



Reflection

Guidance for schools

Ealing SACRE

www.egfl.org.uk/religion





“Secret”

“Our artwork¹ was based on the theme ‘windows to the soul’. This piece of art shows that not everybody is the same on the outside as they are on the inside. We thought a lot about the theme and finally came up with the idea that there is a girl who looks quite ‘rough’ so people usually just ignore her but never really give her a chance so they will never know what a beautiful soul she has, with a secret.

In our artwork this mysterious girl is the light to the darkness but no-one knows because she is too scared to show her beauty. If you look closely at the picture you will see that the buildings are made up of newspaper, this represents the hypocrisy and the terrible things that are happening in the world which become edited for everyone to see...”

*Jemma Gold and Hannah Suleiman (12),
2013 Spirited Arts competition*

It is currently the law² in England that maintained schools provide a daily act of ‘collective worship’ for all registered pupils. Although the streamlined inspections no longer have a separate judgement for community cohesion, schools still have the statutory duty to promote it, with particular focus on achieving cohesion “across different cultures, ethnic, religious or non-religious and socio-economic groups.”³

“Success through diversity” is at the core of the council’s vision, and Ealing SACRE has prepared this guidance to help schools develop policies that encourage the participation of *all* pupils and staff. It is worth noting that according to the last census (2011) the percentage of people in England and Wales with no religious affiliation (25.1%) was three times greater than that of the Muslim (4.8%), Sikh (0.8%), Hindu (1.5%) and Jewish (0.50%) populations combined. In Ealing the figures are: Christian (43.7%), Buddhist (1.2%), Hindu (8.5%), Jewish (0.3%), Muslim (15.7%), Sikh (7.9%), other (0.6%), no religion (15.0%) and non-stated (6.9%). As the picture above suggests, everyone has an inner life which is worthy of nurture, and by referring to ‘reflection’ rather than ‘worship’ it is not our intention to secularise the experience, but rather to make it fully inclusive.

The following guidance⁴ is intended to inspire rather than dictate: SACRE understands that the final decision as to how a school organises their programme of reflection rests with the headteacher and governing body.

¹ http://www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts/art13/windows_on_the_soul/wos12.php

² Exceptions include: pupils whose parents have exercised their statutory right of withdrawal; pupils in nursery classes or nursery schools (although nursery pupils in foundation stage classes can participate as long as parents do not object), and pupils in PRUs. Under Education (Special Schools) Regulations 1994, special schools are required to make provision “so far as is practicable.”

³ *Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion*, DCSF-00598-2007. Available on the EgFL: <http://www.egfl.org.uk/categories/teaching/inclusion/cohesion/>

⁴ Revised January 2014.

✚ Aims	4
✚ Where and when?	5
✚ Ensuring inclusion and promoting community cohesion	7
✚ Developing a school policy	9
✚ Developing a plan	10
✚ Invocations, benedictions and affirmations	12
✚ Monitoring and assessment	13
✚ Guidelines for visitors	14
✚ Right of withdrawal	16
✚ Appendix 1: role of SACRE	18
✚ Appendix 2: applying for a determination	19
✚ Appendix 3: example school policy	25
✚ Feedback form	28
✚ Acknowledgements	29

For all of us, whether we define ourselves as religious or not, it is important to learn to balance the more extroverted phases of life with periods of repose. Developing a space ‘set apart’ from the day-to-day routine⁵ is not just for the benefit of children and staff belonging to a particular religion: at the same time as some of the group may be engaged in silent prayer, others might be cultivating greater self awareness or an abstract such as inner peace.

Daily reflection is also an opportunity for meditating on the big life questions and sharing individual concerns. Whether recognised or not, everyone has a need for contemplation, and by setting aside a time each day for this activity schools can help pupils develop the capacity to appreciate introspection.

The benefits—to both the whole school community and individual pupils and members of staff—of gathering together in reflection on a daily basis include:

- the fostering in pupils of an awareness of universal moral principles of right and wrong, justice and fairness and a proper concern for others and the world;
- an affirmation and celebration of the values and ethos of the school;
- the development of an awareness of, and a sense of belonging to, the many different dimensions of the school’s community;
- opportunities to experience the sense of gathering for a special purpose;
- shared experiences that encourage thought;
- the promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including opportunities to silently reflect or pray on practical issues raised by becoming an adult citizen of the world;
- opportunities to consider and reflect upon a variety of situations and issues and make a personal response; and
- opportunities to reflect quietly and make an internal response congruent with one’s own personal beliefs and background: as explained above this may include silent prayers or other forms of meditation.

