

ADVICE FOR SCHOOLS IN WALES ON COLLECTIVE WORSHIP DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



This pandemic is causing us to work in new and creative ways. We have been asked to think differently about how we offer learners the best experience possible for their ongoing education and as a result, huge amounts of activities and learning experiences have been shared with parents/carers and their children across Wales to support this.

You're doing a fantastic job, thank you!

Collective worship in the current climate

Currently, one of our top priorities is the well-being of our learners, and that includes their spiritual, social and emotional well-being too. Daily assemblies with an act of collective worship are a valuable part of school life. They help to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes. In these unprecedented times, this is needed now more than ever. School life has changed, and continuing to offer regular collective worship assemblies during this time gives opportunities for all members of the school community (learners, all school staff, families and the wider community - should they wish to participate) to stay connected in a way that is meaningful for them. Being part of a collective experience on a regular basis will be a lifeline for some of our children and young people who, during this time, may feel isolated and anxious. It will not only offer them a sense of normality but also the space and time to reflect and to consider what is important to themselves and others. It will enable them to come together as one community and find comfort in belonging.

When planning for collective worship assemblies in the current climate, headteachers need to consider the guidance from Welsh Government ***Live-streaming safeguarding principles and practice for education practitioners*** <https://hwb.gov.wales/zones/online-safety/live-streaming-safeguarding-principles-and-practice-for-education-practitioners/>. This has been published as part of the 'Stay Safe. Stay Learning' programme to support schools who wish to live-stream lessons with their learners.

How to facilitate acts of collective worship for distance learning

There are a number of ways in which schools can offer collective worship assemblies that would be achievable and manageable for learners and parents/carers. It is also important that planning collective worship assemblies does not put undue pressure on headteachers and teachers, at an already stressful time. The following are just some suggestions for schools to consider to help them ensure that all learners are given the opportunity to take part in collective worship assemblies regularly, whilst distance learning.

It is always important to consider the backgrounds of all pupils when planning collective worship assemblies. This might be even more so when considering these sessions are being accessed at home by parents/carers who are unfamiliar with the nature of collective worship assemblies in school. These sessions will naturally support spiritual, social and emotional well-being. In order

to be fully inclusive, it should be made clear when an opportunity for worship is being presented, that there is no compulsion to worship, and that each family can choose whether to participate in worship, or reflection, or a time of stillness, or simply a time of quiet contemplation.

Schools could offer:

- streamed Headteacher's collective worship assemblies that follow specific themes in which successes are shared and time for reflection or worship is included. Designated staff might assist headteachers in preparing assemblies on a rota basis;
- live collective worship assemblies through video conferencing e.g. through Microsoft Teams in Hwb;
- thoughts for the day delivered via the school website, social media or email which can be used as a meaningful way to provide opportunities for emotional, social, and spiritual development and an opportunity to worship as appropriate;
- to send examples of reflections for learners to consider at home, which could simply include music, a picture/short video or a meaningful question for them to consider. Parents/carers can then choose to provide opportunity for worship as appropriate to the family setting;
- learners the opportunity to suggest themes and topics for collective worship assemblies or reflection. They might want to take the lead on the focus of the assembly, e.g. recording a short video for others, choosing a photograph, and sharing successes. Learners can still be at the heart of child-led assemblies;
- creative and purposeful collective worship assemblies which could be developed by exploring some of the key concepts and themes found within the statements of what matters in the new Curriculum for Wales 2022. This would give learners the opportunity to develop some of the characteristics of the four purposes and, at the same time, give longevity to resources that have been created;
- learners opportunity to be active participants in collective worship assemblies and opportunities to respond as part of the collective experience. For example, sending in artwork, poetry, or simply communicating their thoughts on the reflection through a conversation with their teacher. Hwb networks and chat facilities could be a useful way of sharing these responses. This may be particularly important at this anxious time;
- to share the experiences of teachers, support staff and learners in school hubs via a pre-recorded video, photograph, diary, etc... (if appropriate, and if relevant permissions and safeguarding procedures are followed); and
- those who do not have access to digital resources, the provision of a pack of suggested reflections via post, so that they still have opportunities for reflection and emotional, social and spiritual development plus an opportunity for worship as/if appropriate to the family background. This could be based on resources that have already been developed.

