

## Preface

This document is an extensive revision of previous guidance titled 'Church schools serving diverse communities.' The new title flows from the Church of England report, 'From Lament to Action', the work of the CoFE Birmingham's 'BAME Reference Group', and a growing awareness that appreciating and celebrating diversity is vital for all schools in every context, not just those serving diverse communities. Indeed, the Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd which gave voice to his final words, 'I can't breathe' – words which resonate with the experience of so many people of diverse backgrounds – has shown us that not only has there been a failure to properly appreciate and celebrate those of different faiths and cultures but also that there has been a failure to appreciate and celebrate the contribution of Christians from diverse backgrounds within the Church of England. In the words of Archbishop Justin, the Church is institutionally racist. This is a hard truth which places a responsibility on all churches and on all church schools to work proactively to ensure this changes and that going forward every person is properly valued and given opportunity to thrive and know *life in all its fullness*. This builds on the good practice already established from taking account of the Church of England reports 'Valuing All God's Children'.



## Synopsis

Embracing and Embedding Diversity in All Church Schools is intended as a guide so that school staff – of all faiths and none – will have confidence to serve the Church of England Birmingham's wonderfully diverse community, whatever their own school's individual context. This is a whole school concern.

As is often the case, one of the smallest words in the title is the most important – in this case "All".



For some schools the local parish church will be central to the community they serve. For some, Christianity will be central but the community represents differing traditions to the Church of England. For some, a faith other than Christianity forms the background of the majority of pupils' lives. For others, the community served may have little understanding of faith at all.

Wherever a school finds itself, this document is intended:

- To put good practice into place, helping us to better understand and properly represent diversity in our setting.
- To communicate well with families on this important issue – creating a healthy ongoing conversation.
- To avoid oversimplification or stereotyping of faiths acknowledging the diversity and complexity within them.
- To respectfully navigate the landscape of different faiths, celebrating shared elements whilst being honest about different perceptions and understanding.
- To discern, where possible, a shared vocabulary, helping the school community to better engage with other faiths whilst respecting its Christian character.
- To offer clear, practical examples which demonstrate good practice of how the Christian character and message can be appropriately shared throughout the school community with those of all faiths and none. One such example is Prayer Spaces, an initiative that is creative, experiential and invitational. Prayer is a vital part of all faith traditions allowing this common ground to be explored and celebrated without shying away from distinctive Christian approaches to prayer.

Different schools are of course at different places along this journey. Whatever your school's context, it is hoped that there will be something within this document – and the excellent resources it links to - to help all Church schools better serve our unique communities.

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## Theological underpinning

Schools' values should affirm and promote that "all humankind is made in the image of God", (Genesis 1:26-27), therefore all pupils have the right:

- to experience success and worth;
- to make good progress with school making a positive difference to their lives and life-chances;
- to feel valued and affirmed and to learn how to value and affirm others.

According to the Gospel of John, Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full", (John 10:10) therefore all pupils have the right:

- to enjoy their learning and to make a positive contribution to the school and wider community;
- to experience self-fulfilment and learn how to act for others, not just themselves.

## Theological principles which can be explored within the school's rationale for celebrating diversity

- **Worth:** a belief that God's creation is intrinsically good, that every child matters to God, and that wonder, reverence and respect are the appropriate response;
- **Sin:** that from the beginning people have chosen to turn their back on God and serve themselves. That out of selfishness, greed, and fear, people have exploited difference and abused one another;
- **Unity in Diversity:** a recognition of the rich and wonderful diversity of our world, its peoples and cultures, that need not separate people from each other, for Christians believe in oneness in Christ;
- **Incarnation:** a belief that God was made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ and that he met people where they were, with particular concern for the marginalised and powerless, with an invitation to love God as fully as possible and to love and care for others as much as for oneself;
- **Justice:** that God is concerned for the wellbeing of every person and angered by human sin which damages others. That God holds people accountable. That work towards creating a world of equal opportunity is God's work.
- **Hope:** Life does not need to be as it is currently, it can be changed;
- **Service:** Following the example of Jesus, people are called to serve others – bringing the Kingdom of God.
- **Redemption:** That people cannot do the saving work themselves. But that through the cross of Jesus Christ all things, including people, can be brought back into relationship with God as God intends. Nothing and no one is irredeemable.
- **Grace:** that God's unconditional undeserved love changes hearts and minds. That God is at work in people and situations in ways that are mysterious, and often surprising. That the activity of the Holy Spirit is to bring about transformation and renewal, so revealing God's grace.



## Being open and honest about the Christian character

To be true to its Christian character, a church school *in any context* needs to show its connection to the Christian faith: to show what the school stands for. This may include websites, signage, displays, use of the Bible and Christian artefacts as well as strong connections to the local parish church (where possible). In any material promoting the school, and on all open days and events for new parents, leaders need to be explicit about the Christian character of the school and about the daily act of collective worship, as well as the inclusive Christian vision and values. This way, families can be made aware of the expectations of the school, and the nature of life within it. It is still possible to do this whilst emphasising the welcome for children of world faith traditions. The strong Christian ethos provides the safe space where children from families of faith, and those of none, can feel secure and valued and comfortable to share their beliefs with one another, and with adults. Families served by the school need to be able to trust the messages they receive about care for their children. Developing relationships of trust with parents is vital.

## The use of language, images, role models and story

Just as thoughtful use of language, images, role models and story can bring faith to life for people – aiding understanding and allowing people to relate more fully – so careless use of the same can leave individuals feeling alienated, and perpetuate damaging myths and stereotypes.

Questions to consider:

- How is Jesus depicted? Could these images be more faithful to the truth or more diverse in representation?
- Are we mindful of diversity when choosing which saints and heroes of the faith to celebrate?
- Is the use of role models sufficiently rich and varied for every pupil to relate to them?
- Are we aware that words and colours can be value-laden (e.g. black, white, blind) and that sensitivity is therefore required when preparing worship (e.g. choosing liturgy or describing liturgical colours) as well as in teaching about religious practice?
- Do the stories we tell challenge stereotypes (as Jesus' parables regularly did) or reinforce them?

