



Dear Kirst Williams, Cabinet Secretary for Education

Flintshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education noted the recent competing petitions concerning the requirement for the daily act of collective worship.

We understand that the petitions committee have now referred this matter to you to ascertain if it breaches any human rights.

We feel compelled to write to you to express our commitment and support of the continuing requirement that this should be a daily act and should remain enshrined in Law. In the current tumultuous climate it is ever more important that our young people understand and can appreciate a range of perspectives. Additionally the time for quiet reflection and space gives our young people an opportunity to collect their thoughts and gather themselves emotionally and phenomenologically.

The wording of the Act is that it is to be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”. So it can be wholly Christian, in other words not every day there would be a Christian act of worship, but it could be mainly Christian, meaning that, taken over the term as a whole, more of the acts of worship will be Christian than not. Of course that means that almost half the acts of worship could derive from the other great belief or religious traditions.

Until 1988 the law expected collective worship to take place in an assembly of the whole school at the beginning of every day. But now, it can take place in any group at any time of the day: the whole school, or house or year groups, tutor groups, form assemblies.

The Christian worship should not be distinctive of any particular denomination. So, it would be unlawful, for example, for the act of collective worship in a community school to be a Eucharist or Mattins. In a Church School however this can happen.

The worship can be reflective of other faiths. The school can seek a ‘determination’ from the Local Authority’s Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE). The determination could allow the daily act of worship to reflect the predominant major world faith found in the school, or indeed the range of faiths. The determination could specify that there would be no Christian worship. The SACRE has no power to nullify the requirement in law of daily worship for all. Parents can also exercise their right of withdrawal if they so wish.

Therefore we believe that the current statutory position is both flexible and protects the rights of choice. We would welcome the opportunity to receive the Cabinet Secretary's assurance and support of the current position. We firmly believe that it has been tested and shown to be the best option for our young people.

We welcome the challenge from the young people and are glad that both sides felt able to express their points of view. As the pioneer schools develop the new humanities curriculum

under Professor Donaldson's recommendations we would be grateful to receive reassurance that the daily act of collective worship will remain a central part of the life of our schools.

We are grateful to the cabinet secretary for her ongoing support both of SACRE and the position of RE and collective worship in education.

Yours sincerely

Delyth McIntyre
(Chair of Flintshire SACRE)