

Dear Sirs

In our recent SACRE meetings we have been looking at updating the guidelines we offer to schools within the county concerning Collective Worship.

As you will be well aware the current legal demands placed upon schools, when it comes to Collective Worship, are both impractical and no longer reflect the reality of daily life within Wales. As the curriculum becomes more inclusive and seeks to reflect life as lived by the pupils, so it becomes more urgent, in our opinion, that the law about Collective Worship is revisited.

Our understanding is that when this matter has been raised in recent years with the Welsh Government, usually by humanist organisations, there has been a less than encouraging response and we feel strongly that nothing will alter that kind of reaction until the churches themselves ask for change.

The law on Collective Worship in schools privileges the Christian faith. We believe, therefore, that it is incumbent upon the churches themselves, as its chief beneficiaries, to press for change, recognising that the current situation is intolerable and actually leads to less Collective Worship happening in schools rather than more, since it is well known that there is no expectation for inspections to look into a school's performance in this regard.

As a SACRE, who have the legal responsibility to monitor Collective Worship in schools, we are not keen to close our eyes and simply tinker with the guidance we give to schools under our care, but are eager to see the current law changed, in order to help all schools engage seriously with their pupils through creative and thoughtful worship and reflection times, which can be pragmatically integrated into the weekly timetable. For us this is both a matter of justice and of the mental health and wellbeing of pupils.

We are therefore writing to all the leaders of the national churches of Wales to ask whether or not a change to the law on Collective Worship in schools is on their agenda and, if it is not, to encourage them to consider taking concerted action with other churches to correct a situation which has been allowed to get so out of kilter with both schools' and children's experiences for so long.

Yours Sincerely,

Councillor Menna Baines  
Chairman, 2022/2023