

Determinations: Collective Worship

Collective Worship Aims

Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes.

Responsibility to provide daily collective worship

All registered pupils attending a maintained school should take part in daily collective worship.

The responsibility for arranging collective worship rests: at a voluntary or equivalent grant-maintained school with the governing body after consultation with the head teacher; at any other school with the head teacher after consultation with the governing body.

The timing and organisation of daily collective worship can be flexible. It need not be held at the start of the school day. There may be a single act of worship for all pupils or separate acts for pupils in different age groups or in different school groups. For this purpose, a 'school group' means any group, or combination of groups in which pupils are taught or take part in other school activities; it does not mean a group reflecting particular religious beliefs, for which different provision may be made.

As a rule, all acts of collective worship should take place on the school premises. However, the governing bodies of grant-maintained, aided and special agreement schools have discretion to organise collective worship elsewhere on special occasions. County and controlled schools which also wish to hold acts of collective worship off the school premises may do so, provided these are in addition to the daily statutory act of collective worship which must still be held on school premises.

That is, it must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power. However, worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common. The legislation reflects this difference in referring to 'collective worship' rather than 'corporate worship'. Collective worship and assembly are distinct activities. Although they may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear. Collective worship can, nevertheless, be related to the day to day life, aspirations and concerns of the school.

'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, even though on a particular occasion some of the pupils may not feel able actively to identify with the act of worship.

Exemption from broadly Christian collective worship ('determinations')

The requirements that collective worship should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, should be appropriate for most pupils across the country.

The 'determination' procedure, however, allows these requirements to be lifted in respect of some or all of the pupils in a school where they are inappropriate.

In determining this, the standing advisory council on RE (SACRE) is to have regard to any circumstances relating to the faith backgrounds of the pupils which are relevant for deciding what character of collective worship is appropriate.

Education Act 1993

The 1993 Act allows any grant-maintained school, equivalent to a county school, to apply for a determination in similar circumstances to a county school. Applying for a determination If the head teacher of a school considers that the requirements for collective worship could conflict with what is required.

He or she can apply to the local standing advisory council on RE (SACRE) to lift or modify the requirement.

Before doing so the head teacher must consult the school's governing body who in turn may wish to seek the views of parents.

Religious Education and Collective Worship 1/94 31 January 1994

The head teacher's application for a determination may relate either to a clearly described defined group or to the whole school.

Before considering applying for a determination in relation to the whole school, however, care should be taken to safeguard the interests of any parents of children for whom broadly Christian collective worship would be appropriate.

One factor which may inform a head teacher's decision to make an application to the SACRE is the extent of withdrawals from broadly Christian collective worship.

Role of SACRE in granting a determination

In considering whether to grant a head teacher's request, the SACRE must ensure that the proposed determination is justified by any relevant circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils concerned.

When it has made a determination on the request - which can only take the form of acceptance or rejection without modification - it must communicate this in writing to the head teacher and state the date from which it should take effect.

Any determination made under these arrangements ends after 5 years, unless renewed by the SACRE. There must be a review by the SACRE no later than 5 years after any determination was introduced; and subsequently within 5 years of each review.

The head teacher may request an earlier review at any time, after consulting the governing body. The head teacher must be given an opportunity to make representations in any review and, in turn, is required to consult the governing body who may wish to seek the views of parents.

It is for each SACRE to decide how applications should be made, and to make available any necessary guidance to schools.

Information on determinations

It is desirable for a head teacher to keep sufficient records to enable him or her to reply to any parental enquiry about the reasons for applying, or not applying, for a determination for a group of pupils.

The LA is required under the Education (School Curriculum and Related Information) Regulations 1989 to provide annual information by 12 September about the number and type of determinations made by the SACRE in respect of collective worship in schools.

Character and organisation of alternative statutory collective worship

It is for the head teacher to decide what form the alternative worship will take, although the SACRE should be informed of the proposed arrangements. The head teacher will wish to take appropriate steps to notify the governing body and parents of the new arrangements.

Where such a determination is made in respect of all or some of the pupils in the school, daily collective worship must still be provided for them.

Where a determination has been granted in respect of a class or description of pupils of a particular faith or religion, the alternative collective worship may be provided for those pupils as a whole. It may not (Education Reform Act 1988) be distinctive of any particular denomination of any faith or religion, but may be distinctive of a particular faith or religion.

Parents continue to have a right to withdraw their children from the collective worship.

Where a single determination has been granted for the whole school, it is not permissible for pupils to be divided into faith groups for worship. However, where a determination covers only part of the school, or where more than one determination has been granted in respect of different groups of pupils at the school, a single act of worship may be provided for each group of pupils covered by a single determination.

Where such a group has been defined in respect of the pupils' faith background, it follows that single faith worship may be provided for the pupils involved. Each group in respect of which a determination has been made may, of course, be further sub-divided by school or age group, if that is felt to be appropriate.

This should not be taken to imply that worship should or should not be provided by faith groups. The arrangements set out above are, however, permitted by the 1988 Act, if this is deemed appropriate (paragraph 68).

Power of Secretary of State to direct SACRE to revoke a determination or discharge duty

The Education Act 1993 amends the 1988 Act so that, where the Secretary of State is satisfied, either on complaint by any person or otherwise, that any SACRE:

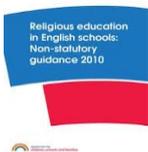
1 has acted, or is proposing to act, unreasonably in determining whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply in the case of a school or group of pupils; or

2 has failed to discharge its duty in this respect; the Secretary of State has the power to direct the SACRE to revoke the determination, withdraw the proposed determination or, as the case may be, to discharge its duty

References

Religious Education in English Schools non-Statutory Guidance 2010

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190260/D_CSF-00114-2010.pdf



Religious education and collective worship (Circular 1/94) Issued 31 January 1994, this circular contains extensive guidance on the duty of local education authorities, standing advisory council on religious education (SACREs) and agreed syllabus conferences (ASCs), regarding religious education and collective worship. This remains extant regarding guidance on collective worship.

<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/dfecircular1-94.pdf>



Education Reform Act 1988