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**An insight into pupils' perspectives  
on school assemblies and collective worship**

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**Abstract**

*Since the 1944 Education Act, a statutory requirement has existed in England stating that maintained schools must provide a 'daily act of collective worship' of a 'broadly Christian' nature for all registered pupils (Department for Education, 2012). In recent years, considerable debate has arisen among educators, researchers and politicians over the necessity and appropriateness of collective worship in our diverse, multi-cultural 21<sup>st</sup> century society. However, there generally has been little consideration of pupils' perspectives, particularly those of primary age, on the effects that assemblies and collective worship have on children themselves. This small-scale study seeks to reveal such information through a series of semi-structured group interviews, with 12 pupils of varying ages (Years 2, 4 and 6) from a Church of England Voluntary Aided primary school in the East of England. The results bring to the forefront a number of key themes that are deemed important by the children - particularly concerning religion, community spirit, morals and values - while also highlighting more minute aspects, such as physical discomfort and pupil distractions.*

## **An insight into pupils' perspectives on school assemblies and collective worship**

**Katherine Halbert**

### **Introduction**

Since the 1944 Education Act, a statutory requirement has existed in England stating that all maintained schools must provide a 'daily act of collective worship' for all registered pupils (Department for Education [DfE], 2012). Collective worship and the assemblies in which it takes place therefore play a uniquely significant part in the daily lives of school communities. When carried out effectively, they can shape the ethos of a school and bring many positive benefits to children through the encouragement of spiritual, cultural, social and moral development.

Nevertheless, collective worship has been scrutinised throughout recent decades. Campaigners include Julian Huppert, Liberal Democrat MP for Cambridge, whose Early Day Motion called for the government to 'repeal the requirement for compulsory worship in schools and to encourage schools to hold educational assemblies that will include all children' (Huppert, 2010, p.1). Others, such as the British Humanist Society, are campaigning for the removal of faith schools and the choice for schools to offer collective worship entirely.

Much of the literature surrounding assemblies and collective worship are thus concerned with such political matters. However, there generally has been little consideration of pupils' perspectives, particularly those of primary age, on the effects that assemblies and collective worship have on children themselves. This is what this study seeks to achieve, through consultation with pupils of varying ages from a primary Church of England school. The central research question, from which a range of discussions will branch out, is therefore:

What are pupils' perspectives on their school's assemblies and collective worship?

## **Literature Review**

### **Legislation**

The Education Reform Act 1988 (Department for Education and Science [DfES], 1988) and circular 1/94 (DfE, 1994) – both of which are still implemented today – stated that the aims of collective worship should be:

‘to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes.’

(Paragraph 50, circular 1/94)

‘Worship’ reflects something ‘special’ or ‘separate’ from ordinary school activities by being concerned with ‘reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power’ (DfE, paragraph 57). The Education Reform Act 1988 specified this ‘divine power’ by declaring that collective worship must ‘reflect the traditions’ of Great Britain, ‘allude a special status to Jesus Christ’, and be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’ (DfES, section 7.1). However, it may also contain non-Christian elements or elements drawn from other faiths, as long as it still reflects and does not deprive it of its ‘broadly Christian character’ (DfE, paragraph 63). The notion of including elements from other faiths, but still remaining Christian, has been labelled contradictory and led to significant controversy (see next section).

The DfE (1994) suggested that ‘collective worship and assembly are distinct activities’ (paragraph 58) and, although they may take place within the same gathering, the differences between the two should be clear. Nevertheless, these distinctions were not clarified until paragraph 143, which stated that teachers have a duty to attend assemblies, but not collective worship. Only a single example is used to differentiate, with ‘the giving out of notices’ defined as a part of school assembly in which collective worship is not taking place. Similarly, it is briefly mentioned that collective worship should involve more than ‘passive attendance’ and instead ‘be capable of eliciting a response from pupils’ (DfE, paragraph 59). Again, the DfE made no attempts to define ‘response’, but recognised that some pupils may not be able to identify actively with the act of worship.

In faith schools, collective worship can be distinctive of a particular denomination and its traditions. In Church of England (C.E.) aided schools, such as the school used in this study, collective worship aims to give pupils and staff the opportunity to: ‘express praise and thanksgiving to God’; ‘foster respect and deepen spiritual awareness’; ‘reflect on the character of God and on the teachings of Christ’; ‘affirm Christian values and attitudes’; ‘share each other's joys and challenges’; and ‘celebrate special times in the Christian calendar’ (Archbishops’ Council, 2013a). These aims are similar to the DfES (1988) and DfE (1994) legislation but are specifically related to Christianity rather than being ‘broadly Christian’.

Furthermore, the C.E. refers to the importance of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (SMSC) in schools, through the promotion of Christian values. Collective worship is regarded as an excellent opportunity to encourage pupils to learn the difference between right and wrong, to make a positive contribution in community life and to recognise, respect and accept the value and richness of cultural diversity in Britain. In doing so, the values and beliefs of pupils from other faith traditions can also be acknowledged through stories from other scriptures and the recognition of specific religious festivals (Archbishops’ Council, 2013b).

### **Responses to legislation**

The government’s legislation on assemblies and collective worship (DfES, 1988) caused significant debate. Many politicians argued that Britain could no longer be classed as the Christian country it was in 1944; yet others were unhappy with the prospect of losing Christian heritage. The DfE’s guidance (1994) was therefore a multifaceted, complex document that attempted to adhere to traditional Christian beliefs but simultaneously recognise the ever-changing cultural and religious make-up of British society.

Consequently, much of the literature surrounding collective worship is centred on the debate of promoting religion in schools. Some view religion as a context for development, which can provide mentorship, support, social and cultural capital, and can contribute to their development of moral reasoning and decision making (King, 2003; Milot & Ludden, 2009). However, groups such as the British Humanist Association are campaigning against faith schools, calling for totally inclusive schools for children of all faiths and none, alongside the end of compulsory collective worship with broadly Christian values. Cooling (2010) expressed his fears that this

would come ‘at the price of having one’s faith treated as irrational’ or ‘irrelevant’ (p.24). He went on to dismiss the notion that ‘religion has to be banished to the private realm’ in order for assemblies to be inclusive in a plural society (p.52).

Moulin and Robson (2012) responded by suggesting that the enforcement of broadly Christian collective worship may compromise freedom of belief, because pupils could be forced to participate in religious practices against their or their parents’ wishes. Nevertheless, they were also aware that the non-existence of faith schools may result in religious children attending a secular school incompatible with their or their parents’ beliefs. As a compromise, they concluded that ‘the fairest arrangement of inequalities requires the existence of faith schools, but the non-existence of compulsory acts of collective worship’ (p.548). Norman (2012) concurred, stating, ‘An assembly without an act of worship, Christian or otherwise, can still function perfectly well as a school assembly’ (p.522). He further suggested that a presentation from an invited speaker about the work of a charitable organisation would be ‘far more likely to promote reflection on beliefs and values than is the singing of a hymn or the saying of a prayer which means nothing to most of the children’ (p.522).

