THE HOWARD PARTNERSHIP TRUST
COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

Date created: May 2018
Responsible body: The Howard Partnership Trust
Trust Committee: Standards & Performance

Review period: Annually
Executive Lead: CEO

Last reviewed: May 2019
Next due for review: May 2020

Purpose:

- To comply with the spirit of the 1993 Education Act.
- To ensure collective worship acts have integrity.
- To provide framework on the expectations of collective acts of worship.

Collective Worship

"I think the requirements of the Act have created very considerable difficulties for some schools. It's very important to have gatherings of any kind at school. Youngsters need to know something about silence, something about how they relate their own feelings and emotions, something about what's going on in school and, indeed, how they relate to God.

But when the large numbers of people present do not necessarily belong to any faith community, what are you able to do in that gathering? Some people would argue that you're inoculating people against any understanding. Especially if the meeting is badly handled”.


This quotation reflects the views of the Trustees of The Howard Partnership Trust (THPT) which are that they have a wish to comply with the spirit of the 1993 Education Act for a daily act of collective worship, whilst recognising the shortages of space and suitably qualified or sufficiently confident staff in these matters and that the school roll in some schools represents a largely secular or multi-faith community.

THPT schools do not always possess sufficient physical space to assemble all pupils together for a daily act of collective worship. As a result, leaders wish to ensure that, when acts of collective worship are undertaken, these are always carried out with integrity and in a meaningful fashion, endeavouring to comply with legal requirements.
Secondary Phase

In THPT Secondary schools there will normally be at least one act of collective worship per week for each year group, in what is hoped to be conducive surroundings; for example, the hall for main assemblies, gym for year group assemblies. These acts of collective worship will be conducted by members of staff or visiting local clergy, with schedules and accompanying themes published for the whole academic year.

The tutor group gatherings which take place three or four days per week may not comply with the definitions of the Act of Collective Worship in circular 1/94 (See Appendix 1 to this document). Some tutor periods should, however, contain thoughtful opportunity for consideration of spiritual, moral, cultural and social values. The co-ordination of these tutor periods will be under the direction of the Year Leader within the tutorial programme.

Example Weekly Assembly Rota

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Primary Phase

In THPT Primary schools collective worship will support pupils in exploring collectively and individually the values, ways of life, behaviours, beliefs and ideas (religious, non-religious and philosophical) to which they might choose to ascribe worth.

Collective worship will:-
• be inclusive and respectful of the whole community, staff and pupils;
• include a variety of elements including spoken word, story, biography, poetry, music, art, film, song;
• involve the pupils;
• Provide an opportunity for pupils to ponder, ask questions, hear the viewpoint of those who have faith and those who do not, consider their own spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences and beliefs.

Opportunities for collective worship will take place as part of the planned assembly cycle as well as in class groups.

Assemblies – both phases

During assemblies the general approach will be to set the aims of each school in a framework which is in line with Christian values and to link these aims with events and values drawn from personal, community, national and international events or experiences and supported by stories, readings, music, poetry, etc. Quiet moments of reflection which are an integral part of these collective acts of worship, will reflect what has been said or done during the assembly. These gatherings will also be enhanced by visitors such as local Clergy, and other visiting speakers. Bespoke protocols detailing arrangements and assembly themes will be attached to this policy at an individual school level.
APPENDIX 1 – THE LEGAL CONTEXT

1. The ERA 1988 required all pupils to attend a daily act of collective worship. (ERA 6[1]).

2. The Education (Schools) Act 1992 requires inspection of the daily act of collective worship.

3. Parents may choose to withdraw their child from collective worship. However, the school is responsible for the supervision of any child so withdrawn.

4. Collective worship should (DFE Circular 1/94) help to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural and social development of pupils. It should further aim to:
   - Offer opportunities for pupils to consider the response of religion to questions about the purpose of being, morality and ethical standards, and to develop pupils’ own response to such matters;
   - Provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God;
   - Consider moral issues;
   - Allow pupils to explore their own beliefs;
   - Encourage participation and/or response;
   - Develop community spirit;
   - Promote a common ethos and shared beliefs; and
   - Reinforce positive attitudes

5. ERA 7(3) requires that, on a majority of days in a term, collective worship should be broadly Christian. An act of worship which is broadly Christian need not contain only Christian material. Those that are must reflect broad traditions of Christian belief. The legislation does not define what is meant by these traditions. (See below).

