



Guidance for Community Primary Schools about Assembly / Collective Worship for Schools during the Coronavirus

'Groups should be kept apart, meaning that schools should avoid large gatherings such as Collective Worship or Assemblies with more than one group.'

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools#A>

The paramount responsibility for all schools at this time must be the health and wellbeing of pupils, staff and families so avoiding whole school or large group Assemblies and Collective Worship is important.

Why still hold Assemblies/ Collective Worship?

One of the main tools for creating the common purpose of school has been through Assemblies/ Collective Worship. To totally abandon that vehicle for communicating expectation, hope and values due to a prohibition on large gatherings would seem a folly.

Some of the purposes of assemblies are so pupils can be given

- *a daily collective activity which can recognise and emphasise common values, aspirations and commitments*
- *give time to breathe, offering space and stillness before, during or at the end of a hectic and pressured day to be oneself, to reflect or just to sit at rest;*
- *help to feel part of a spirit of community in a school, year group or class;*
- *ways to navigate the joys and sorrows of those present, those local to the school, and the joys and sorrows of national and international news, to be reflected upon and shared in a way which is otherwise not possible in school;*

Surely all of these are of important to pupils in school during this pandemic.

So what can schools do to still hold Assembly/ Collective Worship during this time?

How can they ensure that pupils still feel part of the school family; having time to be inspired, to reflect, pray and understand expectations of behaviour and achievement to help them re-settle?

Groupings for Collective Worship

Statutory legal guidance about Collective Worship states that any groupings already in place within a school can be used for Collective Worship – traditionally, this has been interpreted to mean the whole school, key stage groups, year groups and individual class groups. In the present circumstances, other groupings such as ‘bubbles’/ ‘pods’ formed by schools to manage appropriate social distancing could also be included in this list.

This is in accordance with the legislation (Schedule 20 of the School Standards & Framework Act 1998) which states that:

(2) The arrangements for the required collective worship may, in respect of each school day, provide for a single act of worship for all pupils or for separate acts of worship for pupils in different age groups or in different school groups.

(3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2) a “school group” is any group in which pupils are taught or take part in other school activities.

The DfE view is that this gives schools a lot of flexibility to conduct CW in any grouping that they think appropriate, including ‘bubbles’ or ‘pods’.

One suggested model - which schools can adapt or pick from:

Monday – All bubbles participate at the same time, in a pre-recorded/ live streamed service led by the Headteacher or a member of SLT to establish the theme or message for the week. This will include an inspirational story, a time to reflect and draw meaning, and a challenge to take into the week.

Tuesday - This may be a music focussed worship that echoes the value or theme, and a discussion about the meaning of the chosen style, the lyrics, any accompanying pictures and what difference it might make to someone’s life if they believed and lived-out the lyrics. If the school is not holding a music focussed assembly - then this may be a teacher/TA led class assembly exploring the theme / value started the day before by a member of SLT. Pupils can re-cap and discuss the story thinking about what this means for them and reflecting on how they could live it out. Having an assembly focus area with a candle and some stones / elements of nature can aid pupils’ concentration for the reflection aspect of assembly.

Wednesday - This could be an in-class assembly if there was a music based assembly the day before - or again it might be a continuation of the assembly from the day before with an activity to help explore the theme and reflect. Many ideas can be found here:

https://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/search/resources?name=&theme_id=4&tags=0

Or it might be a day where you practise a class meditation or a group examen. You can adapt these materials easily (examen at end of resources list):

<https://www.bristol.anglican.org/content/pages/documents/15891870491060333105.pdf>

Thursday – This could be a service offered by a local member of the community - it could be live streamed or filmed beforehand. If your local church or religious community is not in a position to offer this sort of support, you are welcome to use those below if they seem appropriate.

They are YouTube clips of worship made by Father Malcolm Strange and his wife Jo who serve in Winterbourne and Frampton Cotterell. They have been kindly filming these for their local schools and will continue to do so until it seems no longer necessary.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/DioceseofBristol/videos>

<https://bristol.anglican.org/coronavirus-covid19-resources-for-schools/>

Friday - This could be the Celebration assembly as it is in many Primary Schools in 'normal time'. This can be done within classes with certificates / awards for achievement/ effort and living out the value or theme. It might be a combination of Headteacher/ SLT streaming / filming and the physical giving out of awards by the class teacher. There should be a story and a reflection as well and a thanksgiving and celebration for the week and all that has happened.

<https://bristolsacre.org.uk/site/collective-worship-2/collective-worship-documents/>

has further ideas and support for Assemblies - a full list of helpful websites is at the back of the full guidance document