### **Perspectives on assemblies and collective worship**

Very few studies make references to broad, practical aspects of assemblies. Smith and Denton (2005) reported that some children found assemblies boring, or even physically painful, because they were required to sit still on a hard floor for lengthy periods of time. However, other literature focuses on the religious and moral aspects of assemblies and collective worship. Gill (2000; 2004) examined pupils’ experiences, particularly focusing on the extent to which they felt moral values and spiritual awareness were acquired. One key finding was that pupils valued the opportunities assemblies provide ‘to feel part of a community, to be valued and to build a sense of personal and corporate identity’ (Gill, 2000, p.113). This theme also pervaded Cheetham’s (2000) research into teachers’ perspectives; however, the practice of assemblies in general was seen as more beneficial than the act of collective worship itself. He suggested that a theoretical framework for school assemblies – including citizenship education, spiritual education, and moral and values education – is more unifying than purely Christian worship.

Gill (2004) found that pupils acquire an increasing knowledge of moral principles through assemblies and collective worship, but this was not consistent across all schools and age groups. The consideration of moral dilemmas and their consequences, often through stories, was found

to influence behaviour generally; however, this was dependent on the children's own ability to respond to such material, as some felt affected by external, social contexts such as difficulties at home. The youngest children in KS1, who had learnt a 'literally comprehended picture of the Christian tradition' (p.187) from songs and teachings were the most accepting of Christian morality. Yet some pupils seemed to believe in a divine reward system, suggesting that songs and prayers were offered both as an expression of love and to avoid unwanted consequences: 'If we don't say our prayers, he won't love us or...help us' (Y1 pupil, p.188).

Like Moulin and Robson (2012), older primary and secondary age pupils in Gill's (2004) study felt that broadly Christian worship was inappropriate, particularly for children from other religious backgrounds who had no opportunities to learn about their own faiths. One Y6 child rejected pressure by adults to believe in and conform to Christianity, stating, 'They try and really relate you into Christians when you don't really want to be' (p.188). However, Smith and Denton's (2005) discussion with children of other faiths revealed that not all pupils are threatened by Christian themed worship. Some were able to adapt to collective worship by saying their own prayers, not saying 'amen' and not necessarily singing all of the songs.

Older pupils commented on a generational gap between teachers who try to 'put over a perfect world' and pupils who realise 'that's not the way it is' (Gill, 2000, p.114). Students suggested that an effective approach to resolve these issues would be to allow for more pupil participation and planning, including more opportunities for class assemblies, in order to explore the concerns of young people and to relate assemblies more effectively to 'the reality of their daily lives' (p.116). Pupils of all ages also identified the need for variety, humour and relevance, and expressed a desire for the incorporation of current affairs and world traditions about which they claimed to know little (Gill, 2004). Interestingly, this is at odds with Cheetham's (2004) report on teachers' perspectives. Teachers believed in the importance of free choice when leading collective worship, particularly through the use of open-ended stories and relevant, meaningful material to 'connect' and 'bring things to their level' (p.59).

Smith and Smith (2013) observed the trend for virtue ethics, rather than values, to be the basis for assemblies and collective worship in schools. Virtues are defined as personal qualities (such as truthfulness, courage and kindness) and attitudes (tendencies to behave in a predictable manner, such as tolerance and respect) (Halstead & Pike, 2006). Thus, when good virtues are

being taught, certain behaviours and dispositions are recommended. On the other hand, values are impersonal and abstract, concerned with foundational beliefs and ideals which might shape behaviour but are not descriptions of that behaviour (such as truth, equality and justice). The teaching of ethical virtues, through cultural and religious resources

alongside songs and prayers, is recognised by Smith and Smith as an assembly; whereas when virtues were not included, it felt like an introductory lesson to a new topic.

Smith and Smith (2013) also noted the importance of weekly award ceremonies and house point assemblies, containing messages that certain virtues were desirable, such as hard work, generosity and kindness. Moreover, Smith (2005) reported that children expressed enjoyment when achievements were recognised and praised, but disliked being told off or lectured about school rules. Halstead and Pike (2006) further commented on the importance of school ceremonies that celebrate student achievement, because they encourage good behaviour and morality, and seek to engender such emotions as pride, loyalty, inspiration, thankfulness, and dedication. This is in keeping with Jones and Knowles' (2003) research that noted the effectiveness of highlighting targeted wanted behaviour through whole-school assemblies in improving pupils' behaviour.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

This is a small-scale case study based in a single-form entry C.E.V.A primary school in the East of England. As government legislation insists, assemblies takes place on a daily basis, with the whole school expected to attend at 9 a.m. for approximately 20 minutes. The school's latest OFSTED report rated the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as 'high' (1), particularly because its strong personal values, reflected in assemblies, supports the development of pupils. The analysis will refer back to OFSTED's report in considering whether the pupils agreed with their findings.

The school's intake is varied in terms of pupils' social backgrounds. However, its Admission Policy reveals that up to 6 out of 30 places are reserved for children who attend church or whose parents would prefer them to be educated in a school with some religious traditions. At least some of the pupils are therefore from religious backgrounds; however, a large majority are not necessarily part of a family with a specific faith. This was taken into account when considering

how children perceive the school's Christian ethos as portrayed through assemblies and collective worship.

In order to collect a stratified sample of children's perspectives, four pupils from Years 2, 4 and 6 were selected by their teacher to participate in the study. These particular year groups were chosen because they included children of differing ages (roughly two years apart) from KS1, lower KS2 and upper KS2. Teachers were asked to pick two girls and two boys from their class for equality; preferably those who were likely to be willing to express their perspectives during data collection.

### **Research methods**

The research method for this study is loosely based upon Gill's (2004) research into pupils' perspectives of collective worship. Gill collected qualitative data through interviews with 35 headteachers and 12 groups of pupils. However, due to time limitations (three half-days), staff members were not formally interviewed for this study; instead, the focus was solely on pupil input.

At the beginning of the study, I observed the school's assemblies every morning for two weeks, as did Smith and Smith (2013). This helped me to generate ideas for questions (branching out from the main research question) and later put the collected data into context. Semi-structured group interviews were then used to gather children's perspectives in the form of qualitative data. Group interviews were chosen because they encourage discussion between participants, sparking new ideas or criticisms. In contrast, it was decided that one-to-one interviews may generate less data, as the interview situation may be too daunting for some children. This coincides with Dockrell, Lewis and Lindsay (2000), who argued that the strengths of group interviews include 'the probing of consensus beliefs, the provision of social support in the context of "risky" topics and a natural style of interaction' (p.52).

Prior to the interviews, a list of open-ended questions was generated so that similar information could be gathered across each group. As Russell Bernard and Ryan (2010) noted, 'semi-structured interviews are flexible in that the interviewer can modify the order and details of how topics are covered' (p.29). Prompts can also be used to probe ideas further. However, I avoided over-prompting or asking too many questions, as I wanted pupils to continue the discussion



themselves. This prevented the interviews from being too formal and led to a more conversational style, allowing the respondents to have more control over how to structure the nature and extent of their responses (Dockrell et al., 2000).