⁵ An excellent example of such a space is the ‘Reflective Area’ at Byron Street Nursery and Infant School. For a virtual tour visit www.refuel.org.uk

Reflection is not religious education and the study of religion and belief in the curriculum is not meant to take the place of daily reflection. However using this time to focus on, for example, special observances in the calendar can support the RE programme.

Each school is free to organise their weekly programme to suit their individual circumstances. In order to be compliant with the law it is important to note that, although they may form part of an assembly, the daily act of reflection—which should last between 3 and 5 minutes—is not synonymous with assembly. So, for example, a school may plan to hold one themed *assembly* a week for the whole school or key stage, with smaller *reflections* on the same theme to be held on the other days in class or tutor groups.

In the context of an assembly, it is perhaps best to read school notices at the beginning, so that pupils are left with a ‘message’ to consider as they leave; in addition, part of each assembly should be devoted to some activity—e.g. silent prayer/meditation, the reading of a hymn or passage from a religious or philosophical text that speaks to the theme, group recitation of a school invocation/affirmation/benediction, or a period of silence during which individuals can pray, meditate or worship.

Whereas larger assemblies encourage the feeling of belonging to the greater school community and can generate more of a sense of occasion, it is an advantage of the smaller gatherings that the exploration of themes can be tailored more closely to match the interests of that particular age group. But whatever way a school chooses to plan their programme, it should be consistent, so that pupils and staff have a clear understanding of when they will be entering this special period in their daily routine.

When reflection is held in the classroom, the timing can often be flexible. It may be that class teachers will want to dispense with the daily administration and then turn immediately to the act of reflection. If this is the case, there should be some way to create a ‘space’ that mentally removes the children from their normal surroundings. This could be as simple as reconfiguring the seating into a more intimate arrangement and then lighting a candle; preparation might also include playing special music or carrying out a stilling exercise. You might want to place a notice on the door to ensure the absence of interruptions. A name could be given to this part of the day: ‘circle time’ is a good model to adopt for smaller groups, as it gives pupils the opportunity to share their views while learning to listen to and respect the beliefs of others. It might also be worthwhile to create a focus for these acts, e.g. a display board for prayers, prose meditations, photos, quotations and reflective artwork, all of which could be contributed by the students themselves.

Class teachers are often the logical choice to plan reflection for their own classes, because they are the ones who know their pupils best. They can therefore 'personalise' the theme, while working within the whole school plan for the week. But although all classes must have someone who is willing and able to plan and deliver these acts, this does not have to be the class teacher. It must be remembered that teachers, too, have the right to withdraw. However it is hoped that the approach taken here—i.e. focussing on 'reflection' rather than formal religious worship—will encourage the participation of all staff.

Ensuring inclusion and promoting community cohesion

Many people, particularly those who belong to a faith community, believe that the human spirit is created by God and can only be fully developed through a relationship with God. At the same time a substantial number believe that the human spirit can be understood and developed without any reference to divinity. What unites these positions is the fact that they both arise from human experience, and that the 'spiritual' dimension can be expressed in ways that both religious and non-religious individuals can recognise, such as:

Mystery:	experiences of awe, wonder and mystery about the natural world, human achievement and, for some, a divinity
Values:	attitudes and feelings about what is really important, what really matters
Meaningfulness:	the ability to make connections or to see potential patterns in life which give it meaning
Changes in awareness:	the feeling of being 'at one' with: God, nature, oneself and/or others
Challenge:	being challenged and moved by experiences such as love, beauty, goodness, joy, compassion, injustice, evil, suffering, death

It is hoped that our choice to use the word 'reflection' rather than 'worship' does not leave you with the impression that we are trying to remove religion from the experience. Rather we are striving to ensure the most inclusive experience possible. Although schools are no longer inspected as regards how well they contribute to community cohesion, the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) remains a major inspection focus. Schools will therefore benefit by being able to show that their programme of daily reflection ensures that no segment of the school community feels excluded from the very activity intended to foster school spirit and shared values.

Although it is unlikely that primary-aged children will understand the distinction between 'reflection' and 'worship', older children—not to mention members of staff—will, and ultimately the 'space apart' that we are trying to create on a daily basis should be equally open to those who wish to commune with their god, those seeking an inner dialogue (for example with a wiser part of their self), and those wanting to cultivate a meditative calm. Only then can these acts be truly 'collective'.

