

## **Austwick CE (VA) Primary School**

### **Collective Worship Policy**

#### **Introduction**

Collective worship is central to the life of our school. Worship offers the children and others in our school an opportunity to reflect on values and issues in the context of our Christian ethos. It reflects our mission statement and shapes our approach to others and to what we do in school. Pupils, staff and parents of all faiths (and none) are welcome to worship. Our school celebrates religious and cultural diversity and encourages dialogue and understanding. In collective worship we create the opportunity to explore the place of faith in each of our lives. Through regular acts of worship our school has the opportunity to offer thanksgiving and praise to God through a range of liturgical patterns including the Eucharist.

Our collective worship provides the pupils and staff the opportunity to:

- worship God;
- experience a variety of styles of worship;
- celebrate: Christian festivals; school values; achievements;
- grow in understanding of and participation in prayer;
- develop a reflective approach to life and reflect on Christian values;
- develop as a community based in Christian values;
- participate and respond, through active involvement in the planning, leading, presentation and evaluation of worship;
- feel safe and affirmed.
- Explore and reflect on the stories and events of other faiths.

Worship in school is known as 'collective' worship because the community gathers (or collects) and when worship takes place but there is no expectation or compulsion placed on participants. What is provided is an 'opportunity' during which the participants, through a variety of experiences, can participate in the opportunities listed above.

At times worship will reflect aspects of the curriculum and in particular will:

- nurture spiritual growth;
- consider moral issues in a Christian context;
- Enhance social understanding;

- explore beliefs drawn from their own cultural heritage.

The curriculum should not be divorced from worship as all that we do in school is influenced by our school's ethos, mission and values. Just as opportunities for spiritual reflection and prayer are sought across the curriculum so worship should link to the work that children do in lessons. The children can present work or conduct performances related to their work. These are often included within a structure which includes prayer and reflection.

### **SMSC within collective worship**

Collective worship plays an important role in contributing to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our children.

Acts of collective worship aim to:

- nurture and maintain the dignity and image of God in human beings through working for social justice and encouraging students to consider the needs of others through charitable service;
- nurture reflection, meditation and prayer;
- provide pupils with opportunities to explore the spiritual dimension of their lives through music, images and words;
- provide a sense of occasion that separates them from the rest of the school day;
- foster an appreciation of the natural created world and our shared responsibilities for maintaining it;
- develop clear partnerships between worship in the school and the wider community.

### **Inclusive Worship**

Our understanding of Christianity is that it is an inclusive faith which mirrors the attitude of Christ in the Gospels. Therefore, we welcome individuals of all faiths. Through their Christian character our acts of Christian worship will:

- Recognise and celebrate the diversity of cultures, life-styles and faiths.
- Have an atmosphere in which everyone feels safe and valued.
- Be appropriate for every student to attend;
- Focus on issues and experiences which are relevant to the pupils;

### **The Pattern of Collective Worship**

Collective worship takes place in a variety of groupings in the school hall, classrooms and on occasions outside but it is normally a whole school gathering at the end of the day in the hall.

We follow the seasons of the Church year and within this significant festivals and other special days are observed. These always include Harvest, Christmas, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Easter and Pentecost.

Whenever worship takes place it is planned to promote thinking beyond the time given to worship itself.

We use resources from the Diocese of Canterbury and 'Roots and Fruits' to set a termly pattern and focus for our Collective Worship and the values explored are reflected in wider school life.

Throughout the year there are opportunities for the school to worship with the wider community, either when we take part in services at the parish church or when members of the worshipping community join us in school – for example for the Eucharist on Ash Wednesday.

### **Leading worship**

Worship has a variety of leaders from both within school and from the local Church Community. Children are given opportunities to lead worship throughout the year. The local vicar leads Collective Worship once a week and 'Open the Book' visit once a fortnight. We also have visitors from Sports Reach and the local NISCU delivering Worship.

### **Planning Acts of Collective Worship**

Our acts of worship are carefully planned to ensure a balance between content and experience. Leaders, including the children, plan the content and activities included in Worship according to what is most appropriate to the season/theme, and the ages, aptitudes and the backgrounds of the pupils. Throughout their time at our school children will encounter a wide variety of activities such as drama alongside traditional elements of worship such as prayer and song. The School has a worship committee made up of students who enthusiastically plan and organise worship and arrange opportunities for others to do so. They keep collective worship records and gauge the opinions of others, including ways that collective worship can be improved.

Prayer is a vital part of our worship. It is introduced with a form of words that invites but does not coerce pupils to participate. Our prayers are addressed to Jesus and God reflecting the traditions and practices of the Church of England. Pupils who prefer not to pray are encouraged to use these times to reflect on the important messages shared in our worship.

Our worship is regularly reviewed through discussions with participants, observation and reflection and our evaluations are fed into the planning for future worship.

Planning worship has two main dimensions:

- Worship needs to be planned through the year to take account of the themes (values), Bible stories and readings, songs and prayers which are appropriate for the time of the Christian year;
- Individual acts of worship also need to have a 'plan'. In Church this is commonly referred to as the 'liturgy'; careful attention to the liturgies used in school will ensure that an appropriate range of experiences is offered throughout the year.

By law, Collective Worship must:

- be provided for every child every day;
- reflect the school's Trust Deed.

Our policy sets out clearly our aspiration that collective worship will be a valuable and valued experience for all members of our school community whatever their backgrounds and beliefs. It is invitational, inclusive and reflective in nature and never coercive or indoctrinatory.

Parents have a right to withdraw their children from all or any acts of worship. In the first instance we ask parents who may wish to exercise this right to visit school to speak with the headteacher.

Signed :

(Chair of Governors)

Beth McHardy (Interim Headteacher)

Date: March 2025

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