See later section for suggestions of **resources**.



## Embracing and embedding diversity in COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

How can all feel embraced by collective worship, even for some of the time, if not all of the time? All pupils and staff should grow from their encounter with worship in the Church of England school, whoever they are, and wherever they are on their faith journey. Collective worship should touch everyone in some way, they should leave the collective worship personally a little bit different from when they entered it.

Anglican traditions notably include use of liturgy and calendar and Trinitarian belief, but also inclusion and respect for conscience. How can these traditions be reflected in collective worship in Anglican schools whilst also aiming for it to be inclusive, invitational, and inspiring?

There are many questions to think about. It is not possible to address all questions in each act of worship! There will be many different ways to demonstrate being inclusive, invitational and inspirational. Schools are encouraged to consider how to take them into account, over the course of a year's collective worship provision.

## Inclusive practice

The Anglican parish system means that all who live in it should be able to benefit from the ministry of their parish church *whatever their denomination or tradition*. Being true to its foundation, the school serves its parish (rather than purely its church members). Every family should be able to feel a sense of belonging in the school, **and** in collective worship. Full inclusiveness is not easy to achieve, but it should always be a desired goal. It is not only found in a search for consensus. There needs to be recognition and embracement of differences too.

When pupils and adults from world religions are present in acts of collective worship, this is a particular reminder that not all present will be committed Christians, and that language used should be invitational. The leader should not make presumptions about the faith commitment of pupils. The spirituality of the pupils and adults should be recognised, and care should be taken that there are aspects of the collective worship that will include all. Pupils and adults should be offered the chance to express their thoughts and feelings during collective worship.

Here are some examples of schools demonstrating inclusive practice:

In an act of collective worship to celebrate the beginning of Advent, pupils in school **A**, whose families have origins in different countries, shared information about preparation for Christmas in those countries.

One year, when Lent and Ramadan overlapped, Muslim pupils in school **B** were invited to tell the rest of the school about why they were fasting and what they were choosing to fast from. This gave a new and deeper perspective on the keeping of Lent for Christians.

At school **C**, songs recognising the person of Jesus are only used at Christmas and Easter. At other times of the year, it is more common for collective worship leaders to choose songs which are addressed to God, and which name him as Lord, as these are seen to be more inclusive.

School **D** serves an urban area with a mixed population where many, but not all, pupils come from Muslim families. A self-selected quartet of pupils, from each class, has each taken on a role within classroom collective worship. Roles are for leading a greeting and prayer at the outset; lighting a candle and leading a prayer to conclude. They are representative of the school population and are proud of their roles. One said, "It makes me feel I belong at XXXX school"

At school **E**, a secondary school with a majority of pupils from Muslim families, the chaplain references complementary Qur'anic material alongside verses from the Bible, when possible.

How can those responsible for the planning and leading of collective worship strive to ensure that pupils and adults present feel a sense of belonging within the occasion? Here are some strategies:

Selection of **themes relevant to all** – these may include the distinctively Christian values of the school; other distinctively Christian values; topical or national events; themes about issues that affect members of the school community and the school's context, etc. All the themes should contribute to unpacking and expressing the school's Christian vision for its context.

Ensuring that **pupil leaders of worship** take on some (and an increasing in size) role. This creates a greater sense of connection between the leaders and the rest of the pupil body. It shows that pupils' contribution is valued. It is worth noting that having pupils from diverse backgrounds helping to lead aspects of worship engenders a sense of an inclusive worshipping community.

Using **visual resources** from the worldwide church to illustrate biblical material and Christian activity. This is both to give a greater sense of the Anglican communion, and also the way that artists from different parts of the world convey an understanding of the *imago dei* – that the image of God is within each person. Similarly, deploying artwork and material portraying biblical characters as non-European, can be more realistic.

Enabling all to feel comfortable with the **language** used means, for the most part, avoiding using the pronoun 'we', and statements assuming that people in collective worship believe and do the same things as the leader or the local church. It is far easier to depersonalise statements and talk about what 'Christians believe' or 'people in this/our church'. Name the tradition and avoid using the language of 'we', e.g. 'Christians believe that Jesus lived amongst people on earth and taught them how to worship God'; (rather than 'we believe.... he taught us') and 'When Christians (or people) go to church at Christmas', rather than 'When we go to church at Christmas'. At first, to check that you are alert to this, it would be valuable to jot down what you are planning to say and see what phrases you are using. It can take a bit of practice, but it gets easier once you have done it a few times! See also the section on the Trinity.

Incorporating a **range of leaders**, including from local Christian denominations and the worldwide church, where possible, and using a variety of modes of presentation may enable a wide range of pupils and adults to find a way to encounter God.

### **prayer**

The reciting of common prayers can draw people together. 'The Lord's Prayer' is often used. In situations where pupils and staff speak many languages, they could be invited to participate in this Christian prayer in their home language.

Taking care with selection of **songs** – Depending on the relationships developed with families and religious communities served by the school, there may be perfect ease about the pupils singing songs and hymns with overtly Christian lyrics. This may have the introduction: "This is a song that Christians like to sing about God / to God".

Engaging the **participation of pupils** (with invitations to join in with agreed sound effects, or with actions to songs or prayers, or voting or responding to particular questions, or taking on key roles when telling stories.)

## Celebration of religious festivals

Within a Christian setting, there is place for recognising the religious festivals of people within the school community. If relationships of trust are built up between the parents/carers and the school, then there can be a sharing of each other's festival celebrations or people sharing things that are important to them. This would not be as part of collective worship – but could be in an 'assembly'. This is not the same as asking pupils to actively celebrate a religious festival of a religious tradition other than their own.

At school **F**, recognizing a growing number of Chinese pupils within the school, one theme focussed upon China and Chinese New Year. Thus, their presence and identity was affirmed and acknowledged. The act of worship drew attention to Chinese Christians and a Chinese Christian artist. The spiritual dimension of Chinese New Year celebrations, and the opportunity to start afresh, drew parallels with Christian spiritual practice.