To reiterate, the purpose of these daily acts is to provide children with an experience of stillness and reflection which:

- is usually difficult for them to achieve in their busy day
- is integral to spiritual development
- helps them focus on their developing beliefs and values
- gives them space to consider the mystery which is at the heart of life
- supports their emotional development
- they can draw on at times of need

Teachers should not feel inhibited about speaking of their own faith or philosophy, as long as they do it in a way that shows respect for those with differing views. One way to protect the integrity of belief of each person in the school community is through the use of 'framing', i.e. when elements specific to a particular tradition— e.g. text, artwork, song, or saying—are included, the piece should be introduced with words which clearly identify the tradition from which it comes. For example:

- "Today we are going to listen to a story from the Gospel of Mark. While this has special meaning for Christians we can all listen and respond in the way which feels right for us."
- "I would like to share with you a reading from the Gospel of Mark which has special meaning for me as a Christian. However I hope you can all find something in it which is helpful to you."

Similarly, the session might end with a moment of silence introduced as follows:

"Let's end with a few moments silence, during which you can each reflect on the topic we've been discussing, meditate or worship according to your own beliefs."

Where a headteacher considers there to be a conflict between the requirement to provide reflection that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature and the requirement to provide reflection that accords with the backgrounds of all the school's pupils, they can apply to SACRE for a *determination* to lift or modify this requirement. An application form and the procedure for applying can be found in appendix two. However it is important to note that a determination does not remove the statutory requirement for a daily act of reflection, it just modifies the nature of that act.

It is good practice for schools to have an up-to-date policy regarding the provision of reflection, and an example of such a policy can be found in Appendix 3. The responsibility for ensuring that the law is met is shared by the headteacher and the governing body, and it is important for them to develop a policy that clearly explains the school's approach to the delivery of a programme that satisfies the legal requirements. This policy document should contain:

1. An introduction, i.e. recognition of the legal requirements within which the school's provision is made.
2. The school's philosophy on reflection and interpretation of the law, including:
 - links with the school's aims/mission statement
 - aims for reflection within the school
 - links with other whole-school policies
 - how the school's approach contributes to the promotion of community cohesion
3. A description of how reflection is organised within the school, including
 - management responsibility
 - timings/groupings and rationale
 - content and range of experiences to be offered
 - pupil involvement
 - use of visitors
 - a system for recording and monitoring/evaluation
 - resources and their management
4. A development plan, i.e. how the school wishes to develop the programme (e.g. more pupil participation), and any proposed training/support for staff.

One common approach to planning the themes of assemblies is to link them to seasonal festivals. To be truly inclusive, in addition to pointing out the meaning of the festival to the community concerned, good practice would be to include a focus on *the human experience* reflected in that particular festival. For example, a Christmas assembly could begin with the specifics surrounding the nativity of Christ and how this is a pivotal event for believers, and then progress on to the more general theme of the preciousness—and precariousness—of new birth (e.g. in an act of creativity). Similarly, during the week of Yom Kippur, a presentation on the significance of the high holidays to Jews could end with an exploration of experiences of remorse, and how we deal with our own guilt and need for forgiveness. In the spring, in addition to reflecting on the importance of Easter to Christians, pupils might be encouraged to think about times in their own lives when they or someone close to them felt miraculously ‘reborn’. And finding the strength to deal with bullying might be tied into a look at the Sikh festival of Hola Maholla.

Because of the lunar nature of the calendar most Muslim festivals migrate round the year, whereas the exact date of Hindu and Jewish festivals, which are determined by calendars based on both sun and moon, will vary from year to year but nevertheless occur at roughly the same season. The Days of Observance calendar produced each year by the LA can help schools in formulating their programme.

The law has often been misunderstood to mean that special schools do not have to comply with the requirements regarding reflection. However, this is not the case, and unless there are reasons relating to space or equipment that cannot be overcome, special schools are required to follow the law in the same way as mainstream schools. The examples below come from St Ann’s School for children with severe learning disabilities (SLD).⁶

Week beginning	Theme
12 September	Going somewhere new/helping new people and guests/new beginnings: <i>Rosh Hashanah/Ethiopian New Year’s Day</i>
24 September	Saying thank you: <i>Ramadan/Yom Kippur</i>
1 October	Saying sorry: <i>Ramadan/Yom Kippur</i>
8 October	Harvest/World Food Day: harvest festivals
15 October	Moon and stars: <i>Eid ul Fitr/creation/awe and wonder</i>
30 October	Fire and water: Creation/awe and wonder/links to Bonfire Night/work of and thanks for emergency services/focus on <i>All Saints’ Day</i>
5 November	Yesterday and today: <i>Remembrance Sunday/Armistice/Diwali</i>

⁶ Thanks to Paul Faux.

