



## Collective Worship Policy for Holywell School

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### 1. Rationale

At Holywell School, our vision is:

- to be an outstanding Christian learning community where everyone is valued as a unique individual and where everyone feels safe.
- We aim to be the best we can possibly be, to treat others as we wish to be treated and to make a positive difference to our community and beyond.
- We strive to be peaceful problem-solvers with open minds and hearts, living God's love and being kind.

As a Church of England School in the Diocese of St Albans we are committed to providing a distinctively Christian, community-focussed education. This distinctive educational approach is offered to the community as a gift and, as a result, as with all church schools in the Diocese of St Albans, we educate students irrespective of their faith. In serving the common good and as a church school, we aim to be a place of hospitality, grace and love, welcoming and serving all.

At Holywell we consider Collective worship to be a significant part of our education provision and curriculum that both reflects and explores the schools distinctive Christian character and contributes to the academic achievement, personal development and well being of all learners. Our acts of Collective Worship provide an opportunity for us to meet together in community and, whilst guided and framed by our Christian values, they are open to and inclusive of all faiths. We invite students of other faiths and no faith to join us in a moment of quiet, respectful reflection.

Therefore Collective Worship at Holywell School is planned to:

- Offer the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worshipping God and reflection
- Ensure the act of collective worship is distinctively Christian in content.

- Enable all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, enthusiastic singing, silence, story, prayer, reflection, the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican/Methodist worship, festivals and, occasionally, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- Help pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world, to encounter the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and to develop their understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God and its language.
- Enable pupils as well as adults to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice. Leaders of worship, including clergy, have access to regular training.
- Encourage local church community partnerships to support the school effectively in developing its provision for collective worship.
- Be inspirational and inclusive.
- Regularly include Biblical material and Christian teaching and this should explore and relate to the school's core Christian values
- Use the school prayer, the Lord's Prayer and/or prayers written by students
- Challenge all learners of all backgrounds to understand and embark on their own spiritual journey.
- Contribute significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; by providing all learners with "something more than the obvious, something to wonder at, something to respond to"
- Provide an opportunity to celebrate and give thanks for achievements within the school, local and international community and occasions of significance, including festivals

Collective worship is planned as an experience that does not offend the integrity of the non-religious or those of different faith.

The positive educational outcomes of Collective Worship at Holywell School include opportunities for:

- the whole community to celebrate;
- sharing and experiencing differences;
- developing a culture of learning;
- building a sense of group identity;
- encouraging a sense of personal and social responsibility;
- a break from the busyness of life (for stillness and quiet);
- learning how to behave in a large social group;
- exploring feelings and emotions;
- learning how to perform in front of an audience;
- learning how to respond to a performance;
- making visible the school's leadership;
- developing inner awareness.

At Holywell, our acts of Collective Worship take place during our Assemblies. We separate out the celebration and administrative tasks (giving out notices, sharing information) in our Assemblies from the act of Collective Worship so that students are clear about when the act of Collective Worship begins and ends. Most acts of

collective worship begin and end with a prayer. Sometimes a short piece of music is used to separate the act of Collective Worship from other school business.

## 2. Legal Requirements

The law requires the Headteacher and Governing Body of every school to provide a daily act of Collective Worship which is in line with the school's Trust Deed and foundation. The School meets this requirement through acts of collective worship, daily prayer, or thought for the day.

### *Withdrawal from Collective Worship*

We have an invitational approach to collective acts of worship and we encourage all students to take part in our collective acts of worship. However, we do still recognise the legal right of parents to withdraw their children from acts of worship and this is stated in the school prospectus.

It is intended that consultation will take place before formal requests are made to withdraw from acts of worship. In the case of parents or teachers contact needs to be made with the Headteacher. Guidance for new parents on non-participation in acts of Collective Worship is given in the school prospectus.

## 3. Planning Collective Worship

Planning for collective worship is viewed as integral to the role of teaching staff at Holywell School and planning collective worship/assemblies is as important as planning a lesson.

