



# Collective Worship Policy for Holywell School

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## 1. Context and rationale for practice

At Holywell, our vision is that everyone in our community chooses to “**Live Life in all its Fullness**” (John 10:10).

Inspired by the teaching of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, we choose ...

to live our values,

being the best we can be

in community.

The fundamental guiding values for Holywell stem from our character as a Church of England school. Our purpose is to make a difference in the lives of each and every child in our care, to enable each and every member of our community at Holywell to ‘live life in all its fullness’. This quote from John 10:10 is used to headline our purpose. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus promises that if we choose to follow Him, we will find safety and will have life in great abundance. Whilst not all of our ‘sheep’ are Christians, we ask everyone who is a part of our community at Holywell to uphold our Christian values and to strive to be the best they can be. We ask that our school is filled with learning and love and our hearts are filled with kindness and care. “Which commandment is the most important of all?” “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second most important commandment is this: ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself’.” Mark 28-31. Simply put; we aim to treat others as we would like to be treated.

We take the same approach to Collective Worship. Whilst we are proud and unapologetic about our Christian ethos, values and vision, we are welcoming of all faiths and people of no faith. We ask every member of our community to commit to observing our Christian values and, whilst our approach to collective worship and prayer is invitational, we ask everyone to be respectful of our faith practices. Assemblies do include a Christian act of Collective Worship (a legal requirement of every school) and we invite students of other faiths and no faith to join us in a moment of quiet, respectful reflection. At Holywell we consider Collective Worship to be a significant part of our educational provision and our curriculum that both

reflects and explores the school's distinctive Christian character and contributes to the academic achievement, personal development and wellbeing 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.

## **2. Legal Status of Collective Worship**

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. Practice**

Collective Worship at Holywell School is planned to:

- Offer the opportunity, without compulsion, to all students 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 students 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, and festivals. We hope in the future to occasionally, where appropriate, offer the Eucharist.
- Help students 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 students as well as adults to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice.
- 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 students' 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.

At Holywell, our acts of Collective Worship usually 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. On days when there is no assembly, the act of Collective Worship is done in tutor groups with the use of The Lord's Prayer or The School Prayer. Our school prayer was written by our students and was inspired by our Christian-values-led teaching and practice.

**Heavenly Father**

Thank you for our school.  
Fill our classrooms with learning and love,  
Fill our hearts with kindness and care.

**Lord Jesus**

Help us to find peace when we are angry,  
Compassion to forgive when we are wronged  
And courage to try again when we fail.

**Holy Spirit**

Guide us in our darkest moments  
And lead us towards your Light.  
Amen.

#### **4. 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

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

#### **5. Our pattern of Collective Worship**

Our Collective Worship programme is being delivered both as a live event and, in order to have whole-school acts of collective worship, we will also have live-streamed events via Zoom. The provision during the week is as follows:

- Weekly Whole-school or Key Stage Worship (Tuesdays) led by members of the Senior Leadership Team and/or local clergy.
- Year Group Worship two out of three weeks.
- House Group Worship one out of three weeks.
- 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 Community Time and SLT meetings begin with a short reflection and/or prayer.

We have established a Junior Worship Team and are working towards a more active involvement of students in the delivery of Worship in school.

We have a close working relationship with our two parish churches – St Peter and St Paul, Cranfield and St Mary's in Wootton. Rev Isaac Pain is the rector at the parish church of St Peter and St Paul's in Cranfield and we are looking forward to exploring further links and opportunities to worship in the church. Rev Peter Ackroyd from St Mary's in Wootton regularly leads worship in 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 students 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.

## **6. Impact and Outcomes**

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.

The views of students about collective worship are sought through Community Time discussions.

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

## **7. 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 students 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 students 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 students to benefit without compromising their beliefs. Collective worship gives students 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.