In addition to the exploration of themes, the ongoing development of reflective skills can be encouraged through the provision of opportunities to:

- Focus** An activity in which pupils (and adults) are encouraged to sit in a way that is comfortable and allows them to concentrate, control their breathing and focus on their thoughts.
- Pray or meditate** Encourage pupils to write their own prayers or affirmations, perhaps as a response to some event happening in the wider world.
- Consider belief** Invite people from different traditions to speak. Pupils should be encouraged to consider their own thoughts, feelings and beliefs following such encounters.
- Question** In our daily lives we all face events that cause us to raise ultimate questions. Reflection may often be the most appropriate vehicle through which we can help pupils to explore these questions.
- Participate** Encourage pupils to present their own ideas.
- Wonder** Music, art, photographs and other artefacts are all capable of creating an atmosphere that provides opportunities to experience wonder, as can the telling of a story, the recounting of an experience, and the handling of a small animal.
- Pose questions of meaning** Acts of reflection can provide an opportunity to pose questions of meaning. This does not mean that answers have to be provided. For example, some schools keep comment books for pupils to record their responses to, and questions about, specific content. In addition to contributing to the evaluation of reflection these comment books may also help pupils respond thoughtfully to the content.
- Be curious** Encourage pupils to be curious, thoughtful, sensitive to and respectful of the beliefs of others, to be open-minded and willing to question; enable them to consider and develop personal beliefs and values.

Benedictions, invocations and affirmations

The word 'benediction' means "good saying", and usually refers to a blessing at the close of a service or meeting. Invocations most often take place at the beginning of a service, whereas affirmations can take place at any time. One way a school can partly fulfil their statutory duties is to have a school invocation, affirmation, or benediction that can be said either at the beginning of the week, school day or assembly, or at the close of the day. To be truly inclusive, these 'prayers' should not mention God. However there is no reason, when introducing the communal recitation, not to end with a statement such as: "After we have repeated the affirmation, we will take a moment of silence for personal reflection or prayer."

Examples of inclusive invocations

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1.
Today is another day,
may we be happy and strong.
May we be kind to our
classmates, and share
what we learn. | 2.
As light descends on earth,
let it illuminate our minds
and bring us wisdom.
Let us help each other to learn.
May we nurture our talents
so that we may give them
to the school and the
community.
Let love stream forth
from all of our hearts. | 3.
O light of life,
live through us!
Show us the way.
Open up our hearts
and shine within us. |
|--|---|--|

Example school affirmation

This is our school;
let peace dwell here.
Let the room be full of contentment.
Let love abound here,
love of one another,
love of humankind,
love of life itself.
Whatever they might be,
may we each give of our gifts;
as many hands build a house,
so many hearts make a school.

Example benediction

As we leave school for the day,
may the blessings of life be upon us.
May the memories we have made
and the learning we have accomplished
give us hope for the future.
May the love that we share
bring strength and joy to our hearts,
and the peace of this community be with us
until we meet again.

As mentioned previously, inclusive reflection can contribute significantly to community cohesion, the promotion of which remains a statutory school duty. In spite of the brevity of modern inspections a particularly good assembly might be highlighted in a report, as the care given to the programme will be reflective of other aspects of school provision for SMSC.

The headteacher—in consultation with the governors—has overall responsibility to ensure that legal requirements are being met and that quality reflection is taking place. Questions to ask might include:

- Is there an effective policy?
- Is there evidence of planning and recording?
- Is there evidence that the quality of the individual acts is evaluated?
- How much time is set aside for observations of acts of reflection?
- How much time is set aside for scrutiny of records of these acts?
- How much time is set aside for discussions with those who lead the daily acts?
- How much time is set aside for discussions with participants?
- Is documentation consistent with observed practice?
- Is reflection well resourced?
- Is there opportunity provided for INSET?
- Are the various groupings and environments for reflection maximizing opportunities?
- Is there equal provision made for all pupils?

The following guidelines are to be used in conjunction with existing school policy regarding visitors; they also assume that a teacher is present when a visitor is presenting an assembly or leading an act of reflection.⁷

It is helpful if visitors:

- are familiar with the school, e.g. through a prior visit
- make provision to ensure they arrive on time
- are clear about their brief and the time available to them
- are encouraged to bring resources and artefacts to illustrate their contribution
- are sensitive to the response of the group to what is being said
- do not use the opportunity to influence pupils unfairly, or to attempt to win them over to their stance
- do not have to compete with school notices.