How ever you facilitate collective worship assemblies for distance learning, they needn't be long or complicated. Positive collective worship assembly experiences are inclusive and should be suitable for everyone in the school community regardless of faith or belief. Topics and themes need to be approached in a way that is sensitive, supporting the well-being of all children and young people, including those in very challenging circumstances.

Suggested resources

The table below offers links to a range of collective worship assemblies from which you may choose, as appropriate for your particular school setting and your children's family backgrounds. Some are specifically written for schools of a religious character and this should be fully considered before deciding on their suitability for sharing with families at home. Headteachers are responsible for quality assuring the resources used for collective worship assemblies in their schools.

Welsh Medium

Yn ychwanegol i'r gwasanaethau arferol maent wrthi yn creu adnoddau 'munud i feddwl' byr sy'n ymateb i Covid- 19. Mae'n Cristnogol yn ei gwedd, ond wedi ei greu i weithio ag unrhyw blentyn dim ots ei cefndir ffydd neu ddiwylliant.	https://cymru.assemblies.org.uk
Munud i feddwl Cristnogol ei gwedd	https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p016k10m
Cymorth Cristnogol – gwasanaethau ar gael yn ddwyieithog	https://www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved-locally/wales/cymru
Gwasanaeth ar gyfer CA2 a 3	https://resources.hwb.wales.gov.uk/VTC/2017/RockandRollPoet/ca2/gwasanaethau.html https://resources.hwb.wales.gov.uk/VTC/2017/RockandRollPoet/ca3/gwasanaethau.html

English Medium

As well as the usual assemblies, Assemblies.org are publishing short <i>Pause for Thought</i> clips and suggestions due to the Covid-19 situation. Christian in outlook but designed for use with all children regardless of faith or cultural background.	https://www.assemblies.org.uk/
Bahá'í resources for schools	http://re.bahai.org.uk/assembly-ideas/
BBC School Radio Assemblies	https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0592r92 (ks1) https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00nkdqx (ks2)
Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)	https://cafod.org.uk/Education/Primary-teaching-resources/Primary-school-assemblies
Christian Aid	https://www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/school-assemblies
Diocese of St Asaph Resources for schools, young people and families...and those that work with them during the corona pandemic. (Church in Wales)	https://dioceseofstasaph.org.uk/coronavirus/resources-for-young-people/

SBeducation - Diocese of Swansea and Brecon Education Twitter (Church in Wales)	https://twitter.com/swanbreced
Weekly worship at home resource from the Diocese of St Albans Schools Team (Church of England)	https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/schools/worship-at-home/
Humanists UK Assemblies for all - inclusive and accessible for all schools, teachers, and pupils, regardless of their religion or belief background.	https://assembliesforall.org.uk/about/
Oak National Academy #1 (the National Academy set up in England only)	https://youtube.co.uk
Primary resources – assemblies	http://www.primaryresources.co.uk/assembly/assembly.htm
TES free teaching resource for assemblies	https://www.tes.com/teaching-resource/500-values-assemblies-hundreds-of-free-assemblies-with-powerpoints-stories-videos-and-quotes-11866521
<i>Diversity of Religion and Belief A guidance and resource pack for primary schools in England and Wales</i> - Peter Hemming, Elena Hailwood, Connor Stokes - see p.29ff	https://orca.cf.ac.uk/110147/19/Diversity%20of%20Religion%20and%20Belief%20-%20A%20Guidance%20and%20Resource%20Pack%20for%20Primary%20Schools%20in%20England%20and%20Wales.pdf
Unicef – Rights Respecting Schools - assembly resources	https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/resources/teaching-resources/guidance-assemblies-lessons/

Further Help and Advice

If Local Authorities or schools need further help or advice on collective worship assemblies, please contact Alice Parry, Secretary to WASACRE Alice.Parry@bridgend.gov.uk. Alice will be able to put you in contact with advisers or SACREs within your local authority.

This document has been produced for WASACRE by the following individuals and with grateful thanks to their organisations:

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