

St Andrew's CE Primary School, Great Yeldham

Collective Worship Policy



September 2020

Introduction

Collective Worship is at the very heart of daily life in a Church school.

As a Church school we want to worship. We want our children to have the opportunity to learn to worship and to grow in their understanding of God and of themselves. Worship in our school is not simply a statutory duty.

We believe that, at its heart, Collective Worship should provide opportunity for pupils and staff to come together, to sing and pray, to share and communicate their feelings with one another and to God. It should take them beyond themselves towards an encounter with the living God and should prove to be an exciting time for all of them.

The Legal Requirements

We comply with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Section 70 and Schedule 20) which requires that:

- All registered pupils (apart from those whose parents exercise the right to withdrawal) must on "each school day take part in an act of Collective Worship".
- The daily act of Collective Worship in a Church school should be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Deeds of the school and the ethos statement in the Instrument of Government, and should be consistent with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England.
- All acts of Collective Worship in Church schools must be Christian in character.
- For Collective Worship, pupils can be grouped in various ways: whole school, according to age, or in groups (or a combination of groups) the school uses at other times.
- Acts of worship must be appropriate for the pupils in that they should take account of the pupils' age, aptitude and family backgrounds.
- The daily act of Collective Worship will normally take place on the school premises but all church schools are able to hold their Act of Collective Worship elsewhere (e.g. the local Parish Church) on special occasions.

Anglican Faith and Practice

As required therefore in C of E schools, we seek to provide acts of Collective Worship that reflect the faith and practice of the Church of England which traditionally has the following traits. It is:

- **Biblical** – We use the Bible as a source book for inspiration and learning and make pupils familiar with the Lord’s Prayer, psalms and other verses of scripture. We also introduce them to a variety of well-known prayers - many of which express the central beliefs of Christians throughout the ages.
- **Liturgical** – We use aspects of Anglican liturgy to create a framework for worship – gathering, engaging, responding and sending – and use responses and other traditional aspects of liturgy such as the Lord’s Prayer on occasion.
- **Eucharistic** – We do not have a school Eucharist. We are, however, ‘Eucharistic’ in the sense of thanksgiving. We fill our worship with thank you prayers, we readily thank pupils and staff for all they do in school. We encourage intercessory prayer for individuals, those in positions of authority, the needs of the local community and the wider world.
- **Seasonal** – We observe the cycle of the Anglican year including celebrations of the major Christian festivals.
- **Symbolic** – We provide opportunities to use Christian symbols as a focus for reflection and to enable pupils to discover the value of meditation and silence.
- **Diverse** – We try to use a variety of music and song from different Christian traditions and cultures and to encourage different Anglican and other Christian visitors to reflect both the unity of Christianity but also its diversity in some way.

As a C of E school, we foster strong links with our Parish Church regularly involving its clergy in leading Collective Worship and providing coherence between the worship in Church and school.

For some pupils the experience of worship will be tentative and exploratory. For those who have already developed a growing Christian commitment, worship will be the natural outcome of belief, and a place where their deepest thoughts and emotions can be expressed in communion with God. (Open the Door – David Barton, Alan Brown and Erica Brown, page 12)

Connections with other Local Churches

The Anglican Church sees itself as part of a much wider church and promotes ecumenism. Accordingly, we promote close links with other local churches and Christian organisations and welcome their clergy and leaders as contributors to acts of Collective Worship. We recognise that, while some of our pupils and families belong to Anglican churches, many worship regularly at churches of other Christian denominations and others come from different faith backgrounds or none. We endeavour to ensure that everyone feels comfortable and accepted in worship without any pressure to participate inappropriately or to believe.

Rights & Responsibilities

As established by the 1944 Act and explained in the School Prospectus, parents have the right to withdraw their children from Collective Worship. However, having sent their children to a Church school, it is hoped that no one will exercise this right. Should such a situation arise, appropriate arrangements would be made in keeping with the requirements of the Act.

Teachers have the right to withdraw from Collective Worship.

The Foundation governors have a particular responsibility to ensure the character and foundation of the school are reflected in Collective Worship but the actual arrangements are made by the Collective Worship Leader, who is the Headteacher.

Aims and Purpose

Collective Worship should:

Nourish those of faith

Encourage those of other faiths

Challenge those who have no faith

Robert Runcie, Former Archbishop of Canterbury

The aims of Collective Worship as defined by the Education Reform Act 1988 are as follows:

- to provide an opportunity for the children to worship God
- to enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues
- to enable children to explore their own beliefs
- to encourage participation and response
- to develop in children a sense of community spirit
- to promote a common ethos with shared values and reinforce positive attitudes
- to develop a deeper awareness and understanding of themselves, their feelings and their experiences.
- to celebrate difference and diversity.
- to endeavour to create a sense of awe and wonder at the world around them and an appreciation of beauty and mystery.
- to enable children to use silence for stilling, reflection, contemplation, meditation and if appropriate prayer.