The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed, with each transcript extract consisting of between 110-112 lines. This data entry allowed for qualitative analysis to take place, particularly through considering how ‘themes are related to one another and how characteristics of the speaker or speakers account for existence of certain themes and the absence of others’ (Russell Bernard & Ryan, 2010, p.5). Quantitative data was also generated through the coding of transcripts according to a ‘quasi-statistical analysis style’, using a categorisation scheme and corresponding 3-letter codes (e.g. [SNG] for ‘singing’ – see Appendix 1) to count the frequency of occurrence of specific themes (Polit et al., 2001). Key questions were used when classifying themes, such as ‘What is the person saying?’, ‘What does this stand for?’ and ‘How do structure and context serve to support, maintain, impede or change these statements?’ (Charmaz, 2003, p.94-5). This enabled me to identify and compare which elements of assemblies were most frequently alluded to across the samples, suggesting that these areas cause the most concern and/or interest (see Results and Discussion).

### **Ethical considerations**

Before commencing the study, my proposal form was approved. I read the Ethical Guidelines for Education Research as outlined by the British Educational Research Association (BERA; 2011), which provided a list of ethical considerations to be taken into account. In conjunction with this information, I followed the Ethics Checklist provided by the Faculty of Education. This was signed by my personal tutor to confirm that the project was ethical.

BERA (2011) underlined that researchers must ‘seek the approval of those who act in guardianship’ of participants whose age may ‘limit the extent to which they...understand or agree voluntarily to undertake their role’ in the research (p.6). I consulted the school’s Headteacher, Collective Worship Co-ordinator and class teachers, to ensure that I followed correct policy in collecting data through observations and interviews. The school had no blanket permissions from parents/carers to carry out research, so a letter and form were written, approved by the Headteacher and sent home with the children to be signed as confirmation of ethical consent. This included details of the study, alongside the ethical considerations

mentioned below. Interviews were not allowed to take place until these permission forms were collected in.

Data collection took place in the open-plan ICT area in the centre of the school, lasting roughly twenty minutes. Throughout the study, I operated 'within an ethic of respect' for the pupils (BERA, 2011, p.4), by treating them fairly and sensitively through my questioning, with freedom from prejudice regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, faith and so on. In doing so, pupils were also made aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. Furthermore, as BERA outlined, the participants involved in the study were entitled to privacy and given the rights to confidentiality and anonymity. All names of pupils interviewed have been changed, as well as the names of the school, staff and other pupils mentioned in the data.

I complied with all legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data as set out by the Data Protection Act (1998) and subsequent similar acts. The permission slips have been stored securely in a private folder to protect the identities of the participants and their parents, though have not yet been destroyed because they are a signed agreement of parent/carer permission. The interviews were audio recorded on a Dictaphone, then uploaded and stored securely on a password-protected laptop used solely by me, the researcher. This ensured that the agreed confidentiality and anonymity was not indirectly breached. All of the recorded data will be destroyed at the end of the academic year 2012-13.

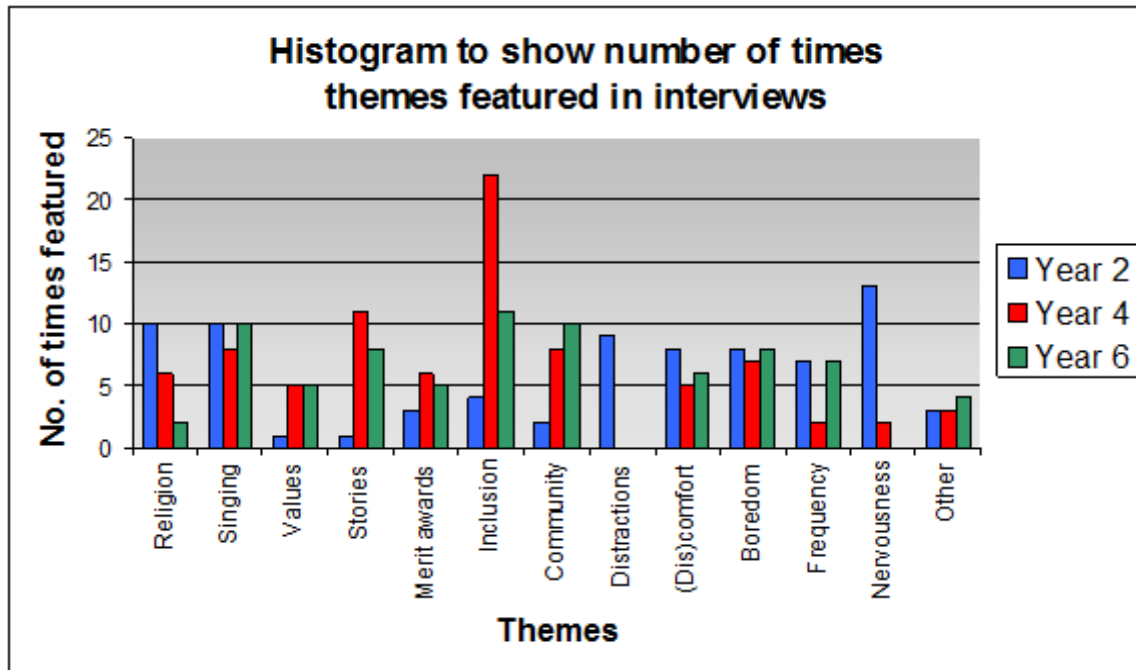
## **Results and Discussion**

### **Data**

Transcripts of the interviews, including coding, can be found in Appendices 2 (Y2), 3 (Y4) and 4 (Y6). Table 1 and Figure 1 below illustrate the range of themes that arose in the interviews and how many times these themes featured. The following sections in this chapter will refer to these Appendices and Table and Figure throughout.

Theme	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
Religion	10	6	2
Singing	10	8	10
Values	1	5	5
Stories	1	11	8
Merit awards	3	6	5
Inclusion	4	22	11
Community	2	8	10
Distractions	9	0	0
(Dis)comfort	8	5	6
Boredom	8	7	8
Frequency	7	2	7
Nervousness	13	2	0
Other	3	3	4
Total	79	85	76

**Table 1. Table to show number of times themes featured in interviews**



**Figure 1. Histogram to show number of times themes featured in interviews**

### **Religion**

During daily collective worship at this school, frequent links are made to Christianity through prayers, songs, talks and readings. Out of all the groups, religion was most frequently alluded to by the Y2 pupils as a key feature of assemblies. This is highlighted in the first responses given

when asked what they thought about assemblies: ‘You learn about Jesus’, swiftly followed by ‘And about God’ (Appendix 2, Y2, lines 2-3). Assemblies were deemed important by the children specifically because of their relation to Christianity (lines 55-8):

H: Yes. I like assembly and I think it’s important because we learn about God.

A: And God is special and we learn about him.

G: It’s important because when you learn about Jesus, you learn new stuff that you maybe haven’t heard of before.

It is interesting to note, however, that only Gemma frequently attends church, as she mentioned, ‘I am more interested in learning about Jesus because I’m a really good Christian. And I go to church every Sunday...’ (lines 40-2). Her repeated references to the importance of assemblies in promoting Christianity and providing information - such as the distinction between the Old and New Testaments (lines 64-5) - reflect these beliefs. Outside of the recorded interview, Hannah and Callum reported that their only contact with Christianity is through school, whereas Amran is Muslim. Although one cannot speculate on children’s personal faith, it could be suggested that, as Gill (2000; 2004) also found, some KS1 children may not yet have formed their own beliefs outside of the school context and have learnt a ‘literally comprehended picture of the Christian tradition’ from songs and teaching in assemblies. They are likely to have been influenced by the language of the school, produced by adults in assemblies and R.E. lessons, as reflected when Amran stated, ‘God is special’ (Y2, line 56), without full understanding. The arguments for this are further justified in the Singing subsection when considering children’s responses to other aspects of collective worship, such as songs.

