**Exploring music in collective worship that is invitational, inclusive and non-confessional.**

*Music and liturgies used in worship should reflect the best of traditional and modern Anglican worship, it should connect with the theme and explore the sacred to educate and engage. Music used should reflect the diverse worship experience of the wider Christian community. Care should be taken with the music and liturgy: the traditional and modern riches of Christian hymnody and music will be drawn upon, but schools should think about what is most appropriate, at a given time, for the spiritual life of their particular community.*

*(CEEO collective worship guidance document May 21)*

This paper seeks to explore and support school leaders in understanding and implementing this section of Church of England Education Office Collective Worship Guidance Document (May 2021)

**Introduction**

Church of England Schools are schools with a religious character, which are built on Christian foundations and the teachings of Jesus. Following the example Jesus set, Church of England schools are proudly inclusive, compassionate, and hospitable communities, who welcome everyone irrespective of their background or beliefs. Therefore, our Church of England schools are proudly inclusive because of these Christian foundations.

*‘Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at parish and diocesan level’ (Instrument of Governance)*

Historically, Church of England schools exist because of the strong desire by the church community and parish to gift land to a build a school, enabling all children within the parish to have access to an education. This desire is set out in most trust deeds that were written at the time of the school opening.

*‘to educate the children of the poor in the principles and tenets of the established church’.*

*(Trust Deed)*

Church of England schools are not ‘faith’ schools.

*‘Our schools are not faith schools for the faithful, they are church schools for the community’*

*(Nigel Genders CEEO Chief Education Officer)*

Faith Schools are schools where the faith of that school is explicitly taught in a personal way to enable each person to grow and develop in that faith group. (e.g. Jewish and Catholic schools.) Many of these schools have a strict admissions criterion to allow children of that named faith group to attend the school.

**Context of the school**

Understanding the context of the school and how this will shape the design and content is vital in ensuring all acts of collective worship are inclusive and invitational.

Why is it important for collective worship to reflect its context?

1. To allow all members of the school community to be present with integrity.
2. To create a worship culture where everyone feels truly welcomed and included.
3. To remain accountable to those who entrust their child/ren to the school. Parents, pupils and adults must know and trust that the Christian character of the school and collective worship will be non-confessional, invitational and there will be no compulsion to do anything.

Therefore, care must be given, by all those who plan and lead acts of worship, to ensure that the themes, language, music, and scenarios used within it are reflective of the school’s context and community

Reflective questions:

* Where is the school located?
* How does our locality influence who we are as a school?
* Who does the school serve?
* Is collective worship a reflection of those we serve?
* What will this look like in practice? Do we need to change the type of songs we sing, the words of our opening liturgy, the types of video clips we use or the style of worship?

\*For further examples and support with this, see Collective Worship in context session

**What is Collective Worship?**

Legislation requires schools, including Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools, to conduct daily acts of Collective Worship. However, the legislation does not define what is meant by the term ‘Collective Worship’.

*“… Worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common. The legislation reflects this difference in referring to ‘collective worship’ rather than ‘corporate worship’.*

*(DfE Circular 1/94 para 57)*

As explained in the introduction in Church schools the requirement to reflect the Anglican status of the school is expressed in its trust deed, which liberates those leading collective worship to build on the rich, lived diversity of Anglican tradition and identity. It is the responsibility of the governors along with the headteacher to ensure the requirements of the trust deed are adhered to.

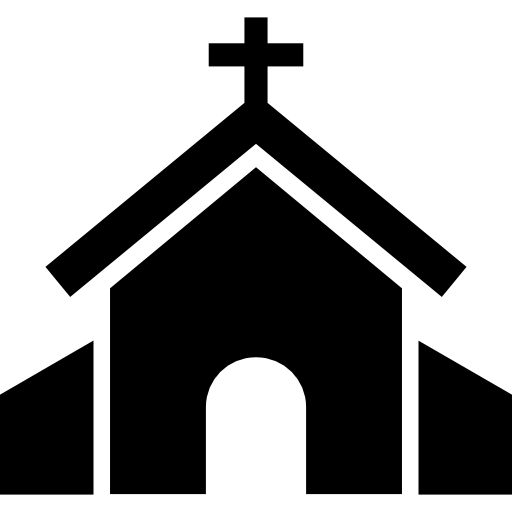
Collective worship, in recognising the collectivity of all participants, can make no such assumption that all have the same beliefs and values. It must be non-confessional.