At school **G**, where the school population is predominantly Muslim, just as there are joyous and enthusiastic celebrations of Christmas and Easter, there is a dearly anticipated Eid assembly with elements of Christian worship. Parents attend each of these.

### Leading of worship by people of different *faiths*

Collective worship in a Church of England school should be identifiably Christian. Some school leaders may belong to faiths other than the Christian faith but will have agreed to support the Christian ethos of the school. Visitors from outside the school are not in this position. They may be invited to speak to the whole school or a group a particular issue, but not to lead collective worship. The usual safeguarding procedures should be followed.

### Inclusive Questions.

- 1) How can you ensure that all pupils and staff are included, to be given the opportunity to grow from their encounter with worship in your school's context?
- 2) What can you learn from your school's provision of worship during the Coronavirus pandemic to help its Collective Worship, going forward, be a comfortable place for *all* to join, explore and grow?

## **Invitational**

There is an Anglican tradition of respect for the individual mind and conscience. People in the Anglican church believe a wide variety of things! They are rarely questioned about what they believe. Therefore, respecting the faith and inner life of others is important. Collective worship in the school is for all members of the school and everyone should feel that they are invited by it being a safe space for all to be in and a part of, whether they are of the Christian faith, a different faith or have no faith. It is a time for pupils and adults to experience or gain a sense of Christian worship.

At school **H**, collective worship is overtly Christian. There are small numbers of pupils from other faith traditions. These pupils join in with the rest of the pupils for some of the time, and participate as observers for part of the time, but take opportunities to pray in their own way at prayer times. Pupils are taught the words and meanings of key Christian prayers in Religious Education and Collective Worship, but they are not recited by the school body.

At school **J**, where there are pupils from many faiths and none, collective worship is overtly Christian and Christian prayers are recited while pupils from different faiths are present. At the start of the act of worship, prayers from different traditions are led by pupils from each faith whilst the other pupils are present. Each pupil, therefore, has the chance to participate in the tradition which is most familiar whilst witnessing the spirituality of other traditions.

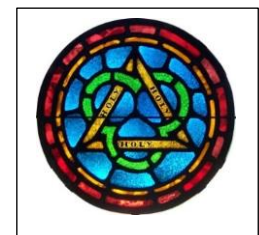
At school **K**, prayers are concluded with the words, "Loving God, hear our prayer." Pupils are reminded that they can join in with the prayer but, if they feel that the words are not right for them, they can be quiet and considerate and think, so that others can use the time to worship God.

How can leaders ensure that the school's collective worship provision is invitational?

<p>Appealing to <b>the senses</b> – making use of visual material, on a screen or physical display, which evokes an emotional response, also using a range of music or sounds. Music used can be drawn from around the world, indicating the worldwide church. There may be times when it would be possible to incorporate a particular smell, or things to touch or hold. Very occasionally there could be scope for something to taste.</p>	<p><b>Words for prayer</b> as <i>suggestions</i>. Leaders should use prayer (or a quiet moment for reflection) in a way that does not compromise the integrity of pupils or adults but encourages everyone to take part. Some ways of introducing prayer are as follows: <i>Let's be still and quiet now / Time to pray or think / Please listen carefully while I say / read a prayer .... It's now time for us to each reflect personally, some of us might want to pray and some of us might want to be quiet and think.</i> Thought should also be given to how to end this time as well. It is possible to say at the start.... <i>"If you agree with the prayer you might want to say, 'Amen'."</i> Some schools have Pupil Prayer Leaders who sometimes lead a prayer in home language from their own faith tradition.</p>
<p>Catering for a range of <b>learning styles</b>: - i.e. auditory, visual and kinaesthetic.</p>	<p>Opportunity for <b>pupil contributions</b> – inviting pupils to join in with actions / sounds.</p>
<p>Acceptance of various <b>levels of involvement</b>. Recognising that not all will pray in a 'Christian' way is important.</p>	
<p>Asking for <b>volunteers</b> to help with aspects of leading. Embrace diversity when selecting volunteers.</p>	

**Trinitarian belief** The outworking of this belief may happen in a variety of ways in collective worship and the following would be common in many church schools. It can occur:

- by invoking the names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit at certain points in the act of worship;
- by singing songs which name the persons of the Trinity;
- by using collects and prayers that conclude with the Trinity;
- by having symbols to represent the holy community.



However, there are schools in some contexts where leaders realise that making references to the Trinity may make it difficult for some attendees to worship God. In such circumstances, people may wish to think in a different way. Is the Trinity just an abstract idea with which we agree or disagree, or is it a way of understanding God's activity in the world? How about this way of thinking about the Trinity: that God who created the universes and who is unknowable, was made known in Jesus, and lives in people by his Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, God can make God's-self, known to anyone, at any time.

Sometimes, using Trinitarian language, especially in prayers, can cause an obstacle for some pupils and staff. So not using the language can allow God's spirit to move more freely. Spiritual opportunity is more important than distinctiveness in prayer. If prayer to God can be led in such a way that pupils are comfortable to be in that space, with their ears and hearts open to God's speaking, this is better than insisting that the right 'holy words' are used to identify it as Christian prayer. A school's generous approach to the faith of others can reflect God's own bold, generous, loving and infinitely diverse commitment to the world

In short, if you think that there are pupils and staff in your school for whom the language of the Trinity would make it difficult for them to participate freely in collective worship, then it may be better not to use it. It is still possible in collective worship to mention belief in the Trinity and to teach about it in religious education, as an important Christian belief.

Invitational Questions.

- 1) How can your school's collective worship be invitational whilst being clearly integral and authentic to the Christian faith?
- 2) How can worship be led in your school so that "pupils and staff are comfortable to be in that space, with their ears and hearts open to God's speaking?"

