

# Top Tips for Leading a School Assembly



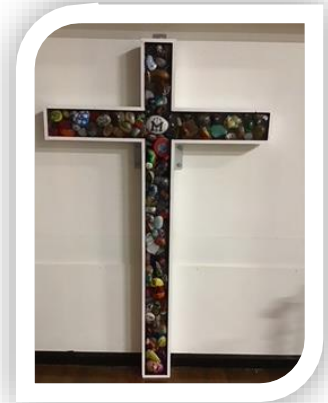
**We will share top tips for worship that is:**

- Inclusive
- Invitational
- Inspiring
- **Also**
  - What might go wrong and how to avoid it!
  - Where to find great resources and ideas

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# Remember

1. School worship should be Inclusive, Invitational, and Inspiring
2. In Schools E is for Education not Evangelism.
3. You have been invited to take collective worship because you are a Christian so do use Christian content.



## The Key Documents

### **Inclusive Invitational Inspiring [Here](#)**

Collective Worship in Church of England Schools Guidance 2021

### **God at the Centre [Here](#)**

Diocese of Guildford Guidance document Church Schools 2018

### **Time to Reflect [Here](#)**

Surrey SACRE Guidance for Community Schools 2021

### **Encounters with Faith [Here](#)**

Surrey SACRE Guidance about Visitors from Faith Groups in Schools  
Written in conjunction with the Diocese of Guildford 2015

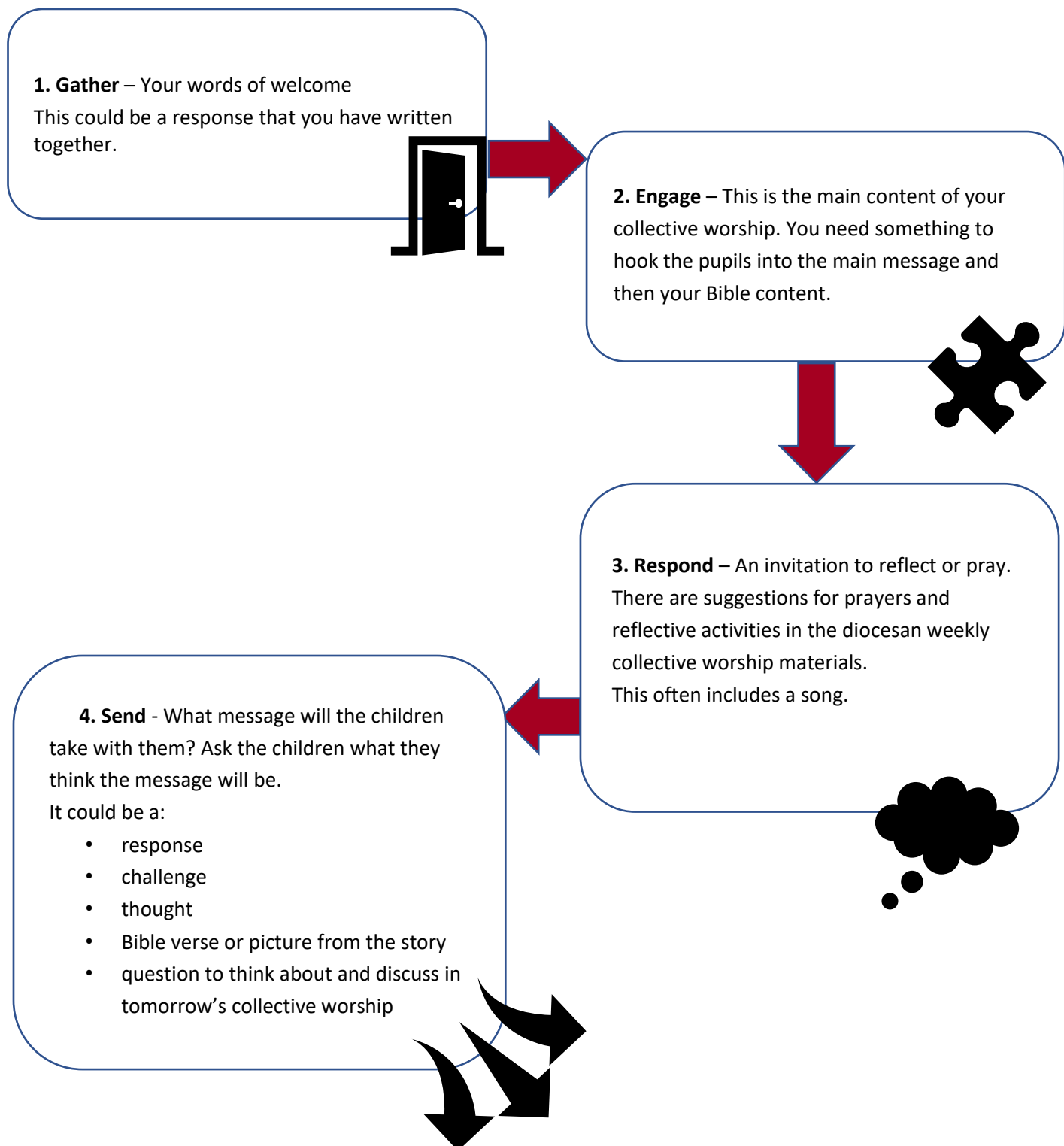
### **Creating Inclusive Collective Worship for All [Here](#)**