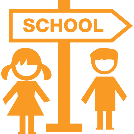
Collective Worship should be:

*“Appropriate to the family backgrounds of the pupils and their ages and aptitudes.”*

*(DfE Circular 1/94 p.22)*

Corporate worship assumes a shared set of beliefs and values, i.e., a worshipping congregation meeting on a Sunday, where the worship is confessional and evangelistic (to spread the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness).

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**Confessional vs Non-Confessional**

**Confessional** – the dictionary explains that when you confess, you are admitting or declaring something to someone else. Christians will confess their faith and their believe in God. This may be done through public declaration, singing, prayer or liturgy or personally through their actions or decisions. Therefore, confessional language will be anything that declares or confesses a faith in God.

e.g. *I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit.*

**Non-confessional** language will be any word, song or response that does not require the person saying it to profess a faith they may not have. It may explain a truth about the Christian faith or tradition but does not include any element of personal declaration of faith.

Our schools and acts of collective worship must be non-confessional to allow them to be truly invitational and inclusive of all faiths and none.

*It is an expectation that care will be taken to ensure that the language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith in all those participating, listening and watching.*

*(CEEO collective worship guidance doc)*

**A tension**

There is a constant tension between the distinctive Christian character of the school whilst being inclusive and invitational to all those being educated within it. Finding a balance and harmony is the key to a flourishing CofE school where all know they are welcomed and included for who they are.

Our distinctive Christian vision demonstrates to all looking in, that we are a Church of England school, where the driver for all we do is the example of Jesus. This vision does not ask those who attend the school or teach there to profess a faith in Christianity that they may not have. It simply says that our school is built on Christian values that guide our behaviour and decisions – these are great life values to live by to help us to flourish individually and together.

**Invitational acts of collective worship**

Offering invitations within school is one way to ease this tension. The new guidance document from the Church of England Education office explains clearly what is meant by collective worship that is invitational.

*Parents, pupils and adults can expect to encounter worship that is consistently invitational. There should be no compulsion to ‘do anything’.*

*Rather, worship should provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. The metaphor of ‘warm fires and open doors’ captures this idea. The warmth of the fire derives from the clarity and authenticity of the Christian message at its heart. There is no value to an encounter with a watered down, lowest common denominator version of faith. Importantly the door is open, all are welcome to come in and sit as near or as far away from the fire as they feel comfortable. Pupils and adults should always only be invited to pray if they wish to do so and should be invited to pray in their own way. Prayer should always be accompanied by the option to reflect.*

*(CEEO CW guidance document May 21)*

In addition is it worth remembering that although collective worship in church schools must legally reflect the trust deed, the expectation of society is that worship should be open to all that wish to attend. For example, The DfE circular document that sets out the legal requirements for collective worship in community schools, clearly shows that worship should be inclusive of all.

*Pupils who do not come from Christian families should be able to join in the daily act of collective worship even though this would, in the main, reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief. The law intends that, subject to the exceptions provided by section 9 of the 1988 Act (paragraph 83), all pupils will take part in such collective worship.*

*(DfE Circular 1/94 p.22)*

**Collective Worship as ‘family time’**

In a Church of England school collective worship is the unique beating heart of school life. It is a sacred, precious and valued time when the whole school family comes together.

Think of it like a family mealtime.

“Dinner time!” everyone in the house comes down to sit at the table. When they are there, they may choose to eat or not. Some may take large portions of everything; some may choose from the vegetarian options, while others may just graze or just watch those eating around them. All are made to feel welcome and are invited to take and eat what they choose whilst sharing life with those round the table.

Like this analogy of family time, collective worship that is truly invitational will use the language of invitation to invite all those who wish to do so to engage with the act of worship. It also allows freedom for those of other faiths and none to be present with integrity.

e.g. “I invite you to join in with this prayer.”

“As a school family our Christian values guide how we think about …”

“The Bible tells many Christians / helps some Christians to know…”

**Invitational singing that is non-confessional**

Another way our worship can be distinctively Christian and truly invitational and inclusive is through our song choices.

Whilst there are not any clear rules on this, care should be taken to avoid lyrics that strongly confessional.

*‘Whilst most will enjoy singing their heart out, schools should not insist that everyone must join in and should take care with what is appropriate, depending on their context. So, for example, insisting all pupils sing ‘All to Jesus, I surrender” in a school where the majority of pupils are devout followers of another faith or none, might seem unnecessarily exclusive when there is lots of other inspirational Christian content to choose from.’*

*(Nigel Genders CEEO Chief Education Officer)*

Choose wisely

When choosing songs, we need to consider the lyrics wisely – ‘Are they asking those who are singing, to declare a faith in God they may not have’?