# Inspirational

For collective worship to be relevant, meaningful and an effective and strong heartbeat of the school, it needs to be inspirational and feel alive. Worship should touch and move, sow a seed that can take root and germinate, today or sometime in the future for those pupils and staff present. Including and drawing upon the context of the school and its school community in the school's collective worship can inspire and will both enhance the worship for all, and build unity and community cohesion, contributing significantly to living well together. It is even possible that the seeds sown in collective worship may 'disperse' into family homes and to the local neighbourhood.

## Collective Worship in the Urban Context

Worship is a chance to bring before God the school's context in all its fullness, with its joys and challenges. The urban context is often seen as a place beset with many problems and issues, and whilst urban contexts do indeed have difficulties and challenges to deal with, there is also much beauty in the urban. The sense of community spirit can be very strong, the richness of diverse communities living, working, learning and playing alongside each other is a blessing as can be urban beauty in the landscape and soundscape. True, inspirational Collective Worship will reflect the area that the school is situated in, drawing from the cultural, artistic, denominational and faith traditions for material to enhance and inspire the school worship. This makes it recognisable and also opens and widens the horizons of the school community.

At school **L**, the primary school community has a large Christian make-up, many being Pentecostal Christians, whilst also having some pupils of other faiths and no faith. During the Coronavirus pandemic, the school was unable to celebrate its Harvest Festival in the usual way by all gathering inside together and then distributing donations to the local community. Instead, this school community came out into its playground which is densely surrounded on all sides by blocks of flats and sang '10,000 Reasons,' (*Bless the Lord,*) by Matt Redman, sending out a blessing to all the school's neighbours. All faiths were comfortable with singing and sending God's blessing out to the wider community. The mission of the Church through the Church school to its parish. It even featured on Twitter and nationally on 'Good Morning Sunday' on BBC Radio 2!

At school **M**, following the stabbing and killing of a teenager at a bus stop used by many pupils from a secondary school, news of the tragic incident was being shared widely on social media including false accusations that linked to a pupil of that school. In collective worship, the school was able to address the rumours, within consultation with the police, with regard to the safety and wellbeing of that pupil and the cohesion of their school community. Alongside the School Chaplain, it could also acknowledge the range of emotions being felt at that time and put it within the context of collective worship, which, because the school community already strongly valued worship and it was central to who the school was, pupils and staff of all faiths and none felt that it was a safe and open space to express, question, reflect, lament and (for those who wanted to,) to pray to God.

At school **N**, in the same road as a primary school and around the corner, a teenager was stabbed. Some pupils had witnessed this on their way home from school. The next day the school held a collective worship, with the parish priest, to respond to the incident, giving all pupils and staff, the chance to think and reflect, sing and pray to God. The traumatic incident upset and affected the whole school community but, because worship was central to the school's identity, it was to worship that the school turned when there seemed no answers. Pupils and staff of all faiths and none were united in their mixed emotions, ranging from anger to sorrow and grief. From out of the worship came various united responses from each different Year Group, including other worship responses such as visiting the impromptu shrine to leave prayers and messages of support for the parents of the murdered teenager along with singing worship songs there. Later the family visited the shrine and said how moved and helped they were by the school's prayers and messages. Passers-by also stopped to witness worship at the shrine by this predominantly Christian, but also multifaith, community, joining together in worship for a common cause and with a common purpose.

Following the worship also arose various acts of Courageous Advocacy that the school became engaged in. These included lobbying and campaigning against knife crime, developing street safety and safety awareness for the community projects.

At school **O**, in collective worship, Tuesday is 'Topical Tuesday.' This school of mainly pupils from a Christian background, some practising, many not, and a small number of pupils from other faiths, finds that by focusing regularly on whatever is going on in the news and is of topical concern, whether it is local, national or international, reaches across differences between faiths and those of no faith for all to unite in reflecting on these different stories and issues. The upcoming topic is shared with the whole community the day before for pupils or staff to be able to offer contributions in the collective worship from their faith tradition or perspective. The collective worship always links back to what the teaching of Christianity has to say in response to the particular topic, and there is often common ground found amongst the school community.



Drawing on all the sections above may create the conditions for collective worship to be inspirational. What additional considerations may contribute?

Creation of **worshipful atmosphere.** This may include moving to a more spiritual setting, or altering the space occupied to be conducive to worship. This might be through a bell being rung as a call to worship, use of lighting, music, images, displays or expectant silence. It may be created by sung worship by a group, as others arrive. This worshipful atmosphere can draw on resources from different parts of the world. It may include a clip of joyful gospel singing or African drumming.

**Responsiveness to context.** This can mean both the make-up of the school population but also the local and topical events and circumstances. Does collective worship provide the opportunity to bring before God things that are of concern in school, e.g. illness and bereavement, fatalities in the area, threats to local amenities, racial justice and inequality? Attendees at black-led churches find that worship services frequently deal with the needs of the community.

Using **creativity and media** which is engaging to the senses.

Well-chosen use of **sound, silence, movement, stillness.**

Drawing on **wisdom from The Holy Bible** and other **examples of holy living.**

As long as the framework and teaching of the collective worship is obviously Christian, the atmosphere and spiritual content can be enhanced by referring to material from all world faiths, at different times. Sacred texts and other material from different faiths offer much wisdom which can enhance the understanding of Christian teachings and be a source of learning for all. Emphasise the value and beauty of diversity. Identify the faith being acknowledged and make explicit references to it, for example, "This is a story that is important to Sikhs".

If using a Biblical story that has expression in the Qur'an, for example that of Noah, explain that this is how Muslims tell this story. Similarly, if many Muslim pupils are present, use 'Prophet Isa' to refer to Jesus. It is extremely important to introduce beliefs with a phrase that clearly connects them to the tradition: "This is what Christians believe about Jesus..."

When using material from any tradition, with which pupils are not so familiar, it is helpful to think that they can be 'listening in' on a different way of talking about things. Pupils may, at different times, be 'listening in' on use of the Qur'an or Hadith in worship, or words from the Guru Granth or the Jewish Siddur.

#### Inspirational Questions.

- 1) How is the beauty and richness of your Church of England school's context offered to God in its collective worship?
- 2) How do you draw upon wisdom from all the different faiths present in your school's context to inspire your collective worship?