Guidance from the Diocese of St Albans about how to include pupils with additional needs in collective worship.



## Planning The Collective Worship Journey

There are four stages through collective worship, no matter how big or small the group.





## **Ideas for Gathering –** **Setting the scene as children arrive**

As a visitor you will have to fit with what the school usually do.

- Use an inspirational or thought provoking image on screen as children arrive
- Use music, playing while the children arrive, that links to the theme
- Opening greeting.
- Create a sacred space, as much of a circle of children as you can make in the hall and sit in the floor at their level.



## **Engaging - What from the children's experience will enable them to understand your**

**message? It's both a link and a hook.**

Younger pupils respond well to hearing about you, your family, your pets. Older pupils find that embarrassing, so talk about I have a friend who was in this situation etc.

- Ask questions about the image or music you had for gathering.
- Interview staff e.g What's your worst household chore?
- A mental or physical challenge such as lick your nose!
- Spot the difference pictures
- A quiz,

## **Then tell the story**

*Make sure to show a Bible and where it comes from even if you tell it in another way.*

- If you are using a well-known Bible story, rather than telling it all yourself ask the children what comes next.
- Use volunteers.(see tip page 5)
- Use images
- Use props – a closed box that you carefully place behind you, and while you start telling the story you keep looking over your shoulder – but you don't say anything about it. The children will be desperate to know "What's in the box?"



## **Responding – This must be invitational in schools?**

If you use a prayer say

something along the lines of "I

*am going to pray, listen to the words and if you who want to join in say Amen at the end."*

- If you ask a question responding can be:
  - think about this in your head
  - talk to the person beside you (talking partner) give the children 20 seconds and swap
  - gather an answer from year R then year 1 then, year 2 and so on
- Singing an appropriate song.
- Listen to a piece of music or look at an image or at a candle flame while the pupils make a private response.
- A collective response might be asking what we can do as a school to make a difference in the context of the theme.

## **Sending – What impact do I want the content of the worship to have on the**

**lives of the children and adults?"**



- Pick up the theme of the assembly in your response. E.g

*Leader* As we leave this place & time and go into the day ahead...*All:* May we trust, and be trusted.

- ask children to share a smile with someone they know /someone they don't know in school
- empower the children "Remember, although you might be small or very young compared to us adults, you can change the world by what you do today
- ask them to think how they treat others while they work, play in school and how they behave in school
- ask then to think of ways in which the school could help others in the local or world community
- As the pupils what they think the sending message should be from today.

## The Practical stuff



### Before you start to plan

Check what time the assembly starts.

Check how long you will *actually* have; it takes a while to get everyone in and there may be notices.

Find out how old the pupils are.

Find out how many pupils there will be.

What is the theme? Or can you do anything you wish?

Do the school want a prayer and if yes how will it be done.

Do the school want a song, if yes how will it be done?

Check what equipment the school have.



### Planning

Write down a brief plan, it is easy to forget where you have got to.

Plan what you will cut out if time is getting short.

Try out any visual aids, IT, tricks etc before you get to the school.

The hall may be in use until 2 minutes before collective worship starts so have everything ready for a quick set up.

