

# Collective Worship Policy

Old Catton C of E VC Junior School



'You will know them by what they do' (Matthew 7:16)



## Collective Worship Policy

### Rationale

All acts of collective worship are in accordance with the founding Church of England Trust deed and the Ethos Statement in the school's Instruments of Government. School collective worship is an affirmation and celebration of the Christian values and ethos of the school.

Collective worship is central to the life and purposes of our school. It is an inclusive act, which encourages reflection in all present, of all faiths and none, rooted in the Christian understanding of God as Trinity.

### Vision

Our vision is to create a school where everyone is encouraged, challenged and given the opportunity to be the best they can be. We are a community of care, built on Christian principles, where children and adults have a sense of belonging, are valued and their individuality is respected.

A place for all to flourish

**'I have come, so they may have life, and have it to the full' John 10:10**

### Our vision and values are embedded in the story of The Parable of the Lost Sheep

At Old Catton Junior School our vision is inspired by a parable that Jesus told which reflects the values of Love, Hope and Joy and encapsulates our ethos. As the shepherd looks out for his sheep we too encourage and support each other. The shepherd makes a bold choice. He has the confidence and faith to ensure that no one is left behind and sees the uniqueness and value of each individual. This story reflects how we nurture each other in our community.

Luke 15 v 1 – 5 Matthew 18 v 12 – 14

**Love, Hope and Joy** – are the values which underpin everything we do in school. The parable highlights the love that the shepherd has for the lost sheep, the hope he has that he will find it and return it to the flock and the joy felt when the lost sheep is found. It also represents that we never leave anyone behind; we are a whole school community who acts to nurture each and every one of our children in school – just like the shepherd does with his flock.

"You should never give up on anyone and always help people, like the shepherd did when he looked for his sheep." (Year 5 child)

"The story means that we help everyone through tough times and we all support each other through God's love." (Year 6 child)

## Spirituality

At Old Catton Junior School, we follow our Federation Spirituality Statement. We have defined spirituality as: "spirituality is the bitter-sweet yearning for beauty, truth, love and wonder beyond ourselves. It is a longing we pursue together and a treasure we glimpse in ourselves and one another and seek beyond us into eternity. It is life in all its fullness."

For our children, we have simplified our definition to: "spirituality is the feeling that there is more to the world than we can touch and see."

Spirituality is included wherever relevant in Collective Worship.

## Introduction

As a Church school we want our children to have the opportunity to learn to worship and to grow in their understanding of God and of themselves. Collective worship in our school is not simply a statutory duty. We believe that we are all made in the image of God and that worship should form an integral part of our lives.

We believe that at its heart collective worship should provide an opportunity for pupils and staff to come together to learn, reflect and pray, sing, share and communicate their feelings with one another and to God.

As a Church of England VC Primary School, we see our collective worship as a central part of school life. Our Collective Worship policy fulfils the statutory requirements common to all schools according to the 1988 Education Reform Act (and consolidated in the 1996 Education Act).

## The Legal Requirements

There must be a daily act of collective worship for all pupils which takes account of their age and aptitude (Education Reform Act 1988). Parents have the right to withdraw children from collective worship and suitable arrangements should be made to accommodate these children. Since this is a church school, however, collective worship is central to its life and work and is regarded as a very important part of children's education.

## Anglican Faith and Practice

We seek to provide acts of collective worship that reflect the faith and practice of the Church of England therefore:

We use the Bible as a sourcebook for inspiration and learning and make pupils familiar with the Lord's Prayer, psalms and other passages of scripture. We provide opportunities to discover the value of silence and quiet reflection. We observe the major Christian festivals and celebrations.

In our school, we aim to provide a worship space that is attractive and well prepared with appropriate thought having been given to space, seating, ambience and music.

## Aims

The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith, and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.

At Old Catton Church of England Junior School we believe that children learn best in a happy, and challenging and safe environment, so we encourage participation in a wide range of physical and creative learning opportunities within a broad balanced curriculum.

