



## A Fresh Approach to Collective Worship in the Classroom

### Support and guidance for planning and leading Collective Worship in the classroom in Canterbury and Rochester Diocesan Schools

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Know that the LORD is God. It is He, who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

Psalm 100: 1-4



## Introduction

*'But how can we sing a new song in this strange land?'*

*Psalm 137: 4*



Psalm 137 speaks of a time when God's people were living in Babylon after being taken into exile. They were living in strange times, unable to continue with many of their 'normal' practices. Whilst there were many moments of sadness and looking back to former times, they knew that God was still God and that their worship could still happen, it would just need to adapt to the 'new normal'.

Like the Israelites, most of us find ourselves in strange times, unable to hold or lead acts of worship as we used to. However, if we reflect on what made our worship the 'heartbeat' of school life and the parts that brought us joy, our worship will retain its rhythm and pattern wherever we are.

This handbook has been designed to offer guidance and support to schools as they redesign their worship in classrooms, bubbles, pods and other small groups. It builds on the information contained within the ['Fresh Approach to planning and leading acts of worship.'](#)

### *Footnote:*

*'But how can we sing a new song in this strange land?'* This might seem a strange title for this booklet when we are not allowed to sing. Singing brings joy and without it will worship feel the same? It is up to schools to create joyful life within worship in new ways – this is what schools do best and with God's heartbeat at the centre, life bringing worship will blossom, with or without singing.

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## What is worship?



For Christians, worship is about **coming into God's presence** and giving **glory**; an act of **praise** and **adoration** through which they develop their relationship with God and obedience to His word. It is through encountering God within worship that they are formed (and transformed) as God's people – this can take place anywhere and at any time and isn't just what happens inside a church service. It requires the right spirit and heart, which is a very personal thing.

*'True worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.'* John 4:22

Christian worship can take many forms; singing, prayer, silence, acts of love and service, reflection, reading/studying the Bible, meeting or eating together.

*'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people'* Acts 2: 42, 46

## Collective Worship that is ... Inclusive, invitational and inspiring

Collective worship in Church of England schools must recognise the collectivity of all participants, so must not assume, that all have the same beliefs and values. All acts of worship must therefore be, inclusive, invitational and inspiring.

In a Church of England school, collective worship is:

- 🕯 **Invitational**, offering everyone the opportunity to engage in the act of worship, whilst allowing the freedom for those of other faiths and none to be present with integrity.
- 🕯 **Inspiring and creative, impacting** the whole community and motivating them into action.
- 🕯 **Inclusive**, where all are **included, have a voice** and are **listened to**.
- 🕯 A **valued** part of the culture of the school, **breathing life** into every aspect of the school day.

**Spend some time pondering these questions before shaping your worship structure, including that within each classroom**

- How is collective worship a reflection of our distinctive Christian vision?
- What is at the heart of our collective worship?
- What does worship that is inclusive, invitational and inspiring look like in each classroom?
- How can we retain all that is 'life giving' in collective worship in our new settings and format?
- How can we ensure worship has an impact on our whole school community when we cannot all join together for an act of worship?
- How will these thoughts on the style and nature of worship be shared with my staff team?

**You might like to refer to:**

[SIAMS Evaluation Schedule](#) – Strand 6 'Impact of Collective Worship

[Collective Worship model policy](#)

[Fresh approach to planning and leading Collective Worship document](#)

[William and Lucy lead worship resource](#)



## Guidance on structuring Worship in the Classroom

*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Matthew 18:20*

Worship in the classroom is a great way to spend quality time with your class, in a different way to teaching them, without thinking about targets, success criteria, outcomes etc. It allows the children to enter worship in a more intimate way, where many children feel more comfortable to interact and join in. It is also a fantastic opportunity for the children to lead some or most of the worship as they often feel safer in front of a small audience. You know your class the best, so when planning worship in the classroom, ensure it is suitable and relevant for the age and needs of the children.