We use the 4 stage structure of planning for collective worship:

- Gathering
- Engaging
- Responding and Prayer
- Sending

Pupils are encouraged to be involved in the planning leading and monitoring of Collective worship.

Worship is invitational offering everyone the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom for those of other faiths and none to be present with integrity. All those who wish to be so are actively engaged in worship. Prayer is a natural and valued part of the culture of the school. It is not compulsory or forced. All those who wish to do so will have regular opportunities to pray and reflect.

The views of pupils about collective worship are sought through the School Council.

Collective Worship is monitored at Governors' level through the Ethos committee at the school.

The programme of acts of Collective Worship is coordinated by the Senior Leadership Team, the Heads of Year and the Heads of House.

#### 4. Our pattern of Collective Worship

- Weekly Key Stage Assembly (Fridays) led by members of the Senior Leadership Team
- Fortnightly House Assembly (Tuesdays)
- Fortnightly Year Assembly (Wednesdays and Thursdays)
- On non assembly days, collective acts of worship are led by tutors and/or students and include the school prayer, the Lord's Prayer and/or a Thought for the Day
- Staff Briefings and SLT meetings begin with a short reflection and/or prayer

We have a close working relationship with our two parish churches – St Peter and St Paul, Cranfield and St Mary's in Wootton. Rev. Hugh Symes Thompson and Rev Peter Ackroyd regularly lead worship – both in school and in the church of St Peter and St Paul, Cranfield. We also have close links with Bridgebuilder Trust and Rachel Forster is a regular visitor to school.

The acts of worship in general follow themes that are aligned to the school's values, whilst also following the liturgy of the church's year and making space for other national events.

In general the Headteacher is consulted before a visiting speaker is confirmed. It is explained to visitors the educational aims of Collective Worship at the school and the need to avoid any proselytising. Attempts to persuade pupils to adopt a particular religious or non religious belief are not appropriate. Visitors are not allowed to speak about raising money for any particular cause(s) without the prior permission of the Headteacher.

#### 5. Review

The Ethos Committee of the Board of Governors will monitor and review the implementation of this policy, making recommendations to the full Board regarding further amendments.

## Appendix 1: Definition of Worship

1. There are many definitions of worship - some have particular relevance in the context of a school:

- a celebration of beliefs, ideals, values and experiences.
- something which promotes feelings of awe and wonder, love, compassion and personal relationships.
- an act of worship renews values and helps members to grasp them personally.

2. Secretary of State for Education 1991

Worship in schools must reflect something special or separate from ordinary activities. It should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a being or power regarded as supernatural or divine.

3. Worship in schools is collective not corporate. Corporate worship is applied to worship within a body of believers who share a commitment to a particular faith. Collective worship allows for differing individual responses at different levels. Not all members of a school community will want or be able to respond to worship in the same manner.

4. School can provide the setting for worship by creating an atmosphere and the conditions within which worship can take place. It can provide stimulus for worship and give opportunities for individual response, e.g. through prayer or quiet reflection, but school cannot and should not seek to make individuals worship since worship is something which must be offered freely and from the heart. All pupils must, however, respect the activity taking place.

5. John Hull has written that the task of worship in the school context "is to take the most transparent, the most symbolic of the concerns of our pupils that they will be led from the trivial and the immediate and the local to the significant, the enduring and the universal concern"

6. David Trainer, HMI, Worship is "any activity where the focus is God".

7. In Church of England schools, collective worship reflects the traditions of the Church of England and develops learners' understanding of Anglican traditions and practice. Many schools work with the local vicar and other church members to plan and deliver acts of worship that are invitational, reflective and engaging. There is plenty of flexibility in the provision of collective worship to enable all pupils to benefit without compromising their beliefs. Collective worship gives pupils and school staff the opportunity to:

- Engage in an act of community.
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God.
- Be still and reflect.
- Explore the big questions of life and respond to national events.
- Foster respect and deepen spiritual awareness.
- Reflect on the character of God and on the teachings of Christ.
- Affirm Christian values and attitudes.
- Share each other's joys and challenges.
- Celebrate special times in the Christian calendar.