It is helpful if the person responsible for the school's programme:

- has met the visitor before the day of the assembly/reflection so that they are aware of the visitor's language and communication skills, and their particular expertise
- has provided the visitor with a clear written brief, and with an idea of the number, age, gender-balance, religious/non-religious and cultural background and ability of pupils in the group they are visiting
- has given the visitor directions to the school, the school's telephone number, details of resources and equipment available to them, and offered hospitality
- has ensured that equipment is available and working
- has encouraged visitors to speak from their personal perspective, and not necessarily on behalf of the community to which they belong
- has prepared visitors for awkward questions from pupils
- is aware of the demands on the visitor (e.g. whether they have taken time off work in order to make the visit)
- has an alternative prepared in case of an emergency
- offers feedback.

It is helpful if the pupils:

- know who the visitors are and are aware of their background
- understand the purpose of the visit, and how it fits into the longer-term plan
- have selected a host/hostess for the visit and have prepared some questions;
- follow up the visit appropriately, relating it to their curriculum
- express their appreciation of the visit

⁷ Because it is assumed that visitors will never be left alone with pupils, schools are no longer required to submit details of anyone proposing to visit a school to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for a "Children's Barred List" check (previously List 99).

Sample letter to visitors invited to lead an assembly or classroom act of reflection

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to come to our school on..... to talk to class...../ years..... in assembly about (*As this will be your first visit, I would like to meet you beforehand to discuss your presentation. Please contact the school office to make an appointment.)

Assembly/reflection begins at..... and generally lasts for..... minutes. It will take place in..... (location) and approximately pupils will be present from years.....(aged.....).

Please arrive by..... and report to the school office, where you will be required to sign our visitor's book. For the duration of your stay at our school you will be required to wear a visitor's badge; this ensures that everyone understands that you are in the building on school business.

Our school community is not a faith community and reflection is provided for all pupils. Therefore the experience you plan should be comfortable, inclusive and sensitive to the needs of all. As part of your presentation you may wish to share your own beliefs with the children. This is perfectly acceptable as long as these are put into context. Please remember it is not the place of the school to provide opportunities to convert or indoctrinate pupils.

In our school we do not expect children and/or staff to perform formal acts of worship. Although some may use this time to pray, our pupils are used to having a quiet thinking/reflection time when they can consider the meaning of what they have seen and heard and apply it to their own lives.

If you have any queries please contact..... at the school. Please also contact us if you have the need for any equipment to be made available for you.

We look forward to seeing you on.....

[*If a visitor has never been to the school before it is important to meet them beforehand to ensure that they will be understood by the audience they will be addressing, unless they come recommended by a reputable source.]

*Right of withdrawal*⁸

Nothing in the Education Act 1993 affects parents' rights, as established in the 1944 Act and re-enacted in the 1988 Act, to withdraw their children from collective worship if they wish. To summarise:

1. it cannot be a condition of attendance at any maintained school that a pupil attends, or abstains from attending, any Sunday school or place of worship;
2. if the parent asks that a pupil should be wholly or partly excused from attending any religious worship at the school, then the school must comply. This includes alternative worship provided by a school as a result of a determination by a SACRE;
3. where the parent of any pupil who is a boarder at a maintained school requests that the pupil be permitted to attend worship in accordance with the tenets of a particular religious denomination on Sundays or other holy days, or to receive religious education in accordance with such tenets outside school hours, the school's governing body shall make arrangements to allow the pupil reasonable opportunities to do so. These arrangements may be provided for on school premises, but are not to entail expenditure by the LA or, in the case of a grant-maintained school, its governing body.

A school continues to be responsible for the supervision of any child withdrawn by its parent from collective worship.

Exercise of right of withdrawal

The parental right to withdraw a child from attending collective worship should be freely exercisable and a school must give effect to any such request. Parents are not obliged to state their reasons for seeking withdrawal.

The right of withdrawal from collective worship would normally be exercised through the physical withdrawal of the pupil from the place where the act of worship is taking place. Indeed the school could insist that this is the way the right is to be implemented. If, however, both the parent and the school agree that the pupil should be allowed to remain physically present during the collective worship but not take part in it, nothing in the law prevents this.

Experience suggests that, to avoid misunderstanding, a head teacher will find it helpful to establish with any parent wanting to exercise the right of withdrawal:

- the elements of worship in which the parent would object to the child taking part;

⁸ Reproduced from DFE Circular 1/94: "Religious education and collective worship," January 1994, paragraphs 83-88, hence the reference to 'worship' rather than 'reflection'.

- the practical implications of withdrawal; and
- whether the parent will require any advanced notice of such worship, and, if so, how much.