**Collective Worship, wherever you are, needs to follow the gather, engage, respond and send format.**

### Gather, Engage, Respond and Send worship structure

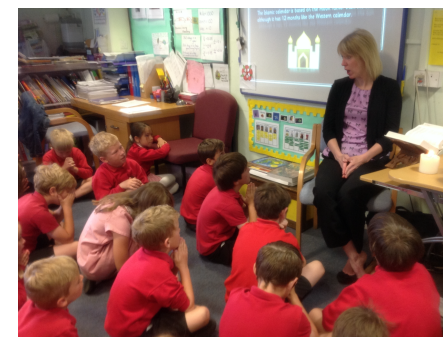
	Gather	Engage	Respond	Send
Key ideas	<p>We are invited to prepare our hearts and minds to meet with God.</p> <p>We gather together for this special time as a community</p>	<p>We engage with the big things and the little things in life</p> <p>We encounter Jesus and the stories of the Bible</p> <p>We listen to God’s message and how consider how it might apply to our lives.</p>	<p>We respond to what we have heard and seen through prayer, silence, stillness and reflection.</p> <p>We are given the invitation to worship God in different ways.</p>	<p>We are sent out to love and serve one another and to make a difference in the world</p> <p>We are all sent out with God’s blessing</p>
Biblical context	<p>The next holy day almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.</p> <p>Acts 13:44</p>	<p>Jesus told them a story to teach them that they should keep on talking with God and not give up.</p> <p>Luke 18:1</p> <p>He taught them by telling many stories in the form of parables.</p> <p>Mark 4:2</p> <p>Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work.</p> <p>2 Tim. 3:16,17</p>	<p>But <b>Jesus</b> often withdrew <b>to</b> lonely places <b>and</b> prayed.</p> <p>Luke 15:6</p> <p>In prayer there is a connection between what God does and what you do.</p> <p>Matthew 6:14 (<i>The Message</i>)</p>	<p>So the word of God spread</p> <p>Acts 6:7</p> <p>I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.</p> <p>John13:15</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Questions to consider when planning an act of Collective Worship</b></p>	<p>How do we prepare the classroom for worship? How could it be made to feel different to a lesson? <i>(some examples: a mini altar table could be set up, desks could be moved to allow some space, use a room spray to add a 'fragrance' to the room)</i></p> <p>Is everyone who is involved in worship today ready and prepared? Do they all know what they are doing?</p> <p>How do we prepare for worship and to meet with God? <i>(some examples: quiet music, video clip playing, central image or quote up)</i></p> <p>How might you expect your class to enter the worship space?</p> <p>How will we signal that worship is about to begin?</p> <p>How will we gather today to greet each other? <i>(What will we say – this is an opportunity to use some Anglican liturgy?)</i></p>	<p>How will you share and illustrate the Bible story, message and or theme with my class? <i>(some examples: story, video clip, drama etc.)</i></p> <p>How will your class engage with the Bible text and know where in the Bible it comes from? <i>(Will it be read out, displayed, told in own words?)</i></p> <p>What questions will you ask the children to engage them into the story, teaching or message? <i>Some examples:</i> <i>'I wonder what you think this story might teach Christians or us as a school community?'</i> <i>'I wonder why Jesus told this story?'</i> <i>'I wonder if this story makes you think of a situation in your life?'</i> <i>I wonder why Christians might think this story is special?'</i></p> <p>How will you link it to real life ('take it back to the playground or at home') or events in the local community or world? Link to Christians around the world, charity events.</p>	<p>How will you allow your class to respond? <i>(Think, question or act)</i> <i>Some examples</i> <i>'I wonder what you might do differently after hearing the story today?'</i> <i>'I wonder how you felt after watching that video clip?'</i> <i>I wonder what you can do to ... help/care for others, forgive, persevere or be a better friend etc.?</i></p> <p>How will you incorporate reflection, silence or stillness into worship?</p> <p>What opportunities will there be for formal or informal prayer? <i>(for example, teacher-led, child-led, spontaneous, planned, up on screen, personal in head, call and response, prayers used as part of Anglican liturgy)</i></p>	<p>What thought will you send your class out with as they leave or finish the act of worship? <i>(for example, a soundbite, activity or key message from the act of worship to reflect on as they leave worship and over the rest of the week.)</i></p> <p>What special words, final blessing or prayer will be used as the worship finishes? <i>(this is an opportunity to use some Anglican liturgy)</i></p> <p>How will you signal that worship has ended? <i>(for example, blow out the candle, play some calm music, change the lighting?)</i></p>
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<b>Key features of each section of worship</b>	<b>Check list/prompts</b> Altar table out, Bible and candle, props for the act of worship. Calm atmosphere created? Music on, focal image up. Share a bidding prayer or greeting Light the candle	<b>Check list/prompts</b> (Sing together) – Listen to a piece of music together. Read from the Bible. Share the message. Use a variety of strategies. (Video, artwork, music, drama, props etc.) Discuss and question the children.	<b>Check list/prompts</b> Opportunity to respond – discuss, question, think. Prayer time Reflection time, opportunity for silence or stillness. Listen to a piece of music to reflect on.	<b>Check list/prompts</b> Blow candle out. Send your class out with a thought or action. Share a sending prayer / blessing as the children leave.
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**Questions to support planning an act of collective worship in the classroom:**

