

Platt C.E Primary School



Collective Worship: Policy and Practice

1. Statement on Worship in Church Schools

The daily act of collective worship at Platt Church of England Primary School plays a central role in our life and work as a Church School. It provides us with valuable opportunities to reaffirm our values and ethos. It offers important opportunities to strengthen our sense of community, belonging and inclusiveness and to reinforce the respect and care we have for each other. Through collective worship we make a significant contribution to the religious, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of those present. We want all our children to 'enjoy and achieve' and collective worship provides a valuable vehicle for this.

The law requires that all children take part in a daily act of collective worship. The Trust Deed of an Aided School stipulates that the worship should accord with the faith, doctrine and practice of the Church of England, under the oversight of the parish minister. We want worship to hold a place at the heart of the family life of the school for both children and adults.

2. Aims

Collective worship contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils, as appropriate to their ages and aptitudes.

It does this as follows:-

It helps pupils' **spiritual** development by:-

- introducing the children to the traditions of Christian worship, including silence and contemplation, singing and speaking together, symbols and ritual.
- helping children to grow in knowledge and understanding of their own personalities, the created world, other people, and God.
- giving children the opportunity to hear and understand the Bible, particularly gospel stories, and how these might have meaning for their lives.
- giving children the opportunity to offer their thoughts, ideas, abilities and achievements in prayer and service to God.

It helps pupils' **moral** development by:-

- encouraging children's concern for the feelings and needs of others.
- tackling moral issues.
- expressing through daily worship the common Christian values of the school community.

It helps pupils' **social** development by:-

- helping children understand common human experiences and to find positive ways of managing their own experiences and feelings.
- encouraging input from young and old and teaching respect for all.
- welcoming pupils of all faiths and none.

It helps pupils' **cultural** development by:-

- using music from a variety of cultures.
- using visual art and poetry.

3 Organisation

Collective worship can involve large or small groups: we gather regularly as a whole school and in classes, so that the children experience different scales of belonging and degrees of formality. The leadership of worship is shared by all teachers and sometimes other staff and visitors, and often involves children too.

In compliance with the law, we provide an act of worship daily for all pupils.

Staff attend worship regularly. 'Daily worship is at the heart of the life of a Church School. It offers regular opportunities for the school community to worship God, to share its beliefs and to reinforce its Christian values'. Worship is an offering of all members of the community, and the involvement of staff gives the message to the pupils. All collective worships are evaluated commenting on the children's participation, reaction and learning within that worship. The school uses the Rochester Diocese recommended program as a basis for worship, however worship leaders do have freedom to plan their own worship using the Diocese recommended themes as a starting point.

Variations

- The vicar visits on a planned basis to lead or share in worship
- The Family Trust team from Maidstone lead worship at least once a term.
- Other visitors are sometimes involved, e.g. representatives of charities.

4. Content of Worship

Christian worship involves recognising the *worth*, the value, the importance of God as:

- Father - Creator and Sustainer of the universe

- Son - Teacher and Redeemer of mankind
- Holy Spirit - ever-present Guide and Encourager

In turning to God, worshippers are helped to see themselves in truer perspective in relation to God and to other people.

The practice of Christian worship is varied. It may include:

- *praise* and thanksgiving, spoken or sung
- *prayer*, silent or shared
- *teaching*, learning and reflection
- *offering* of gifts or talents
- *sharing* with others in expressions of belonging or involvement

In a Sunday service, all these 'ingredients' may be present, but school worship is necessarily briefer. We aim to include all the 'ingredients' at some time each week. Whatever the content and format, we want children to understand that the time is special, can be enjoyed, and has a meaningful purpose.

Our experience is that appropriate coverage is secured over a period through the personal planning of worship leaders. Their individual ideas and styles are valued. There is, however, a firm annual structure to the school's worship determined by the festivals of the church calendar, and the rhythm of the academic year.

The children's experience will regularly include:

- Bible reading and associated teaching - seasonal themes linked with the created world or the Christian year
- worship linked with current RE work
- the sharing within worship of talents and achievements
- praise and prayer, involving sound and quietness, energy and stillness, affirmation and reflection

Whole school/key stage acts of collective worship:

We aim to create an atmosphere of stillness and calm. To aid this, appropriate music is played for entry and exit from the hall. Music may be chosen and prepared by the worship leader, or chosen as an appropriate piece of classical music to complement the theme of the worship that day.

