

An application for a Determination for an exemption from the requirement for collective worship to be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character” was received from the Headteacher of Poulner Infant School on 17 January 2022. In line with Hampshire County Council Procedure (attached as Appendix 1) a small group of SACRE members held a preliminary meeting on 3 February 2022 and additional information was requested from the school. The additional information received included minutes of Governors meetings with clarification that the limited responses received to the parent consultation on the proposed school collective worship policy consisted of one in support and one asking for further information.

Following receipt of additional information the group reconvened on the 26 May and 28 June to consider the Application and accompanying documentation prior to making the recommendation to SACRE set out in this report. The Application and relevant accompanying documentation are attached in Appendix 2 to this report. This includes:

- Application Form dated 17 January 2022
- Supporting information from Poulner Infant School
- Proposed Collective Worship Policy dated Autumn 2021
- Letter from Poulner Infant School dated 13th May 2022

In the Application it states, “it is not appropriate for collective worship to be wholly or mainly reflective of the broad traditions of ‘Christian belief’. This is particularly so bearing in mind the family backgrounds of the pupils at our school - two thirds of parents do not identify as Christian. We find that parents increasingly exercise their choice by seeking out our community school as an alternative to nearby faith schools”.

The group considered all the information in order to make a recommendation to SACRE including the legislation and meaning and form of collective worship as stated in Department for Education Religious Education and Collective Worship Circular 1/94 (the 1994 Circular).

SACRE is asked to consider the Application in particular the information provided on family backgrounds of the pupils of the school as recorded by the school on admission as being 34% Christian, supporting document, Appendix 2, forming the largest religious group and that there have been no withdrawals from Collective Worship recorded by the school, page 8 of Appendix 2

On the basis of this information SACRE is asked to consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply, having due regard to any circumstances of the family backgrounds to the pupils at Poulner Infant school.

Legal

The Education Act 1996 S394 provides that it is for SACRE, on an application from a Head Teacher of a relevant school, to consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply in the case of the school or in the case of any class or description of pupils at the school.

The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 states in S70 that each pupil in attendance at a community, foundation or voluntary school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship.

Schedule 20 paragraph 3(2) of this Act further provides that for relevant schools that do not have a religious character the required collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

Paragraph 4(1) makes provision for SACRE determinations. This provision applies where SACRE have determined that it is not appropriate for the requirement for collective worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character to apply.

In making a determination whether it is appropriate for the requirement to apply S394 states that SACRE shall have regard to any circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils at the school, or of the pupils in the particular class or description in question, which are relevant for determining the character of the collective worship.

The legislation does not include a definition of 'Collective Worship'. The 1994 Circular refers to the aim of collective worship as being 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.

It is stated that "...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."

The relevant legislative provisions are set out in Appendix 3 together with an extract from The 1994 Circular relating to Collective Worship.

Therefore, after a full and thorough discussion of the legislation and documents, the small group decided to recommend to SACRE that the Application for a Determination for an exemption from the requirement for collective worship to be of a "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian

character” as required by paragraph 3(2) of Schedule 20 to the 1998 Act be refused.

Consultation and Equalities

4. There is no adverse impact on equalities and no consultation is required.

Climate Change Impact Assessment

5. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council’s climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does.

6. Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation.

The carbon mitigation tool and climate change adaptation tools were not applicable on this occasion because the decision relates to a programme that is strategic/administrative in nature.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	no
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

3. High-quality Collective Worship should seek to contribute to the elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimisation especially and directly with regard to the protected characteristics of race and religion. SACRE seeks to promote high quality Collective Worship through supporting training for schools and producing materials to support such Collective Worship. SACRE encourages all schools through the Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS) to access such training and materials. Further, SACRE works with Governor Services to ensure all governors have access to such training and materials.