In our school we aim “to enable our school community to engage meaningfully in a real act of Christian worship every day.” (The Way Ahead, 4.6)

The purpose of our Collective Worship is to allow opportunities for

- personal reflection
- an awareness of change
- a consideration of innermost thoughts, feelings and beliefs
- expressions of creativity and imagination
- appreciating and valuing the feelings and beliefs of others
- appreciating and valuing the beliefs and practices of the Church of England
- establishing positive school relationships based on tolerance, acceptance and appreciation
- exploring commitment and positive social relationships
- the development of a sense of belonging
- exploring lives, events and beliefs which exemplify qualities and universal values
- raising awareness of the hurt caused by injustice, aggression or rejection
- experiencing and valuing the environment
- exploring ideas about the origin of the world and the universe
- an awareness of the order and pattern within the natural world
- Looking for meaning and purpose in the world
- Encouraging a sense of wonder, awe and mystery in the natural world
- Exploring how humans use language to convey inner meaning e.g. symbolism, allegory, analogy, myth, metaphor.

Planning

Long and medium-term planning for Collective Worship is led by the Collective Worship Leader, who is the Headteacher. Plans follow the cycle of the Anglican year and reflect our school values. Each week tackles a sub-theme. The Collective Worship Leader is responsible for ensuring leaders and visiting speakers receive copies of these plans. Individuals and groups are then responsible for using them as a basis for developing their own short term plans for individual acts of worship. There is a preferred format for planning a worship that covers four elements of each worship: gathering, engaging, responding and sending.

Gathering:

As people gather for worship they may be encouraged to join in with a song as they enter or simply listen to music. A distinctive atmosphere and a clearly visible focus point are important. A candle may also be lit before or after a greeting. The church’s liturgical colour will be represented. There should be a feeling of expectation as people gather for worship.

Engaging:

This will be the main part of the act of worship in terms of input by a member of staff, child or visitor. Whatever is chosen should fit the theme for worship and be appropriate for the age,

aptitudes and backgrounds of the pupils. It should encourage children to engage in the Bible, Christian teaching, and most importantly, with God.

Responding:

For every child and adult present some response should be possible. All should understand that this is time set aside for deep thought and for each to respond in an appropriate way. The opportunity to worship God should be clearly and carefully offered, encouraging and inviting, but never compelling.

Sending:

The ending of the act of worship should be full of purpose, as people are sent out to be different and to 'do' differently. A set ritual will be used for leaving. The candle will be blown out and the blessing said.

Organisation

An act of Collective Worship is held daily. This involves the whole school in the hall. Where Collective Worship forms part of an assembly, we ensure that there is a clear distinction between the two elements of the gathering. When Collective Worship takes place in the hall, the Year 6 children are responsible for preparing the environment. We aim to provide a worship space which is attractive and well prepared with appropriate thought having been given to colour, space, seating, ambience and music.

The Headteacher and other members of staff together with groups of children take turns to conduct Collective Worship. The Revd from the Parish Church leads every Monday. On other days during the term we welcome visitors from the Church to lead Worship.

We conduct Collective Worship in a dignified and respectful way expecting children to behave appropriately. We create a suitable atmosphere by using music and candles, pictures or other artefacts to act as a focal point. We ask children to be quiet and thoughtful, to listen carefully and to participate in singing and prayers.

We use Friday assemblies as an opportunity to share children's work and to celebrate their successes. These culminate in an act of Collective Worship and play an important part in promoting the ethos of the school.

Governors are welcome to attend acts of worship at any time.

Pupil Led Worship

Every half term Collective Worship is taken by a group of pupils. They plan the worship on the weekly theme and must ensure that they include the required elements: Gathering, Engaging, Responding and Sending. They are responsible for making links to the Bible, deciding on music and hymns and leading the school in prayer. This is highly successful and the children are very keen and engaged.

Resources

There is an annual budget for Collective Worship. We have a collection of assembly books and artefacts which we aim to regularly update and improve. We also access short term plans from the internet. We have an extensive collection of music which is used to provide suitable music as children enter and leave the hall as well as to accompany singing.

Within the hall, resources are conveniently stored in a suitable cupboard which keeps them safe and makes them readily accessible. Music for hymns are stored in the Headteacher's office.

We aim to purchase additional resources to enhance the hall environment and create a more effective focal point for Collective Worship to take place.