In contrast, Y4 and Y6 pupils made few specific references to religious aspects of assemblies. Pupils expressed their enjoyment of the local Reverend’s visits to the school, but were disappointed that he has not attended in recent months due to ill health (Appendix 3, Y4, lines 17-18, 35-6; Appendix 4, Y6, lines 40-3). However, generally, there were no concerns towards the inclusion of Christianity in assemblies, despite the fact that only 3 of the 8 pupils are practising Christians. It may be that, growing up in a C.E. school, pupils have become familiar with the concept of collective worship and are neutral in their feelings towards the notion of deity, neither passionately for nor against its presence in assemblies. This suggests that issues driven by Norman (2012) and Moulin and Robson (2012) are not reflective of all faith schools containing non-religious pupils. It also contradicts Gill’s (2000; 2004) findings that older

primary age pupils viewed Christian worship as inappropriate and pressurising pupils to conform to unwanted beliefs. The debate raging among Christian and humanist educationalists is therefore not as reflective of all pupils' beliefs as they may think.

### **Values, Stories and Merit awards**

Although pupils in Y4 and Y6 expressed few perspectives on religion explicitly, they offered insight into how Christian values are interwoven through other aspects of assemblies and collective worship. For example, Y4 pupils enjoyed the 'special stories', including those from the Bible, because they are related to 'special topics' (lines 42-8). These topics are known in the school community as 'values' and are changed on a half-termly basis. This is in keeping with the DfE's (1994) notion of collective worship, which should 'promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes' (paragraph 50). However, the school's use of the term 'values' is broader than Smith and Smith's (2013) definitions, as it encompasses what both the promotion of certain qualities and attitudes ('virtues') as well as abstract beliefs that shape behaviour ('values').

Rebecca (Y4) responded positively to how values are used in assemblies, saying, 'We do special stories related to that to see how people persevered which is quite good' (lines 45-6). When asked if these are an important part of assemblies, Tim replied 'Yeah, 'cause then we've got something to think about during assembly' (line 48). This corresponds with the C.E.'s aims for collective worship, which seeks to give pupils the opportunity to 'reflect on the character of God and on the teachings of Christ' and 'affirm Christian values and attitudes' (2013). However, during my research, I also observed assemblies that included perseverance stories from recent times, including the lives of Aung San Suu Kyi and Dame Kelly Holmes, which highlights how SMSC can promote values and be used effectively without direct links to Christianity. Only one Y2 pupil commented directly on the use of stories and values, but insightfully suggested that it has a positive effect on behaviour: 'Also when the teachers tell us about people who have persevered you want to persevere in your work and stuff' (lines 66-7).

In contrast, some Y6 pupils were initially negative towards stories. In particular, Luke stated, 'We always have stories and I don't like the stories. They're like little kid stories' (lines 32-3), before suggesting they have their own assembly to counteract this issue. It was also noted that they had heard 'most of them' before (line 35), which may highlight a flaw in the school's cyclical rota of promoting values. Nevertheless, the pupils admitted that the stories can be

beneficial despite being too infantile, although their language suggested some uncertainty: ‘They always sort of mean something’; ‘I suppose it helps with how we behave and treat people’; ‘I suppose it helps me think...oh yeah I should keep trying when something is hard’ (lines 46-52).

Pupils were more positive towards merit award assemblies - in which two pupils per class are awarded for their achievements or good behaviour – exemplified when Luke explained that he sets himself a goal to get a merit as ‘something to aim for at the end of the week’ (lines 81-3). Similarly, Milly (Y4) listed the merit award assemblies as her favourite because she likes to hear ‘what we need to do to improve our behaviour’ and is inspired to think that she can ‘do that too’ (lines 32-4). This is in line with the C.E.’s aims for pupils to ‘share each other's joys and challenges’ through collective worship (2013a). Furthermore, it concurs with research stating that weekly award ceremonies such as this contain messages that certain virtues are desirable, such as hard work, dedication and kindness (Halstead & Pike, 2006; Smith & Smith, 2013). Overall, it can be concluded that the pupils generally agreed with OFSTED’s report, which stated that the school’s strong personal values, as reflected in assemblies, supports the development of pupils.

### **Singing**

Pupils’ perspectives of singing and music in assemblies were varied. Gemma (Y2) expressed her enjoyment of all the songs and the accompanying actions (lines 91-2) due to their Christian associations (lines 105-6). However, both Hannah and Amran felt that assemblies would be improved if the songs were ‘cooler’ (lines 95-6, 102-4), especially if it was rock music played on guitars. These opinions reflect Norman’s (2012) suggestion that ‘the singing of a hymn...means nothing to most of the pupils’ (p.522), and refers back to the notion that the true meaning of Christianity may be misunderstood at this young age (see the Religion subsection). The boys also described their boredom, discomfort and nervousness when singing, explaining, ‘I get really bored...my throat gets really tired of all the singing. And I’m not a very good singer’ (lines 86-7) and ‘I don’t know the words...and I don’t like my voice. I think they will laugh at my voice’ (lines 98-9), at which point Amran admitted he mimes to avoid ridicule from other pupils. Such fears suggest collective worship can lead to negative experiences that contradict Christian ethos entirely.

Although Y4 children enjoy singing, they had become disillusioned with the repetitive nature of singing assemblies merely for the sake of practising for church services. In contrast, Archie (Y6) argued that assemblies put ‘most people in a good mood’, particularly when the children sing, because it’s ‘quite lively and it gets people involved’ (lines 3-6). Although he admitted finding the slow songs dull, Luke believed that the key reason the school insists on having so many assemblies is because ‘the only times we do singing is assembly and school plays...so assembly could help us with singing’ (lines 23-5). This is a very practical view of assemblies, but again disregards the underlying aspects of collective worship.

### **Inclusion and Community**

As Figure 1 and Table 1 illustrate, the theme that featured most across all interviews was inclusion, referred to 22 times by Y4 pupils. They were extremely positive about special sports and music assemblies in which pupils can perform, because it empowers pupils to have more control and freedom ‘without getting told what to do’ by teachers and to feel like they can ‘let it all go and do it’ (Tim, lines 68-9). The pupils also noted the importance of community, through sharing life outside of school and inspiring younger children to participate in sports or music (lines 70-2). Due to their roles as assembly monitors, they showed a keen interest in making assemblies more interactive and inclusive to enhance the school community. For example, they preferred assemblies when children were actively involved and wanted to find further ways to achieve this, for example including ‘acting in the stories’ (line 76), with children wearing costumes to ‘make it more realistic’ (line 60). This, they believed, would make stories more engaging and exciting so that pupils can ‘feel the story and how it was like then’ (line 61). These perspectives mirror those revealed in Gill’s (2000) study, in which pupils desired more variety, humour, relevance, and pupil participation and planning.

