

St Stephen's C.E. Primary School



Worship Policy

'For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.' Ephesians 2 v 10

Ephesians 2:10



**Updated September 2021
Date approved by Governors:**

1. Fundamentals

In this Church of England Voluntary Controlled School, Collective worship is in conformity with the ethos statement and the rites, practices and doctrines of the Church of England.

“Aspire to greatness” is the school’s motto and the school’s values are woven into the word ASPIRE (“Achieving highly, Succeeding with increasing Self-belief, Persevering, Including others, showing Respect and Enjoying learning”). These values are fully exploited in our daily worship.

Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at St. Stephen’s Broadgate.

The school aims to serve its community by providing an 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 experience it offers to all its pupils.

The daily act of collective worship required by law in the School shall be consistent with the faith and practice of the Church of England and the basic curriculum required by law in the school shall include religious education consistent with the faith of the Church of England. Use will be made within the provisions of the Education acts for the time being in force, of the Parish Church or other Church of England place of worship, both for occasional acts of collective worship and for religious education.

Collective Worship contributes to the working out of our **Ethos Statement** through our **Mission Statement** and the **aims** and **ethos** of the school, and therefore to the Christian Education we provide. It also contributes to the celebration and exploration of the values of our school. The school’s worship plans are structured using the ASPIRE values and are: Justice, forgiveness, peace, compassion, trust, truthfulness, wisdom, humility, courage and endurance. A long term plan and medium term plan are produced each half term and they identify how these values are reinforced over the coming year.

Collective Worship is at the heart of our school life and the Governors see it as essential part of all pupils’ education. As such we are concerned to resource it properly and ensure that it is of the highest standard. The worship and prayer life of the school is not limited to the legally required daily acts of worship. Opportunities will be taken to use prayer and meditation exercises in the curriculum generally and every day in school.

The Church of England/Methodist Heritage

Forms of worship within our denomination(s) differ and these differences enable us to provide a varied range of approaches to worship whilst remaining true to our Trust Deeds. As well as drawing on our denominational heritage, we also occasionally expect to draw on the rich tapestry of practice in the world-wide Christian Church.

Whatever the approaches, we expect that pupils will be introduced to the key beliefs and aspects of the Christian faith and helped to explore them. These would include:

- The nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- The nature of human beings as children of God, part of his creation and, though sinful, destined for eternal life;
- Jesus as the Son of God who, through his life, death and resurrection, broke the power of evil and restored humanity's relationship with God;
- The central values of forgiveness, selfless love, redemption, goodness, compassion and charity;
- The central place of the Bible as a source of knowledge about God and Jesus and as a source of inspiration and guidance;
- The importance of prayer;
- The central symbols of Christianity;
- The cycle of the Church year.

Inclusive, Invitational and Inspiring

Inclusive:

Worship is collective in that it involves meeting, exploring, questioning, and talking to others and, for some, to God. In the Church school pupils, their families and other adults can expect to encounter worship that is inclusive of, and fully accessible to, all. Many pupils and staff in our school come from homes of different faith backgrounds as well as of no faith background. Moreover, many pupils are at different stages of their spiritual journey during their time in school. Pupils will be given the opportunity to think and ask questions. There should be space to consent, and dissent: to participate and to stand back; and to consider. It is an expectation that care will be taken to ensure that the language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith in all those participating, listening and watching. Collective worship will not be 'done to' but will involve meaningful contributions from the whole school community, including pupils. It is recognised that pupils will bring their own experience to worship. Inclusion requires pupil involvement in planning, leading and the evaluation of worship. Although part of a national legislative framework, collective worship in our school grows out of the local context and out of pupils' experience, including their cultural backgrounds.

Invitational:

Parents, pupils and adults can expect to encounter worship that is consistently invitational. There should be no compulsion to 'do anything'. Rather, worship should provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. The metaphor of 'warm fires and open doors' captures this idea. The warmth of the fire derives from the clarity and authenticity of the Christian message at its heart. There is no value to an encounter with a watered down, lowest common denominator version of faith. Importantly the door is open, all are welcome to come in and sit as near or as far away from the fire as they feel comfortable. Pupils and adults will always only be invited to pray if they wish to do so and will be invited to pray in their own way. Prayer will always be accompanied by the option to reflect. Music and liturgies used in worship will reflect the best of traditional and modern Anglican worship, it will connect with the theme and explore the sacred to educate and engage. Music used will reflect the diverse worship experience of the wider Christian community. Care will be taken with the music and liturgy: the traditional and modern riches of Christian hymnody and music will be drawn upon, but we think about what is most appropriate, at a given time, for the spiritual life of our community.