Contribution to SMSC Development

We recognise that although SMSC development should be fostered across the whole curriculum, acts of Collective Worship provide opportunities in this area almost too numerous to mention in detail. For example, children will be encouraged to reflect on and celebrate the deeper meanings of life, consider their own behaviour and recognise the need for forgiveness, appreciate the contributions of others and respond to their needs, value their own culture and the cultures of others.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We aim to develop the monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship by continuing to keep records of Collective Worship and surveying adults and children as to their views on its effectiveness. We intend to make the criteria for successful worship available to all those who plan and lead it before asking them to submit short term plans. The co-ordinator and others will routinely observe and monitor acts of Collective Worship in line with these criteria. The co-ordinator will also involve the Foundation governors fully in the monitoring and evaluation process.

Inclusion

We are committed to equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, cultural background, ability or any physical or sensory disability. We therefore aim to make Collective Worship accessible to all and accommodate ourselves to individual needs when appropriate. As when teachers prepare lessons, worship leaders take account of different learning styles and aim to present materials using multisensory resources.

Implementation of Policy

The Collective Worship Leader is responsible for this policy which will be reviewed every two years. Its implementation is the responsibility of all those planning and leading Collective Worship.

Advice for Visitors taking Collective Worship at St Andrew's Primary School

1. Collective Worship is part of our pupils' *educational* entitlement. In many schools it is known as 'assembly', but we do not see it as a space to fill with notices, business, awards and visitors. It is intended to provide an opportunity to worship God so we are not inviting you just to entertain us!

2. 'Collective' worship is different from 'corporate' worship in faith communities. In all schools pupils and staff come together from various backgrounds, some Christian, some of other religions and some of none. Ask about the mix in our school if you would find this helpful.

3. In church schools, worship should be Christian but it must also be suitable for all to participate, whether actively joining in or listening reflectively. Please share something important - simple and clear - from which we can all learn, whatever our background.

4. If you are a representative of the Christian community, speak about your faith. We want to hear what is important to you and other Christians. School is an opportunity to share, not indoctrinate or evangelise, so remember to say... *Christians believe, the Bible says, in our church, Jesus taught ...*This will help everyone know whose ideas you are sharing.

5. As a number of our pupils and staff have no religious background, do not *assume* that even in a church school everyone has a great knowledge of Biblical characters and stories, Jesus, church or different Christian festivals. However, that does not mean we don't know anything!

6. Our Collective Worship follows a yearly plan. We will tell you what we are doing and may offer you a subject or story on which to base your contribution. If you are a regular visitor, do discuss your contribution in more detail.

7. Each act of worship in our school follows a basic shape or structure lasting 15 minutes:

- **Gathering** – music, a candle and a greeting by staff, but please feel free to greet children yourself as well
- **Engaging** – this is your bit; it may be a story, demonstration, drama, song, pictures – whatever you feel most confident with
- **Responding** – this can also be your bit, although the school will take responsibility for it if you prefer; it may be a time for stillness, prayers, an activity, questions and answers or singing
- **Sending** – you may want to offer the children a blessing or to pray for them before the school is dismissed by children or staff

8. In your preparation and delivery, please do:

- think about the youngest children – *what is there for them to look at and enjoy?*
- make any visuals large – *will we all be able to see?*

- try to include something active e.g. hand movements or words to repeat – *we learn best by doing, not just listening*
- remember sight reading is an adult skill – *limit anything you expect children to read on the spot and do not use all capital letters*
- check songs carefully if you want to bring your own – *would it be best for the pupils to sing or just listen?*
- prepare questions carefully – *and rephrase them if there is no response or the wrong one! They may simply not have understood.*
- move on swiftly and kindly when given an inappropriate response - *small children always put their hands up!*
- remember time is limited – *if you have a lot to say, turn it into a series!*

9. Please do not:

- use sexist or racist language – *this will alienate many pupils or staff*
- be too controversial – *there is no real forum for debate in assembly*
- speak badly of other faiths – *their representatives may be present*
- disparage education, school or staff – *we do not need undermining!*
- wind children up and leave them there – *we have to teach them next!*

10. If you want helpers, let us know and we will give you an idea of how best to organise this. It can be effective, and time-saving, to ask for volunteers as children begin to arrive in the hall.

11. Introduce prayers or a quiet moment for reflection in a way which does not compromise pupils or staff but encourages everyone to take part. In our school we are happy to do this for you BUT you will find it helpful to establish your own symbol or phrase to introduce this time for prayer or reflection e.g. *Let's be still and quiet now / Time to pray or think / Please listen carefully while I say / read a prayer* Think about how to end this time as well as how to start it.

12. Try to visit an act of Collective Worship before you lead one. We will be pleased to arrange this for you. Don't be afraid to discuss plans for what you want to do. We will try to give you feedback after your assembly. Likewise, if we could do something better, please give us suggestions to think about.

We hope you enjoy joining us for Collective Worship in our school.