If you plan to light a candle take matches as well.



### On the day

Have some means of knowing the correct time that you can see at a glance.

Get there much earlier than you think you need.

When you arrive check that everything still works.

Lay out what you will be using in order; if you are using a book put a paperclip to mark

the page.



Created by Adrian Copcutt  
from the Reach Project

### Volunteers

Say at the start of the assembly, that you will be needing some volunteers later.

Please could the teachers watch to see who is listening carefully and choose those people?

If you use volunteers avoid embarrassing them.

Give the pupils an indication what the volunteers will be asked to do. "I need 3 volunteers to act the parts", or "to hold these props".

Make sure you choose from across the whole school not just those that are tallest or in your immediate line of sight, choose a mix of boys and girls.

In a primary school the smallest ones at the front may well look keen to answer but freeze when you choose them. I often ask the head or a teacher to choose my volunteers.

Children may change their mind about being a volunteer, that is fine just let them sit back down again.



Created by the team from the Neeson Project

## Pupil questions, answers, and comments

Look for the pupils giving you eye contact so that you ask someone who is involved and will have an answer.

Use eye contact to make it clear who you are asking.

If a pupil answers, be positive about their answer. *"thank you"*.

If you think others may not have heard the answer you will need to repeat their answer more loudly.

If you would like more responses *"can anyone expand on what x has just said"*

Ask the question of everyone but as you look for a volunteer to answer make it clear you are looking for answers from all ages. *E'g Now I'm going to hear from someone in year 4"*.

It can be useful to target a few questions at particular year groups.

If you get an answer that is unconnected, or appears to be unhelpful, don't engage. Just thank them and move on.



## Managing Behaviour

Managing pupil behaviour should not be your responsibility.

You shouldn't be left on your own with a hall full of pupils!

Talk to the teacher who is hosting you on the day and clarify that you will be looking to them to pick up behaviour issues, you will keep delivering the assembly.

Ask the school what signal they use to gain everyone's attention, use that if possible.

If that isn't clear tell the pupils what your signal for quiet and eyes on you is tight at the start of the assembly. *E.g "when I put my hand up like this is means I need you to look at me"*.

If primary children are getting very chatty getting them to follow you in a clapping pattern or body percussion pattern works well. *E.g clap, clap tap the knees, tap the knees, pat your head, back to clap, clap etc.*

If one pupil is being disruptive get them out of the crowd with a small job, maybe best if this is at the side!

Point out the pupils who are showing the behaviour that you would like to see. *E.g This group in year 3 are sitting so well and looking at me.*

Make your voice quieter so that they have to strain to hear you.



Created by the team from the Neeson Project

## Meeting the needs of a wide age range

You may have children aged 4-11 in your assembly.

Aiming for the middle roughly 5-9 year olds can work.

Keep referencing year 6 *E.g I wonder if year 6 can remember anyone showing kindness while they were on their residential?* Reference the worship team if the

school have one.

Often the oldest children do enjoy the approaches used with the younger ones but are embarrassed about joining in with actions etc. Don't push them to join in.

Put in something visual or practical that will engage the youngest children.

Target questions at different age groups. *E.g "This is a question for year 5 and 6"*

You can enlist the older children's support. *"the way that I'm going to tell the story today may be a bit young for you, please can you help me by leading the responses for the younger ones."*

If you want to use actions using British Sign Language or Makaton or better than making up actions.

It makes things accessible to the younger children and has an authenticity for the older children.

If you are a regular visitor vary your style from week to week so that different ages feel that you care about including them.



## Meeting the needs of pupils with additional needs

The needs of the pupils in each school vary. The school should have a plan for how to include SEND pupils.

It's helpful to explain roughly what is going to happen in the collective worship at the beginning. E.g We are going to play a game, then listen to a story, then think together

about what it means to us. The school may use a visual time table in for the school day, they may have a version they use in assembly.

Think about the language you use, avoid figures of speech and obscure illustrations.

You may be asked to wear a microphone, if there are hearing aid users.

We have an inclusion advisor Steff Shepherd in the diocese who may be able to help.

### Creating Inclusive Collective Worship for All [Here](#)

Guidance from the Diocese of St Albans about how to include pupils with additional needs in collective worship. This is very detailed guidance which the school may find helpful as they create their support plans.



