

Collective worship policy

A policy for all schools

Review December 2020

Responsibility for this policy:	CEO
Responsibility for monitoring/evaluation:	Executive Headteacher/Headteacher/Head of School
Date of original policy:	January 2018
Date of next review:	December 2022 or as required
Links to other policies:	Religious Education
<i>Tracked changes from original policy:</i>	<i>Further detail added for greater clarity (throughout) The Trust's key objectives and values (p4) Aims and objectives of the policy (p5) Guidance on content and delivery (pp5-6) Roles and responsibilities (p5) Right of withdrawal (pupils and employees) (pp6-7) Inclusion (p7) Monitoring and evaluation (p7) Reference to Executive Headteacher/Head of School (throughout)</i>

Creating futures through our shared values of excellence, partnership and perseverance

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1 INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION

- Our schools are required by law, to organise daily collective worship (sometimes just a few minutes in length) to support their pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Collective worship is often combined with a school assembly and frequently the two activities are used interchangeably. A school assembly is a gathering without any need for a point of reflection or prayer. Collective worship is the point at which pupils are asked to pray or reflect.
- As the notion of prayer can be interpreted differently, the Trust encourages its replacement with **a moment of reflection** so that each person taking part can interpret it in her/his own way.
- Collective worship should allow opportunities for pupils to consider their own beliefs as well as to learn about the beliefs of others.
- Collective worship is often closely aligned to Religious Education (RE) and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) but it is a separate entity.

Collective worship in school is different from acts of worship that take place in a religious building. It involves all pupils, regardless of faith, coming together to celebrate and reflect on aspects of life that may affect them. It is inclusive of all faiths and is not worship of any one particular faith. We recognise that in asking our pupils to worship, we have to consider the background that our pupils come from and it is not the practice within the Trust to preach or convert. A school community is not a worshipping community and the law recognises this by requiring *collective, not corporate worship*. The faith background of both the staff and pupils' families is respected at all times.

Collective worship within our Trust is inclusive of pupils of all faiths and those without faith. The Trust and the schools are sensitive to, and respectful of, the individual beliefs and faiths of the whole community – staff, pupils and their families. Prayers and forms of worship are fully inclusive and non-denominational.

Sometimes to enable understanding of the definition of collective worship, it is referred to as **worship**. This encompasses a spirit of admiration, celebration, respect, worthy of honour and by extension to concepts, principles and conduct which are worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievement of the human spirit.

Defined in this way, worship draws on literature, music, art, drama and other sources of inspiration and reflection.

The Trust views collective worship as:

Educational	Inclusive	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A quality learning experience that is planned, prepared, delivered and evaluated • A broadening and deepening of knowledge and understanding • Providing a variety of experiences • Challenging but without seeking to convert or indoctrinate (which would be against the ethos of the Trust) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relating to pupils' experiences, concerns and needs • Affirming diversity and respecting integrity of pupils and staff, whatever their faith or non-faith background • Fostering a sense of community where people come together as school family • Offering opportunities to engage • Providing an opportunity to worship in their own way or as suitable for listening only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshing the spirit with a time to gather, be still and reflect • Creating an opportunity to be uplifted out of the every day and ordinary and be aware of what is within and beyond ourselves • Creating an atmosphere conducive to worship while accepting that some pupils will make no personal response • Offering opportunities for pupils to consider the spiritual dimension and explore their own beliefs and those of others

2 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Each school in the Trust has a funding agreement with the Department for Education (DfE) which includes reference to legislation pertaining to collective worship as set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1988 Section 70.

Each school also follows paragraphs 50-88 of the DfE's guidance on collective worship in schools, which contains the following main points:

- Each pupil must take part in daily collective worship unless they have been withdrawn by their parents.

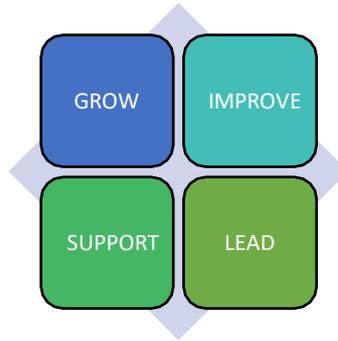
- Schools must provide collective worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.
- A school can reflect the religious backgrounds represented in its community, as long as provision is broadly Christian.
- Collective worship must also be appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils.

