



Weston Mill Community Primary School

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY



Policy Statement

Our collective Worship should seek to involve all pupils regardless of their Religious values or cultural background whilst reflecting the broad traditions of Christian belief.

Christian belief encompasses, for example, the importance of ideas common to all humanity

- of love, joy, peace, hope, truth, trust, forgiveness, service, compassion, justice, respect for individuals, respect for life, personal and social responsibility.

The focus of Collective Worship should aim to evoke senses and feelings from which it might be agreed that worship most naturally arises whilst encompassing commonly accepted personal and social values. The contents should not encroach upon the integrity and beliefs of the individual. It should be seen and resourced as an intentional and integral part of the learning experience within the whole school curriculum. The school should maximise upon a variety of experiences and opportunities to enhance corporate identity.

Collective Worship should provide a period for quiet reflection and physical calm. It should foster a sense of personal and social responsibility and become a focal point of the school community in its widest sense.

Defining the aims and purposes of collective worship

What is Worship?

The Anglo-Saxon word *weathscipe* is a useful starting point for schools in their consideration of the issue. Worship has to do with worth and worthiness. It is recognising, affirming and celebrating that which is worthy of honour and respect - ideals and the highest achievements of which humanity is capable, matter of truth, goodness and beauty, an appreciation of the world, a recognition of the interdependence of human beings, a response to the plight of those in need.

The word "worship" has at least two distinct meanings:

- a) adoration offered by believers to the Supreme Being
- b) concerns, concepts, principles, conduct worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit.

What is collective worship?

Collective worship is not for example like corporate worship in churches - the latter is an activity of a faith community. Worship in churches is a corporate act in which members share common beliefs. The school serves

pupils from a wide diversity of backgrounds - some theistic, some non-theistic, and therefore the 1988 Education Reform Act requires schools to conduct collective worship (not corporate worship). Thus a school's act of worship should seek to involve all pupils - it should be an inclusive activity. The wide variety of backgrounds from which pupils come must be recognised. The act of worship in county schools should allow people of different (or of no) religious beliefs to be included.

What is meant by "wholly or mainly Christian?"

The question of the nature of collective worship has to be addressed. The Act requires it to be "wholly or mainly Christian", and "not to be distinctive of any denomination". In section 7.2 the Act requires collective worship to be broadly Christian and for this to be so it should "reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief". An outline of Christian belief may take many forms. One possible example is that Christian belief centres around the origin of life, the human condition (the potential and frailty of human nature), and the endless opportunities for forgiveness and fresh starts which human beings have at their disposal. Christians may be more familiar with explicit theological expressions such as the Creation of the world by God: the Fall: the Incarnation: the redemptive work of Jesus through his life, death, resurrection and ascension: the work of the Holy Spirit, who guides, sustains and gives life to the people of God. Not all members of the school community will be able to subscribe to these doctrines, but they are more likely to be able to accept the underlying principles.

Collective Worship: Its educational value

What is the intention of collective worship at Weston Mill School?

The act of worship should seek to:

- a) reflect, express, affirm or challenge commonly accepted personal and social values; and
- b) provide experiences so that those with a commitment to a religious life may worship adequately without violating the integrity of those without a religious commitment; and
- c) provide experiences for those not committed to a religious belief without violating the integrity of those who have religious beliefs.

Weston Mill School will sensitively try to evoke those senses and feelings from which it might be said that worship most naturally arises:

e.g.

- ☐ sense of beauty
- ☐ sense of wonder and awe
- ☐ feeling of pride
- ☐ sense of pity
- ☐ sense of smallness in the face of greatness
- ☐ feeling of shared sadness
- ☐ sense of shared loss
- ☐ sense of peace
- ☐ sense of thankfulness
- ☐ sense of stillness in the midst of a busy existence

What will be the positive outcome of collective worship at Weston Mill School?

The act of worship in schools is conducted within an educational context. It therefore follows that evangelism (an attempt to persuade the participants to adopt a particular religious belief), is not appropriate.

We should identify the educational benefits of good assembly practice. These may include providing opportunities for:

- ☐ the whole community to celebrate
- ☐ sharing and experiencing differences
- ☐ building a sense of group identity, encouraging a sense of personal and social responsibility
- ☐ a break from the busyness of life (for stillness and quiet)
- ☐ learning how to behave in a large social group
- ☐ learning how to perform in front of an audience
- ☐ making visible the school's leadership
- ☐ developing inner awareness
- ☐ exploring feelings and emotions

Is the act of worship an isolated event within the life of the school?

The act of worship should be seen as part of the whole school curriculum. It is therefore an excellent cross-curricular opportunity. It follows that, like other parts of the curriculum, it should be an intentional learning experience which requires planning, resourcing, preparing and evaluating. It is an opportunity for a focal point, a sharing of classroom learning across the larger group.

Act of Collective Worship: Legal Requirement

- ☐ The Education Reform Act (1988) requires schools to provide a daily act of collective worship for all registered pupils. Nursery schools and classes are exempt from the requirement.
- ☐ Pupils in special school should attend acts of collective worship as far as practicable.
- ☐ Headteachers in county schools must consult the governors, but are themselves responsible for arranging acts of worship and ensuring that they take place, even if on grounds of conscience, they absent themselves.
- ☐ Parents have the right to withdraw their children from acts of worship.
- ☐ Teachers, including headteachers, have the same right of withdrawal.
- ☐ In county schools collective worship is to be "wholly or mainly Christian" and "not to be distinctive of any denomination" (ERA Section 7.1)
- ☐ Section 7.2 of the Education Reform Act requires collective worship to be broadly Christian and for this to be so it should "reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief".
- ☐ In providing acts of collective worship the ages, aptitudes and family background of the pupils should be taken into account.

- ☐ A whole school or part of a school can be excused from acts of collective worship which are "wholly or mainly Christian" but not from daily worship. This determination can only be granted by the Devon Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE).
- ☐ Strictly, County and Voluntary Controlled schools must not hold the daily act of worship off school premises. However, events of a nondenominational character may be held in a local church in addition to daily worship in school.
- ☐ The role of SACRE includes: advising the Local Education Authority about collective worship in schools and appropriate training for teachers, dealing with determinations, publishing an Annual Report which includes references to collective worship.

DFE Circular 1/94

Schools should be aware of the guidance on collective worship given in DFE Circular 1/94 paragraphs 50-88. This includes the following statements which are particular to this circular:

- ☐ Collective worship should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs (paragraph 50)
- ☐ Worship must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power (paragraph 57)
- ☐ An act of worship need not contain Christian material ... It must, however, contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ (paragraph 63)

Collective Worship and Inspection

Inspectors are required to report on whether the school is meeting the legal requirements for collective worship and the extent to which that worship contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This is reported under 5.1 of the Inspection framework. The evidence also includes the ethos of the school and the whole curriculum, including R.E.

Agreed by Governors on _____

Chair of Governors signature _____

Date agreed _____