

7: Staff attendance at collective worship

Collective worship is intended for the whole school community. Although the legal requirement for daily worship applies to the pupils, the greatest benefit is gained when worship takes such a high priority in the life of the school that everyone, all adults and pupils, is present. Who attends when is for the headteacher to decide, but the diocese recommend that school have a minimum of one worship time a week when everyone comes together.

There has been a tendency, especially in primary schools, to give teachers non-contact time during collective worship. Although this is understandable, it undermines the important aspect of collective worship as being a celebration of the whole school community. Pupils quickly realise when key adults are not present and begin to wonder whether collective worship is an important part of the school day.

Practically, it will rarely be possible for everyone to be together, but extra effort might be made for special occasions. The message this conveys to pupils is significant: we are community who work and worship together. On such occasions it is beneficial to be joined by members of the wider staff such as the office team, not only the classroom staff.

It is good practice for a minimum of two adults to be present in an act of worship involving several classes: one to lead and the other to support.

The involvement and example of class teachers and support staff play an important part in the developing attitude of their pupils. Whilst their role may well include keeping a watchful eye on the group, their intention to be involved in the worship with their pupils should be clear.

Class teachers will also expect to organise occasions when their class leads worship for the whole school, and to be asked to lead worship themselves; this may be for their class, year group, phase or whole school.

The Church of England Expectations of Staff Attendance at Collective Worship.

The Church of England document 'Attendance at Acts of Collective Worship in Church of England Schools' (2011) recommends that *'All members of the school staff should be encouraged to attend acts of collective worship and as far as is practicable school staff structures and timetables should enable the maximum number to do so.'*

The Church of England model contracts of Employment (July 2017) include the following:

Teachers in Voluntary Aided schools will:

- be conscientious and loyal to the aims and objectives of the School;
- have regard to, maintain and develop the Church of England character of the School;
- not do anything which is in any way detrimental, prejudicial, or contrary to the interests of the School and/or its Foundation;
- give and/or supervise the giving of religious education in accordance with the doctrines of the Church of England and the requirements of the Trust Deed of the School;
- take part in, and may be required to lead, acts of religious worship.

Support staff in Voluntary Aided schools will:

- be conscientious and loyal to the aims and objectives of the School;
- have regard to, maintain and develop the Church of England character of the School; and
- not do anything which is in any way detrimental, prejudicial, or contrary to the interests of the School and/or its Foundation.

There is an infrequently-used guidance contract that relates to 'reserved teachers' in **Voluntary Controlled schools**, which states that they may appoint up to 20% of the staff (including the headteacher) as Reserved Teachers. In VC schools only Headteachers and Reserved Teachers have a contractual responsibility to lead and take part in acts of worship. For advice about staff withdrawal from collective worship, including 'reserve teachers' please refer to the **Appendix 2 – Withdrawal from collective worship.**