Alternative worship for pupils who have been withdrawn

Nothing in the law prevents any maintained school from allowing, at parents' request and where they have withdrawn pupils from statutory provision, religious education to be provided or religious worship to take place according to a particular faith or denomination. Governing bodies and head teachers should seek to respond positively to such requests from parents:

1. unless the effect would be that denominational worship replaced the statutory non-denominational collective worship;
2. provided that such arrangements can be made at no additional cost to the school; and
3. provided that the alternative provision would be consistent with the overall purposes of the school curriculum set out in section 1 of the 1988 Act.

Teachers

Teachers cannot be required to lead or attend collective worship except where the law provides otherwise, which would normally only happen in a maintained school with a religious designation. All teachers, including the head teacher, have the right of withdrawal, however the responsibility for ensuring the school's compliance remains with the head teacher.

Since the Education Act of 1988, every local authority (LA) has been required to set up a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE).

The main purposes of SACREs are:

- to advise local authorities on the implementation of the agreed syllabus for religious education in schools, and to express a view as to whether or not the syllabus needs revision (it must be reviewed every five years);
- to advise local authorities on the conduct of daily reflection, which is legally required in schools;
- to consider applications from schools who wish to take advantage of the provisions of the 1988 Act and opt for reflection other than that which is “mainly or wholly of a broadly Christian character.”
- SACREs may also discuss any other relevant issues concerning the religious and spiritual development of children in school, and communicate its views to the cabinet/portfolio holder children and young people and the director children and adults. For example, recognising the fact that a quarter of our pupils follow Islam and will be affected by such issues as fasting during Ramadan, Ealing SACRE have produced a document entitled “Guidance to schools with Muslim pupils.”

SACRE members welcome the opportunity to visit schools and observe acts of reflection. Headteachers interested in extending such an invitation should fill in and return the feedback form.

Appendix two: applying for a determination

Before requesting a determination, the headteacher must consult the school's governing body, which in turn may wish to seek the views of parents. The application may relate either to a clearly described and defined group or to the whole school. Examples of parental consultation letters can be found below.

A determination, once granted, lasts for five years, and if a school wishes to continue to provide acts of reflection that are other than broadly Christian, then it will need to reapply to SACRE to seek a renewal of its determination.

Procedure for considering determinations

- 1) Schools submit applications (with relevant documentation: see checklist) using the attached application form.
- 2) A representative visits the school to observe at least one act of reflection and speak with the headteacher (or other responsible person) and a governor.
- 3) The head or other responsible person is invited to attend the next available full SACRE meeting, at which time the representative will present a report on their visit and make a recommendation as to whether the determination should be granted.
- 4) SACRE decides whether to accept the school's application.

SACRE members who can currently be contacted for a school visit include: Rabindara Pathak (020 8755 3287), Kath Richardson (07905 353496) and Cllr Swarn Kang (020 8571 1884).

Electronic copies of the application form can be found on the EGfL:
(www.egfl.org.uk/religion see under "reflection")

Completed applications should be returned to:

Nora Leonard, SACRE consultant, Perceval House P2: NE, 14-16 Uxbridge Road, London W5 2HL

Example parental consultation letter when applying for a new determination:

Dear Parents/ Guardians

I am writing to inform and consult with you about our proposal to apply to Ealing SACRE for a determination.

All community schools in England are legally required to provide a daily act of collective worship; without a determination, this act is required to be predominately of a Christian character.

As our pupils come from a wide range of religious and non-religious backgrounds we prefer to find a way of providing 'collective worship' that meets the needs of everyone in our school. In addition, Ealing SACRE recommends an approach where there is no formal worship; instead, following a presentation based on a religious or ethical theme, pupils are requested to spend a quiet moment silently praying, meditating or reflecting on what they have just heard. Only in this way can these important moments of quiet in an otherwise busy school day be truly inclusive and meet all students' needs.

The governors of the school are supporting my proposal to apply for a determination so that [name of school] can follow the Ealing SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) 'reflection' approach. This approach is educational in nature and promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils while drawing from a range of religious and non-religious traditions. For example, we may address themes such as 'community' or 'peace,' which concern both religious and non-religious people. A copy of the guidance document on "Reflection" is available in the office.

We will of course continue to mark the main religious festivals and observances such as Remembrance Day. I very much welcome the SACRE approach, as this allows us to make our daily reflections relevant to everyone in our school regardless of their background or tradition.

If you want to discuss this proposal further, please contact me within the next two weeks.

