**Freedom of Assembly …**

**What does the word ‘assembly’ mean? Does it simply make you think of our getting together in the school hall? The gathering together of people has long been a way of sharing ideas, opinions and influencing others to help you achieve a common desired result.**

**Early Christians came together secretly to avoid persecution by the Romans. Such meetings were dangerous and carried with them certain death for those involved.**

**The barons gathered together in 1215 to force King John to recognise their voice in the running of the country … to stop him imposing random taxes and seizing property.**

**We had the Tolpuddle Martyrs - [ see below]**

<http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/to/Tolpuddle_Martyrs>

**They were a group of farm workers from the village of Tolpuddle in the county of Dorset who were arrested under the power of something called the Combination Acts. These acts meant that the coming together [ combining ] of groups of people to organise for better working conditions, were illegal. Those who were arrested were transported to Australia without their families.**

**In Manchester in 1819, large numbers of people had assembled in a field on the edge of Manchester to listen to speeches about increasing the categories of people who were allowed to vote.**

**However the assembly, or gathering together, was deemed to be illegal. As a result, the local authorities sent in soldiers on horseback to break up the gathering. People died and approximately 500 people were injured.**

**So we can see that the simple act of people coming together raises many questions about freedom and human rights.**

**This is the first time in living memory that people have been prevented from gathering together in public places.**

**This decision has been taken for all the correct reasons – we all need to play our part in keeping each other safe and it is vital that everybody does this properly in order to control the further spread of the disease.**

**Of course this has to be done for now. How do you think this will possibly change our lives and social gatherings in the future?**

**Should limiting the number of people allowed to meet in public be a rule which we keep in place - for example to prevent gangs gathering?**

**Or should we make very sure that these rules are ended when the threat of the disease ends to protect our freedoms?**