Y6 pupils also reported that they would like to ‘get involved a bit more’ and ‘talk a bit’ (lines 102-110). Alongside more opportunities for class assemblies, Archie suggested that pupils could have ‘five minutes [chatting] to the person next to you’ before reporting back to the teacher, mimicking the style of a lesson. Similarly, Rebecca (Y4) suggested that assemblies could involve a quiz ‘to test how well we’ve been listening’ (lines 102-4). However, all of the Y2 pupils expressed their apprehension in being involved in such interaction (lines 43-53), for example when Hannah said, ‘Sometimes I think I’m gonna be the only one putting my hand up...and it’s scary...while you’re talking they keep looking at you’ (lines 49-52). Therefore, while older children enjoy the sense of community built through pupil involvement, younger

children are perhaps daunted by the presence of other unfamiliar children and are more aware of judgement. In order to combat this, it may be advantageous for the school to consider separating assemblies into Key Stages for certain assemblies, as suggested by Y6 pupils.

### **Frequency, Distraction and Discomfort**

Some of the data displayed pupils' negative perspectives of assemblies and collective worship. Pupils from every year group reported that they disliked having assemblies every day because it's 'boring' (Hannah, Y2, line 30) when the children are 'just sitting there doing nothing' (Tim, Y4, line 100-1). A sense of boredom repeatedly arose through Y2 pupils' numerous references to distractions, particularly other children chatting to them. Again, the consideration of age appropriateness and awareness that younger children have poorer attentional control abilities (Davidson et al., 2006) may well be beneficial in dealing with this. The discomfort of being 'squashed' (Y2, line 14) when sitting on the floor was reported as another distraction for the children, as Smith and Denton (2005) also discovered in their research.

When asked what they would prefer to do with assembly time, the most common response was more lessons. This was particularly poignant for Luke (Y6, lines 10-12), who was concerned about his attainment in maths and wanted 'more time to improve on it before our SATs', underlining that 'it would be a better thing to do with the time instead of...assembly a bit more every morning for ages'. For many teachers, this could raise concerns that pupils are becoming overwhelmed by reaching academic goals and may fail to recognise the benefits of time away from the classroom in developing socially, morally, culturally and spiritually. On the other hand, as the government continue to increase academic pressures in primary schools, perhaps it is time they also reassess the advantages of compulsory daily collective worship.

### **Analysis of methodology**

As the results show, the use of semi-structured interviews as data collection method was fairly successful in highlighting pupils' perspectives of assemblies and collective worship. The children bounced ideas off one another and I was not required to frequently intervene with prompts. However, it is possible that the true extent of the pupils' perspectives was limited by interviews taking place in a group context. As Dockrell et al. (2000) noted, participants may



have dominated the interviews by ‘restricting the topics for discussion or dominating the discussion themselves’ (p.52). Furthermore, some members may have been hesitant to offer a different or alternative perspective from the prevailing opinion within the group. Although all pupils contributed during the interview, certain members were particularly eager to respond and occasionally directed the conversations away from a question by changing the subject (e.g. Amran; Y2, line 43). This meant that some questions received few responses. Nevertheless, the discussions never moved away from the key topic of assemblies so all input was highly valued.

If there had been no time restraints, it would have been beneficial to back up the group interviews with one-to-one interviews, to allow pupils further opportunities for input. Another possibility would have been to provide pupils with a questionnaire at the start of the process, followed by interviews based upon their responses. This would have also provided another layer of quantitative data to triangulate with the qualitative data, allowing me to ‘confirm or challenge the findings of one method with those of another’ (Laws, 2003, p.281). However, this arguably would not have offered such a rich resource of data on pupils’ perspectives, limiting pupils to agree or disagree with a statement rather than allowing them to express their views freely.

Coding was an effective method, highlighting which themes were most commonly referred to during each interview. Index codes were used to highlight the direct mentions of or underlying themes within a response. included (as described by Russell Bernard & Ryan, 2010), perhaps to measure whether a statement offered a positive or negative perspective on an issue. Rather than simply using flat coding, hierarchical coding could have also grouped sub-coded, interlinked themes together (Taylor & Gibbs, 2010), but this was alluded to in the layout of the research discussion.

## **Implications for professional development**

This study has highlighted the importance of considering pupils’ perspectives on school issues and has increased my awareness of primary age children’s abilities to form and express strong opinions. It could be easy to assume that children will graciously (or unknowingly) accept and conform to the ways in which headteachers and staff members choose to run the school. However, I am now very conscious that this view could negatively impact on children’s social, emotional and intellectual development if pupil voice is not taken into consideration. It is vital to give pupils the opportunity to share their perspectives for the benefit of the school community and this is something I will aim to promote in my future career, both within my own classroom

(e.g. giving children the opportunity to feed back ideas for activities or topics) and on a whole-school level (e.g. offering to set up or help run a school council).

The significance of pupil voice arose from several of the key findings. Firstly, pupils in Y4 and Y6 frequently referred to their desire for more inclusion in assemblies as a way of involving pupils and developing community spirit. Rather than listening to a teacher read aloud, the children wanted to see more opportunities for class assemblies and pupil performance, particularly in retelling stories. This would benefit the performers by allowing them to develop skills such as teamwork, organisation and creativity, while deepening their understanding of the subject in question. It would simultaneously make the assembly content more engaging, relevant and understandable for pupils in the audience. In the classroom, high-quality teaching practice will allow pupils to be actively involved in their learning. This should be replicated in the opportunities for learning about wider issues and for SMSC development in assemblies and collective worship.

The findings did, however, show that pupils' opinions vary between year groups. Pupils in Y2 were not in favour of inclusion or interaction during assemblies due to feelings of nervousness and anxiety at other people watching and judging them. Meanwhile, Y6 pupils felt the stories were too immature. These varying perspectives highlight the difficulty of providing collective worship across a broad age range, because what appeals and makes sense to a 4-year-old infant is bound to be different from the interests of an 11-year-old. As stated in the Results and Discussion section, the suggestion of having separate assemblies for each year group – even just for one assembly per week – could help to counteract these negative perspectives. However, these issues could highlight a deeper-rooted concern in that KS1 pupils lack the sense of feeling part of the school community. This may reflect the fact that the Key Stages spend much of their time apart, with different playgrounds, lunchtimes and classrooms in different areas of the school. It could be suggested that the promotion of whole-school community needs to move beyond merely sharing collective worship and this is something I will consider in my future practice.

Finally, a comment must be made on the ongoing debate of compulsory collective worship in schools. This study showed that pupils have many positive opinions of assemblies and collective worship in faith schools, including those from non-religious backgrounds. This contradicts the

negative literature that I found during my research and suggests the issues of compulsory worship are not so relevant to pupils. It would, of course, be necessary to carry out similar studies in state-maintained schools to see whether their responses are similar before dismissing the debate entirely. However, if any drastic changes are to be made to the collective worship policy, I hope the government considers schools' perspectives on a national scale before making any decisions. Unfortunately, as the drafts of the new National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) have shown, the true wants and needs of our schools and our pupils are not always taken into consideration.

