



Collective worship policy.

St Catherine's C of E Primary School, in the Diocese of St Albans and affiliated to St Mary's Church, Ware

December 2023

St. Catherine's is... "a nurturing community where differences are celebrated, and caring, happy children flourish. Children embrace their learning and develop skills of wisdom and resilience, enabling them to live life in all its fullness."

John 10:10 "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

It is a requirement that all registered school age pupils take part in an act of worship each day, whether they attend a 'church' school or not. These acts of worship must be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character" for the majority of the time. They must also be appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils".

AIMS AND PHILOSOPHY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AT OUR SCHOOL.

We believe at St Catherine's that collective worship both supports and strengthens what we aim to do in every aspect of school life. Our caring ethos, and the value which we place on the development of the whole child, spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually is reflected in our worship. We value this special time in the school day for the space it gives children to develop a reflective approach to life and the ability to express their reflections in traditionally religious ways or any other appropriate manner. Collective worship should support children in a holistic sense, enabling them to grow spiritually, develop and flourish.

We aim to introduce children to worship in a manner appropriate to their age and understanding. We recognise that children of various faiths, or indeed of no faith attend this school, alongside Christian children, and we are proud of that diversity. All pupils are encouraged to understand the views and beliefs of others, whilst developing their own worldviews based on their own beliefs, values, behaviours, experiences, identities and commitments.

We recognise that in asking our children to worship we have to consider the background that our children come from. It is not the practice of this school to convert children. The faith background of both the staff and the child's family is respected at all times. Children are not obliged to address God directly, in prayer, but it is expected that they are respectful while others do. Children not wishing to join in with prayer are encouraged to have a moment of reflection.

Worship should be invitational, inspiring and inclusive...

In summary we aim to:

- Introduce pupils to collective worship
- Grow pupils' understanding of the Christian faith
- Teach and develop values such as kindness, integrity, respect
- Develop pupils' awareness of their own feelings and those of others regarding faith and beliefs
- Deepen pupils' understanding of the world around them and the diversity within it
- Nurture a sense of love and forgiveness within the school community
- Celebrate Christian occasions together
- Learn about stories from the bible and how they relate to everyday life
- Learn about varied celebrations of all faiths
- Explore and reflect upon attitudes and values in society today

Content of collective worship

Worship at St Catherine's generally takes place during assembly times, but may also take place in classrooms, as appropriate, for example class prayers or times of self-reflection. Collective worship might encompass concepts involving celebration of and respect to God. Worship may draw on drama, literature, music, stories from the Christian faith or from other faiths or personal experiences.

Collective worship will always include a moment for prayer and/or reflection.

Many of the characteristics of Christianity are shared by other faiths. It may be appropriate at times to draw these comparisons.

Starting points for assemblies reflect a wide variety of themes; these may be seasonal, topical (news related perhaps), or explore stories from other religions; they are sometimes linked to the Diocesan collective worship themes. When appropriate, collective worship will engage with community or national events and there is always room for spontaneity within the planned themes.

The local vicar, Ysmena Pentelow leads and/or participates in whole school Collective Worship regularly and is supported on some occasions by the trainee vicar. The whole school also attends acts of Collective worship at St Mary's Church, termly. These are often led by KS2 pupils and based on relevant themes (for example Christmas, Easter)

Methods of delivery

There is a half termly timetable of themes, outlining values and bible stories for focus. There are whole school assemblies, as well as Key Stage assemblies enabling staff to deliver more 'age specific' topics and materials. The Head, deputy and teaching staff will plan and deliver assemblies in line with planned themes. 'Picture News' resources are used weekly to introduce current affairs to the pupils in a child friendly, discussion-based way. There is a weekly 'singing assembly' which includes reflection on the chosen theme of that week and appropriate hymns and prayers.

The range of methods may include:

- Hymns, music and prayer in varied forms
- Drama and role play
- Stories from all faiths
- Visual aids and props

- Pupil contributions
- Visiting speakers

Invite, inspire, include:

It is important that everyone has the opportunity to engage.

- I invite you to join in with this prayer
- Would you like to help with this prayer
- Call out/ whole school collaborative prayers

Worship should be inspiring:

- Reflect upon big questions / wider issues
- Be inspired by other Christians (everyday stories)

Everyone should feel included:

- Whatever their faith/belief
- Whatever their learning style
- Worship in different ways, with different people leading
- Sing a variety of songs
- Consider use of language... “some people believe...”, “I wonder...”

Monitoring and evaluation

The collective worship timetable is drawn up termly by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and RE leader, and shared with staff and Ysmena Pentelow. The plan includes topics to be reflected upon by whole school and is a starting point, rather than an imperative. It includes suggestions for bible readings and songs/hymns, although these are by no means exclusive or exhaustive and may be deviated from by staff leading assemblies, if they feel there is something more appropriate.

Staff evaluate during staff meetings and as a teaching team on the plan itself, which is displayed in the staff room, and also as S.L.T. against some of the following:

- The growth of forgiveness, respect and kindness within the school
- Enjoyment, attention and reaction/response of pupils
- Thoughts, questions and answers voiced by the children during assemblies
- Feedback from staff about responses and reactions following assembly
- Attentiveness during assemblies
- Pupil voice feed-back from our ‘Worship Warriors’

The H/teacher & RE leader also sit in during collective worship to monitor style, effectiveness, pupil response. The RE leader or other leaders within the school, monitor pupil views by way of ‘Pupil Voice’ interviews.

Often, a display will be initiated from a weekly theme, which supports ongoing development of a given value, or participation by pupils and their views which in turn supports evaluation of an assembly theme. For example, our ‘kite’ display reflects Rebecca Nye’s ‘Relational Consciousness’, encouraging children to express their emerging awareness of themselves in response to the collective worship.

Withdrawal from collective worship

If a parent asks for their child to be wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at St Catherine’s, the school must comply unless the request is withdrawn. Any parent who wishes to exercise this right should consult the head teacher. Teachers may also withdraw from worship.

By law, parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship.

(Currently there are no children withdrawn from collective worship at St Catherine’s School).

Pupils may, on occasions, miss part of collective worship for individual support/booster work. These intervention groups always vary, so no one child would repeatedly miss assemblies and collective worship.