#### Dealing with requests for withdrawal from collective worship

There is a legal right of withdrawal for parents / carers of their children from attending collective worship and it is a statutory obligation of schools to publicise this right in the prospectus and school's Collective Worship Policy. Obviously, though, any withdrawals have an impact upon the unity of the school body. School leaders are encouraged to dialogue with any parents / carers wishing to exercise this right in order to try and find a satisfactory solution. The following may be useful to try:

- Find out what concerns the parents / carers have.
- Invite any such parents / carers to attend an act of worship so that they can see for themselves what happens, and what opportunities exist for pupils to respond with integrity.

If, sadly, no way can be found for the pupil to be present during the school's acts of collective worship, then the school has a responsibility for the pupil's safety, but not for the provision of alternate activity.

#### Concluding thoughts

Worship is a collective activity, rather than just the response of the individual worshipper. In Anglican worship it is recognised that worship is never a one-way activity. It is God's graceful invitation to people that comes before any response. So collective worship will change, challenge and deepen people's relationships with God and with each other.

## Embracing and embedding diversity in RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

RE is one area of the curriculum where schools feel confident that diversity is integral to the subject. But is there room for complacency? How can RE be taught so that, as far as possible, pupils from a range of backgrounds can see its relevance to themselves?

In seeking to improve the quality and impact of religious education, it is important to periodically review the curriculum, and answer some challenging questions:

### **In the way that the curriculum is framed currently, whose interests are being served?**

Are these the interests of religious groups, the school, the pupils and families? Is it ever possible to recognise that religious traditions and religious believers do not always live up to the high ideals of the faith?

### **When teaching about any religious tradition, is there a safe, or stereotyped, version put across to pupils?**

Is there recognition that not all people within a tradition, think, believe and behave in the same ways? Do pupils have the chance to listen to different voices from within the same tradition, rather than one account that is assumed to embrace all? Due to lack of knowledge, or resources, do teachers present a one-dimensional version of a religious tradition? Are there resources that would assist teachers in presenting a more nuanced and multi-faceted picture? Are there voices from the traditions that can help to flesh out a more abstract idea? Are there real adherents in the school, or in the locality, or in a partner school, or at a place of worship, or available remotely, who can offer individual perspectives?

### **Do pupils of any tradition, and none, have the chance to offer their own experiences and perspectives in response to what is taught?**

What opportunities are provided for pupils' voices to be heard and shared with others beyond their classroom? Does this result in a richer picture within the school of how people live and believe?

### **Is Christianity represented a default white tradition or, more truthfully, as a worldwide faith with many forms?**

When teaching about Christianity, do resources and narrative make assumptions that all involved are white? Is cultural and ethnic diversity visible in presentations? How can black Christian pupils be enabled to see themselves reflected in the stories, and in the descriptions of religious life? Can illustrations and examples from black and Asian majority churches sometimes be included, rather than always drawing on white majority churches? Do pupils get to see images of Christians, including clergy, who are UKME?

### **How can the approach to religious education enable good quality engagement with religious concepts, yet also recognise that for some people, the encounter with Christian traditions has not always been positive?**

This last question is a longer term project. A focus on the proliferation of black-led churches in the UK, and the reasons why they were founded, could be a good starting point.

### Visits to places of worship

Visiting places of worship can really bring the teaching to life for the pupils and this is a valuable learning experience.



Many parents are content for pupils to learn about the religious faiths of others in the classroom, but are less confident about their children attending places of worship that are unfamiliar to them. Parents have the right to withdraw from such visits as they do from any aspect of the religious education curriculum, (see Right of Withdrawal below). Suggestions to try are:

- Begin a conversation with the parents to find out what their fears are. It may be possible for those fears to be allayed.
- Reaffirm the educational purpose of the visit.
- Invite parents to attend the visit, themselves if they are able.
- After the visit has taken place, it is a good idea for the school to create a publicly visible display of images from the visit with comments from the pupils about their responses to the visit. This is a way to reassure parents whose children will attend the visit in future years.

At the beginning of the year, school **P** sends out a general letter seeking parental permission for trips that will take place for which no voluntary contribution will be asked. These include trips to places of worship. There have been no parental objections to visits taking place.

School **Q** invites any parents who are able, to attend visits to places of worship. Parents speak warmly about what they have learned through their positive encounters.

### Right of withdrawal from religious education

The parent of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school may request that the pupil be excused from all or part of the religious education (RE) provided, and it is a statutory obligation of schools to publicise this right in the prospectus. In documentation and conversation, schools should clearly state the purpose of religious education, and what it is not.

Some practical strategies are:

- School leaders dialogue with any parents wishing to take advantage of this right to find a satisfactory solution. They listen to the parents' concerns to find out what their fears are.
- Leaders can remind parents that schools have a responsibility to prepare pupils to live in a diverse society and that religious education plays a great part in this, rather than being an attempt to convert any pupil to any religious tradition, and that it helps pupils to develop religious literacy, as well as giving a particular place in the curriculum to investigating the spiritual dimension to life: or that which is of enduring worth and beyond the material.
- Leaders can show parents the long term plans for the subject for their children, and answer questions on any part of it.
- Parents could be invited to attend an RE lesson in the school (in a class that does not include their child).

If parents still wish to withdraw their children, then the school has the responsibility to supervise them but not to set alternate work, and certainly not to provide additional work from other curriculum areas. Parents can arrange for the pupils to undertake religious education of their choosing, during this time.

## Embracing and embedding diversity-RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN SCHOOL

In addressing each of these matters it is important to reflect upon the Christian underpinning of the school and consider which Christian values are influencing the school's response.

### Dress – (including the wearing of particular symbols of faith)

Be explicit about any dress code in the school admissions policy as well as in the prospectus, so that everyone knows in advance what is expected and permitted and include an explanation. When talking about issues of dress, put an emphasis upon the concept of modesty as Christian virtue. Dress can often be a matter of personal taste, as well as of religious preference for some, so there must be good communication with a spirit of love, especially across faiths.