Inspiring:

Pupils and adults can expect the worship they encounter in a Church school to be inspirational. Worship should be formational and transformational: it should enable pupils and adults to ask big questions about who we are and why we do what we do. It should motivate pupils and adults into action, into thinking differently, and into reflecting on their and the wider community's behaviour and actions. As a result of inspirational collective worship, children will be inspired to become courageous advocates of causes. It will encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and/or philosophical convictions. There will always be those who are uncomfortable to enter through this open door of worship in our schools and so the Church of England recognises the right of withdrawal from collective worship for those parents or pupils who wish to exercise this option. This, and how to exercise this choice is explained at the appendix.

The links with local Churches.

We have a close link with the local church of St. Stephen's and will visit to take part in activities which invite children to see the church as a place which is inclusive of the children and their families. Our church performs "open the book" dramas on a monthly basis in school and offer our families opportunities to visit the food market or to attend worship at particular services (i.e. harvest and Christingle). The vicar, curate and other church members lead worship on a weekly basis and launch the value theme for the week in Monday worship. The Diocese also invites pupils to attend worship at the cathedral (i.e. Leavers' service).

Collective Worship and assembly.

The school meets together for Collective Worship but there will be times when we assemble together for other purposes, e.g. important notices and announcements. Such 'assembly' times are legally distinct from Collective Worship and parents' rights to withdraw their children do not apply.

Structure of Worship, organisation and delivery

Worship in the school, while reflecting our denomination, will take into account the levels of development of pupils and we try to deliver worship so that it has meaning and relevance to the individual age groups. Worship Leaders are chosen from each class who meet with the head teacher to explore the half- termly worship themes, to input into assemblies and to lead on worship within their classrooms.

The long term plan incorporates the school's values and ensures that the key Christian festivals are incorporated into the plan (see website). This is planned from the story starters planned by the Open the Book team.

The school gathers collectively in the school hall (or google meet in classrooms). Worship is led by church leaders or senior school staff for approximately 20 minutes. Class teachers will lead worship with their own class on a Wednesday as part of intimate worship and the children are then linked to the closer Diocesan family who produce an act of worship via video on a Friday. This is played in the classroom.

At the start of worship, music is played to signify that worship has begun. Children will enter the hall silently, reflecting on the music played. At the start of worship, the leader will welcome with the liturgy, "The Lord be with you", to which the children respond, "and also with you". 3 symbols are then brought forward by

pupils chosen prior to the start of worship. The bible is the symbol for God the Father, the cross is the symbol for God the son and a candle is the symbol for the Holy Spirit. Worship proceeds with a message through story, drama, videos, artefacts and other stimuli which encourage motivated deeper thinking. Big questions also encourage deeper reflection. Music and songs are used to invite further reflection and then worship finishes with an invitation to prayer. Children are invited to say “Amen” if they agree with the prayer.

Each class is invited to present to the school community on a theme, over the course of the year. Currently, this theme is drawn from the “Open the Book” drama performances which are linked to school values. Families are also invited to attend a lower junior performance at Harvest and a Christmas worship in December. At Easter, an Easter enrichment week deepens the children’s understanding of the Easter Story and all classes contribute to an Easter Act of Worship

The provision of collective worship conforms to Diocesan/District policy and this policy is written to the most up to date Church of England guidance for its schools (version 18.5.21).

Development of Spirituality

We want all of our pupils to experience the spiritual dimension of life and will, through worship, seek to develop their spiritual understanding and provide opportunities for children to make spiritual responses. Pupils will be encouraged to ask big questions, consider what is awe inspiring, be reflective and demonstrate, through prayer, praise and evaluation ways to demonstrate growing spirituality.

