

Section 70 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

Religious worship

70 Requirements relating to collective worship

(1) Subject to section 71, each pupil in attendance at a community, foundation or voluntary school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship.

(2) Subject to section 71, in relation to any community, foundation or voluntary school—

(a) the [local authority] and the governing body shall exercise their functions with a view to securing, and

(b) the head teacher shall secure,

that subsection (1) is complied with.

(3) Schedule 20 makes further provision with respect to the collective worship required by this section, including provision relating to—

(a) the arrangements which are to be made in connection with such worship, and

(b) the nature of such worship.

Exceptions and special arrangements etc

71 Exceptions and special arrangements; provision for special schools

[(1) If the parent of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school [in England] requests that he may be wholly or partly excused from receiving religious education given at the school in accordance with the school's basic curriculum, the pupil shall be so excused until the request is withdrawn.

(1A) If the parent of any pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school other than a sixth-form pupil requests that he may be wholly or partly excused from attendance at religious worship at the school, the pupil shall be so excused until the request is withdrawn.

Schedule 20, Section 70 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998

General provisions as to collective worship

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- (1) This paragraph applies to any community, foundation or voluntary school.
- (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.
- (4) Subject to sub-paragraph (6), the arrangements for the required collective worship shall be made—
 - (a) if the school is a community school or a foundation school which does not have a religious character, by the head teacher after consulting the governing body;
 - (b) if the school is a foundation school which has a religious character or a voluntary school, by the governing body after consulting the head teacher.

Nature of collective worship in community schools and foundation schools without a religious character

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- (1) This paragraph applies to—
 - (a) any community school; and
 - (b) any foundation school which does not have a religious character.
- (2) Subject to paragraph 4, the required collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.
- (3) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (2), collective worship is of a broadly Christian character if it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.
- (4) Not every act of collective worship in the school required by section 70 need comply with sub-paragraph (2) provided that, taking any school term as a whole, most such acts which take place in the school do comply with that sub-paragraph.
- (5) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) and (4)—
 - (a) the extent to which (if at all) any acts of collective worship required by section 70 which do not comply with sub-paragraph (2) take place in the school,

(b) the extent to which any act of collective worship in the school which complies with sub-paragraph (2) reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief, and

(c) the ways in which those traditions are reflected in any such act of collective worship,

shall be such as may be appropriate having regard to any relevant considerations relating to the pupils concerned which fall to be taken into account in accordance with sub-paragraph (6).

(6) Those considerations are—

(a) any circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils which are relevant for determining the character of the collective worship which is appropriate in their case, and

(b) their ages and aptitudes.

(7) In this paragraph references to acts of collective worship in the school include such acts which by virtue of paragraph 2(6) take place otherwise than on the school premises.

Disapplication of requirement under paragraph 3(2)

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(1) This paragraph applies where a standing advisory council on religious education have determined (under [section 394](#) of the Education Act 1996) that it is not appropriate for the requirement imposed by paragraph 3(2) to apply in the case of any school to which paragraph 3 applies or in the case of any class or description of pupils at any such school.

(2) While the determination has effect—

(a) paragraph 3 shall not apply in relation to the school or (as the case may be) the pupils in question, and

(b) the collective worship required by section 70 in the case of the school or pupils shall not be distinctive of any particular Christian or other religious denomination;

but paragraph (b) shall not be taken as preventing that worship from being distinctive of any particular faith.

Section 394 of the Education Act 1996

394 Determination of cases in which requirement for Christian collective worship is not to apply

(1) The council constituted by a [local authority] under section 390 shall, on an application made by the head teacher of—

(a) any [community school] maintained by the authority, or

[(b) any foundation school which has not been designated under section [68A or] 69(3) of the [School Standards and Framework Act 1998](#) by [the Welsh Ministers or] the Secretary of State as having a religious character,]

consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement imposed by [paragraph 3(2) of [Schedule 20](#) to the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (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.

(2) In determining whether it is appropriate for that requirement to apply as mentioned in subsection (1), the council shall have regard to any circumstances relating to the family backgrounds of the pupils at the school, or of the pupils of the particular class or description in question, which are relevant for determining the character of the collective worship appropriate in their case.