- Is there a clear, simple message that flows through the act of worship?
- How will I illustrate the message and enable my class to access it? (Make sure this illustration doesn't distract from the Biblical teaching and message.)
- Is the act of worship built around the Bible text/story for that session?
- How will I communicate this Bible text / story to my class?
- How could I use music, video clips, artwork, artefacts or images to engage the children within worship?
- How could I use 'I wonder' questions to make the children dig deeper, explore, ponder and reflect on the meaning within the Bible text/ story?
- How will I invite the pupils to respond to the message and Bible text/story?
- How will pupils be involved within the act of worship? What parts could they plan and lead?
- How will I incorporate a time of reflection, stillness or silence. What part of today's message will I ask the pupils to think about in this time?
- What might the impact of the worship on your class be?





## Practical points to consider:

### 1. Think about transitions

- How will you 'move' from a lesson into worship? How will the children know it is time for worship?
- How will you begin worship?
- How will you end worship?
- How will you create a calm, welcoming atmosphere ready for worship?

#### Ideas for opening and closing worship in the classroom

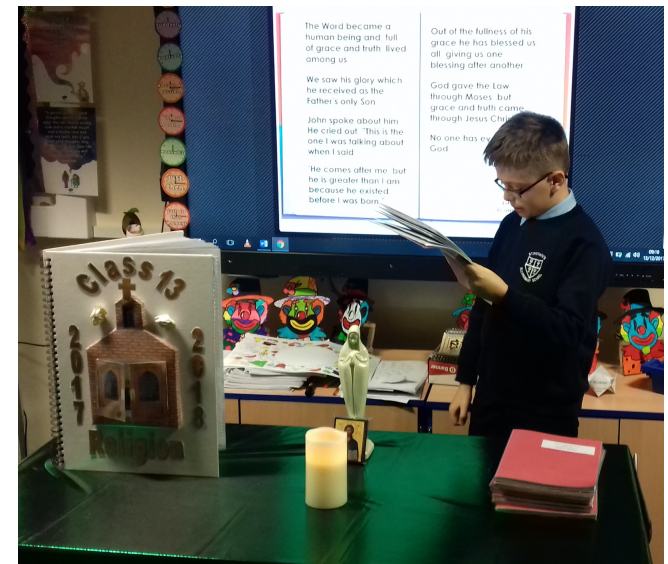
- 🕯️ Ensure the lesson resources have been cleared away.
- 🕯️ Begin worship with a familiar worship song – to signal that we are moving away from learning into a time of worship.
- 🕯️ Light the candle and begin with a familiar greeting.
- 🕯️ Set out a small altar or focal point, that your class has made or put together.
- 🕯️ Create your own class routines – could you choose or create your own greeting and sending prayer that is specific to your class?
- 🕯️ End worship with extinguishing the candle and saying the sending prayer together.

### 2. Think about the layout of your space

- Where will the children sit?
- Where will I be?
- Can /should this be different to a class based lesson?
- Where else could you hold your act of worship?  
The Church, school field / playground?

