

# Information sheet

## Delivering school assemblies/collective worship

Leading a school assembly or collective worship (as it's often called in church schools) is a great opportunity to help young people in their spiritual or faith development. Prior to the visit it's important we give thought, prayer and consideration to our content and method of delivery, as well as the expectations of the school. This short guide aims to help you to do that.

### **What is a school assembly for?**

A daily act of collective worship continues to be statutory in all schools in England and must be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. How this is practiced in schools varies. Often there is the opportunity for faith and belief visitors to serve their local schools in doing this by helping young people to explore and engage with teachings, values and experience and giving them opportunity to reflect on their own beliefs as they do.

### **What are the school expecting?**

If you are invited to lead an assembly for the first time, it is important to find out what the usual pattern of worship is at the school. In Primary Schools there is often a set pattern to begin and end the time such as lighting a candle and saying some words together. In Secondary Schools pupils may not be used to having faith and belief visitors and may not necessarily respond to audience participation on your first visit!

It's also worth finding out certain practical things, such as where the assembly will be, how many pupils will be present, whether it's possible to use images/video on screen (with or without sound) and how long you have. Bear in mind the actual time on the day could be less if there is a delay in students arriving or if important notices need to be given.

### **How do I plan the content?**

There are a number of great resources that you can use and adapt (see suggestions below) but as a general rule, make sure you have a beginning, middle and end to your presentation. You might start with an ice breaker or something that introduces the theme. Use a simple game or challenge (remembering that you are in a school not a youth club) or perhaps a story, illustration or video clip.

As you move on to your main message, make sure that it is as engaging. The use of religious stories especially in Primary School assemblies can work well by bringing the story to life using props, volunteer 'actors' or audience participation. In Secondary School the use of topical or current stories or stories about people from history can also work well and lead in to a relevant message.

Music often plays a part in collective worship especially in Primary Schools. If you are a regular visitor, it may be helpful to fit in with the songs and music the school use or that the

children know and enjoy. Alternatively, the use of a recorded track or music video can be used as an aid to teach them a new song or to introduce a reflective moment before the pupils return to classes.

It would often be appropriate to end with time for reflection or prayer. Again, find out what is usually said and done at the school. If you are offering a reflection, you can leave a moment of silence for the pupils to think on the ideas presented. If you are offering a prayer you can introduce it by inviting children to join in with an 'Amen' at the end if they would like to make it their own prayer. Avoid making the children repeat lines of a prayer that they haven't had chance to hear beforehand.

### **How can I improve my delivery?**

- Practice your presentation/storytelling and if you can do it without a script, do!
- Play to your own strengths. What are you passionate about? Incorporate your own gifts and talents. Is there a story you could tell about something that happened to you?
- Keep to time. Once the bell rings you will have lost the room.
- If you are using images on screen, video or sound be really familiar with the technology and make sure you test it out beforehand.

### **Other things to consider**

- Always arrive in good time so there's time to set up, meet staff and settle in before the children arrive.
- Is there an expected dress code? It may or may not be ok to wear jeans and a t-shirt!
- Unexpected changes: what will you leave out if you have less time than you thought?
- Technical difficulties: what's your back up plan if something doesn't work?

### **Useful links:**

Government guidance on collective worship in schools:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/collective-worship-in-schools>

Information on collective worship for church schools in Exeter Diocese:

<https://exeter.anglican.org/schools/>

Open The Book (<https://www.biblesociety.org.uk>)

### **School assembly/collective worship resources:**

Assemblies.org.uk <https://www.assemblies.org.uk/>

Bible Based Assemblies from Scripture Union <https://www.biblebasedassemblies.com/>

Big Start assemblies <https://bigstartassemblies.org/>

My Fish Bites youth work resources <https://myfishbites.com/assemblies/>

Schoolswork UK <https://www.schoolswork.co.uk/>

Simply Collective Worship

<https://simplycollectiveworship.co.uk/about-us/>