Created by Richard Wilson  
From the Neuron Project

## Whoops moments!

Make sure you don't use material or make comments that imply everyone has the same family make up.

Be careful talking about healing miracles; you don't know the circumstances of individual pupils in the school; this has caused pupils in my school real problems in the past.

Think about the language you use around inviting pupils to join in with prayers or songs. It is helpful to write this down. "I'm going to say a prayer if you wish to join in..."

Look professional, schools have a staff dress code.

Be aware of copyright around the use of images and photos.

Probably best not to use puppets above year 1 or possibly year 2 in an infant school setting.

## **Our Ten Top Tips for a Successful Assembly**

### **1. Think of a theme**

What is the point you want to make? This is your focus and you need to be very clear about it. Fix it in your planning with a single sentence. If you need to examine such a complex issue, then you must choose a single, specific aspect of the issue and concentrate on that.

### **2. Keep it simple**

This is probably the most important 'golden rule'. When you have your idea, try to plan your assembly so that you are focussing on one part of the subject at a time.

### **3. Keep it short**

You won't have as much time as you have been led to believe. Plan for it to be about 10 minutes so that you don't have to miss anything out. Schools are always happy if you finish early!

### **4. Link to the pupils' everyday life**

Think about the concept that you are trying to get across. What would that look like to a child in their everyday life. Start there, to ensure common understanding.

### **5. Ensure understanding of the words you use**

Check that the children share your understanding of the key words in your theme. It is probable that one word will be pivotal in any assembly, so it is vital that everyone has a common understanding of what you mean by it. E.g an assembly about co-operation while some of your children think that you are talking about the local co-op shop!

### **6. Illustrate your point**

Jesus used parables to explain abstract moral values and you need to do something similar for children by converting your focus into something concrete and visual. You need to show, as well as tell.

### **7. Use familiar props**

You are making a point and you are making it in a visual way but you don't want the props to be too distracting. If the children are trying to work out what the props are, they won't be listening to the point that you are making.

### **8. Reinforce the theme throughout**

Keep on coming back to your key message throughout the assembly. Make clear how what you have just said, shown or used fits with the theme.

### **9. Think carefully about any songs you use**

It is not appropriate to ask children to sing confessional words such as "Jesus I love you". talk to the school about their song selection

### **10. Have fun!**



## Linking to the school's Vision and Values



- Did you spot any of your school values being lived out in today's collective worship?
- How did living this value make a difference in the story or situation we heard about?
- Did you notice someone doing the opposite to one of your school values? *e.g calling someone names instead of showing respect.*
- Would it have made a difference if the people in today's story or situation had lived out one of your school values? Which one? What difference could it have made?
- How does today's collective worship help us to understand more about your school vision in action?
- Did anything in today's worship make you think differently about something?

## Questions to unpack a Bible Story or Verse



You could put these question starters on the sides of a big die; the questions the pupils ask, and the resulting discussion can be very deep.

**I wonder....**

**What?**

**Which?**

**If**

**How?**

**Why?**



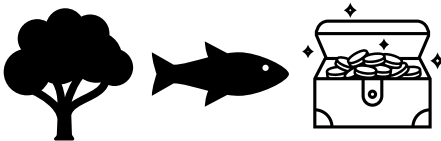






## Asking the questions about a Bible Story

### ***Exploring one or two will be enough for a single collective worship***

1. What are the questions you want to ask of this story?
2. What surprises you?
3. What difference does it make it hear / know this story?
4. Why was this story included?
5. What is the value of this story?
6. How is this story different to other stories?
7. Could this story be left out of the Bible?

## Storytelling Grid – Prompts for Telling Bible Stories

Explore the story or passage that you are about to tell with a series of prompts. Not every prompt works with every story, pick and mix.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
|    |                                       |    |
| What feelings and emotions are in the story?  | What people are there in the story – not only those mentioned by name?  | What objects are there in the story?  |
|    |                                       |    |
| What sounds?  | What still surprises you or puzzles you about the story?  | What tastes?  |
|  |                                     |  |
| What smell?   | 1 what would make a good opening line?<br>2 What is the turning point?<br>3 What will be the final line for your story? | What movements are there in the story?  |

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