**Some suggestions for talking with pupils about worship**

**Adapted from ‘Listening to the Voice of the Learner’** (Diocese of Worcester)

*Note: throughout these suggestions the word worship is used rather than assembly. Make sure that you use a term familiar to the children/students.*

*Some indications of age appropriateness is given but, of course, you are free to use the material as you wish.*

*Notes need to be takes of pupil comments/responses. You may find it easier if this is done by someone other than you. It might be helpful to use recording form 2.*

*Question/Statement examples follow the pattern found in the criterion grid.*

**1. Agree-Disagree Game**

* Display notices clearly printed with these words around the room so that they are easily seen.
  + AGREE
  + AGREE A LOT (Strongly Agree)
  + DISAGREE
  + DISAGREE A LOT (Strongly Disagree)
* Ask children/participants to stand in the middle of the room and then read out statements like…
  + Worship:
    - helps me understand the values of the school better
    - is there for everyone in the school
    - helps me see how to behave with my friends
    - … *(add further statements as you feel appropriate)*
    - helps me think about what I believe
    - gives us a chance to pray
    - is a chance to reflect on what is right and wrong
    - …
    - Is a chance to hear Bible stories and stories from other faiths
    - helps me to find out more about the church year
    - gives us a space in which to think about God
    - …
    - is sometimes fun and lively
    - can be quiet and serious
    - has times when we can join in and lead
    - …
* Each time a statement is read participants move to stand by the sheet that most accurately describes their views on this statement.
* Ask participants why they have chosen to stand where they are
* It is important to hold this discussion and record the comments
* With younger children you might use words such as
  + LIKE
  + LIKE A LOT
  + DON’T LIKE.
* Or simple emoticons…

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**2. Alien Adventure**

* Ask the children to imagine that they have just met an alien who has asked them what happens in worship. They can write or draw their responses.
* Next, ask the children to go on to tell the alien about places, things and people in their school that make them feel welcome, safe and happy.
  + If something good happens who would they tell at school? How might it be celebrated?
  + Now the alien wonders if there is anything, anywhere or anyone in school that makes them feel sad, unsafe or unhappy.
  + The alien would now like to know who they go to if they are feeling sad or worried or if they need help. How are sad times shared in school? Does this ever happen in assembly?
  + How does the school give children opportunities to reflect on how they behave?
* The alien is going back to his own planet now and would like to take some information about your school back with to show other aliens. Can you design a poster or leaflet about your school for the alien to take with him. You can include good things and bad things about school, the sort of things you do and the people you see there.
* As a thank you for being so friendly the alien is going to give you one special wish to help your school. What will it be?

**3. Beans in Jars**

* Set out a number of empty jars and label each with one aspect of worship. For example: story, song, prayer, music and so on. You could ask the children which aspects they want to consider.
* Give each child several marbles or beans (just not something edible!). It has been found that it is better to ensure that children had more marbles than the number of jars. Ask children to place ‘beans’ in the jars to show how much they like each aspect of worship. They can of course put all their beans in one jar or spread them more evenly.
* Review the results with the children by asking them to explain *why* one aspect is liked more than others and (equally important) what is it about the less popular aspects that they don't like. How could the less popular aspects be improved?
* Remember you are trying to find the *quality of experience* that children identify with worship.
* *Knowing* that the prayers are a favourite part is only part of the story - you need to try to find out *why*.
* Discuss with the children how you might summarise the outcome of the activity to share with others – **then do it**. This might be enough as a record for monitoring or you may wish to write some additional notes.

**4. Evaluation Targets (**KS2/3)

* Draw up a list of statements
* Draw targets consisting of 4 concentric circles on flip chart sheets and write an

evaluation statement relating to an issue at the top of each sheet.

* Provide enough sticky dots for one for each target and ask children to place one on each target according to how strongly they agree with the statement – the closer to the middle the stronger the agreement.
* Some example statements:
  + Worship gives me time to think
  + Worship helps me celebrate happy times
  + Worship helps me to think about sad things
  + Worship helps me to reflect on my values
  + Worship brings me closer to God
  + … *(add further statements as you feel appropriate)*

*(You may also use some of the statements from activity 1)*

* Allow children to move around the room until everyone has had opportunity to respond to each statement.
* Spend some time together looking at and discussing the group responses.



**5. Ideas Carousel** KS 2

* Split into groups and give each group a piece of flip chart/sugar paper with a subject or question at the top – such as:
  + What would make worship better?
  + What is good about worship?
  + How would visitors feel about our worship?
  + What makes our worship special?
  + How does our worship help us understand our shared values?
  + Could our worship include a bigger range of different things?
  + …. *(add further statements as you feel appropriate)*
* Give groups 5 minutes to write their ideas down on their sheet then move the pieces of paper round.
* Give each group another 5 minutes to read the ideas on the sheet, tick the ones they agree with and add any others.
* Continue to move the sheets round in this way until all groups have seen all the questions.
* Display the final sheets; allow time to discuss the results and to explain thinking.

**6. Simple Questionnaire**

The presentation of the material will depend on the age of the children. Younger children may need help writing responses, or responses could be recorded (Consider using older children to help younger ones). For older children, able to write their own responses, the statements could be written on separate large sheets of paper with the invitation to children to write their responses (graffiti style) on the sheets.

Suggestions:

* I like worship when………………….
* The worst part of worship is……………..
* In worship I enjoy…………..
* In worship I don't like………..
* Worship would be better if……….
* The best part of worship is……….
* My favourite part of worship is………
* Visitors make worship good by ………….
* We have worship so that we can…………………
* In worship I wish we could…………………
* Worship would be better if……………………
* In worship I would like to leave out………….
* My best idea for worship is………………….
* Specific parts of worship can also be considered:
* Prayers are important because………………
* We should pray about…………………
* Our songs make me feel …………………….
* Worship makes us reflect on our values by………………………
* The best place for worship is …………………………………
* … *(add further statements as you feel appropriate)*

The questionnaire is not really made of questions, the use of statements means that the responses can be more than simple yes/no answers.