The Executive Headteacher/Headteacher/Head of School (EHT/HT/HoS) is responsible for ensuring that there is daily collective worship.

3 ALIGNMENT WITH THE TRUST'S VISION

Our Trust's key objectives

The Trust has four key objectives, two of which – improve and support - relate directly or indirectly to collective worship:



IMPROVE: school improvement – a model with clear accountability structures, using our collective strengths to demonstrate consistently high performance in terms of leadership, teaching, safeguarding, curriculum and assessment

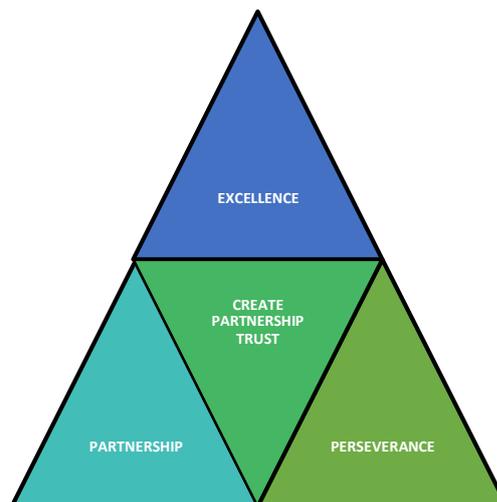
SUPPORT: earlier intervention and improved transition – meeting the needs of children so that barriers to learning are quickly identified and removed as soon as possible, especially for the most vulnerable children and their families

Good collective worship opportunities make a strong contribution to pupils' learning, attitudes and life skills.

Our Trust values

Opportunities for collective worship help our pupils to:

- achieve **excellence**
- develop understanding and knowledge about **partnership** with others
- enable a grasp of the **perseverance** we need when faced with challenges.



4 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Trust and its schools believe that collective worship supports and strengthens all aspects of school life. The ethos of our schools' and the value they place on the development of the whole child – spiritually, morally, culturally and intellectually – is reflected in the worship content and arrangements.

The **aims** of this policy are to make the right provision and provide the right environment so that pupils:

- Become increasingly aware of themselves as individuals and members of groups within the school and the wider community
- Grow in understanding and empathy when considering the feelings and experiences of people in different contexts and with different beliefs
- Deepen their sense of wonder about the world around them
- Acknowledge diversity and affirm each person's life stance, whether it be religious or not

The **objectives** of collective worship are many in number and often school-specific but some of the most common are:

- Show interest in and a concern for members of the school community
- Celebrate special occasions together
- Show concern for daily happenings in school life, the local community and the wider world
- Share appreciation of worthwhile projects and actions
- Explore and review a variety of values and attitudes across and between faith groups
- Reflect on the dimensions of human life – the wonderful, beautiful, joyful, heroic, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn....

The schools make their own arrangements for the leadership and delivery of collective worship, choosing from a range of methods which include:

- Contributions from the pupils themselves
- Sacred and secular stories, poems and readings
- Dance/drama
- Reflection, meditation, songs, music
- Artefacts/natural materials
- Focal points: slides, paintings, a candle, a star
- Dialogue or creative silence
- Visitors
- A range of leaders

5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Directors (Trustees) ensures that:

- A collective worship policy is in place for the Trust and which applies to each school.
- All school policies and procedures relating to collective worship are reviewed every two years or when a major change arises.

The CEO/EHT ensures that:

- The Trust's collective worship policy is updated and the Board is informed of the updates as they arise.
- Full consultation with school leaders and the Board take place if major changes are proposed.

The EHT/HT/HoS ensures that:

- The Trust's policy is published on the school's website and any changes at the point of review are shared with all appropriate staff (and, if necessary, with parents)
- Daily collective worship, referred to as **the moment of reflection** is provided
- Clear information is provided for parents on the content of collective worship, including the right to withdraw their child.