Collective Worship

Aims

- 50 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

- 51 All registered pupils (note 4 on page 10) attending a maintained school should take part in daily collective worship (see paragraphs 83-87 for the parental right of withdrawal). The relevant legislation is reproduced at Annex G.
- 52 It is the head teacher's duty to secure this. The governing body or, for LEA-maintained schools, the governing body and the LEA, must also exercise their functions with a view to securing this.
- 53 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.
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Organisation of collective worship

- 54 Collective worship, subject to the right of withdrawal, is intended to be appropriate for and to include all pupils attending a school.
- 55 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 (paragraphs 68-74) .
- 56 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.
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Meaning of collective worship

- 57 'Worship' is not defined in the legislation and in the absence of any such definition it should be taken to have its natural and ordinary meaning. 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'.
- 58 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.
- 59 '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.

Character of collective worship (other than at LEA-maintained voluntary and equivalent grant-maintained schools)

- 60 In the light of the Christian traditions of Great Britain, section 7(1) of the Education Reform Act (and the corresponding section of the Education Act 1993) says that collective worship organised by a county or equivalent grant-maintained school is to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.
- 61 The Act then further defines collective worship of a 'broadly Christian character' as being worship which reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief. Any such worship should not, however, be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.
- 62 It is open to a school to have acts of worship that are wholly of a broadly Christian character, acts of worship that are broadly in the tradition of another religion, and acts of worship which contain elements drawn from a number of different faiths. Section 7(3) of the Act qualifies section 7(1) by providing that within each school term the majority of acts of worship must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, but it is not necessary for every act of worship to be so (see also paragraph 124). Thus, whatever the decision on individual acts of worship, the majority of acts of worship over a term must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.
- 63 Provided that, taken as a whole, an act of worship which is broadly Christian reflects the traditions of Christian belief, it need not contain only Christian material. Section 7(1) is regarded as permitting some non-Christian elements in the collective worship without thus depriving it of its broadly Christian character. Nor would the inclusion of elements common to Christianity and one or more other religions deprive it of that character. It must, however, contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ.

- 64 The extent to which and the ways in which the broad traditions of Christian belief are to be reflected in such acts of collective worship should be appropriate to the family backgrounds of the pupils and their ages and aptitudes. It is for the head teacher to determine this after consultation with the governing body.
- 65 Pupils who do not come from Christian families should be able to join in the daily act of collective worship even though this would, in the main, reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief. The law intends that, subject to the exceptions provided by section 9 of the 1988 Act (paragraph 83), all pupils will take part in such collective worship.
- 66 In all these matters any departure from the broadly Christian Education requirement must be justified in terms of the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of the pupils concerned. These considerations should inform:
- 1 the extent to which (if at all) any acts of collective worship in the school are not of a broadly Christian character;
 - 2 the extent to which the broad traditions of Christian belief are reflected in those acts of worship of a broadly Christian character; and
 - 3 the ways in which those traditions are reflected.
- 67 It is suggested that the head teacher ensure that the school's plans for daily collective worship, or some other record, are kept in case of queries.
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Exemption from broadly Christian collective worship ('determinations')

- 68 The requirements described above (paragraphs 60-66), 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.
- 69 The 1993 Act allows any grant-maintained school equivalent to a county school (i.e. to which section 7(1) of the 1988 Act applies) to apply for a determination in similar circumstances to a county school.

Applying for a determination

- 70 If the head teacher of a school considers that the requirements for collective worship in paragraph 60 could conflict with what is required by paragraph 64, he or she can apply to the local standing advisory council on RE (SACRE) to lift or modify the requirements in paragraph 60. Before doing so the head teacher must consult the school's governing body who in turn may wish to seek the views of parents.
- 71 The head teacher's application may relate either to a clearly described and 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.
- 72 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.

Character and organisation of alternative statutory collective worship

- 77 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.
- 78 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 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.

- 79 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 (paragraph 68).
- 80 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).