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## **Appendix 1: Coding Chart**

Definitions of codes and themes

<b>[REL] = Religion</b>	<i>References to specific aspects of religion (particularly Christianity) in assemblies and collective worship, such as God, Jesus, the Bible and the church</i>
<b>[SNG] = Singing</b>	<i>References to singing, singing assemblies and music assemblies</i>
<b>[VAL] = Values</b>	<i>References to values, both directly (i.e. the school's 'values' system) and indirectly (i.e. underlying values promoted by a collective worship practice)</i>
<b>[STO] = Stories</b>	<i>References to stories in assemblies and collective worship</i>
<b>[MER] = Merit awards</b>	<i>References to merit award assemblies</i>
<b>[INC] = Inclusion</b>	<i>References to pupil inclusion and interaction in assemblies and collective worship</i>

<p><b>[COM] = Community</b></p>	<p><i>References to the school community as a whole, both directly (i.e. references to other year groups and pupils) and indirectly (i.e. sense of community spirit)</i></p>
<p><b>[DTR] = Distractions</b></p>	<p><i>References to elements of distraction in assemblies and collective worship</i></p>
<p><b>[DCF] = (Dis)comfort</b></p>	<p><i>References to elements of physical comfort or discomfort in assemblies and collective worship</i></p>
<p><b>[BOR] = Boredom</b></p>	<p><i>References to sensations of boredom in assemblies and collective worship</i></p>
<p><b>[FRE] = Frequency</b></p>	<p><i>References to the frequency of daily assemblies and collective worship</i></p>
<p><b>[NER] = Nervousness</b></p>	<p><i>References to sensations of nervousness, embarrassment or anxiety in assemblies and collective worship</i></p>



## Appendix 2: Interview Transcript of Year 2 pupils

*I = Interviewer G = Gemma H = Hannah A = Amran C = Callum*

- 1 I: **What do you think about your assemblies here at school?**
- 2 G: Erm, you learn about Jesus. [REL]
- 3 A: And about God. [REL]
- 4 G: And I like singing songs. [SNG]
- 5 H: Yeah, I like singing the songs. [SNG]
- 6 I: **So you girls like singing songs. What about you, boys?**
- 7 A: Erm, I think we are learning about God. [REL]
- 8 C: Hmm. Well...when people talk to me, I find it really annoying. [DTR]
- 9 I: **In assembly? When you say people talk to you, who do you mean?**
- 10 C: Erm, like...Oliver when he's here...or Ahmed. They always talk to me. [DTR]
- 11 I: **Oh, the people in your class. I wasn't sure if you meant the teachers.**
- 12 C: No, other people. It's OK if it's a teacher 'cause they're important. [DTR]
- 13 H: I think it's annoying when you're sitting down in assembly with your legs [DCF]
- 14 crossed...erm... 'cause I'm squashed or other people are squashed they always
- 15 put their legs on top of my legs and I find it annoying.
- 16 I: **Do you like sitting on the floor?**
- 17 All: Erm...*[inaudible]* ...no [DCF]
- 18 I: **What would you prefer?**
- 19 G: These soft chairs. [DCF]
- 20 A: Like moving chairs. [DCF]
- 21 H: Or like stools. No, not stools, the benches. [DCF]
- 22 G: Yeah, the floor isn't very comfy. [DCF]
- 23 C: Yeah, it's really annoying. [DCF]
- 24 I: **What do you think about having assembly every day? Do you like that?**
- 25 All: *[mixture of yes/no/don't know]* [OTH]
- 26 A: Not really, not really. It's a bit bored. It's like la...la...lalala. *[giggles]* [BOR] / [FRE]
- 27 H: I wish we didn't have it every single day. I wish we just had it, like, three days [FRE]

- 28 a week.
- 29 I: **Why's that?**
- 30 H: Erm... 'cause... 'cause it's boring just having assembly every day. [FRE] / [BOR]
- 31 I: **Is there something you think you could be doing instead?**
- 32 A: Get a bit more holiday... more holiday! [FRE]
- 33 H: I'd rather be doing more work. [FRE]
- 34 I: **Like what?**
- 35 H: Hmm... more literacy so I can practise my reading. And I wish... I wish we didn't [FRE]
- 36 have it on Mondays and Fridays. 'Cause like, when it's on Monday, you won't be
- 37 too awake because you've had two days off school. And when on Friday you
- 38 might be too tired to sing all the songs.
- 39 G: I like having assemblies every day because... because I like learning about [FRE] / [REL]
- 40 Jesus... because... I am more interested in learning about Jesus because I'm a
- 41 really good Christian. And I go to church every Sunday and then I
- 42 see Reverend Oswald and he's my goddad.
- 43 A: I'm a bit nervous at assembly. I don't know what to answer to Mrs Evans [NER]
- 44 when... when she tell us an answer.
- 45 G: Or when she asks a question. [NER]
- 46 A: Yeah, I'm nervous round Mrs Evans. [NER]
- 47 H: I'm frightened when I put my hand up. [NER]
- 48 C: Me too! I think I am when I'm in assembly. [NER]
- 49 H: I don't like putting my hand up in assemblies 'cause sometimes I think I'm [NER]
- 50 gonna be the only one putting my hand up probably and it's scary.
- 51 A: They all looking at you. [NER]
- 52 H: Yeah and they just stare at you, while you're talking they keep looking at you. [NER]
- 53 G: And you think... why are they looking at me? [NER]
- 54 I: **Do you think assembly is important?**

82		like it when Reverend Oswald comes in. He's... er...	
83	G:	He's my goddad. When he comes in I try to get his attention and give him a	[DTR]
84		wave and a smile.	
85	I:	<b>What do you think of singing in assemblies?</b>	
86	C:	I get really bored and sometimes my throat gets really tired of all the singing.	[BOR] / [SNG] /
87		And I'm not a very good singer.	[DCF] / [NER]
88	G:	I sometimes see him messing around when other people are singing. I think	[DTR] / [SNG]
89		that's why.	
90	H:	I like singing 'Trust in the Lord' and I like singing 'Sing'.	[SNG]
91	G:	I just like singing all the songs because they're all really nice and I like doing	[SNG]
92		the actions.	
93	I:	<b>Is there anything you think the teachers could do to make your assemblies</b>	
94		<b>better?</b>	
95	A:	Make the songs cooler. Like... <i>[pretends to play rock music on the guitar]</i> dun-	[SNG]
96		dun-dun...	
97	I:	<b>So you don't really enjoy the songs?</b>	
98	A:	No. It's a bit bored. And I don't know the words...and I don't like my voice. I	[BOR] / [SNG] /
99		think they will laugh at my voice. So I close my mouth and then... <i>[pretends to</i>	[NER]
100		<i>mime]</i> ...like I am singing and then they won't laugh at me. I'm a bit nervous at	
101		assembly, it's very scary.	
102	H:	I don't like the songs. Well I do like some of the songs but I do wish they was a	[SNG] / [INC]
103		bit cooler and you could take, like, instruments to school and take them into	
104		assembly. With like guitars.	
105	G:	I like the songs because most of the time we sing that Jesus is the light of the	[SNG] / [REL]
106		world and Jesus is around us and stuff.	
107	H:	I wish in assemblies we could just put our hands up and say 'Can we do	[BOR] / [INC]
108		something?' like play a game or something. I find them boring.	