### Staff

It is important that clothes worn are appropriate to the nature of duties and responsibilities of the job. It is helpful if school leaders can develop a dress code to which members of the Senior Leadership team can make reference, and which encourages members of staff to consider the significance of the statement that their choice of clothing makes to others. Such a dress code should take into account sensitively ethnic and religious dress requirements.

### Pupils

Similarly, pupils can express their religious identity through their uniform. Most schools have uniforms which can afford some flexibility to additional garments, usually within the school colour scheme. This can include the *patka*, worn by some Sikhs or a *hijab*, worn by some Muslim girls. If parents wish their daughters to cover their hair, it is possible for the *hijab* to be closely tied for safety in technology and physical education lessons. It would be unusual for a Church of England primary school to agree to requests for niqabs to be worn, for practical and educational reasons.

Other items of religious identity can be permitted as long as they do not contravene health and safety guidance.

The *kirpan* can be allowed to be worn in schools in compliance with the following guidelines:

- It is restricted to pupils who have gone through the *Amrit Pahul* ceremony;
- The *kirpan* will be sheathed and secured, in line with religious requirements
- The sheathed *kirpan* will not be displayed openly and will be worn under clothing to ensure the highest possible safety at all times;
- During physical education, sports and recreational activities, the *kirpan* be kept under clothing or carried in a secure pocket in shorts or swimming shorts etc. so that it is not visible and other pupils have no access to it;
- On no account, will the *kirpan* be drawn while the young person is in school, on a school trip or on school transport.

Where agreement has been reached with the pupil, parent and local Sikh representatives, any transgression should be dealt with seriously under the school's or academy's policies for behaviour management and discipline.

With reference to the religious practices of Black Christian children, it is more difficult to give precise advice, as there are many different denominations, all with their own customs. However, it is worth recognising that there may be requests for religious jewellery/symbols to be worn, and it may be possible for these to be worn unobtrusively, under uniform. Whereas, for health and safety considerations piercings are not practical, apart from stud earrings.

It is also worth noting that respecting staff and students' ethnic, cultural and religious identities includes welcoming Afro and cultural hairstyles. Afro-textured hair is an important part of these identities and requires specific styling for hair health and maintenance. Although, for safety, long hair should be tied back for practical lessons and PE. Hair gel and wax may be allowed.

### PE and swimming

It is for the Governing Body and staff of the school to decide on these issues, but here are suggestions:

Following a principle of modesty requires segregated changing areas. This is easier to arrange for secondary schools. In primary schools there are various options that can be adopted, such as: boys and girls changing consecutively, rather than simultaneously; girls and boys changing in different rooms; using screens to divide the room.

Swimming can pose similar issues; some schools rota PE and swimming generally into separate activities for girls and boys which is good practice encourages more enthusiastic engagement, especially at secondary level. This is not always possible at primary level, but separate changing facilities for swimming should be an easier matter to arrange.

It is possible for the Sikh *kara* or steel bracelet to be covered with a wristband whilst swimming. Sikh boys who have undergone a ceremony of commitment (*Amrit Pahul* ceremony) may wish to cover their long hair/patka/turban with a cap.

## **Food**

### Served in school

For religious adherents, it is the provision of meat that provokes the greatest controversy. Many schools ensure that all pupils can eat school lunch by always providing a vegetarian option. Schools may choose to offer halal meat as an option, if the facilities allow it. When it is served, it should be labelled. Few church schools would offer solely halal meat. Is it a Christian value that pupils should be offered meat that is religiously acceptable, or is it just important to ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to eat a nourishing midday meal?

Wishing to ensure that all pupils could eat meat at lunch time, school L offered halal meat on certain days of the week.

### Fasting

As a spiritual discipline, fasting has a place in many religious traditions, including the Christian tradition. This can involve anything from self-denial of luxuries, to just eating bread and water, to abstaining from food altogether. The purpose of fasting in the Christian tradition is to underline one's utter dependence on God by finding in him a source of sustenance beyond food. This is expressed in the CPAS document "Growing Leaders" in this way: "We fast in order to feast on God – and on doing God's will", This thinking can provide the backdrop to our response to requests from Muslim parents for their children to fast – particularly during Ramadan.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is one of the five pillars of the faith, considered obligatory for all Muslims, male and female, once they attain the age of puberty. However many younger children will begin to fast before this age to progressively get accustomed to the practice. During Ramadan most Muslims are expected to abstain completely from both food and liquid—including water—from dawn until sunset. However the intention behind the fast is not that Muslims are to avoid aspects of everyday life, but rather that they learn to cope under a set of conditions that increase the importance of the spiritual dimension. It should not be forgotten that it is part of the religious discipline of Ramadan that fasting takes place as part of 'business as usual': that it is not intended to take Muslims out of the everyday world, but rather to bring a heightened spiritual awareness into their world. Although it is helpful for schools to make certain allowances and special arrangements (e.g. for prayer) during Ramadan, it is also an opportunity for the whole school to honour spiritual discipline and consider similar examples from other traditions. Families and mosque leaders are often prepared to give formal dispensation at such important times as GCSEs. Primary pupils, as children, are not required to fast during Ramadan. Many children still choose to follow the pattern of the family and so, in consultation with families, older pupils could be allowed to fast during lunchtimes. Beforehand it is useful for the school to send a letter to parents of any pupil who might consider fasting, to invite them to have a conversation about their child's welfare. During this time, when other pupils are eating, they could be outside with other pupils, or could be allowed to spend time inside supervised by an appropriate adult.

If a school serves a neighbourhood with a particularly large population of Muslim families who attend the school, the leaders might want to consider carefully the timing of school events for parents during Ramadan. For example, it might be difficult for parents to attend parents' consultations or social events held in the evening.