### 3. Think about the worship table/ focal point

- How will it be distinctively Christian?
- What will go on it?
- Who will prepare the space?
- Where will it be kept between worship sessions?



#### 4. Think about using your prayer / reflection space

- How could you use it within the worship time?
- How could you add to it?
- What could you leave in the space as a reminder of the thought or story?

#### Questions to consider when creating a prayer/reflection space

- ⌘ How is the space inclusive, invitational and inspiring?
- ⌘ How is the space distinctively Christian?
- ⌘ Is the prayer area in a quiet place away from other distractions that is accessible for all?
- ⌘ Is it a place where children and adults would want to go to pray or reflect?
- ⌘ Is it an interactive space rather than a display?
- ⌘ How will the children engage with the scripture, activities, objects within the space?
- ⌘ Does it flow from the worship theme?
- ⌘ How could the children take responsibility for creating the space and keeping it tidy?
- ⌘ When will the children be able to use?
- ⌘ Are they clear about the purpose of this space as a place of prayer or spiritual reflection?
- ⌘ How often will you update/change it?



## Pupil led worship:

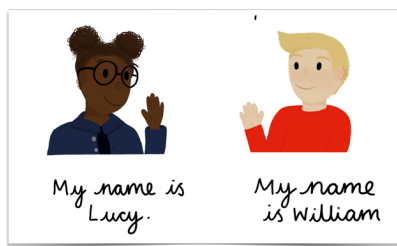
Worship in the classroom is the perfect 'training ground' for fledging worship leaders.

The SIAMS evaluation schedule says worship should '*enable pupils as well as adults to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship that lead to improving practice.*'

Pupils should be responsible for the planning of worship as well as taking the lead for parts of it. You might want to ask groups of children to plan worship for the following week, working on a rota to allow all those who are keen to have a turn.

Other children could be involved in setting up the worship 'Altar' table, lighting the candle, reading the Bible or operating the music.

See Page 16 of '[Fresh Approach to planning and leading acts of worship](#)' for further guidance on this.



**William and Lucy lead Collective Worship** is a practical resource book, which explains the pattern of worship in a Church of England school. The accompanying training pack was written support schools in growing and developing pupil leaders of worship. For more information about the resource book and training pack and where to purchase it click [here](#).

I wonder how you are developing pupil leaders in worship?

I wonder how you will incorporate your pupils in the planning and leading of worship?



## Class liturgy

Christian worship has always followed patterns. These patterns have been known as liturgy. You may already be using phrases like 'The Lord be with you, and also with you, or 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'

The pattern of collective worship, wherever you are, is really important as it helps to give structure and create a routine.

As a class, I wonder if you could create your own opening and sending greetings that become part of our class worship ritual? Think carefully about the sorts of words you want to include and those you do not. It might be worth exploring examples of child friendly liturgy to guide your creations.

For example:

**God be with us in our classroom,**

God be with us now.

**God be with us every day,**

God be with each of us now. Amen

Guide and protect us as we go out from worship to make a difference in your world. Amen

See pages 19-20 [Fresh Approach to planning and leading acts of worship](#) for further guidance on Anglican Liturgy.

## Worship without singing?

Music and singing has always played a huge part in the life of God's people and their worship. This Psalm reminds us that worship is much more than just singing. It is about bringing your praise, thanks and gratitude to God in whatever form you choose.

*Praise him for the mighty things he has done.*

*Praise his supreme greatness.*

*Praise him with trumpets.*

*Praise him with harps and lyres.*

*Praise him with drums and dancing.*

*Praise him with harps and flutes.*

*Praise him with cymbals.*

*Praise him with loud cymbals.*

*Praise the Lord, all living creatures!*

*Praise the Lord!*

*Psalm 150: 2- 6*

So, how can we enjoy music, when we are not currently allowed to sing? Here are some ideas:

*Speak to one another with the words of psalms, hymns, and sacred songs; sing hymns and psalms to the Lord with praise in your hearts.*

*Ephesians 5:19*

- 🕯 Ask several children to speak a verse of song, one at a time.
- 🕯 Choose an appropriate section of a Psalm to speak out loud.\*
- 🕯 Listen to a piece of worship music and encourage the children to play instruments or clap their hands.
- 🕯 Learn some sign language to accompany a worship song.

