

Visitors leading collective worship.

Tips for inviting visitors

- Give them plenty of notice - don't assume that a visitor who wears an RE or religious "hat" can produce an assembly at a few moments notice!
- Invite them to attend an act of collective worship beforehand so they may observe the usual practice of the school. If this is not practical, lend them a copy of the collective worship policy document.
- Some visitors may need to be reminded that collective worship is not an appropriate vehicle for hard sell evangelism, and that inclusive language ("we all believe...") is to be avoided.
- Give the visitor a clear brief, explain how this fits into the overall worship plan for the school, and ask them to keep to it.
- Make sure the visitor knows where they stand in relation to other members of the community.
- NEVER leave a visiting speaker to take an act of collective worship alone, it is bad manners, bad educational practice, and bad churchmanship!
- Be prepared to give constructive feedback, and to offer appropriate support with planning, preparation or delivery.

Tips for visitors themselves

- Visit the school beforehand, and if possible observe an act of collective worship
- Keep to the brief given (and if this is not clear, ask!)
- Prepare your material thoroughly
- If you need any special equipment, ask for this well beforehand (not when you arrive with five minutes to spare).
- Arrive promptly
- Make sure you are articulate and can be easily heard, and use words and materials at a level appropriate to the age ranges. It can help to pause from time to time to allow the pupils time to take in what you have said or shown them.
- Be aware of the way you relate to the pupils. Avoid patronising them. Be aware of the cultural sensitivities of some pupils about touch, gestures or eye contact.
- Think about how the pupils will see you. Try to remain visible to all pupils, convey a sense of enjoyment and an appropriate sense of humour, and use artefacts and visual aids.
- Be prepared to receive questions from young people, some of which might be awkward. Be sensitive to the response of the pupils to what is being taught.
- Do not use the opportunity to influence listeners unfairly, or attempt to win them over to your faith stance.
- Be aware of the need to break down some of the stereotypes others may hold about your own own faith community.
- Be prepared to receive feedback from staff and young people on the positive aspects of your contribution and those which might be developed or altered.

A Few Do's and Don'ts for those asked to lead collective worship

Do find out

- who will attend the collective worship - the whole school, or just part of it?
- how long you are expected to speak for (and don't over run).
- the theme the school is presently following in collective worship, what they have done already and will do in the rest of the term .
- whether pupils and staff are used to being involved in activities, should you wish them to be so.

Do visit the school beforehand.

Arrange to meet the head teacher for a discussion of the school's policy and procedures, and if possible, be present at an act of worship in the school.

Do prepare thoroughly.

A ten minute presentation which addresses the needs and variety of backgrounds of pupils has to be carefully thought out, and should always begin by making a real connection with the children's world, making it relevant to them.

Do help pupils by allowing them time for silence in which they may think, reflect and respond at their own level.

Do remember the difference between collective and corporate worship. A school assembly is not the appropriate venue for strong evangelism.

Do adopt a variety of approaches in each act of worship or within each series of acts. Introduce them on a variety of occasions to the breadth of Christian experiences and practices.

Don't

- talk too much
- forget that pupils are used to a variety of learning styles
- talk down to them
- merely entertain them
- talk over their heads

Don't assume that pupils' presence at worship signifies their personal commitment or involvement. You should not impose on pupils words or attitudes which they cannot honestly express. Your task is not to compel worship, but to enable it.