* Avoid lyrics that use personal pronouns to declare a belief in God.

e.g. I believe in God, I worship you God, I love you Lord, My Jesus, my Saviour

* Use songs that teach children truths about how God feels about them or Christian truths

e.g. ‘I won’t be afraid, for you are with me’ ‘You will carry me safe to shore’

* Consider the context of your school carefully. What words and themes might not be appropriate to sing, listen to or enjoy in worship?

For example, would it be appropriate to sing ‘Onward Christian soldiers, marching unto to war’ in a school with a high Muslim population for? How might this offend or detract from the invitational and inclusive nature of your acts of worship?

* Are the songs and video clips used within worship a reflection of the school context? Are those portrayed on screen a diverse make up of cultures and genders?

Open this discussion up with your staff. Which songs are appropriate to sing in our context, whilst not losing worship that is distinctively Christian?

Listen

There is a rich and wonderful library of traditional and modern Christian worship that the children should experience but are often confessional in nature. This is especially true around Easter as most Christian worship songs or hymns are confessional. Provide opportunities for the school community to listen and reflect as the song plays and those who would like to sing or utter the words know they can do so.

Explain

Some of our favourite collective worship songs contain elements that are confessional – does this mean we cannot sing them anymore?

By explaining what the lyrics mean to Christians might help some children decide to sing them or not, it also allows for pupils to truly understand exactly what it is they are singing about.

For example, ‘My Lighthouse’ does not use the word ‘God’ within it, it just says ‘You will carry me, I will trust your promise’. Each child can choose who they are singing about, for some it will be God, for others it might be Allah or their parents.

The same is true of ‘One more step along the world I go’. The lyrics ‘Keep me travelling along with you’ was written to mean God but could represent anyone in the life of the child singing it.

‘Our God is a great big God’ – You could explain that this is a song Christians sing in church that helps them learn more about God. We are a school that is built on Christian values, so ‘our God’ refers to our school and community.

Invite

Hopefully, through your invitational language and inclusive community, your children should know that they can choose to sing or not. Allowing this freedom enables you to choose songs that may have a confessional ‘feel’ to them. E.g. ‘All through history you were faithful.’ ‘God loves each of us in a special way.’

**Conclusion**

* Keep singing!
* Keep building acts of collective worship that flow from your distinctive Christian vision.
* Keep your unique heartbeat of collective worship beating strongly.
* Keep being inclusive and invitational through your language and song choices.
* Keep growing, developing, and questioning all you do in worship as a school, to ensure it meets the needs of all, wherever they may be on their journey of faith or belief.
* Keep this conversation about non-confessional songs open – if you fancy writing any, there is definitely a gap in the market!

CEEO Collective worship guidance document

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/Collective%20Worship%20Guidance%2018052021.pdf>

DfE Curricular 1/94

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281929/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf>

**Suggested songs for consideration to sing in collective worship**

*(This is not an exhausted list, just examples of songs that could be sung – please always check the lyrics and videos to ensure they are appropriate for your context. There are also other versions of these songs, the links are just examples.)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Suggested songs for consideration for collective worship** | |
| Nothing’s too big for His power | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yopo6DvV9Z8>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5D9M8ZpX8o> |
| Big family of God by Nick and Becky Drake | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smkYUzrgD7A> |
| Creator God by Nick and Becky Drake | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uDwnqynJD4> |
| All through History by Nick and Becky Drake | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGbSK5zRTtA> |
| Never give up | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15R6SNZ-K1g> |
| This little light of mine | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKkbIZtqhyQ> |
| God is with us forever | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LovLvqwtxkY> |
| My Lighthouse | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lFBZJGSgyVQ> |
| Brave | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCC9fGnHH4I> |
| City on a hill | <https://youtu.be/lTEadEftdnM> |
| God is good all the time | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vt6TsIAHIgs> |
| Shine from the inside out | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2xc-w8Zcbo> |
| I won’t be afraid | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhAH2zU8UiU> |
| The Lord’s prayer | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijPuAtrwHYM> |
| We will go by Watoto Children’s Choir | <https://youtu.be/tCEGDkdXOcM> |
| One more step along the world I go | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PXV3dwaeNU> |
| Golden Rule is love by Nick and Becky Drake | <https://youtu.be/se6gQUVscnw> |
| Don’t forget to remember by Ellie Holcombe | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNsoXsyeUE0> |
| Harvest Samba | <https://youtu.be/dqpkWsR6Yew> |
| Morning has broken | <https://youtu.be/BFAREr-w0Eg> |
| Everywhere around me | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Od_qFJ2g50> |
| Peace like a river | <https://youtu.be/7it5W1FVtTs> |
| Love never fails  Based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 | <https://youtu.be/KS5or9cSLnE> |

