

Evaluation of the responses to the Collective Worship Survey

Responses were received from 5 church schools (1 secondary, 4 primary schools) and from 8 community schools (1 infant, 6 primary schools & 1 secondary). The responses from church schools have not been analysed, as these do not fall under the remit of the SACRE.

What is the legal position of CW?

Community schools:

*These are the schools for which the SACRE has responsibility and the current legislative framework was originally set out in the **1988 Education Reform Act**. Summarised the main points are as follows:*

*There must be a **daily** act of worship for **every** pupil. This can be at any time of the day in any normal school grouping. It is the headteacher's responsibility, after consultation with the governing body to ensure this happens. **Collective worship** is distinct from **assembly** which can be a gathering for a wide variety of reasons.*

*The **majority** of worship must be **wholly** or **mainly** of a **broadly Christian character**, meaning it should **reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief**. It can contain non-Christian elements.*

*Worship must be **appropriate** to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils. Worship must **not** be denominational.*

***The basic requirement is that there should be an act of collective worship for all registered pupils every school day.** (ERA 6.1) There are only two exceptions to this: parents have the right to withdraw their child(ren) from all or parts of collective worship and pupils in school sixth forms are permitted to decide for themselves whether to attend or not.*

None of this legislation applies to special schools.

Given the above statement and reading the responses, it would appear that many schools are not complying fully with the legal requirements.

Summary of responses:

Most of the schools have assemblies that are largely PHSE (lots of SEAL assemblies) or curriculum skills focused (in one school teachers seemed to be free to link either to PHSCE or the RE curriculum); one school at least does not seem to offer a daily act of worship – though that could just be the way that the material is presented. Only one school mentioned any time for reflection being included; two others mention that a prayer is included in at least one assembly each week. One school had a visit from a member of a faith group. The one secondary school held an assembly for a different year group each day.

In many of the schools, on at least one day of the week in question worship was left at the discretion of the teacher. This may not be a problem, but means that we have no way of knowing what was actually covered.

One school seems to think that CW can be delivered in PE and PHSCE lessons.

Celebration of work is high on the agenda in most schools. Again this need not be a problem, if there is a worship focus too, but the responses do not allow us to make that judgement.

Conclusions:

It would seem that there is no real understanding of what is intended by collective worship; no suggestion that there is even an SMSC agenda in the minds of most schools. In the majority of schools there is little or no religious or worshipful content indicated. This would imply that they do not evaluate their own collective worship and therefore it would seem that it is not accorded much value.

SACRE response:

Having carried out this survey we need to think carefully about the SACRE response. Here are some possible responses:

- 1) Investigate further to gather more detailed information
- 2) Send out a reminder to schools about their legal responsibility
- 3) Report schools that are non-compliant
- 4) Offer training to raise the quality of CW in our schools
- 5) Ignore it
- 6) Wait for OFSTED to take action
- 7) Contact the schools that did not respond directly so that we have the bigger picture
- 8) Send observers to schools
- 9) Organise one to one discussions with HTs