Yours sincerely,

Example parental consultation letter when applying for a renewal of an existing determination:

Dear Parents/ Guardians

I am writing to inform and consult with you about our proposal to renew [name of school]'s determination.

All community schools in England are legally required to provide a daily act of collective worship; without a determination, this act is required to be predominately of a Christian character. Since [date of first determination], [name of school] has had a determination, which lifts the requirement to focus predominately on Christianity.

As our pupils come from a wide range of religious and non-religious backgrounds we prefer to find a way of providing 'collective worship' that meets the needs of everyone in our school. In addition, Ealing SACRE recommends an approach where there is no formal worship; instead, following a presentation based on a religious or ethical theme, pupils are requested to spend a quiet moment silently praying, meditating or reflecting on what they have just heard. Only in this way can these important moments of quiet in an otherwise busy school day be truly inclusive and meet all students' needs.

The governors of the school are supporting my proposal to apply for a renewal of our determination so that [name of school] can follow the Ealing SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education) 'reflection' approach. This approach is educational in nature and promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils while drawing from a range of religious and non-religious traditions. For example, we may address themes such as 'community' or 'peace,' which concern both religious and non-religious people. A copy of the guidance document on "Reflection" is available in the office.

We will of course continue to mark the main religious festivals, and observances such as Remembrance Day. I very much welcome the SACRE approach, as this allows us to make our daily reflections relevant to everyone in our school regardless of their background or tradition.

If you want to discuss this proposal further, please contact me within the next two weeks.

Yours sincerely,

Application for a determination

Please consider this application for a determination to lift or modify the requirement to deliver reflection that is “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”.

1	School name				
2	School status	Primary	Secondary	Community	Foundation
3	Headteacher’s name				
4	Is this application for a renewal of a previously granted determination?	Yes		No	
	If yes, when does/did the determination expire?				
5	Date of governing body meeting at which the decision to apply for a determination was taken (please attach a copy of relevant minutes)				
6	Details of any consultation with parents:				
7	Religious affiliation of families of pupils in the school	Number or percentage			
	African (or other) traditional				
	Bahá’í				
	Buddhist				
	Christian				
	Hindu				
	Jain				
	Jewish				
	Muslim				
	Pagan				
	Ravidasia				
	Sikh				
	Valmiki				
	Zoroastrian (or Parsee)				
	Other				
	No religion (including atheist, agnostic and humanist)				
8	Is this application being made in respect of the whole school or one or more clearly described and defined group(s) within the school? <i>If the latter please give details, if the former please state what steps will be taken to safeguard the interests of any parents of children for whom broadly Christian reflection would be appropriate.</i>				

9	Please give details of the arrangements it is proposed to put in place in the event that the requested determination is granted. (<i>Your answer to this question must allow SACRE members to see that all pupils in the school are being provided for on each school day.</i>)		
10	Please attach records of acts of reflection for the current term and plans for the next half-term (<i>these can be brief</i>). SACRE members would also like to see examples of detailed plans for one or more acts of reflection that have been delivered or will be delivered this term.		
11	How many pupils in the school are currently withdrawn from:		
	a) all acts of reflection		
	b) some acts of reflection – <i>please give details</i>		
12	How many teachers in the school currently exercise their right not to lead or actively participate in:		
	a) all acts of reflection		
	b) some acts of reflection – <i>please give details</i>		
	How many teachers in the school currently exercise their right not to be present at:		
	a) all acts of reflection		
	b) some acts of reflection – <i>please give details</i>		
13	Is there anything else you wish to bring to SACRE’s attention in relation to your application?		
<hr/>			
Headteacher’s signature		Date	

Checklist of requirements for determination application

Application form: download from www.egfl.org.uk/religion		All-school plans for one term	
Governing body minutes		Detailed plans for a few acts of reflection	
Parental consultation			
Reflection arrangements			
<i>What do you have in place to ensure inclusion of all staff and students?</i>			
<i>How are non-religious views represented in the programme of assemblies?</i>			
<i>What does the school do that is innovative?</i>			

Name of school

Reflection and assembly policy

“Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality. ‘Spiritual’ is not synonymous with ‘religious’...” *Handbook for the Inspection of Schools, OfSTED, 1994*

[A statement of the school ethos, e.g.] (Name of school) is a thriving school which celebrates the diversity of the pupils and provides a nurturing environment for effective learning to take place. Good links with the community helps to create exciting opportunities for children to learn. The school has a positive ethos in which the needs of children are paramount and met by a harmonious team of teachers and governors.