**Suggested songs for consideration to explain and invite your school community to sing in collective worship**

* “These are songs that teach Christians more about God, his love, creation of the world and each of us.”

*(This is not an exhausted list, just examples of songs that could be listened to – please always check the lyrics and videos to ensure they are appropriate for your context. There are also other versions of these songs, the links are just examples.)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Who put the colours in the rainbow? | <https://youtu.be/9BfRO4RA0G4> |
| Make me a channel of your peace | <https://youtu.be/ihhvm6eLWZI> |
| All things bright and beautiful | <https://youtu.be/c4qQiLStH9U> |
| He’s got the whole world in his hands | <https://youtu.be/-T1CLlMjiTw>  <https://youtu.be/kDBJNQiugnM> |
| We plough the fields and scatter | <https://youtu.be/ohXNLA1hJsc> |
| Our God is a great big God | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StSJ4D05nuU>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaXPXWBcE3I> |
| Giant of Faith (Big Start Assembly songs) | <https://youtu.be/2aM5DViPkqc> |

**Suggested songs for consideration to listen to and enjoy in collective worship.**

* Many of these songs and hymns could be used to gather your school community or as background music for a reflection time.
* Others are traditional hymns that are part of the rich tapestry and heritage of Christian worship. We should not exclude these from worship due to their confessional nature but opportunities should be provided for our school community to listen to and appreciate them as part of Christian worship.

*(This is not an exhausted list, just examples of songs that could be listened to – please always check the lyrics and videos to ensure they are appropriate for your context. There are also other versions of these songs, the links are just examples.)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 10,000 reasons | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DXDGE_lRI0E> |
| Wonderful Lord, Wonderful God | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qZWK8ZE2Pk&list=RD1qZWK8ZE2Pk>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1PzYxrx7Ic> |
| Be Thou my vision | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIMhshpf0Y4> |
| Philippa Hanna | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RThWShsXF0U>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaVw-B30X8Y>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVNKj0fbMiU>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGntY93UwrA> |
| Rend Collective | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YcSWpVKKMcs>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6Y91axwxfI> |
| Laura Daigle | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ch6eXkQWU8> |
| Quiet reflective prayer music | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUoAvDWal9Y> |
| Jonathan McReynolds | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfyVeJ2OdQg> |
| Lou Fellingham | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGJlZvl8PJM>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTQGgS0CXBk> |
| Maverick City | <https://youtu.be/q5m09rqOoxE> |
| Don’t worry by Ellie Holcombe | <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhbK2GpbKTY> |
| The Rock by Nick and Becky Drake | <https://youtu.be/urmrckEFhX8> |
| The Lord is my Shepherd (Psalm 23) | <https://youtu.be/pN4tPkX0MG0> |
| Be still for the presence of the Lord  Great hymn for gathering your school community into worship. | <https://youtu.be/WDP9pfVNpdc> |
| I the Lord of sea and sky  A song of justice and bringing change into the world. | <https://youtu.be/uZTQF_9D3-Y> |
| How Great Thou Art  Great hymn of praise, but very confessional. Perhaps you could use the opening verse as a prayer or reflection. You could listen to this as a song that Christians love to sing. | <https://youtu.be/uKGf06YM7rQ>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGDa3OkEle4> |
| Amazing Grace  A reflective song to explain what Christians believe about the sacrifice of Jesus for mankind through the gift of grace. | <https://youtu.be/Obp-9BEZe1c> |
| You hold the world in your hands  Israel Houghton  A reminder of Gods love for the world and mankind. | <https://youtu.be/A7zhpp0t_zc> |
| Every praise by Hezekiah Walker  An uplifting song of praise, great to open or close your worship. | <https://youtu.be/UuuZMg6NVeA> |
| Remember me  Reflective song for Easter services | <https://youtu.be/nhFBX5ZSySo> |