

# Collective Worship Policy

*Nurturing Life-Long Learners*



Ratified by Governors:	March 2023
Date for Review:	March 2026

## **BACKGROUND TO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AT OUR SCHOOL**

It is a legal requirement that all registered school age pupils take part in an act of worship each day. These acts of worship must be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character” for the majority of the time. They must also be “appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils”.

Families who send their children to this school are in the main ‘nominally’ Christian and some children are from practicing Christian families. In addition, there are children who are from religions other than Christianity and some from non-religious backgrounds. We recognise that in asking our children to worship we have to consider the background that our children come from and it is therefore not the practice of this school to preach to or convert the children. The faith background of both the staff and the child’s family is respected at all times and we celebrate and welcome diversity of faith within our school community.

The Headteacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging the daily collective worship after consulting with the governing body. Parents of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school have a right to withdraw their children from collective worship. If a parent asks for their child to be wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at the school the school must comply unless the request is withdrawn. Any parent who wishes to exercise this right should consult the headteacher. Teachers may also withdraw from collective worship.

## **SOME DEFINITIONS**

### **Collective worship**

Worship from within a faith tradition has a very specific definition. A school community is not a worshipping community and the law recognises this by requiring “collective” not “corporate” worship. Broadly, worship in school is more appropriately referred to as worth-ship. This might encompass what is offered in a spirit of admiration, celebration and respect to God and/or people of excellence, worthy of honour and by extension to concepts, principles and conduct which are worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit.

Worship defined in this way draws on literature, music, art, drama and other sources of inspiration and reflection for pupils and staff whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none. In this way collective worship is inclusive not exclusive.

### **Worship of a broadly Christian character**

The majority of acts of worship must be of a “broadly Christian character”, and those that are must reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief without being denominational. Paragraphs 60-63 of the DFE Circular 1/94 asks schools to define this as according a special status to Jesus Christ.

If we are to be inclusive in our worship in this school, taking the family backgrounds of the children into consideration, then, when according a special status to Jesus Christ, all pupils, whatever their beliefs, need to be respected. It is therefore appropriate in this school to tell stories of the life of Jesus, but inappropriate for all children to be required to address Him in prayer.

Many of the characteristics of Christianity are shared by all the faiths. It is important to concentrate on these as well as those specific to Christianity.

## **VALUES AND AIMS**

We believe at this school that collective worship both supports and strengthens what we aim to do in every

aspect of school life. Our caring ethos, and the value which we place on the development of the whole child; spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually is reflected in our worship. We value this special time in the school day for the space it gives children to develop a reflective approach to life and the ability to express their reflections in traditionally religious ways or any other appropriate manner.

Through our collective worship we aim to provide a caring and supporting environment for children to:

- Celebrate and reinforce the school's 7 Learning Power values
- Become increasingly aware of themselves as individuals and groups within the school and wider community
- Grow in understanding of the feelings of other people in every day situations and beliefs •

Explore the language which people use to express their feelings

- Deepen their sense of wonder about the world around them
- Grow in confidence when making a presentation to the group or whole school
- Respond freely to religious and/or spiritual stimulus
- Acknowledge diversity and affirm each person's life stance, whether it be religious or not

Worship both reflects and nurtures the ethos of the whole school. It encompasses all aspects of school life and all areas of the curriculum so that every member of staff and every pupil may feel involved. In particular school worship here develops the feeling of belonging to a community which is essential for personal development and spiritual growth.

## **OBJECTIVES**

We see school worship as an educational opportunity with clear objectives. We use this time to encourage pupils to:

- Show interest in, and a concern for, members of the school community
- Celebrate special occasions together
- Show concern for the daily happenings in school life, the local community and the wider world • Share appreciation of worthwhile projects undertaken by groups within the school • Explore and review the variety of values, attitudes and standards manifested in religions and society
- Reflect upon dimensions of human life – the wonderful, beautiful, joyful, heroic, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn....;
- Reflect on the way in which humankind has expressed the deepest spiritual feelings, through the creative and expressive arts, scientific discovery, religious practice, service to God and other people.

## **PLANNING**

In this school we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework. The whole school meets together on Monday where the theme for the week is introduced. This assembly is led by a member of the School Leadership Team. On Tuesdays

each class has a time of collective worship in the classroom and on Wednesday each key stage group meets together. These assemblies are led by teachers in turn. A whole school singing assembly is held on Thursday, led by the music subject leader. We end each week with a whole school celebration assembly every Friday afternoon led by the Head Teacher.

We base our assembly themes on our school values, linking these to the PSE curriculum and then dividing each theme into topics. These topics are then reinforced through class PSHE time and class assembly time. We set weekly whole school PSE targets which link to the weekly school values and PSE topics and further reinforce the children's spiritual, moral, cultural and social understanding.

We believe that creating the right atmosphere is crucial to the quality of the worship. Therefore, the time is not over-dominated by school administration or moralising. We plan the time so that there is a variety in content and methods, allowing opportunity for quiet personal reflection/worship.

**We choose from a range of methods, including:**

- Pupil's contributions
- Sacred and secular stories/readings
- Dance/drama
- Prayer/reflection/meditation/songs/hymns/music
- Artefacts/natural materials
- Visual aids/focal points
- Dialogue/creative silence
- Visitors

**SUCCESS CRITERIA**

At this school evaluate our acts of worship against some of the following:

- A growth in understanding and embedding the 7 C powers
- Involvement, enjoyment, attention, reaction of pupils
- The growth of respect and tolerance within the school community
- Positive response to shared experience
- An atmosphere which matches the theme
- A contribution to individual and community sense of well being
- A sense of occasion
- Good order
- Staff affirmation
- A sense of challenge
- A place in the overall plan of the school

- Enrichment of pupils' experience

### **Staff non-contact time**

We appreciate the need for staff to have some time during the school day set aside for planning and preparation and collaborative phase working. We also recognise the value of the whole school, including staff being involved in our school worship. Therefore, staff have a rota of non-contact time during the Wednesday and Thursday assemblies and all staff attend the celebration assembly on Fridays.

### **Song/music**

Song/music is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and unifies and uplifts the school community. We have a bank of music and songs from which to draw, taken from a variety of cultures and types. We select our songs carefully to match the theme and choose songs which are inclusive for all children to sing.

Every week we have a singing practice. During this we take time to consider carefully the words of one of the songs and make this into a worshipful experience by reflecting on and responding to that song.

### **Prayer**

We feel that prayer is a good way of enabling children to focus their thoughts. Nevertheless, pupils should not be required to say or affirm prayers in which they do not believe. It is not always necessary to have a prayer and the use of regular moments of silence and reflection provides opportunities for some pupils to respond in a personal way if they so wish.

### **Visitors**

We enjoy the fresh approach which visitors can bring to our school worship, but we require them to adhere to our values. All visitors are issued with this policy and, unless otherwise agreed, will fit into the theme for the week.

Every month, there is a visiting lay speaker from a local church, who takes a Key Stage assembly, based on a Bible story, which links in with our assembly themes.