For example: Always with me - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ADas6j17Uw>

Wonderful Lord, wonderful God - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=je66ti1DQRk>

God is with us forever - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LovLvqwtxkY>

🕯️ Listen to a piece of reflective music as you pause to be still, reflect and pray.

For example: Hillsong reflective worship songs - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q04XE2-XhyA>

It is well by Philippa Hanna - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70Bs7SFKI\\_E](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70Bs7SFKI_E)

Still I will praise by Lucy Grimble - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWu-iRaen6s>

How Great Thou Art sung by Lauren Daigle - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BL06fxHPVo>


God with us by Terrian - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJbtWOSYjBM>

*\*See pages 30-31 [Fresh Approach to planning and leading acts of worship](#) for further guidance on Psalm worship.*

*See pages 21-23 [Fresh Approach to planning and leading acts of worship](#) for further guidance on singing in worship and song choices.*



An example of how worship in the classroom could be structured:

Gather	Engage	Respond	Send
<p>Light the candle</p> <p>The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you <b>and also with you.</b></p> <p><i>(The 'Grace', from St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is a very widely used text. While most often used as a closing prayer it is also makes a good greeting, especially for worship in small groups.)</i></p>	 <p>You might want to show the children this image – I wonder what it makes you think of? I wonder if you can identify with the character in the corner? I wonder what he might be feeling or thinking? We all feel a bit like this sometimes.</p> <p>There are lots of passages in the Bible that remind Christians that God is always there, watching over them and ready to help them with their worries. Share the verse with the children.</p> <p><i>Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you. 1 Peter 5:7</i></p> <p>What do you notice about this verse? Which words stand out to you? How does this passage make you feel? I wonder how this verse might help Christians when they are feeling worried?</p> <p>Listen to this song together Give all your worries to God. Life Tree Kids <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnDs58jlvfQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnDs58jlvfQ</a></p>	<p>I wonder how it makes you feel that you can give anything you are worried about to God and he will care for you.</p> <p>Give the children a small piece of paper- ask them to write anything that is worrying or bothering them. When they are ready and if they would like to, get them to bring it to the front and put by the cross as a symbol that they are giving the things they are worried about to God. (Have some quiet worship music playing whilst they do this. - <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhbK2GpbKTY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhbK2GpbKTY</a> Don't worry by Ellie Holcombe)</p> <p>Invite all the children to say the Bible verse together.</p> <p>Dear God, Thank you that you care for us and that we can bring everything we are worried about to you. Help us to stop worrying about all the things we wrote down and please help with each of these situations. Thank you God, Amen.</p>	<p>So, when you are feeling worried this week, what could you do?</p> <p>The Lord bless you and keep you. May He show His face to you and have mercy. May He turn His countenance to you and give you peace. The Lord bless you! <i>(from the book of Numbers 6:24-26)</i></p>

## [Additional examples of practical activities for worship in the classroom](#)

### **1. Game - Praying for our world:**

Using an inflatable globe, get the children to pass/roll it round the classroom whilst music is playing (you could use '[Build your kingdom Here](#)' by Rend Collective). When the music stops, whoever is holding the ball has to look where their hands are and then we all pray for the country under their left hand.

Talk about what that country might need prayer for, then say together...

Lord, we pray for ..... Bless the leaders to be wise. Look after all the people there. Thank you for that country and we pray for all who live there.

Invite all to say: AMEN!

You could also pray for anything specific for that country, e.g.: war, famine, disasters etc.

Keep it moving quickly, let the children have fun!

### **2. Using song 'He holds our world in his hands'**

Get the children to think about a country they had just prayed for. [Watch the video](#) and listen to the song (approx. first 2 mins) The song says that we need not be afraid because God holds the world in his hands. Think about this quietly and say a quiet Amen together, knowing that God had heard the prayers of our heart.

### **3. Praying for the news:**

Give the children various newspaper articles and pictures about recent news and create a collage in groups of things that are happening in our world that need prayer. Play worship music in the background, which helps to create a reflective atmosphere.