- The usual format consists of a child lighting the candles on the school hall altar which has seasonal colours in accordance with the Church's Year. A Christian greeting is said, there is an input from the leader, an appropriate hymn or song, followed by a time of prayer and/or quiet reflection. Leaders are encouraged to actively engage pupils/students through for example questioning, props and drama;
- The act of collective worship is kept separate from any notices or other items which may be included in this assembly time, with a different person leading each section;
- Visitors may be invited from time to time to lead one of our whole school acts of collective worship;

- The assembly, including the act of collective worship, usually takes 20 minutes altogether.

Class-based acts of collective worship:

- We aim to give our children some 'space' to be quiet and to think reflectively during collective worship in their classroom;
- These acts of collective worship may be led by the children or the class teacher;
- They usually take between 10 to 15 minutes.

Appropriate hymns and songs are selected from a range of sources. The school also uses worshipworkshop.org.uk for worship planning and hymns. The school holds a Christian copyright licence.

3. Collective worship planning group:

This group meets at least twice a year – once towards the beginning of Term 6 (to review the past academic year and make plans for the next) and once during term 3 (to monitor progress. The group is chaired by the collective worship co-ordinator and attended by the head teacher, the link governor, two members of the school council and the Vicar. The group works with the collective worship co-ordinator to plan, oversee and monitor the programme and to consider how to continue to improve the experiences and opportunities we provide for our pupils through collective worship. Notes of their meetings are taken and are available from the collective worship co-ordinator. The link governor reports to the governing body after each group meeting.

4. Use of Visitors

The worship co-ordinator is responsible for liaising with any visitors who come into school to lead collective worship. Practical arrangements such as timing, age range of audience and appropriate content are agreed through discussion. By drawing on people from the local community to lead acts of collective worship we enhance community cohesion.

5. Services held in St. Mary's church

The whole school worships in church at least 8 times through the year, with an invitation extended to parents and friends. The dates and content are often planned to mark Christian festivals, or significant school occasions; the planning and leadership is shared by the vicar, staff and sometimes children. The vicar introduces and familiarises the families and their children with appropriate Anglican practices.

6. Participation and Withdrawal

As a church school, worship plays a central part in our school life and is important educationally for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Therefore, although parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from this activity, they are encouraged to discuss this fully with the head teacher before reaching a decision. In an act of worship we do not see participation as performance.

7. Prayer

Prayer is commonly explained as talking to God. Many Christians would also emphasise listening to God, as in a conversation. Others would think of being with God - a time for thought, but not necessarily for words.

It is school policy that prayers should be included in

- School and Class Worship
- before lunch
- at the end of the school day
- at each staff and Governors meeting

Prayers may be

- read, selected or composed by adults or children
- a time of silence, focused by teaching and/or a picture,
- spoken together, read or known by heart (e.g. The Lord's Prayer, The Grace)

The collection of prayers available to worship leaders includes both traditional and modern forms of words. A candle may be used at times. A Prayer Box is available for children to add their own prayers, and an outdoor area for prayer and reflection is available for children to have a quiet moment to share with God or reflect on an issue without the need for writing.

There is also a communal Prayer Tree in the corridor leading off of the hall, where children's prayers may be displayed and celebrated.

By custom, those present add 'Amen' as an expression of togetherness and agreement, to 'make the prayer our own'.

8. Health, Safety and Well-being

In collective worship we follow the school's health, safety and well-being policy. For example, appropriate care must be taken when using lighted candles and electrical equipment. In line with our 'e-safety' policy any internet resources used must be checked by the leader prior to their use in act of collective worship. In the event of fire all pupils must be familiar with exit routes from the halls and other areas of the school where collective worship takes place. Visitors are not left unaccompanied with children/young people.

9. Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

Collective worship will challenge stereotypes, misinformation and misconceptions about race, ethnicity, religion and gender. During collective worship, religions will be presented fairly and accurately and diversity and equality will be affirmed.

10. Resources

A range of resources, including age-appropriate DVD material and PowerPoints, is available to support teachers and pupils with collective worship and is situated in the staff room.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of the school's quality assurance programme it is the role of the co-ordinator to monitor individual acts of collective worship and feed back to the leader. Worship leaders are also asked to make a brief comment in evaluation of the children's engagement with their

worship. These self-evaluations are monitored by the RE co-ordinator. Governors who visit collective worship are invited to provide informal feedback to the co-ordinator or the leader. As part of our pupil voice policy a random selection of pupils will be asked to comment on their experience of and response to collective worship at least once a year.

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed (by the co-ordinator in consultation with our collective worship development group) every two years.

Due review date: Term 6 2017