
St Mary's Church of England Academy, Walkley

Collective Worship Policy



*"I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full."*

John 10:10

Reviewed: Spring 2022
Approved by Governors: Spring 2022
Date of next review: Spring 2024



Collective Worship Policy

Context and Philosophy:

At St Mary's, we aim to provide a caring environment where every child can thrive and is supported to achieve their unique & amazing potential as a child of God.

St Mary's aims to serve its community by providing education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experiences it offers all its pupils. We recognise that it is extremely important to provide varied experiences for our children in order that they can develop fully on a spiritual, moral, social & cultural level. The school sees the time set aside for Collective Worship as being a time for sharing and togetherness as well as a sharing of knowledge, feelings and experience. It is seen as a time when we foster a sense of belonging to the school, to the wider community of Walkley and to the society and world in which we live. It is a special act or occasion where the purpose is to show reverence to God.

Legal Requirements:

Collective Worship is a legal requirement of schools under the 1944 Education Act, affirmed in subsequent legislation (1988 and 1996). It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to discharge this requirement. The law states that:

- All pupils must attend every day unless withdrawn by their parents;
- It may take place at any time of day;
- It need not involve the whole school at once but can be for any existing group, e.g. classes or key stages;
- It must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, reflecting the broad traditions of Christian belief;
- It should be appropriate to the 'family backgrounds of pupils and to their age and aptitude'.

In 1994 a government circular was issued to clarify the law on Collective Worship. This is non-statutory advice, intended to help schools meet the legal requirements. It stated that there should be opportunities for pupils to:

- worship God;
- consider spiritual and moral issues;
- explore their own beliefs;
- encourage participation and response; promote community / shared values;
- reinforce positive attitudes.

The Purpose of Collective Worship:

At St Mary's, Collective Worship is an opportunity to come together to share, reflect and explore personal beliefs, issues of identity, and questions of meaning and purpose. Each half term a new theme is introduced and is explored in the acts of Collective Worship. In this way it makes an important contribution to promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. It is also a vehicle for supporting inclusion as well as building community cohesion.

In accordance with the law and the ethos of our school, the majority of acts of Collective Worship reflect the 'broad traditions of Christian belief'. This does not restrict the focus exclusively to Christianity alone, but will sometimes include material from a range of spiritual, religious and secular contexts. Our aim is that no child be withdrawn from Collective Worship.

Pupils will be encouraged to explore ideas arising from the stimulus material presented by staff and visitors and invited to reflect on them, from their own perspectives. There is never any intention to impose religious ideas or beliefs on pupils but often the material can raise issues and questions that are relevant to their lives, irrespective of their background.

There will always be a time of quiet when pupils are invited to reflect on the focus of the assembly, with an invitation to those children for whom it is appropriate to make their thoughts into a personal prayer. Sometimes words of traditional prayers are used to support that reflection.

Through Collective Worship at St Mary's, our intentions are that:

- Children will take part in Collective Worship every day;
- The collective worship will include the singing of hymns, choruses and songs and opportunities are given, both to join in with and to listen to prayers;
- Time will also be provided for silence and reflection;
- Themes from our St Mary's Two Year Cycle of Assemblies will be used will be varied and will always have a moral imperative whether based on Biblical topics or relating to the cycle of the seasons, the wonders of the world, the deeds of human kind or the celebration of religious festivals;
- Themes will also relate to special days & celebrations plus the children's interests;
- The themes will be put forward in a variety of ways, e.g. through story, prose, poetry, drama, art, music, discussion;
- Whilst the majority of assemblies will be Christian based, there will sometimes be a focus or reference to other faiths;
- All members of staff are given the opportunity to lead Collective Worship;
- All children are given the opportunity to take a lead;
- Members of appropriate organisations are invited to share in Collective Worship.

Through the above, we intend that our children will:

- have the opportunity to worship & to develop a relationship with God if they wish to;
- Develop an understanding of Christian values, where these originate & what these can add to their own life & practice;
- develop respect and understanding of the self and of others;
- create a sense of belonging and connecting to the world;
- develop empathy and community with others;
- provide security within which pupils can share their values and beliefs;
- provide opportunities to question and reflect;
- promote discernment and support pupils in combating prejudice;
- encourage an appreciation of the intangible, e.g. beauty, truth, love, goodness as well as for mystery, paradox, and ambiguity.

The Pattern of Collective Worship:

At St Mary's, we conduct assemblies in a dignified and respectful manner. We tell children that assembly time is a period of calm reflection. We regard it as a special time and expect children to behave in an appropriate manner. We ask them to be quiet and thoughtful and to listen carefully to the teachings and participate fully in prayer and singing. We create an appropriate atmosphere by using music and sometimes candles or other objects that act as a focal point for the attention of the children.

| Monday Whole School | Tuesday Whole School | Wednesday Whole School | Thursday Whole School | Friday Whole School |
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| Celebration Assembly in which the St Mary's Declaration, St Mary's 'Proud to Be' List & Lord's Prayer are recited. | Themed Assembly – taken from the St Mary's Two Year Cycle of Assemblies & including prayer & reflection or presented by a Visitor to the school. | Themed Assembly – taken from the St Mary's Two Year Cycle of Assemblies & including prayer & reflection or presented by a Visitor to the school. | Singing Assembly – Vibrant & active songs of praise & worship. | Reflection Assembly- Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on world events that occurred that week and to say their own prayers |

Monitoring & Evaluation:

Monitoring of Collective Worship occurs both formally and informally. It occurs informally through pupil & staff discussion with valued feedback from parents and visitors. In addition, it also takes place more formally via the work of the St Mary's CREW Council made up of pupils from Y4 to Y6 who meet very regularly with the RE Coordinator as well as the Head of School to discuss their views on RE & Collective Worship.

It is the role of governors to monitor the policy and practice of Collective Worship. Governors liaise with the Headteacher before reporting back to the full Governing Body on Religious Education and Collective Worship.

Right of Withdrawal:

At St Mary's, we hope to provide Collective Worship that offers an inclusive opportunity to foster a sense of belonging for everyone associated with the school. For this reason, it is hoped all pupils will take part every day. However, if parents do not want their child to be included, they have the right to withdraw her or him from one or all acts of Collective Worship. Those wishing to do so are asked to discuss their reasons with the Head of School and to complete and sign a withdrawal form. No provision of alternative activities has been agreed.