



Ottery St Mary Primary School

# Collective Worship Policy Statement

2023-24



## **INTRODUCTION**

Although Ottery St Mary lies in a part of Devon that is predominantly Christian in faith and culture, the school recognises the fact that Great Britain as a whole is much more cosmopolitan and as such the school will provide learning opportunities that will assist our children as they widen their understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion through life in a multicultural society.

### **Act of Collective Worship : *Legal Requirements***

- Headteachers in community schools must consult the governors but are themselves responsible for arranging acts of worship and ensuring that they take place even if, on grounds of conscience, they absent themselves.
- Parents have the right to withdraw their children from acts of worship.
- Teachers, including headteachers, have the same right of withdrawal.
- In community schools, collective worship is to be wholly or mainly Christian and not to be distinctive of any denomination.
- Collective worship should be broadly Christian and for this to be so it should reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief.
- In providing acts of collective worship the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the children should be taken into account.
- A whole school or part of a school can be excused from acts of collective worship, which are “wholly or mainly Christian” but not from daily worship. This dispensation can only be granted by the Devon Standing Advisory Council for RE (SACRE).

Schools should be aware of the guidance on collective worship. The main points are summarised below :-

- Collective worship should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs.
- Worship must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.
- An act of worship need not contain only Christian material. It must, however, contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accorded a special status to Jesus Christ.

## **AIMS**

Schools should provide opportunities for :

1. Adoration offered by believers to the Supreme Being.
2. Concerns, concepts, principles, conduct worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit.
3. Acts of collective worship should be seen as part of the whole school curriculum and not the sole responsibility of any one area.
4. Acts of worship should be conducted within an educational context. It therefore follows that evangelism (an attempt to persuade the participants to adopt a particular religious belief) is inappropriate.

The act of worship in community schools should allow people of different (or of no) religious beliefs to be included. However, the underlying principles of Christian belief encompass, for example, the importance of ideals common to all humanity – of love, joy, peace, hope, truth, trust, forgiveness, service, compassion, justice, respect for individuals, respect for life, personal and social responsibility. These fundamentals of Christianity should be addressed in such a way as to enable the whole school community to maintain its integrity.

The act of worship should be seen as part of the whole school curriculum. It is therefore an excellent cross-curricular opportunity. It follows that, like other parts of the curriculum, it should be an intentional learning experience, which requires planning, resourcing, preparing and evaluating. It is an opportunity for a focal point, a sharing of classroom and departmental work across the larger group and to provide opportunities for :

- the whole community to celebrate
- sharing and experiencing difficulties
- 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
- 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
- exploring feelings and emotions

## **PURPOSE**

The Act of worship should seek to:

- Reflect, express, affirm or challenge commonly accepted personal and social values
- Provide experiences so that those with a commitment to a religious life may worship adequately without violating the integrity of those without a religious commitment
- Provide experiences for those not committed to religious beliefs without violating the integrity of those who have religious beliefs

Schools should sensitively try to evoke those senses and feelings from which it might be said that worship most naturally arises :

- sense of beauty
- sense of wonder and awe
- feeling of pride
- sense of pity
- sense of smallness in the face of greatness
- sense of grandness in the face of smallness
- feeling of shared sadness
- sense of shared loss
- sense of shared happiness
- sense of peace
- sense of thankfulness
- sense of stillness in the midst of a busy existence

## **GOOD PRACTICE**

Effective acts of collective worship :

- are conducted within an educational context
- exploit the excellent cross-curricular opportunities provided
- recognise the wide variety of backgrounds from which pupils come
- are inclusive, i.e. allow people of different (or no) religious beliefs to be included
- involve active participation of pupils and other members of the school community
- are part of a programme which has allowed for appropriate planning time
- take place, whenever possible, in an inspiring atmosphere
- employ a variety of methods of delivery and media
- include visiting speakers and groups. It should be emphasised however, that all who lead worship should have the opportunity to read the school's policy and are fully briefed by the co-ordinator for, or teacher responsible for, the act of worship.

## Appendix 1

The arrangements for collective worship at Ottery St Mary Primary School are as follows:

- Monday :       Key Stage 1 sing together in the hall; Key Stage 2 have class assemblies
- Tuesday :       Key Stage 2 sing together in the hall; Key Stage 1 have class assemblies
- Wednesday:     Year 5 and 6 children use the Dance Studio; all other children have class assemblies
- Thursday :     Year 1 and 2 children use the dance studio; all other children have class assemblies
- Friday :        Year 3 and 4 children use the dance studio; all other children have class assemblies

Content is mainly Christian or such principles that Christianity and other major religions encompass. Reference is made to the Religious Calendars and festivals, Saints, Acts and people worthy of consideration or that inspire pupils to improve their own behaviour in its widest sense. Moral and interesting stories that convey the ethos of worship, caring and celebration are also used. By their very nature these can rarely be planned into an ongoing programme of content.

There is also room during the term for more topical and spontaneous acts of worship relating to current affairs or events in the life of the school.

Guests may be invited to present at assembly time although evangelical content should not be included. Due diligence is followed in line with our school Safeguarding Policy and the PREVENT strategy to ensure the suitability of guests and work against radicalisation in all its forms.

All who lead worship should have the opportunity to read the school's act of worship policy and be fully briefed by the co-ordinator or teacher responsible for the collective worship. Every assembly should be under the control of a member of the teaching staff. All teachers and visitors who lead acts of worship should appreciate that while it is not always possible, or appropriate, to avoid controversial issues, acts of worship should never be an occasion for proselytising or promoting a particular set of beliefs. Visitors should also be aware that permission should be gained from the school for distribution of literature, raising money, or giving invitations to attend out-of-school activities.

Children are encouraged to enter and leave the assembly area quietly making the event have a special meaning and providing opportunities for quiet reflections. Points of focal interest, appropriate music and audio-visual equipment are encouraged as is the control of distracting sights and sounds.

Staff groupings make local arrangements in order to carry out collective worship. Any child who does not attend collective worship because of a parental request will be placed wherever adequate supervision can be maintained and given work supporting the ongoing class work. If a member of staff exercises their right to withdraw they will be asked to supervise non-participating pupils or work on other professional matters.

Resources to support collective worship are shared via the Google Drive. The RE co-ordinator has access to other material.

Where staff feel they need further training in the conducting or content of collective worship they should approach the INSET co-ordinator on this matter.

A timetable and record of collective worship is kept on the school's Google Drive. which provides ideas and content for class assemblies.

Where possible staff should evaluate the outcomes of acts of collective worship against such criteria as :

- has it improved the school ethos of caring for each other and the school environment ?
- have children enjoyed and learnt anything from the content ?
- have children found any solutions to cope with or overcome day to day problems through the use of quiet reflection ?

Answers can be sought by a simple questionnaire or through discussion in class time or other methods the staff feel are suitable.

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