



Collective Worship Policy

Collective worship occupies an important and unique place within the life of Stapleford School. It provides an opportunity for members of the school community to pause from activity, to gather together, to remind themselves and to reflect upon the beliefs and values which bind the school community together. It also allows those with a religious commitment the possibility of entering into worship and those with no religious commitment to sense what worship is and to reflect at depth.

The Legal Requirement

The current law states that there must be a daily act of worship for all pupils. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from school worship, but not assembly. Teachers also have the right to withdraw from school worship, but not assembly. The school's Trust Deed, dated 1951, states quite clearly that the school should teach the principles of the Church of England and this is further supported by the law of the land.

What happens when pupils worship?

Activities in which the children may be involved include prayer, celebration, love, friendship, wonder, thanksgiving, consideration, compassion, sharing, forgiveness, co-operation, corporate responsibility, perseverance, reflection and singing.

It is important to distinguish between worship and ritual. Rituals such as prayer, hymns and readings from the Bible are a means to worship, not worship in themselves. For children other means of worship are also valid, such as stories, music, drama, dance, interviews, pictures, creative silence, artefacts and natural materials.

Aims for School Worship

- to understand the rites and practices of the Church of England
- to become familiar with the life and times of Jesus
- to bring pupils to the threshold of worship
- to create an atmosphere in which those who wish to worship can do so
- to be appropriate for the pupils
- to develop the inner lives of children and focus on immeasurable targets
- to be a learning experience, which contributes to the pupils' religious education
- to build up a sense of group identity, develop the school community and foster a sense of fellowship, rather than break the school up into various faith groups
- to encourage a reflective approach to life and give an opportunity to be still and silent
- to establish the school values; value each other and ourselves and to encourage compassion
- to encourage sensitivity to the wonder and mystery of the world and people
- to experience and reflect on awe, mystery and our sense of transience
- to provide an opportunity for grieving at times of sadness or sorrow
- to develop awareness and experience of the use of symbol to express feelings and beliefs - light, darkness, water, food etc.
- to celebrate together special occasions and times of success or joy.

Organisation

The pattern for collective worship varies occasionally with changes to staff, class structure and room availability. The current pattern is as follows:

Monday: A sharing of work and achievements by individuals and/or groups of children led either by the children themselves or the headteacher. The aim is for the children to have the opportunity to worship, praise, celebrate and give thanks to God for their talents.

- Tuesday: Values: This whole school Collective Worship is based around the programme of half-termly core Christian Values.
- Wednesday: Whole school worship led by the Parish Priest, following a theme linked to the Church of England calendar.
- Thursday: Worship focussing on musical aspects. The children learn hymns suitable for children in a manner which leads the songs to become their favourites and enables them to understand and reflect upon musical contributions to worship.
- Friday: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) - Whole school worship led by the headteacher. Worship follows a theme based on the SEAL programme linked to bible references. Each theme follows through for a half-term

Each year themes will cover the following five areas of Christian Faith:

1. God – the Creator, the Father, the Provider, the Listener, the Protector, user of people, Giver of only Son.
2. Jesus – the Carer, the Teacher, the healer, the Friend, the Storyteller, the King
3. The Church – building, community, symbols, festivals, Eucharist, worship, prayer, its development, prominent people
4. The Bible
5. The Christian Way of Life – baptism, marriage, funeral, confirmation, food, festivals, prayer, pilgrimage.

For several Christian festivals a special service is planned, which often takes place in the church and to which parents and friends are more formally invited. The Leavers' end of year service also takes place in the church.

School worship is a special occasion within the school day. This is achieved by the very act of the whole school coming together and by setting the occasion in a specific way, often with music, so the children are aware that this is a special time in which they will have the opportunity to reflect and think.

Worship also occurs at other times in the classroom on an unplanned basis in reaction to specific events. The classroom can also offer the opportunity for the children to say Grace together before their midday meal and a prayer before they leave at the end of the day.

Prayers that are specific to a faith and which assume commitment should be used with care to avoid excluding pupils from the fellowship. An introduction such as, "This is a prayer that is very important to Christians/Jews/me" or "Some of you might like to join in ..." is appropriate. Children's own prayers are most acceptable. Leading the school in a time of reflection is also appropriate for school worship.

Listening to music also plays an important part in school worship. It is particularly effective in creating atmosphere and speaking directly to a child.

Visitors also lead school worship and offer a further rich means to worship.

Management and Co-ordination

The headteacher is the current co-ordinator for school worship. She works in consultation with the Parish Priest, who provides the main link with the Governing Body regarding school worship. Further to this governors are frequently invited to attend school services and school worship is also often discussed at governors' meetings. Themes for school worship are recorded and kept in a file in the school office.

The main pointers for school worship are:

- the tone and feel of the act of worship matters
- the children are not pressurised to believe
- the children's world is used as a link
- ten to twenty minutes is the optimum time
- material is chosen carefully.

Resources

The school has a great number of books to assist with assembly planning and prayer. The appendix contains a variety of theme lists for school worship. Further resources are available from the Hertfordshire Development Centre, the Diocesan Education Office and the National Society's London R.E. Centre.

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