

# Working on Worship 12



## Valuing and Evaluating the Impact of Collective Worship

In Church of England schools, collective worship should be inclusive, invitational and inspiring. It must meet all statutory requirements for collective worship, while holding to the Trust Deeds of the school, which normally require acts of worship in accordance with the practice and principles of the Church of England.

### Impact in the opinion of SIAMS .... ?

The SIAMS Evaluation Schedule provides a guide to what good collective worship is, gives exemplars of what Excellence might look like, and defines collective worship which requires improvement as 'not yet good' suggesting strongly that something can, and should, be done about this. Using these two extremes, staff and children can work on evaluating where they are as a school and what steps to take to improve provision.



All Church of England schools should look with care at the implication of what is said.

In all Church of England Schools collective worship is inspected and judged publicly through SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). This has obliged teachers and inspectors to make both formal and public decisions about the nature and quality of collective worship in a school and the effect it has on those present. Both must answer the question '**What is the impact of collective worship on the school community?**'

The whole Evaluation Schedule can be found at:

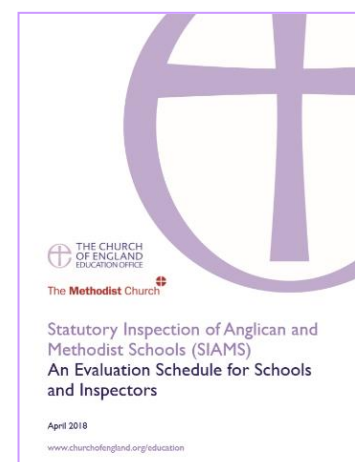
<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/education-and-schools/church-schools-and-academies/siams-school-inspections>

### Strand 6: The impact of collective worship

**In a church school collective worship should be inclusive, invitational and inspiring.**

The following must be explored:

- **The ways in which collective worship is an expression of the school's Christian vision.**



*In developing collective worship that is inclusive, invitational and inspiring the school community needs to evaluate the extent to which worship:*

<p>a) Offers the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection.</p> <p>b) Enables all pupils and adults to appreciate Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican/Methodist worship, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.</p> <p>c) Helps pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world, to encounter the teachings of Jesus and the Bible</p>	<p>and to develop their understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God and its language.</p> <p>d) Enables pupils as well as adults to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice. Leaders of worship, including clergy, have access to regular training.</p> <p>e) Encourages local church community partnerships to support the school effectively in developing its provision for collective worship.</p>
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**Some key things to note:**

- **The word 'opportunity'** – provision of an opportunity to worship God is part of the Circular 1/94 commentary on the CW law for ALL schools
- **The expectation that CW is for 'all pupils and adults'** – CW is to involve the whole school community; no-one should be taken out of CW except by parents.
- **The understanding of CW as a place for spiritual growth** (Ofsted also sees it as a place for Spiritual Development) – It is an occasion with a purpose.
- **The words describing levels of engagement** - 'opportunity', 'experience' and 'appreciate'. Planning should take into account different backgrounds and ages.
- **The use of educational terms –encounter, enable, develop understanding** – we are in school, not church. CW should add to a child's education.
- **The reference to Anglican as well as Christian** - A C of E school should reflect its Anglican foundation in the worship it provides. See '[Working on Worship 5'](#)

**Impact in the opinion of the Almighty?**

Worship is clearly valued in a school where it is taken seriously ... reasonable budget, high profile, information on the school website and in newsletters, positive talk of CW, creative displays, training for staff ..... all these speak volumes about the importance of worship, and by inference of God and Christian faith in the school.



For people of faith, an evaluation of CW that involves 'grading' may feel at odds with the notion of worship, which in its religious sense is about 'giving worth' to God. St Paul urges

Christians to 'Try to find out what pleases the Lord' (Ephesians 5:10) not the inspector! This might suggest that questions about the value or impact of worship would more rightly be addressed to God!

And, if worship is ultimately for God; it does not seem so strange to be concerned with offering God the best we can in our worship and to ask questions as to whether we can do better i.e. evaluating the worship.

**Worship the Lord  
in the beauty of holiness,  
bow down before him ..**



### **Some tried and tested ways of evaluating worship ...**

Here are some examples of how local heads, teachers and governors:

- A 'Worship team' goes round on a Friday afternoon and gather comments from children on that week's worship in a special book.
- Monitors evaluate assemblies as they end, using a really simple proforma e.g. one good thing, one thing to improve, one thing I'll remember.
- The evaluation of CW is on the School Council agenda every half-term. Pupils feed back to SMT and governors; this counts as Pupil Voice.
- An annual survey of the whole school, including staff, asking what they enjoy, what they learn about God, how they feel worship could be improved.

It may also be helpful to:

- Increase the number of visits of governors and others to CW (not leading, just sharing) so a wider perspective is available.
- Evaluate aspects of CW one at a time – themes, songs, prayers, leadership style.
- Involve children more in helping plan, leading and participating in CW as this can provide more feedback and more accurate evaluation.

**One very simple strategy** is an exit poll; this should be used sparingly but will give an instant idea. Children have a single question to answer e.g.

- Would you like quieter songs or more action songs?
- Do you prefer a spoken prayer or a moment of silence for reflection?
- Should we have one song or two songs?

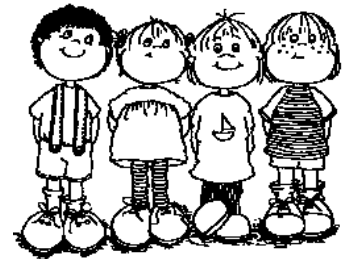
They register their opinion by placing a voting counter in the correctly labelled tub on the way out of assembly.

### **Impact in the children's opinion ....**

**Good teachers ask open-ended questions.** Evaluating worship by asking whether children enjoy it or not is not necessarily a true measure of its quality as worship and will give only an insubstantial answer to the question of impact.

Ask more open-ended questions such as those below and use them regularly in relation to individual acts of worship rather than asking generally about CW.

- How did it make you feel?
- What did it make you think about?
- What has it helped you understand about God?
- Have you learnt anything new about yourself?
- Do you think you will behave differently?
- Did it give you things to think about?
- Did it give you a chance to pray if you wanted?
- Do you want to ask anything about what you heard / saw / thought?
- Did you enjoy it? Why?







Answers to these will give an indication of the impact worship is having on children.

Teachers will also find that improved evaluations result when.

**.... teachers share objectives with pupils!** To evaluate effectively, children need to know what CW is for i.e. to give them an opportunity to celebrate, to be reflective, to pray to God and so on. They should know something about what worship is for Christians but also what time spent in CW can mean for those with no particular faith.

**..... teachers deepen and broaden children's experience of worship styles** e.g. silence, reflection, singing, dance, liturgical action, clapping, raising hands, kneeling and bowing, reading the scriptures, 'offering' of money or goods, are all mentioned as forms of worship in the Bible. Where children have limited experience of worship, they may have little idea how things might be different or improved.

### Impact in your opinion ....

How would you rate your worship against these elements of Collective Worship?	
 <p><b>Does it have a feel of Gathering?</b></p>	e.g. silence ~ calm excitement ~ intrigue
 <p><b>Does it contain something Engaging</b></p>	e.g. story ~ song visitor ~ questions
 <p><b>Does it have space for Responding?</b></p>	e.g. singing ~ praying discussion ~ action
 <p><b>Does it end with a sense of Sending?</b></p>	e.g. purpose ~ challenge resolve ~ blessing

**Collective Worship always has an impact.  
It is never neutral. If not positive, it will be negative.**