- 109 C: I was gonna say what Hannah just said. And I'd like to play with toys. [BOR] / [INC]
- 110 I: **Do you think assembly is a time for that?**
- 111 C: I don't think so but I just wish we could to make them more fun. [BOR] / [INC]
- 112 G: I don't. I like assemblies how they are. [OTH]

### **Appendix 3: Interview Transcript of Year 4 pupils**

*I = Interviewer R = Rebecca M = Milly L = Lewis T = Tim*

- 1 I: **What do you think about assemblies?**
- 2 R: Well...we help to set up the assemblies. Like put on the CDs and put the stuff out [INC]  
3 and set up the benches and things. So we like them because we help.
- 4 L: But it can be annoying...like when you put the CDs and words back and come [INC]  
5 back in the morning and they're not there! They disappear.
- 6 M: I think assemblies are quite good when we get asked lots of questions. [INC]
- 7 T: But we sing the same songs over and over again just to practise them and that gets [SNG] / [BOR]  
8 really boring.
- 9 L: Yeah, it gets quite annoying when we've been practising the songs and after we've [SNG] / [BOR]  
10 sung them in church, we keep doing them again and again.
- 11 R: But that's so we remember them and know them for next year. [SNG]
- 12 L: Yeah, we are expected to know them off by heart. We have lyrics here but in [SNG]  
13 church we can do them off by heart because we sometimes don't have lyrics.
- 14 T: I just wish we could learn some different songs. [SNG] / [BOR]
- 15 M: I like learning new songs but on special occasions like candle services...or Lent or [SNG] / [REL] /  
16 Christmas we just hear the same old songs that we did last year. [BOR]
- 17 R: In assemblies I quite like it when visitors come and do stuff. It used to be every [REL] / [INC] /  
18 Thursday the Reverend would come in but he doesn't do that anymore. And...in [STO]  
19 some assemblies Mrs Evans brings some other people...some special helpers to tell  
20 stories.
- 21 L: Oh we do sometimes have assemblies about other religions. [REL]
- 22 T: No, that's more in RE than in assemblies. [REL]
- 23 I: **What's your favourite assembly of the week?**
- 24 R: I think the best assembly is the merit awards. [MER]
- 25 L: Yeah, the merit awards. [MER]
- 26 I: **Why's that?**

- 27 T: Because you get to find out who's been the best in the week and who...has been [COM] / [MER]  
 28 naughty!
- 29 L: I like it especially when we win the Brian Bell cup. [MER]
- 30 R: Which is for all the work that's been done in the best class and the Early Birds is [MER]  
 31 for the register...when lots of people in a class come in early.
- 32 M: My favourite assembly is Friday's 'cause I like to hear what people...what we need [COM] / [MER]  
 33 to do to improve our behaviour. So when you hear what someone has done well / [VAL]  
 34 and it makes me think maybe I can do that too.
- 35 R: I used to really like Thursdays because it was parents' assembly and Reverend [REL] / [SNG]  
 36 Oswald would come in and do a special one...but now I like Tuesdays 'cause Miss  
 37 Barkford does a special singing assembly. Then we practise all the songs for...if  
 38 we're going to church or something on special occasions...and we learn new songs.
- 39 L: Well I like Friday because it's the last day of the week and then I don't have to [OTH] /  
 40 work anymore. And I like Tuesday because I like singing. And...erm...I like [SNG] / [STO]  
 41 listening to the stories that Mrs Evans always reads to us.
- 42 R: Yeah me too, like ones from the Bible. We have a special topic for every term and [STO] / [REL] /  
 43 now we're doing perseverance but last term it was hope. [VAL]
- 44 T: Yeah we have about 18. We're starting again now on them. [VAL]
- 45 R: And we do special stories related to that to see how people persevered which is [STO] / [VAL]  
 46 quite good.
- 47 I: **Is that an important part of your assemblies?**
- 48 T: Yeah, 'cause then we've got something to think about during assembly. [VAL]
- 49 R: Sometimes Mrs Evans asks us to come and do stuff because...she lets us...kind [INC]  
 50 of...interact and lets us do things. Me, Laura and Chloe, when we were doing  
 51 assembly, we got to write for her display what we wanted to do when we were  
 52 older. And she was going to show it in assembly.
- 53 I: **Do you like when you're able to help and be involved?**



- 54 T: Sometimes they just stand and talk at you and they just show us pictures which [BOR]  
55 can be really boring. I like it when they get the computer out and they actually  
56 show us things.
- 57 R: I think it's really good the way all the teachers muddle it up so sometimes we [STO] / [INC]  
58 see slide shows and stories, sometimes we get read stories and sometimes we  
59 interact and hold things up and get to act out the stories.
- 60 M: I like it when people act out the stories. It makes it more realistic. [STO] / [INC]
- 61 R: Yeah, so we get to kind of feel the story and how it was like then. [STO] / [INC]
- 62 L: Oh and sometimes we get music assemblies when people perform their [INC] / [COM]  
63 instruments that they've been learning to show other people what they do.
- 64 T: And we have sports assemblies about different sports when all the stuff you do [INC] / [COM]  
65 outside of school you can, like, perform it and...
- 66 R: Give a lecture about it and how you do it. Last time I did golf and nearly hit one [INC] / [COM]  
67 of the Receptions on the nose!
- 68 T: They're good because you get to do something that you like without getting told [INC]  
69 what to do and you can just...let it all go and do it.
- 70 R: And people will see what you're doing so you don't just do the stuff inside [INC] /  
71 school, there's stuff you do outside school. I think part of the idea is so you can [COM]  
72 make other people want to get into some more sports as well.
- 73 I: **Is there anything you think you could do to improve your assemblies?**
- 74 M: Yeah...a bit more, like, action into it to make it more exciting. [INC] / [BOR]
- 75 T: What...waving our arms? [OTH]
- 76 M: No! Not just waving your arms randomly. Like...a bit more acting in the stories. [INC] / [STO]
- 77 R: So people could come up and act the stories as they're being read out. Instead of [INC] / [STO]  
78 just having little puppets there might be just a headdress to show you're a  
79 shepherd and then you could act it out.
- 80 M: Yeah, you could have costumes and then it makes it even more realistic. [INC] / [STO]
- 81 R: Also, what I was going to say...this is a bit weird, but you get a bit of a boney [DCF]