6 DELIVERY

The school delivers a programme of collective worship:

- in large groups (e.g. combined with an assembly) or in smaller groups such as year groups or classes
- at any time of day
- led by a range of adults including visitors (who are subject to behaving in line with the principles of this policy and have had the appropriate safeguarding checks)
- face to face or virtually

NB Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the schools have been unable to hold large scale collective worship proceedings combined with assemblies because of the need to maintain social distancing. This does not prevent collective worship from taking place. In many ways, the smaller group gives pupils opportunity to make a greater contribution.

7 TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The EHT/HT/HoS ensures that collective worship is planned and delivered well and recorded or evaluated appropriately.
- A wide range of resources is used to aid understanding, motivation and engagement; e.g.. artefacts, films and video clips, different types of music, stories (religious and secular), poetry, dance, news articles, etc..
- Cross-curricular themes are used or references to current news items, special anniversaries, famous people, etc.
- Concepts are considered – the values of the school, the Trust, British values, equality, health, etc.
- Challenging ideas are considered (and age appropriate) to support safeguarding; e.g. conflict, racism, bullying, harassment, sexism, prejudice, grooming, personal risks, drugs, gangs, war, etc.
- Staff are up-to-date with the regulations, guidance and best practice regarding collective worship.
- Staff understand the contribution of collective worship to developing pupils' understanding of religion and belief and its impact on promoting community cohesion.
- The planning of collective worship carefully considers suitability and relevance to pupils of all ages and backgrounds.

NB. Religious artefacts must be handled with reverence, paying attention to the required actions.

The words of songs should be checked (and changed if necessary) so that they are not offensive to particular groups.

8 RIGHT OF WITHDRAWAL

Pupils

- Parents/carers have the right to withdraw their child from collective worship.
- The use of the right to withdraw is at the instigation of parents and should be via a written letter of application and/or discussion with the EHT/HT/HoS.
- The letter of application should specify exactly which elements of collective worship are being identified for non attendance; i.e. wholly or partly excused and the reason for the request. The parent/carer may wish, for example, that their child does not attend any proceedings linked to religious festivals or to a particular religion.
- The EHT/HT/HoS will discuss the practical implications of withdrawal including the physical arrangements, supervision and safeguarding and whether any areas of learning might be affected.
- The school must comply.
- The withdrawal of a pupil usually requires her/his physical absence and the school will make every effort to provide safe supervision arrangements and plan for an appropriate replacement learning opportunity. In extreme circumstances, if separate arrangements cannot be made, the pupil remains within the collective worship proceedings but is not expected to play any part.
- The school may be able to arrange alternative provision of separate faith worship, relevant to the pupil's particular faith or denomination, provided that there is no cost to the school or to the detriment of other pupils.

Employees

- Employees are expected to attend collective worship either as leader/presenter or in a supervisory/supportive role.
- They have the right to withdraw from collective worship (not assembly) but should do so only via a written letter of application and a meeting with the EHT/HT/HoS.
- The letter of application should specify exactly which elements of collective worship are being identified for non attendance; i.e wholly or partly excused and the reason for the request.
- The EHT/HT/HoS will discuss the practical implications of withdrawal including safeguarding or health and safety matters and make alternative arrangements for the employee's directed time.

9 INCLUSION

- By its nature, collective worship is inclusive and applies to all.
- Just as with any other area of the curriculum, all pupils are expected to take part in collective worship at the appropriate level of understanding.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) play a full role and are supported by adults as necessary.

10 REPORTING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Reporting

- The Board (through its Curriculum and Resources Committee - CRC) receives reports from the EHT/HT/HoS (the School Profile) and the CEO.
- The Board also reviews any major policy changes.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Unless any issues have arisen, the monitoring of collective worship takes place at school level and is the responsibility of the EHT/HT/HoS or another delegated senior leader.
- The school is advised to evaluate the impact of collective worship through qualitative data such as: feedback from pupils; observations of pupils' behaviour, attitudes and engagement, staff affirmation, parental feedback, etc.

11 COMPLAINTS

A complaint from a parent/carer about collective worship is forwarded to the EHT/HT/HoS who makes arrangements to meet with the parents to discuss the matter and conduct an investigation if that is necessary.

The Trust also has a general Complaints Policy which is published on each school's website.