*If your school has any additional examples of good practice that ensure that the Christian character is enhanced along with relationships with families then please let us know so that we can add them to examples already given.*

## RESOURCES



### Resources for diversity in 'Collective Worship', 'Religious Education' and general 'images' are now available on three, separate online *Padlet* pages

[NB It is possible that you may need to use Google Chrome or upgrade your search engine to enable you to access these pages]

Each link below will take you to a 'wall' of clickable resources links which are colour-coded to help you to identify what you need.

#### **Colour Code:**

Green = video;

Blue = books;

Mauve = Collective Worship outlines;

White = songs/music;

Red = images;

Yellow – Powerpoint



Links to *Padlet* pages:

**Diversity Resources for Collective Worship:** <https://padlet.com/rachelr25/b7jsmeidlvc5sikr>

**Diversity Resources for Religious Education:** <https://padlet.com/rachelr25/eh3nq5jy9vw5t6ki>

**Diversity Images:** <https://padlet.com/rachelr25/8pwh3d485z8h37k8>

## Appendix A

### Advice for Clergy and Visitors leading Collective Worship in Church Schools



1. As part of preparation for leading worship in a church school, it is essential for there to be a conversation with someone from the school to confirm expectations on both sides. It may be useful for the visitor to see the school's collective worship policy. Visitors are strongly advised to try to visit an act of Collective Worship in the school before leading one. It will provide invaluable information about **the way that the school understands and engages with collective worship** as well as well as clues about behaviour management and practical routines (including what activity takes place once the worship time has ended). It will also enable the gaining of important insights about the pupil population and typical responses to invitations to participate. It provides a chance to discover songs the pupils sing.

2. **'Collective' worship is different from 'corporate' worship** in faith communities. In all schools pupils and staff come together from various backgrounds: some Christian, some of different religions and some of none. It is important that the visitors/clergy are aware of make-up of the school population before preparing to lead worship. It is also important for visitors/clergy to provide opportunities to enable all pupils to respond and celebrate faith.

3. In church schools, worship should be Christian but it must **also be suitable for all to be able to participate**, whether actively joining in or listening reflectively. In an act of worship there should be an important idea - simple and clear - from which all can learn, whatever the background.

4. It is a great privilege for representatives of the Christian community to speak about faith in Collective Worship - for all concerned. Pupils can be moved and inspired by hearing from people sharing about the faith that underpins their lives. **Collective Worship in school is an opportunity to share**, not proselytize, so it is important to remember to say... *Christians believe, The Bible says, In our church, Jesus taught* ...This will help everyone know whose ideas are being shared. The presence of a large percentage of children from a faith other than Christianity, in the act of worship, changes the context considerably, and this guidance about identifying the source of the beliefs is particularly pertinent here.

5. As there may be number of pupils and staff who either are members of religious communities other than Christian ones, and those who have no religious background, it cannot be assumed that everyone has a **great knowledge of Biblical characters and stories, Jesus, church or different Christian festivals**. This will be **the expertise of the clergy or visitor**, and, as such, is a valuable offering to the school in collective worship.

6. It is likely that themes and topics for Collective Worship follow a yearly plan. It is helpful if the clergy or visitor can **make a distinctive Christian contribution to the theme for the day**. Sometimes, however, schools can be flexible and welcome topics that are not part of the plan. It is important for the clergy or visitor to check what and how much is expected.

7. The act of worship in school may follow a basic shape or structure lasting a reasonable time, negotiated with the school:

**Gathering** – maybe music, a candle, a greeting and song led by children or staff,

**Engaging** - it could be a story, demonstration, drama, song, pictures

**Responding\*** - it may be a time for stillness, prayers, an activity, questions and answers or singing

**Sending** – this could a blessing or a focused question before the school is dismissed by children or staff.

Clergy or visitors should check beforehand which parts of the act of collective worship they will be planning and leading.

\* Sometimes pupils might want to explore ideas about faith further, but this is better done with a trusted adult in school.

8. In preparation and delivery, clergy or visitors should try to **bear the following in mind**:

- the youngest children – *what is there for them to look at and enjoy?*
- size of visual aids – *will all be able to see?*
- careful preparation of questions to be asked of children during the act of worship – *what kind of answers are anticipated? If these are not forthcoming, can the question be rephrased?*
- how to handle inappropriate response - *small children always put their hands up even if what they have to say is not pertinent to your theme!*
- time is limited!

and remember not to:

- use sexist, racist or homophobic language
- speak disparagingly or inaccurately of other faiths
- put pupils on the spot and insist that they own their beliefs – *it will make everyone feel uncomfortable and thus destroy the atmosphere of the collective worship.*

9. Having **pupil volunteers** can really add a sense of familiarity and anticipation to the act of worship. Staff can be asked to help with selecting pupils for this purpose.

10. **Prayer** is a very important part of collective worship in the church school, and care needs to be given to the way that it is used, and how people are invited to participate. The clergy or visitor should use prayer (or a quiet moment for reflection) in a way that does not compromise the integrity of pupils or staff but encourages everyone to take part. Some ways of introducing it are as follows: *Let's be still and quiet now / Time to pray or think / Please listen carefully while I say / read a prayer ....* Thought should also be given to how to end this time as well. It is possible to say at the start.... *"If you agree with the prayer you might want to say, 'Amen'."* Helping the pupils gain a broader understanding of different ways in which Christians may pray may be another gift offered by the visitor e.g. sung prayers, prayers using sounds, or whole bodies, or prayers with actions. Is there a prayer which pupils are used to saying together (such as a school prayer) that could be used? Do they ever say the Lord's Prayer together?

Finally, asking for **feedback** from staff after the event is brave, but valuable. Even more courageous is seeking the views of pupils, but it is a good move for us all as it can make us better aware of how well we are able to assist the school community in approaching worship.

NB This advice about clergy and visitors leading collective worship has been adapted, in consultation with clergy, from guidance issued by the diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

## **Appendix B**

### **Liturgical Colours – their guidance for use in collective worship**

Liturgical colours are a very helpful resource in worship but can be misused in ways that reinforce prejudice so sensitivity must be shown. Referring to White as the colour of goodness or purity and Black as the colour of evil or sin should particularly be avoided. Taken together all the colours make a rainbow which is a helpful way of celebrating diversity – e.g. 'The rainbow people of God' by which Archbishop Desmond Tutu meant all of humanity together in our glorious and colourful diversity (similarly, the LGBTQI+ community have embraced the rainbow as a symbol of inclusion).

