

## **Statutory Requirements**

The 1996 Education Act requires that all pupils in attendance at a maintained school, unless excused at the request of their parents, shall take part in an act of collective worship on each school day and, unless a school applies for exemption (which is considered by the SACRE), collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.

## **Guidance from Croner's "Heads" Legal Guide**

The responsibility for determining arrangements for collective worship lies with the Head, in consultation with the Governing Body.

In the guide, reference is made to schools which cannot accommodate all their pupils in a single hall needing to be 'inventive' in order to adhere to the legislation. Suggestion is made that collective worship takes place in year groups, house or tutor groups.

However, it acknowledges that such arrangements may not be possible since teachers, including the Head, are not required to attend collective worship and can request to be excused from it.

## **Coombe Girls' School**

Coombe Girls' School is in the situation of having no suitable area for all pupils to gather together in comfort and dignity. The Sports Hall has sufficient space but it would be impractical to provide seating without adversely impacting on its function as Sports Hall. The Assembly Hall and stage area combined can accommodate three year groups and the gym two. For both the Gym and the Sports Hall the requirement for pupils to remove their shoes to protect the floor makes this a difficult option.

From September 2006 a new curriculum pattern was introduced which removes the previous difficulty in providing sufficient time for a Collective Act of Worship on a Tuesday. The new curriculum is possible now the Sports Hall and Performing Arts Centre is complete.

Currently a mixed pattern of gatherings takes place:

- Lower (years 7-9) and upper (years 10 and 11) Assembly – alternate weeks, different days
- Year Assemblies – one day a week, 2 weeks out of 3
- House Assemblies – one day a week, 1 week out of 3
- Tutor Group Assemblies/Thought for the Day – all other days

For Lower and Upper Assemblies, Coombe Girls' retains the tradition of singing a hymn from our Song Book and includes a prayer or an opportunity for reflection. Use is made of religious festivals, both Christian and those of other religions. These assemblies are clearly 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. All assemblies, whether individual Tutor Group or larger focus on moral themes and issues. The requirement and associated guidance appears to be based on the premise that the larger the assembly the better. We are fortunate at Coombe Girls' in that staff are willing to manage the Act of Worship in Tutor Groups since the quality and value of these occasions usually far outstrips those of the larger collections.

## **Coombe Boys' School**

Coombe Boys' school is at present fortunate in having a suitable space, the Sports Hall, in which all boys can gather. However, it is not practical to provide seating for the boys without impacting adversely on the function of the Sports Hall, so boys sit on the floor, which is not desirable or dignified. The new Assembly Hall which is planned will provide seating sufficient for the current number of boys on roll. However, as the school roll grows, as is expected, the Assembly Hall will be able to accommodate a maximum of three groups. The current situation, described below, will need to be adapted to an arrangement of Lower School (Years 7-9) and Upper School (Years 10 - 11) as necessary.

Currently a mixed pattern of gathers takes place:

- School Assembly – Monday and Friday each week
- Year Assembly – one day a week
- Tutor Group Assembly – all other days

School Assemblies always include a prayer or opportunity for reflection. Singing has been reintroduced to Years 7 and 8 Assemblies. Use is made of religious festivals, both Christian and those of other religions and the school's Honorary Chaplain is invited to lead significant Assemblies, such as Remembrance, Easter etc. Tutor Group Assemblies focus predominately on moral themes and issues.

## **The Sixth Form**

The statutory requirements for the daily act of collective worship apply to Sixth Form in schools, but not in Sixth Form Colleges or Further Education colleges. Coombe Advanced Centre hold a weekly Sixth Form Assembly, and students join the Upper Assembly at the beginning and end of terms. However, students who wish to hold an act of collective worship are free to do so. Students at the Vocational Centre also attend a weekly Sixth Form Assembly and join the School Assembly at the beginning and end of term and on special occasions.

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