



**Rooted in the community – growing for the future**

## **Collective Worship Policy**

Updated June 2012, May 2015, January 2018, February 2021

Adopted at Governing Body on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021, as recorded in minutes and signed by the Chair of Governors, Antonia Nicholls:

This policy is due for review by February 2024

All our policies should be read in conjunction with our Shire Oak Values and the principles and practices detailed in our Equalities Policy.

## **Definition**

Current legislation requires schools, including Voluntary Schools, to conduct a daily act of Collective Worship which is predominantly Christian in character. The legislation does not define what is meant by the term collective worship.

At Shire Oak Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School we offer the following definition of collective worship:

***An assembly, conducted within the context of a multi-faith community, which is appropriate to the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of all pupils.***

At Shire Oak CE Primary School we aim to provide acts of Collective Worship which reflect the distinctive Christian ethos of the school. Such worship, however, shall neither presuppose nor promote a personal commitment to the Christian faith in pupils. The provision of acts of collective worship shall reflect the diversity of beliefs and points of view and shall encourage appropriate tolerance and mutual respect between those of differing faith expressions.

## **Aims of Collective Worship**

- To enable pupils to explore and respond to a variety of forms of worship, thus enabling those pupils with a religious commitment to deepen their experience of worship, and to allow those without a religious commitment to begin to appreciate what worship means for others.
- To enable pupils to approach the threshold of worship by fostering in them an attitude characterised by feelings such as humility, awe, wonder, appreciation, thankfulness, respect, reverence and elation.
- To enable pupils to consider spiritual and moral issues and the many questions which relate to life.
- To acknowledge the things which have meaning, value and purpose for the pupils as individuals, as well as for the school and the wider community.
- To help pupils develop a sound understanding of right and wrong.
- To develop a sense of community within and beyond the school.
- To celebrate achievements, special occasions and special events in relation to individual pupils within school, to the school as a whole, or to the wider community.
- To acknowledge and respect difference and diversity.

## **Legal Requirements**

### **Parental Rights**

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from Collective Worship. This was established in the 1944 Education Act.

- Parents should inform the Head Teacher in writing if they would like to exercise the right for their child/ren to be wholly or partly excused from attending Collective Worship at a school.
- Alternative provision for these children to be supervised during assemblies will be made. Parents are not obliged to state their reasons for seeking withdrawal. We would hope, however, that most parents and carers would feel able to talk to us so that we can address any misconceptions about our collective worship, answer any questions and better understand and support their choices.

### **Rights of Teachers**

As with the rights of parents, the rights of teachers and head teachers to withdraw from Collective Worship as described in the 1944 Act remain.

- Teachers should inform the Head Teacher in writing if they would like to exercise their right to be wholly or partly excused from attending Collective Worship at a school.

- For those teachers exercising this right, the Head teacher will be responsible for directing the time of that teacher during assembly times.

### **Approach to Collective Worship at Shire Oak CE Primary School**

At Shire Oak we recognise:

- those who have, or who come from families with, commitment to the Christian faith
- those who have, or come from families with, a commitment to a faith other than Christianity
- those who have, or come from families with, no particular commitment to any religion.

Therefore our programme of Acts of Collective Worship takes into account the family backgrounds of all pupils as part of the school's commitment to diversity and inclusion. Diversity is seen as enriching the life of our school community. We therefore take particular care to ensure that in acts of Collective Worship, diversity is embraced in positive and sensitive ways through:

- building up positive relationships with families and local faith communities
- encouraging pupils to be present at acts of Collective Worship but ensuring that pupils from other faiths and their parents are aware that they will not be required to say Christian prayers
- ensuring that when some leaders use Christian prayers (or prayers from their own tradition) in the time set aside for prayer, pupils will be encouraged to think about and learn from the words, and/or use their own private devotions by thinking of prayers they have learned in their own faith tradition
- providing opportunities for silent reflection to enable all pupils to make a personal response
- developing a sense of shared values and achievements which cross cultural and religious boundaries
- respecting the integrity of different faiths and life stances.

Inclusive language may offend pupils from different religions or of no religion if words are used in ways which suggest affirmation or agreement. We believe that Christian belief should be approached with sensitivity within the context of Collective Worship. Care is taken to avoid using language in ways that suggest that all those present at the act of Collective Worship share this belief. We will often say things like, "many Christians believe that..." or "for many Muslims it is important that..." When introducing prayers and reflections we will start with a form of words like, "We put our hands together and close our eyes so that we can concentrate on the words and so that people may pray if they would like to."

### **Organisation of Collective Worship**

We use a variety of ways of grouping and organising our acts of collective worship including:

- Whole school assemblies
- Specific year or key stage groupings
- Individual classroom assemblies

Each term a programme of themes is established, published and followed

We encourage outside speakers from faith organisations, different denominations of the Christian faith and individual speakers who can, through their job/ organisation offer experiences to our children that demonstrate practical examples of putting Christian values into action.

Some of the values that underpin our collective acts of worship include:

- Love
- Humility
- Compassion
- Reconciliation
- Valuing ourselves and others
- Valuing the environment

- Trustworthiness
- Forgiveness
- Justice
- Stewardship
- Truth
- Human Rights
- Freedom
- The importance of family and community

Each class has a specific Christian value that they learn about and use in class worship for the year:

Reception: Sharing

Year 1: Kindness

Year 2: Love

Year 3: Trust

Year 4: Respect

Year 5: Forgiveness

Year 6: Compassion

In most years we will use the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) themes to frame half termly topics to link in with Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) work in classes.

### **Involving Visitors in Acts of Corporate Worship**

We recognise that visitors can enrich the experience of school Collective Worship. We choose our visitors carefully and fully brief them about the educational context of Collective Worship in our school and how we approach it. When we invite visitors from local faith communities to assembly we ensure that they are clear about the purpose of their educational role.

### **Church and visits to other places of worship**

At least twice a year, for Christmas and at the end of the school year, the whole school conducts an act of worship at St Michael's Church. This is approached as part of children's religious education (RE) where they learn about a religion but it is also partly collective worship that is approached in much the same way as worship in our school assemblies. This is also true of visits to other places of worship, where children may take part in acts of worship, e.g. ringing bells at the Hindu mandir, without the presumption that children share any or all of the beliefs of that faith community.

### **An Individual's Faith**

From time to time we have requests from pupils and parents to allow their child to find some space to pray during recreation periods in school. We will always respond to these requests positively and will work with those making the request to make appropriate arrangements.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be regularly reviewed as part of the Governors cycle of policy reviews. Governors and senior leaders will monitor assemblies and use this to inform the evaluation of collective worship specifically, and spiritual, moral, cultural and social more generally.