Our aim is that our worship contributes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all children and staff.

Our policy for collective worship supports this by:

- Recognising that collective worship is an important opportunity to provide opportunities for our pupils' and staff spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Ensuring the daily act of collective worship will be distinctly Christian in content and will follow the liturgical calendar
- Providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils which enables them to:
  - ▲ worship God
  - ▲ strengthen and support the school community, giving expression to and reaffirming the Christian values of the school to develop a community spirit, a common ethos and shared values
  - ▲ celebrate the gifts that each person brings to the school community, recognising the uniqueness of each individual made in the image of God
  - ▲ consider spiritual and moral issues, reflect on personal development, multi-faith festivals and curriculum aptitudes
  - ▲ respond to the worship offered
  - ▲ be introduced to and respond to Christian language, symbolism and major Christian celebrations and experience stillness and quietness
  - ▲ experience a variety of forms of prayer and meditation. These might include praise, seeking forgiveness or quiet reflection
  - ▲ begin to understand the nature and purpose of worship
  - ▲ encourage reflection on the puzzling questions that life poses and response to the wonder and mystery of the world around us, fostering an appreciation of the created world and an awareness of our responsibility for it.
  - ▲ enable children to explore their own beliefs.
- Ensuring collective worship, whether in assembly or class time, will:
  - ▲ be inspiring and transformational
  - ▲ be led by senior leaders, staff, children, clergy and visitors.
  - ▲ develop the Christian vision, values and ethos of the school and focus on our school Christian values
  - ▲ include a range of creative opportunities e.g. music, silence, symbol, drama
  - ▲ involve pupils through members of the Worship group opening and closing worship and through pupils writing their own prayer
  - ▲ celebrate and give thanks for the achievements within the school, local and international community and occasions of significance, including festivals
  - ▲ provide a foundation for a mature understanding and practice of worship in the future
  - ▲ take place in the school hall, outdoors, in classrooms or the church
  - ▲ respect the right of parents to withdraw their children for collective worship

### Organisation of collective worship

We hold a daily act of collective worship in our school and this forms part of each assembly. The whole school, including members of staff, meet together in the hall each day. Collective worship usually lasts for fifteen minutes. We conduct collective worship in a dignified and respectful way. We tell children that this is a special time, a period of reflection. We expect children to behave in an appropriate way; we ask them to be quiet and thoughtful and to listen carefully to the teachings and to participate fully

in prayer and hymns. The school prayer is said regularly, as is the Lord's Prayer. The lectern and our prayer table is situated in the hall as a focal point during collective worship. The objects on the prayer table represent our key school values of Love, Hope and Joy.

The Head of School normally leads collective worship; other staff also lead collective worship on occasion such as Staff who hold TLR roles and the RE Subject Leader. Members of the congregation of St. Margaret's (including a Foundation governor) also lead 'Open the Book' assemblies fortnightly, with children fully participating in them.

The children also participate in leading assemblies as part of the school's 'Worship Collective' – a group of children who come together to plan an assembly around a given theme, to then present to the whole school. This is a termly project lead by the RE Subject Leader.

Children are invited to pass the blessing at the end of collective worship and also sometimes lead prayer.

The incumbent leads collective worship once every half term. Other visitors may also invited to contribute to acts of worship.

Some of our assemblies reflect the achievements and learning of the children: assembly times provide opportunities to celebrate success. We encourage the children to participate in assemblies by showing their work to the other children and raising issues discussed in their class or the School Council. Assemblies offer an opportunity to acknowledge and reward children for their achievements both in and out of school. They provide an important part in promoting the ethos of the school, which is that all children are valued and all achievements are recognised.

