



"We believe, we achieve, we succeed in God's family"

With God, all things are possible. Matthew 19:26

THANKFULNESS • COMMUNITY • COMPASSION • TRUTHFULNESS • COURAGE • FORGIVENESS

St Mary's C of E Primary School

Collective Worship Policy

Staff consulted: September 2024

Ratified by the Governing Body: Chair's Action

Review Date: September 2026

St Mary's Primary School Collective Worship Policy

Introduction and Background

St Mary's C of E Primary School is committed to offering high quality collective worship. Our school is a place that recognises and value Collective Worship as central to fostering a sense of community and to expressing the school's Christian vision. In practice this means that structure, planning, evaluation, participation, collaboration, and inspection of worship are all taken seriously by the school.

Collective Worship is seen as more than a daily 'awe and wonder' moment. It is the unique heartbeat of the school and is offered as part of a wider opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter faith by engaging in conversations about God, both as individuals and together.

This form of encounter through worship should be truly welcoming, inclusive and exemplifying the principles of Christian hospitality. This is an approach that seeks to meet the needs of all, wherever they may be on their journey of faith and belief.

What is Collective Worship?

Collective Worship is a special act or occasion, the main purpose of which is to show reverence to God. Collective Worship should reflect the Anglican status of the school as expressed in its trust deed liberates those leading Collective Worship to build on the rich, lived diversity of Anglican tradition and identity. In the same way as worship in churches is aspirational, constantly evolving and being re-imagined there is an expectation of a continuous, dynamic reimagining of what Collective Worship means in the Church school.

Collective Worship ought to reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities.

Collective Worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to, watching and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes.

We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way that enhances their lives... Collective Worship in schools, including prayer, reading and reflecting on the Bible, liturgy, sacrament and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity, provide a vital opportunity for this.

An act of Collective Worship is distinct from an assembly. Although they often take place during the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear.

Aims and Purpose of Collective Worship

The aspiration to provide Collective Worship that is Inclusive, Invitational and Inspiring is underpinned by the following aims and objectives and will be monitored and quality assured through the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS).

Collective Worship at St Mary's Church of England Primary 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.
- To celebrate difference, diversity, achievements and special occasions.
- To develop a sense of community by understanding the feelings and needs of others.

Inclusive, Invitational and Inspiring

Inclusive

Worship is collective in that it involves meeting, exploring, questioning, and responding to others and, for some, to God. In our 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 will come from homes of different faith backgrounds as well as of no faith background. Moreover, many pupils will naturally be at different stages of their spiritual journey during their time in our school. Pupils should 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 should 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 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. It should reflect the faith, belief, and ethnic communities the school serves. Collective Worship should validate, embrace and celebrate all protected characteristics.

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. Pupils and adults should always only be invited to

pray if they wish to do so and should be invited to pray in their own way. Prayer should 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 should reflect the diverse worship experience of the wider Christian community. Care should be taken to ensure that pupils and adults do not feel compelled to sing strongly confessional lyrics. There should be no assumption of Christian faith in those present.

Inspiring

Pupils and adults can expect the worship they encounter in St Mary’s C of E Primary 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, they should be inspired to become courageous advocates of causes. It should encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and/or philosophical convictions.

Collective Worship Provision and Implementation

Through Collective Worship, we are creating a space for an encounter with faith in God. It also provides the opportunity to reflect on larger questions of meaning and purpose. Pupils and adults can expect that our school’s Collective Worship practices will provide a shared set of symbols, signs, words and actions which give the community a language upon which it can draw, in times of joy and grief. Such an experience is key to fostering a sense of fellowship and cohesion within the school community. Whether in times of crisis or celebration, this time set aside in the school day provides staff and pupils with the opportunity to gather and support one another as a community.

Throughout the year, our school may meet to celebrate and mark certain seasons in the Church calendar, such as Lent, Harvest and Advent. Other important events in the school year, such as the start and end of the academic year, may be marked by formal acts of collective worship. Pupils and adults will encounter the practice of regular prayer and worship as a normal part of the life of the school.

Parents, pupils and adults can expect that worship in a Church school will follow a recognisable structure that will help focus worship on one idea. This helps to give organisation and clarity to the unfolding of that idea, as well as helping the leader to ensure that worship is age-appropriate. This could take the form of a welcome or prayer followed by a consideration of a Bible passage or story that the group can then reflect on through discussion, prayer, silent reflection or music.

We use set gathering and greeting words such as *‘We are gathered here today in the name of the Lord, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We light this candle to remind us that God’s love burns brightly for all of us’* and *‘Peace be with you... and also with you’* which all present are invited to join in.

All are invited to join in as we close worship with prayer, reflection and the closing words *‘Let us go out, into the world, as messenger of hope and (Christian Value)’*.

Term	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Christian Value focus	Community	Compassion	Thankfulness	Forgiveness	Truthfulness	Courage

Spirituality

Worship should seek to support the school's definition of spirituality:

Spirituality helps us appreciate the beauty of life and deepens our understanding of ourselves, others, and the world.

At our school, it creates a sense of belonging, where love, kindness, and connection with God, nature, and each other help us flourish.

We value quiet moments for reflection, guiding us in how we live and grow, and reminding us that there is something greater than ourselves.

Worship allows children to learn, express their views, listen to others opinions and think more deeply about the world around them. It should be a time for awe and wonder, to reflect on something 'bigger than ourselves' and to reflect on who we want to be.

Developing staff expertise and knowledge

Parents, pupils and adults are entitled to be led in worship by those who have a secure understanding of the nature of Collective Worship in a Church school context and by those who are professional in their approach to working with pupils and adults from all faiths and none. Therefore, it should be a priority to build up the expertise of staff, pupils, clergy and other adults in facilitating Collective Worship in Church schools. To do this we ensure the following:

- Worship leaders, including clergy, should have access to regular training, primarily through local diocesan education teams.
- Pupil worship leaders should be supported, encouraged and resourced to contribute meaningful acts of worship.
- Worship leaders, including clergy, should have access to high quality and current resources.
- The governing body should have robust systems in place to monitor the impact of worship effectively; this monitoring will include and meaningfully involve pupil voice. Those facilitating worship should have the opportunity to receive feedback and the hear the outcome of evaluation.
- Those from outside agencies and church groups invited into the school to facilitate worship should be trained and properly briefed about the school, its pupil context and the school's vision. They should be supported and monitored as part of the school's systems for the evaluation of the impact of worship.

Mr Austin is the named member of staff responsible for Collective Worship with responsibility for ensuring that appropriate policy and practice are in place and publicly available.

The co-ordinator and Head teacher are willing to provide help, support and ideas to any member of staff in planning and delivering acts of Collective Worship on a class or whole school level.

It is the role of Rev Jacqui King, School Governor, with responsibility for religious education and Collective Worship to monitor the policy and practice of collective worship. The Governor concerned should liaise with the Headteacher before reporting to the Governors on religious education and collective worship.

Equal Opportunities

Children's entitlement to Acts of Collective Worship should not be affected by gender, culture, race or special needs. It is important that there are no barriers to this equality of opportunity.

Right of Withdrawal

There may be those who are uncomfortable to enter through this open door of worship at St Mary's C of E Primary School and so we recognise the right of withdrawal from Collective Worship for those parents or pupils who wish to exercise this option.

We will make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the child during the period concerned.

Parents do not have to explain or give reasons for this.

This complies with the 1944 Education Act and was restated in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

The Headteacher keeps a record of all children who withdraw from collective worship.