




COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Our Vision:

Achievement, Belonging, Celebration: valuing every child through fostering independence, inclusion, trust and support.

Our Mission

Supporting our learners to develop holistic skills for life.

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| Ratified by: | Local Governing Body |
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Policy Statement

The law states that collective worship organised by the school is to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character and should not be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination, provided that taken as a whole, it reflects the traditions of Christian belief.

It is our Policy that we aim that all pupils will take part in collective worship at least 2 days per week.

Our Collective Worship Policy and its Guidelines reflect the school's aims and ethos of being an encouraging, inclusive and caring community.

Opting Out Policy

Pupils

It is intended that our policy and its Guidelines provide an inclusive approach to collective worship and will be broadly accepted by a wide range of people.

There may occasions however when a parent/carer chooses to exercise the right to withdraw their child. In these circumstances then the parents/carers need to make this request to the Headteacher. This right was established in the 1944 Education Act and consolidated in the 1996 Act.

Staff

Whilst it is the nature of collective worship for adults and children to undertake this together, and whilst the school encourages its staff to take part in order that children experience this collectively, a person feeling unable to attend collective worship has the right not to do so.

The Standing Advisory Council on religious education advises that any adult not wishing to attend collective worship should communicate this request to the Headteacher for consideration.

Consideration will be made in accordance with the requirements of the 1944 Act, /1996 Act which prohibits discrimination against adults working in schools on the grounds of their religious opinions or practice in participating or not participating in acts of worship.

Collective Worship Guidelines

Aims

- Foster a sense of fellowship and community sharing value.
- Foster a sense of awe and wonder at the beauty mystery and power of the world.
- Allow reflection on the fundamental questions of life focusing attention away from the concerns of the moment to things which are of eternal concern to human beings.
- To experience or understand ways of worship in other cultures.
- Foster a concern for the needs of other people.
- Provide an experience of being part of a caring community.
- Foster new insights about life and empathy with others including feelings of joy, hope friendship concern.
- Enable pupils to approach the 'threshold' of worship through feelings such as awe and wonder, being uplifted, elation, deep appreciation, solemnity, peace, love, respect and reverence.
- Provide an opportunity for celebration, thanksgiving and sharing.
- All collective worship begins with an attempt at silence and end with an optional prayer.

Organisation of collective worship

The School holds collective worship at least twice a week.

- one is normally focused on a theme
- a second is focused on celebration of achievement and good news

The secondary site may also conduct a third, focused Christian assembly, conducted by a Thornbury church group, who enact Bible stories using 'Open the Book'.

In addition a class based act of worship may take place at appropriate times during the day, at the discretion of the class Teacher.

Whole school collective acts of worship are between 15 and 30 minutes long. Class based acts of worship are shorter lasting in the region of 5 minutes.

Nature of Collective Worship

The school's collective worship reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief. The school interprets this flexibly. The law also states that any such worship should not be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination, provided that taken as a whole, it reflects the traditions of Christian belief. It is not necessary for every act of worship to be of this character, but within each school term the majority of acts should be so.

The law states that collective worship should take account of pupil's age and aptitudes. This is an important aspect of collective worship in a special school. The nature of collective worship must be predicated upon the nature of the pupil's learning disabilities and needs. Their attendance at acts of collective worship may be affected by these needs and disabilities.

Building upon pupil's strengths and enhancing their self-esteem is an important aspect of collective worship in a special school. This is reflected in the major focus on achievement and good news built into our organization of collective worship.

The law also states that acts of worship should take account of pupil's family backgrounds. Culture is a vital element in our educational philosophy. Relevance of collective worship to pupil's daily and family lives is an important of our organization of collective worship.

Educational definition of "beliefs which are broadly Christian in Character" These beliefs encompass:

- An underlying purpose to creation and human responsibility for it (for example interest in ecology, pollution and stewardship of the Earth's resources).
- Human beings responsibility before God and yet failure to meet those demands fully (for example opposition to prejudice, cruelty, violence).
- The uniqueness and value of each human being and the possibility of new beginnings (for example concern for self-knowledge, co-operation and respect).
- God's purpose for a just and harmonious world, (for example fairness and unfairness).

Department of Education circular 1/94 provides additional non-legislative guidance. Defining worship as:

- 'Concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.
- Containing some elements, which accord special status to Jesus Christ.

- Implying more than simple passive attendance (it should be capable of eliciting response from pupils.)'

Prayer

In today's pluralist society, a creative silence may be considered more inclusive than vocalized prayer. It can give an opportunity for prayer rather than insist upon it. Our pupils should have the opportunity for quiet contemplation and it is important that they are guided to be still. Silence provides the opportunity to discover the deeper self.

Nevertheless pupils with severe learning difficulties need models provided by teachers in order to effectively learn so if only silence was used on all prayer occasions this would fail to provide any model or what a prayer sounds like.

A careful balance is therefore required in order to provide as inclusive an experience as possible whilst providing models that pupils can learn from.

Activities in Collective Worship

The theme should in essence be a single idea.

Local events, school events, religious festivals, national and international days and experiences of people past are examples of topics for collective worship.

Methods include, the spoken word, story, singing, poetry, use of the Bible and other holy books, hymns, pop songs, folk songs, chants, and singing games, visual stimuli, pictures, posters, photographs, symbols, artefacts, natural objects, religious objects, personal objects, works of art, video recording. Interactive whiteboard and digital projection play an important part in supporting learning.

Assemblies can include music, including classical, pop, folk and world music and performances including dance, music, drama, role-play, preparing and sharing food, silence sitting, reflecting, contemplation and mediation prayer.

Assemblies provide opportunities for learning of a cross-curricular nature and this is considered a key intrinsic element.

Children unable to manage attendance at collective worship

There may be circumstances where an individual child is unable to cope with the experience of collective worship, e.g.

- pupils whose sensory needs result in heightened anxiety
- pupils with emotional or behavioural needs, who cannot regulate their behaviour in this particular context
- pupils whose sensory needs make the experience a frightening one.

Under these circumstances, such an experience would not be considered in the best interest, the child will be supervised elsewhere by a member of staff and take part in a worthwhile activity. The ability of pupils to cope with a collective experience will be periodically reviewed by their teacher and discussed with parents / carers.

Addition to the guidelines for collective prayer

For our school the emphasis is placed upon quiet contemplation. Children are encouraged to listen to prayer, but they are not required to make a response but may do if they want to. E.g. amen.

Prayers should always be introduced in a sensitive manner, it should be clear to children that they are not expected or obliged to join in verbally.

If prayers are a particular faith this should be explained e.g. "I am going to say a Christian prayer".

Visitors representing particular faiths should always be aware of this policy.