In brief, the main liturgical colours are:

**Purple or Violet** are associated with mourning but also important things (as in ancient times the dye was the most expensive to produce). It is used at reflective periods in the Church year such as Advent and Lent when people are spiritually preparing for the joyful festivals of Christmas and Easter through self-examination, as well as thinking about God's judgement of humanity (an Advent focus) and the temptation and suffering of Jesus (a Lent focus). In the early Church, Lent was also the time when converts undertook a rigorous time of preparation before baptism, along with penitents who were hoping to be forgiven and taken back into the church community.

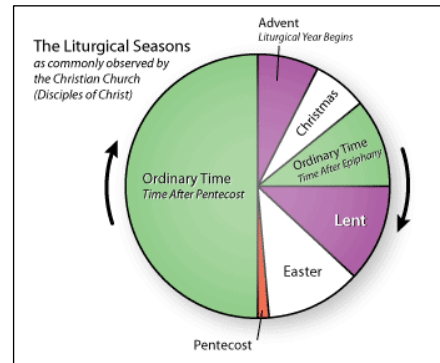
**Gold or Gold White** are associated with the brightness of God's glory, so are used for festivals and celebratory seasons such as Christmas, Epiphany and Easter (lasting 40 days from Easter Day to Ascension Day). Christmas emphasises Christ's incarnation (God coming into this world through the birth of the child Jesus) and his presence amongst ordinary people. Epiphany, which follows after, helps Christians to understand more about who Jesus is – including as Son of God to all nations (visited by the Magi who were not local or Jewish). Easter celebrates Jesus risen who has overcome sin and death, culminating in his Ascension back to his heavenly Father.

**Green** is associated with new life and growth, so you can expect to see it being used at those times of the year when the emphasis is not upon any particular festival, but upon periods of teaching and spiritual growth. Green will be used from the first Sunday after Epiphany until Lent begins and again from Trinity Sunday until Advent begins. A particular focus within this season is Creation-tide (the 4 weeks in September) when Christians explore what it means to be good stewards of God's creation. This might typically begin with Climate Sunday and end with Harvest.



**Red** is associated with fire and blood, so is used at Pentecost (when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples of Jesus like tongues of fire), as well as on Palm Sunday and during Holy Week. It is also used on all Saints Days because many of the early saints shed their blood as martyrs for the faith. These saints are celebrated on the days listed below. If your school is named after any of these saints, you may consider choosing to use a red cloth on that day.

- David (1 March)
- Patrick (17 March)
- Alphege (19 April)
- George, Patron of England (23 April)
- Mark the Evangelist (25 April)
- Philip and James, Apostles (1 May)
- Matthias the Apostle (14 May)
- Barnabas the Apostle (11 June)
- Alban (22 June)
- Peter and Paul, Apostles (29 June)
- Thomas the Apostle (3 July)
- Margaret (20 July)



- Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist (21 September)
- Michael (29 September)
- Francis of Assisi (4 Oct)
- Luke the Evangelist (18 October)
- Simon and Jude, Apostles (28 October)
- All Saints (1 November)
- Clement (23 November)
- Andrew the Apostle (30 November)

Additionally there are saints' days usually falling within school holidays:

- James the Apostle (25 July)
- Mary Magdalene (25 July)
- Laurence (10 August)
- Bartholomew the Apostle (24 August)
- Stephen, Deacon, First Martyr (26 December)
- John, Apostle and Evangelist (27 December)

The liturgical year is a great cycle of remembering, but it is not only the past event which is being celebrated. Every season or festival can affect the way a Christian views the present and help shape their eternal hopes for the future.

This advice draws upon *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England 2000*

## Appendix C

Prophets of Islam also mentioned in the Bible:

Prophets of Islam (sometimes spelled differently)	People in the Bible
Aadam	Adam
Nuh	Noah
Ibrahim	Abraham
Lut	Lot
Ismail	Ishmael
Ishaq	Isaac
Yaqub	Jacob
Yusuf	Joseph
Ayub	Job
Musa	Moses
Harun	Aaron
Dhul-Kifl	Ezekiel
Dawud	David
Suleiman	Solomon
Ilias	Elijah
Alyasa	Elisha
Yunus	Jonah
Zakariyah	Zechariah
Yahya	John
Prophet Isa	Jesus

There are many other prophets of Islam who have parallels in the Bible, but these prophets are not so well known, within Christian circles, as the ones listed above.

## Appendix D

### Planning sheet for collective worship that has a Christian character

How will it be **inclusive**?

How will it be **invitational**?

How will it **inspire**? (*or 'How will people be challenged to do something, or be, different during and following the act of worship'?*)

What material that is explicitly Christian will you use? (*something from the Bible, or from the life of a Christian, or the church, or a Christian prayer or Christian artwork*)

Can you find any connection with another religious tradition?

#### **Theme**

How will you **prepare** the space for the time of worship?

#### **Greeting**

#### **Engaging**

#### **Responding**

#### **Sending**

### Pupil planning sheet for Collective Worship

Date of our worship	
This week's worship theme	
People on our worship team	
Key message to include in our worship	
Link to the Bible or Christian life	
Link to another religious tradition	

### Plan for our worship

Activity	We have chosen	Who is leading this in the worship?
Music playing as we enter and leave worship		
Greeting		
Song to sing		
Story or poem we are using and our message		
Activity e.g. drama, quiz		
Prayer activity		
Sending		

### Checklist

- Will the youngest children present understand what we are talking about, and be able to join in?

### Checklist of jobs

- Do we need to find anything?
- What equipment do we need to ask for?
- Do we need to write anything?
- Do we need to prepare anything e.g. a powerpoint?
- When are we going to rehearse?