



Collective Worship Policy

Background to Collective Worship at Our School

It is a legal requirement that all registered school age pupils are able to 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 include those in the main ‘nominally’ Christian or from non-religious backgrounds. Some children are from practising Christian families, in addition, there are children who are from religions other than Christianity. 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.

The head teacher 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wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at the school the school, must comply unless the request is withdrawn.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. We do this by covering other cultures, faiths and beliefs in our RE and PSHE curriculum; wherever practical we cover the religious festivals of other faiths, e.g. Diwali- festival of lights (Hindu faith).

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:

- 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, 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. We use a combination of ways to deliver key themes, social or moral messages, or cover important National/ cultural/ religious events or festivals. We use the locally agreed syllabus for RE that covers teaching about all world religions and use assembly to highlight the key festivals and events celebrated. Our school values are constantly revisited and reinforced during collective worship as we are able to recognise and celebrate achievement and success of pupils in and out of school. We are able to challenge thinking, and guide our pupils in the choices they make as they develop their growing knowledge of what it is to be a good citizen and member of a community. Our acts of collective worship, through assembly, reinforce and support the teaching, curriculum and learning experiences covered in class through taught lessons in RE, PHSE and citizenship.

The headteacher usually leads the whole school worship, with a rota of other staff leading worship on some other days.

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 we evaluate our acts of worship against some of the following:

- 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 pupil's experience

SOME CHALLENGES

Intervention/nurture groups

We recognise the value of the whole school, including staff, being involved in our school worship, therefore, there are set assemblies which staff are expected to attend or lead. At other times they will be leading intervention/ nurture groups for children who need additional tuition or support with a learning focus. Attention is paid to those pupils who are selected to attend these groups so that they do not miss out on collective worship learning experiences disproportionately. Pupils may miss one session or a set number of sessions for a short period or a rota may be operated to ensure fairness and inclusion.

Song/music

Song/music is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and unifies and uplifts the school community. We use music from a variety of sources, cultures and types. We are careful about the selection, often matching it to a key theme chosen for the assembly.

Prayer

The use of prayer has led to a great deal of debate. We feel that prayer is a good way of enabling children to focus their thoughts. We have developed various forms of introduction to our prayers and may use some from other traditions or faiths, e.g., 'And now in a moment of quiet, listen to the words of a well-known Christian/ Hindu/ Muslim prayer/poem/reading...' Or we may use a 'thought for the day' instead as part of the collective reflection. When ending a prayer, pupils are invited to participate if they wish, e.g. 'if you agree with what has been said or would like to join in say 'Amen' at the end'. No one is forced to do so, but we do expect all our pupils to maintain a respectful silence and attitude throughout the prayer or reflection.

It is not always necessary to have a prayer and the use of regular moments of silence and reflection provide 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 request that they reflect and support our school values. All visitors contributing to acts of collective worship, such as whole school or class assembly, are briefed by the head teacher or class teacher and the focus agreed. Expectations are made clear so that all parties feel valued and able to contribute to the learning experiences of our children.

We are fortunate to have established a partnership with our local minister Reverend Rob Burles who regularly visits the school to support pupils learning in a variety of ways, e.g. weekly assembly, local visits to his parish church or generally in class taking an interest in the children's learning.