### **Content and Approach**

We have developed a range of themes and topics through which collective worship takes place. Themes for each month are chosen and presented in a variety of ways. The current list is included in the Collective Worship Folder. Key themes include: courage, hope, forgiveness, compassion, justice and perseverance. There are regular links to our key values of **Love, Hope and Joy** and we reference these within our themes, stories and experiences that we explore within collective worship. We regularly use the 'Values for Life' resource. The school explores themes through stories, hymns, prayers and responses;

- Celebration of the major festivals of Christianity and of other faiths
- Presentation of Bible stories
- Topical matters from the news or the locality
- Literature with implicit or explicit religious teaching
- Appreciation of the natural world and human activity
- Appreciation of the talents, achievements and work of ourselves and others
- Visitors who represent organisations who have a brief acceptable to the school
- Prayer in different forms – formal, pupils' own, silence
- Use of music
- Appropriate focal points and artefacts
- Participation by the children

Children are encouraged to think of the occasion as a special time and to reflect on how we can apply Christian teaching to our lives in school. The Head of School and staff who lead collective worship plan keep plans of collective worship.

Collective worship will generally follow the structure below and include a prayer:

- ▲ **Gather**  
Coming in to music, lighting of the candle, call and response
- ▲ **Engage**  
Story, music, visual aids, drama, puppets, quizzes or activities.
- ▲ **Respond**  
Reflection, prayer, discussion, questioning or singing
- ▲ **Send**  
Prayer, blowing out of the candle or final thought

Any whole school notices will be given at the start of the session before the act of collective worship begins.

Singing is often part of Collective worship and thus can also be when new hymns and songs are introduced and taught.

Collective worship may also take the form of a 'Celebration Assembly'. This is a celebration of the children's work through the week and an opportunity to recognise individual achievements.

### **Learning Expectations and Intended Outcomes**

Education, celebration, praise and hope are essential features of our worship at Old Catton Church of England Junior School. We aim to make children aware of what it means to be a community committed to serving and caring for each other, God and our environment. In so doing we hope to create an atmosphere in which pupils are invited rather than compelled to explore issues for themselves, reflect upon and learn from their own and others' experiences, develop sensitivity and a sense of wonder, awe and mystery for the world of which they are part.

### **Special Services and Visitors**

We value our links with the staff and congregation of St. Margaret's Church. We hold some of our services in church. The incumbent leads collective worship once every half term and the Open the Book Team of St. Margaret's Church regularly lead collective worship in school. The school holds a service in St. Margaret's Church for Christmas and Easter each year. Parents, carers and the wider whole school community are also invited to join us for these services. The children participate in them, presenting readings and singing hymns. Where possible we also invite other members of the community in to lead worship. All visitors are welcome to attend our collective worship.

### **Inclusion and withdrawal**

Collective worship is central to the life of the school. However, parents/carers do have a legal right to withdraw their children from all or part of worship. Before making the decision to exercise that right parents /carers are encouraged to discuss the issues with the head of school. Teachers are generally required to take part in collective worship, and to uphold the Christian ethos upon which it is based. However, at the discretion of the headteacher and governing board teachers may request permission to withdraw from worship.

We are committed to equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, cultural background, ability or any physical or sensory disability. We therefore aim to make collective worship accessible to all and accommodate ourselves to individual needs when appropriate.

### **Contribution to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development**

We recognise that although SMSC development should be fostered across the whole curriculum, acts of collective worship provide a multitude of opportunities in this area. For example, children will be encouraged to reflect on and celebrate the deeper meanings of life, consider their own behaviour and recognise the need for forgiveness, appreciate the contributions of others and respond to their needs, value their own culture and the cultures of others.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

We monitor and evaluate collective worship by keeping records of our collective worship and informally questioning adults and children as to their views on its effectiveness. More formally, Governors are invited in to monitor collective worship and record their findings. Feedback is shared and any action points implemented. The school will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

At Old Catton Church of England Junior School, we offer pupils opportunities to explore and share beliefs and consider the importance of prayer, meditation and silence. We encourage them to consider the relevance of ideas, beliefs and values to their own lives, to think about the needs of others and what it means to be part of a community. The opportunity is given to put into practice the values of the school. Collective worship offers a time to celebrate achievement and worthwhile or positive behaviour, thus contributing to our community.