- 82 bum sitting on the floor!
- 83 I: **Would you prefer to have chairs?**
- 84 R: Yes, because you get a very, very boney bum! [DCF]
- 85 T: It's really annoying, we're not allowed to sit on the benches yet. Why can't the [DCF]
- 86 Year 6s shove off!
- 87 M: We could at least just have a cushion to make it more comfy. [DCF]
- 88 T: The Year 5s and 6s should just...budge off. I can't wait for Year 5 then we'll [DCF]
- 89 get to shove everybody else off and have the benches.
- 90 I: **What do you think about having assembly every day?**
- 91 R: It's OK but maybe one day of the week we could have a class assembly so [INC] / [COM]
- 92 everyone in their classes do it and the teachers of the classes give an assembly.
- 93 I: **How often does that usually happen?**
- 94 L: Never. [INC]
- 95 M: Not much. We only ever did it in Year 1. [INC]
- 96 L: We could do role plays and stuff. We do get to do Christmas plays and our [INC]
- 97 Sparkling Star and Fabulous Finish but that's only with our year not the school.
- 98 I: **Is there anything you'd rather be doing with this time instead of assembly?**
- 99 L: Sometimes I'd probably rather do work instead of assembly all the time. [FRE]
- 100 T: Yeah, not always, just sometimes. 'Cause...in assembly most people are just [FRE] / [BOR]
- 101 sitting there doing nothing.
- 102 R: Maybe we could have an activity to do while the teacher is at the front. So like [INC] / [STO]
- 103 a quiz on what's happening in the assembly or about a certain story to test how
- 104 well we've been listening.
- 105 T: *[laughs]* Even the younger ones? [OTH]
- 106 M: Oh yeah that reminds me...the people that set up the assemblies...whatever we [COM]
- 107 do the little ones will copy us so we have to make sure we sit nicely and listen.
- 108 L: Every single person in Reception sits there like this *[stares with mouth open]* [NER]
- 109 which is a bit...weird!



110 T: Yeah they always stare at you. And I think...do I have something on my face? If [NER]  
111 we got up and moved they would still be staring!

## Appendix 4: Interview Transcript of Year 6 pupils

*I = Interviewer L = Luke A = Archie E = Ella R = Rachel*

- 1 I: **What do you think about assemblies?**
- 2 E: Assembly is OK. It's not good but it's not bad. [OTH]
- 3 A: I like assembly because I think it puts everyone in a good mood, like when [SNG]
- 4 we sing. Or most people in a good mood.
- 5 I: **Why's that?**
- 6 A: The singing's quite lively and it gets people involved. [SNG] / [INC]
- 7 L: I don't really like assemblies. I don't really see the point of having them all [FRE]
- 8 the time 'cause I think we could fit a bit more lesson time in.
- 9 I: **More lesson time?**
- 10 L: Yeah, like Maths. I need more time to improve on it before our SATs so it [FRE]
- 11 would be a better thing to do with the time instead of always having assembly
- 12 every morning for ages.
- 13 R: If we have to have assemblies we should have different ones so one for Year [FRE] / [COM]
- 14 5 and 6, Year 3 and 4...
- 15 A: Yeah we could do different points in a day. So if Reception and Year 1 had [FRE] / [COM]
- 16 assembly, then after their assembly they'd go into lessons.
- 17 L: Then do Year 2, 3 and 4. [FRE] / [COM]
- 18 A: And then Year 5 and 6 or something like that. [FRE] / [COM]
- 19 R: Actually...assembly just once or twice a week would be better. [FRE]
- 20 I: **Why do you think you have so many assemblies?**
- 21 E: I don't really know. [OTH]
- 22 R: The teachers just want us all to go. [COM]
- 23 L: I reckon it's for singing. Like the only times we do singing is assembly and [SNG]
- 24 school plays. And...we don't really practise the school play a lot 'cause
- 25 we've got lessons so assembly could help us with singing.
- 26 A: And I guess it's the only time we're altogether. Usually Year 5 and 6 go [COM]
- 27 together, Year 3 and 4 go together and Key Stage 1 go together in their
- 28 lessons and stuff.

- 29 R: Oh yeah...well I've got a brother and some other people have got younger [COM]  
30 brothers and sisters so it's nice to see them then.
- 31 I: **Is there anything else you don't really like?**
- 32 L: We always have stories and I don't like the stories. They're like little kid [STO] / [BOR]  
33 stories. I would prefer to have an assembly just for us 'cause we're older.
- 34 E: Sometimes they're interesting. [STO]
- 35 L: Sometimes but most of them we've heard before 'cause we've done a lot in [STO] / [BOR]  
36 Year 5 and 3 and we've heard most of them.
- 37 R: It's hard because we've been here...six...seven years so we know them [COM]  
38 really well.
- 39 L: And usually just Mrs Evans reads it and talks about it for ages. [STO] / [BOR]
- 40 E: Sometimes you get Reverend Oswald. [STO] / [REL]
- 41 A: Thursdays you do...sometimes a visitor comes in and the parents are [REL]  
42 invited to come. Usually we have Reverend Oswald but he's ill at the  
43 minute so we have different vicars and that coming in.
- 44 I: **In terms of the stories, you said you think they're for the younger**  
45 **children. Are they ever helpful?**
- 46 R: Well...they always sort of mean something. [STO] / [VAL]
- 47 E: I suppose it helps with how we behave and treat people. [STO] / [VAL]
- 48 A: Yeah 'cause we do different values don't we? [VAL]
- 49 L: Yeah. The teachers do different values for life every half term so that's [VAL] / [STO]  
50 what they talk about in assemblies and they use the stories as well.
- 51 R: This one is perseverance so I suppose it helps me think...oh yeah I should [VAL]  
52 keep trying when something is hard.
- 53 I: **Do you ever get a chance to do your own assemblies?**
- 54 L: Sometimes. We've not done one in Year 6. Nobody's done it yet have [INC]  
55 they?

- 83 a merit.
- 84 I: **So you actually set yourself a goal when you're doing your work?**
- 85 E: Yeah and you think, when you're in a merit assembly, oh will I get a merit? [MER]
- 86 A: Yeah and if you get it for your work or something, it just shocks you and
- 87 you're like ahhh... But me and Luke sometimes guess who's gonna get it. [MER] / [COM]
- 88 L: Ha yeah. And it's nice when my brother gets it and I can see what he's been
- 89 doing. I can see him smiling from the back of the hall! [MER] / [COM]
- 90 E: Yeah, and it's easier to see 'cause we get the benches. I love that!
- 91 R: 'Cause we've been the oldest for...what? Three years? [DCF]
- 92 A: Yeah. Everybody used to sit on the floor but now we get benches. Last year [OTH]
- 93 they only just brought in the bench thing when we were the oldest in Year 5 [DCF] / [COM]
- 94 but they extended the hall so it's bigger and Year 5 and 6 can now.
- 95 I: **Did you mind sitting on the floor before that?**
- 96 E: I didn't really like it 'cause it's quite hard.
- 97 R: Yeah and if you sit there for ages it's not very nice. [DCF]
- 98 L: I guess they could put a carpet down or something. [DCF]
- 99 A: Or sit on a beanbag. Actually that's better than a bench...I wanna sit on a [DCF]
- 100 beanbag! [DCF]
- 101 I: **What would be your ideal assembly?**
- 102 L: I dunno. I think we have to stay quiet a bit too much. We could talk a bit.
- 103 A: Yeah it would be good if we could get involved a bit more and chat to other [INC]
- 104 people. Like five minutes to the person next to you would be more better. [INC]
- 105 E: What, just chatting? [OTH]
- 106 A: No I mean if the teacher or Mrs Evans asks you something and then you
- 107 could hear what everyone else says after. [INC]
- 108 L: Yeah like I said earlier we haven't had a class assembly yet but we have had [INC]
- 109 loads of work to do so maybe that's why. It would be good if we had another
- 110 one.