[How the policy was developed, e.g.] This policy was created as a result of a series of meetings with a cross section of staff. It draws upon various guidelines issued by the DFES and Ealing SACRE, and is regularly reviewed. It recognises the legal responsibility to provide a daily act of ‘collective worship’ for all registered pupils. We are committed to promoting community cohesion, and by referring to ‘reflection’ rather than ‘worship’ it is not our intention to secularise the experience, but rather to make it fully inclusive.

Organisation

[See ‘where and when’ section in “Reflection” guidance, p 4, and developing a school policy, p 8, e.g.] Reflection is held daily when each year group meets together for their twenty minutes assembly time. Each head of year plans a sensitive approach so that notices, as well as the reinforcing of good practice by praise and the award of certificates at all key stages, are linked into the theme. This means that liaison takes place between the head of year and the person leading the assembly. Themes are often linked to seasonal religious festivals and poems, music and various textual passages may be used.

⁹ Note: an electronic version of this example policy can be downloaded from the EGfL: <http://www.egfl.org.uk/religion> (look under ‘Reflection’)

Overall aims

[A statement of aims, e.g.] We believe that the benefits—to both the whole school community and individual pupils and members of staff—of gathering together in reflection on a daily basis include:

- the fostering in pupils of an awareness of universal moral principles of right and wrong, justice and fairness and a proper concern for others and the world;
- an affirmation and celebration of the values and ethos of the school;
- the development of an awareness of, and a sense of belonging to, the many different dimensions of the school's community;
- opportunities to experience the sense of gathering for a special purpose;
- shared experiences that promote thought;
- the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including opportunities to reflect on practical issues raised by becoming an adult citizen of the world;
- opportunities to consider and reflect upon a variety of situations and issues and make a personal response; and
- opportunities to reflect quietly and make an internal response congruent with one's own personal beliefs and background: as explained above this may include religious prayers or other forms of meditation.

Content and themes

Assemblies are an important part of the school day. The tradition of listening to music, which encourages a sense of reflection as well as celebration and togetherness, assists in encouraging thoughtfulness about the ethos of the school. Themes are planned in advance and assemblies are presented by members of staff and invited guests from a variety of traditions. Care is taken to ensure that the chosen theme is sensitive and appropriate to the needs of the pupils and the school.

The head teacher is formally responsible (under the *School Standards and Framework Act 1998*) for arranging the daily act of reflection after consulting the governing body. In practice this responsibility is devolved in [name of school] to (examples: the deputy head teacher/RE co-ordinator, etc).

Monitoring and evaluation

Example: Monitoring occurs through observation carried out by senior staff and heads of year who keep written records of assemblies.

Withdrawal

Every parent and guardian is made aware of their right to withdraw their child from the daily act through the school prospectus. However we at [name of school] strive to make our acts of reflection as inclusive as possible, [if the school has a determination] and towards that end we have had a determination (which allows schools to opt out of the requirement to provide predominantly Christian acts) since [date].

Development

[How the school wishes to develop the programme (e.g. more pupil participation), and any proposed training/support for staff.]

		Date
Policy compiled by:		
Approved by:		

School:					
Person responsible for reflection:					
How useful did you find this guidance?	<input type="radio"/> Very useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> Not at all useful
Was there any section that you found particularly useful, and if so, what was it?					
Do you think the inclusive approach taken in the guidance will encourage greater compliance?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/>	
Was there anything else that you would like to have addressed in the guidance?					
Was there any aspect of the guidance that you found particularly troubling?					
Does your school currently fulfil the statutory requirement for a daily act?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/>	
Would you welcome a visit from a member of SACRE to observe an assembly or act of reflection?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> No	<input type="radio"/>	
If so, please give details of the person at the school to be contacted:					
Do you have any other concerns you would like to bring to the attention of SACRE?					
Thank you for taking the time to fill in this form. Please return to: Nora Leonard, SACRE consultant, School Effectiveness, Perceval House P2: NE.					

Acknowledgements

In compiling this document I have drawn on a variety of sources, which I would like to acknowledge here.

Assemblies not worship, British Humanist Association
www.humanism.org.uk

Collective worship guidance for Lambeth schools, Lambeth SACRE
www.lambeth.gov.uk

Collective worship in Brent schools, Brent SACRE

Collective worship policy, TeacherNet
www.teachernet.gov.uk

HMI Alan Brine, inspector for religious education.

The report of the Religious Observance Review Group, published 2004 by the Scottish Executive, www.scotland.gov.uk

Worship works: collected guidance for schools, East Riding SACRE
www.eriding.net

Nora Leonard
SACRE consultant
January 2008
Revised January 2014