6. The organisation of collective worship is the responsibility of the Headteacher in consultation with the Local Governance Board. (ERA 6[3]).
APPENDIX 2

CIRCULAR 1/94 – RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Circular 1/94 and the provisions of the 1993 Education Act relating to religious education and collective worship came into force on 1st April 1994. This document attempts to clarify the legal responsibilities of the Head and Governors in the matter.

Collective Worship

The advice given in Circular 1/94 is often confusing and, at times, even conflicting. It leaves unresolved many of the practical difficulties which a great number of schools are likely to experience. Moreover, the Circular has placed an interpretation on certain critical terms and concepts that goes beyond the wording of the law which has largely remained unchanged since the 1944 Education Act.

1. Paragraph 50 – The aim of collective worship according to the Circular is “to provide an opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs and to encourage participation and response whether through actions, involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered.”

2. Paragraph 51 – All registered pupils should take part in collective worship, subject to the parental right of withdrawal (paras 83 – 87).

3. Paragraphs 52–53 – It is the Head’s duty to secure this although the Local Governance Board and the LEA must also exercise their functions with a view to securing this.

4. Paragraph 54 – Collective worship, subject to the right of withdrawal, is intended to be appropriate for and to include all pupils attending a school.

5. Paragraph 57 – States that “worship” is not defined in the legislation but “it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power”. Paragraph 85 states that “collective worship and assembly are distinct activities” and “taking part” in “collective worship implies more than simply passive attendance. It follows that an act of collective worship should be capable of eliciting a response from pupils” (para 59).

6. Paragraph 60 – Collective worship should be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character” and is further defined in Paragraph 61 as “being worship which reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief”.

7. Heads, in consultation with the Local Governance Board, should also ensure that acts of collective worship are “appropriate to the family background of the pupils and their ages and aptitudes”, (para 64) and therefore they have a professional decision to make on what constitutes ‘appropriate’.

8. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship (paras 83 - 87) and teachers and even Heads themselves can refuse to participate.

9. Heads are charged with the responsibility in law for ensuring that the legal requirements of the Education Acts are met, even if there are insufficient teachers prepared to lead acts of collective worship (or teach RE).
10. The Circular recognises that difficulties exist and suggests that senior pupils or members of the local community (provided they are ‘able’ as well as willing) might be engaged to lead acts of collective worship.

11. Tutor groups (and periods) which form part of a teacher’s conditions of service (and therefore their attendance is compulsory) very often occur simultaneously with acts of worship in assemblies from which the same teachers may withdraw (secondary phase).

12. Paragraph 149 makes clear that Heads are not permitted to leave pupils unsupervised at any time as “nothing over-rides the schools’ responsibility to the health and safety of pupils”.
APPENDIX 3

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR THOSE TAKING SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

We are most grateful to you for coming to school to participate in our assembly programme. We hope you will find the experience a positive one.

Below are some notes that are intended to be helpful in preparing an assembly if you have not visited the school before.

1. The pupils in the school are used to school assemblies being formal occasions. The pupils are on the whole very well behaved and respectful towards visitors to the school.

2. The actual body of your assembly will be about 10 minutes in length. We will keep other notices etc to a minimum, and these will all be given before you take the assembly.

3. We value assembly times as contributing to the spiritual, moral and cultural development of our pupils. We have a list of agreed themes of which you should have had a copy, and which will give guidance on topics to cover.

4. Pupils can be passive participants in assemblies, but there is no reason why they cannot be actively involved! If you wish to involve groups of pupils or even staff in your assembly, please give them as much notice as possible. Pupils (and certainly staff) do not take kindly to being “put on the spot” in front of large audiences!

5. The 1988 Education Act introduced the requirement that, over a term, the majority of acts of worship should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature. However, in acknowledging the multicultural nature of our society, Circular 1/94 advised schools that:
   • As long as the majority of acts of collective worship in a given term are wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature, the remaining acts of collective worship need not be so.
   • An act of collective worship could contain non-Christian material without depriving it of its broadly Christian character.

6. Given that collective worship is part of the life of the school, it should be justifiable on educational grounds. A working definition of school worship could be: “Worship consists of a special activity in which a community comes together in order to remind itself of and to reflect upon those values and beliefs which lie at the heart of the community and to which it aspires”

7. It is important to include some time for quiet reflection. The act of worship in school should not aim to influence a pupil towards a particular faith, nor assume that pupils have or should have religious faith. Collective worship should provide an expression and reminder of the shared values (including the Christian principles) of the society of which the school is a part.