2. Responsibility for the policy

The policy has been written by the Headteacher who is the lead for worship. The vicar is the governor with responsibility for auditing the quality of worship and development of spirituality but other members of the governing body attend and evaluate worship, particularly those who are foundation governors.

3. Statement of broad aims (GBD)

Collective worship in our school will do the following:

- Explore the school's vision and how that underpins shared values and virtues. In doing so, it will reflect on moral values such as compassion, gratitude, justice, humility, forgiveness and reconciliation; and develop virtues such as resilience, determination and creativity that develop character and contribute to academic progress.
- Help pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world by encountering the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and developing understanding of the Christian belief in the Trinitarian nature of God.
- Offer the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection.
- Enable all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, as well as through the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican worship, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- Enable pupils to develop skills through engaging in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice.

5 Content and Approaches

An example of the content of worship is shown in the appendix. We are clear that we want worship to be as great an opportunity to draw from Biblical texts and modern texts so that children can reflect on core Christian values and the shared values across the faiths represented in school.

6. Resources

We build upon the resources used in worship each year. In each class, from Year 1, worship leaders work with the worship leader to develop the reflection areas in their class and to suggest ways to improve worship in school. The worship leader attends Diocesan training and builds upon the resources used by spending the annual budget on materials which will enrich the quality of worship for pupils and their families.

7. Consultation, Management, Recording and Review

The worship leader organises the Long Term Plan in partnership with the clergy St. Stephen's church. From this, the school's chosen values are developed through half termly medium term plans. Class reflection books are used by teachers and staff to evaluate and reflect upon worship. The pupil worship leaders meet with the worship leader on a weekly basis to plan future worship, take a leading role in developing worship and talking with their classes about how they can contribute to the worship life of the school. Worship plans are uploaded to the school's one drive and also placed on the school website.

Governors monitor worship through attending school worship, talking to worship leaders and evaluating the responses of children in the reflection books and in classroom/corridor displays.

The legal requirements for Collective Worship in our school

(a) Legal Basis

Collective Worship in Church Schools is governed by both the 1944 and 1988 Education Acts as well as by the Trust Deed of the School. The Collective Worship provided by the school must be in accordance with the Trust Deed, or in accordance with the tradition before we became a Controlled school.

(b) Daily Worship

Daily Collective Worship has to be provided for every pupil. This worship may take place in various groupings such as the whole school, separate Key Stage groups, year groups or house groups or in classes or tutor groups, but not faith groups. Worship may take place at any point in the school day.

(c) Worship in Church

Controlled Schools

Worship may take place in Church in addition to the daily act of Collective Worship in school. In our school, we invite children to church to take part in activities to further reflect on a festival (Christmas and Easter) and then invite families to attend church for harvest and Christingle. The children view the church as a place of welcome in our community.

(d) Parental rights of withdrawal

Parents may withdraw their children from Collective Worship and this provision and its limitations are indicated in this policy.

The Worship and Religious Education provided by the school is in accordance with the Church of England (Methodist) Foundation. This Foundation is also reflected in the curriculum and the whole life of the school community. Since the conduct of the school as a whole reflects the Church of England (Methodist) ethos, removal of pupils from Worship and or Religious Education (as parents are legally entitled to do) cannot insulate pupils from the religious life of the school.

(e) Complaints about the provision of Collective Worship

It is hoped that any complaint will be resolved informally by the Head Teacher, in consultation with the Governors, and possibly with advice from the Diocese or District. However, if the complaint is not satisfactorily resolved, then formal procedures come into play and the matter will be adjudicated by a specially constituted sub-committee of the Diocesan Board of Education acting on behalf of the Bishop of the Diocese, (or, in the case of the Methodist Church, the complaint would be referred to the Superintendent Minister and then the Connexional Authorities

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

Appendix

TO BE COMPLETED BY PARENTS			
Name of child		Class	
Name of parent		Date	
Reason for withdrawing child from worship			
Any other information you would like the school to consider			
Parent signature:			
Agreed actions from discussion with parents.	<p><i>Include notes from discussions with parents and agreed actions taken.</i></p> <p><i>E.g. withdrawal from worship does not also mean withdrawal from the distinctive Christian values which are woven into areas of the curriculum and which contribute to the Christian Distinctiveness of the school.</i></p>		