose, and to respond in their own way, with respect for their family's faith, belief or worldview.

- **Inspiring** - Collective worship encourages children and adults to think deeply about life — who we are, how we treat others, and the choices we make. It helps them reflect on their own beliefs and values, show respect for others, and inspires positive actions within the school and wider community.



Collective worship in church schools does not

- Require children to take part in Christian worship, prayers, or any activity that conflicts with their own or their family's beliefs or seek to convert pupils to any faith or belief. Parents may also request that their child be withdrawn from collective worship.

What is special about collective worship in a church school?

- Collective worship should have a **high profile in the life of the school** and on the timetable for each day.
- Each school has a member of staff who plans, supports and develops collective worship across the school.
- Schools are **encouraged to have links** with their local church. This could give pupils opportunities to
- attend collective worship led by people such as the vicar or Open the Book team, or to hold collective worship in the church at different times of the year (e.g. harvest, Christmas, Easter etc.).
- Collective worship should **help pupils and adults understand** why faith and belief matter in today's world, including hearing about Jesus, the Bible and Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- Collective worship **helps the school community to flourish** spiritually, which might include opportunities to encourage pupils as leaders e.g. as Worship Ambassadors;
- Collective worship is **part of living out the school's Christian vision and value**
- Collective worship is inspected as **part of the school's SIAMS inspection.**



Examples of collective worship might include

- **using a candle** to mark the start and end of this special time;
- **an opening greeting.** This might be words written by the school community to welcome each other into this special time, **or words** provided as part of their assembly material;
- **a quiz, puzzle or game** to get children thinking about the theme e.g. a spot-the-difference picture;
- **listening to a Bible story**, story from another tradition or real-life example and thinking about what it means for everyday life and the life of their school community;
- **linking the story to their school's Christian vision and values**;
- **using questions** to stimulate children's thinking e.g. 'I wonder how many ways we might think of to be welcoming to others?'
- **singing together, listening to music**, or using music as a time for reflection;
- **having a quiet moment to think**, pray, be still, or reflect in their own way;
- **a sending response** as children go out;
- **celebrating pupils' achievements** and considering how everyone can contribute to the life of the school and wider community.

Use this **video link** if you'd like to view an example of a collective worship, recorded for schools during the pandemic.





Diocese of Guildford

What is the role of parents and carers?

- Talk to your child about their experience of collective worship.
- Come and see collective worship in action when your school invites you to join them.
- If your family follows a faith or belief, you and your faith or belief community should help your child take part in meaningful activities, worship, and festival celebrations. It is not the role of the school to do this.



What do SIAMS reports say about collective worship in our Church schools?
"Worship is an active time where pupils listen, respond and share their ideas with each other. They feel included and know their questions are welcomed.."

Diocese of Guildford

Diocese of Guildford

What is a SIAMS report? - find out more here.

"Collective worship is joyful, inspiring and engages pupils and staff. It brings the school community together."

"Worship is an active time where pupils listen, respond and share their ideas with each other. They feel included and know their questions are welcomed.."



All rights reserved
Produced by the Diocese of Guildford
September 2026