This activity will help the children to think and talk about our world and problems other people face. Allow them to respond to these situations; write prayers, poems or thoughts on the collage to demonstrate how these situations make them feel.

### **4. Praying for our local area.**

Get some maps of your local area and get the children to think about their neighbourhood. Plot people on the map, those who need prayer/support. Ask them to think about other people. Look at doctors, hospitals, other schools, and friends etc. on the map, who may need prayer.

Spend some time quietly thinking for these people. Invite children to write prayers on post-it notes and stick them on the relevant part of the map.

<https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/> - This website has hundreds of interactive prayer ideas that can be used in schools.



## Covid 19 'friendly' prayer space ideas



### Prayer stones

Decorate some stones with words and symbols to allow children to form simple prayers with them. Varnish the stones so they can be easily wiped down.

*Jeremiah 29:12*

*"Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you."*



### Help the helpers

**Equipment:** hand sanitiser

**Suggested Instructions:**

Squirt a bit of the sanitiser onto one of your hands and rub it in until it's all gone. As you do this, think about the nurses, doctors and other health professionals who are trying to help people who are sick to get better. If you want to, you can say a hope or a prayer for their safety and protection.

*Philippians 4:6*

*"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."*



### Love > (is bigger than) Fear

**Equipment:** paper, pens, love-heart shapes or love-heart Post-it notes

**Suggested Instructions:**

Fear can feel HUGE and overwhelming. If you want to, take a love-heart shape, hold it in your hand and talk to God about your fears. Place your heart at foot of the cross as a hope or a prayer to be set free from fear.

*1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."*

Adapted from prayer spaces in schools website - <https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/177>



### **Peace bottles / jars**

**Equipment:** A selection of sensory bottles or jars.

#### **Suggested instructions:**

Shake the bottles – sometimes our lives are like this, busy and overwhelming, this can make us feel anxious or worried sometimes. The Bible tells Christians that God promises to bring peace to their lives. As the glitter or objects in the bottle settle ask God to bring you peace so that you will not be troubled or afraid.

When you look at the glitter and objects resting calmly, remember God's promise of peace.

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

*John 14:27*

### **Praying for the world**

**Equipment:** A globe or map. Images from around the world.

#### **Suggested instructions:**

Look at the map or globe. Who do you know who lives in a different place or community?

Can you find a place or country that you have heard about on the news recently? Which country would you like to pray for today?

As you look at that place on the globe pray for God's peace and healing.

*First of all, I ask that you pray for all people. Ask God to bless them and give them what they need. And give thanks. You should pray for rulers and for all who have authority.*

*1 Timothy 2:1*

## Background essential information

### Collective Worship in the SIAMS Evaluation Schedule

#### **Strand 6 – The impact of collective worship**

**Inclusive    Invitational    Inspiring**

In a Church school, collective worship should be inclusive, invitational and inspiring.

How is collective worship an expression of the school's Christian vision?

In developing collective worship that is inclusive, invitational and inspiring the school community needs to evaluate the extent to which worship:

- a) Offers the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection.
- b) Enables all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican/Methodist worship, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- c) Helps pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world, to encounter the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and to develop their understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God and its language.
- d) Enables pupils as well as adults to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice. Leaders of worship, including clergy, have access to regular training.
- e) Encourages local church community partnerships to support the school effectively in developing its provision for collective worship.

(SIAMS evaluation schedule 2018)

#### **Collective worship leader**

- **How can you ensure these areas are all met in your school?**
- **How will you evaluate collective worship to ensure it has an impact on the whole school community?** \*see [monitoring guidance sheets](#)

**Distinctive Christian Vision**



Creating Worship that is  
Invitational, Inclusive and Inspiring

*Connect with  
myself*

*Connect with  
vision and values*

*Connect with the  
community*

**Collective Worship**

*Connect with God;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit*

*Connect with the  
Bible*

*Connect with faith*

art      music

reflection      stillness      silence

worship      story      liturgy      prayer



Is it the Heartbeat of the school?

**'time to breathe'**  
How can you be creative with this  
valuable time?