

Willingham Primary School Collective Worship Policy



BACKGROUND TO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AT OUR SCHOOL

It is a legal requirement that all registered school-age pupils take part in an 'act of worship' each day. 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".

At Willingham Primary School some children are from practising Christian families, in addition, there are children who practise religions other than Christianity and some from non-religious backgrounds. We recognise that in asking our children to worship we have to consider the background that all children come from and it is therefore not the practice of this school to preach to or convert the children. The faith background of both the staff and the child's family is respected at all times.

The Headteacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging the 'daily collective worship' after consulting with the governing body. Parents of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school have a right to withdraw their children from collective worship where that worship has a religious context. If a parent asks for their child to be wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at the school, the school must comply, unless the request is withdrawn. Any parent who wishes to exercise this right should consult with the Headteacher. Teachers may also withdraw from collective worship where that worship has a religious context.

SOME DEFINITIONS

Collective worship

Worship from within a faith tradition has a very specific definition. A school community is not a worshipping community and the law recognises this by requiring "collective" not "corporate" worship. Broadly, worship in school is more appropriately referred to as worth-ship. At Willingham Primary School this might encompass what is offered in a spirit of admiration, celebration and respect to God and/or people of excellence, worthy of honour and by extension to concepts, principles and conduct that are worthy of celebration, as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit.

Worship defined in this way draws on literature, music, art, drama and other sources of inspiration and allows for reflection for pupils and staff whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none. In this way collective worship is inclusive not exclusive.

Worship of a broadly Christian character

The majority of acts of worship must be of a "broadly Christian character" and must reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief, without being



denominational. Paragraphs 60-63 of the DFE Circular 1/94 asks schools to define this as “according a special status to Jesus Christ.”

If we are to be inclusive in our worship at Willingham Primary School, taking the family backgrounds of the children into consideration, then, when according a special status to Jesus Christ, all pupils, whatever their beliefs, need to be respected. It is therefore appropriate to tell stories of the life of Jesus, but inappropriate for all children to be required to address Him in prayer.

Many of the characteristics of Christianity are shared by all the faiths. It is important to concentrate on these, as well as those specific to Christianity.

VALUES AND AIMS

We believe at this school 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 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.

Through our collective worship we aim to provide a caring and supporting environment for children to:

- Become increasingly aware of themselves as individuals and groups within the school and wider community
- Grow in understanding of the feelings of other people in every day situations and beliefs
- Explore the language which people use to express their feelings
- Deepen their sense of wonder about the world around them
- Grow in confidence when making a presentation to the group or whole school
- Respond freely to religious and/or spiritual stimulus
- Acknowledge diversity and affirm each person’s life-stance, whether it be religious or not

Worship both reflects and nurtures the ethos of the whole school. It encompasses all aspects of school life and all areas of the curriculum, so that every member of staff and every pupil may feel involved. In particular, school



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worship here develops the feeling of belonging to a community that is essential for personal development and spiritual growth.

OBJECTIVES

We see school worship as an educational opportunity with clear objectives. We use this time to encourage pupils to:

- Show interest in, and a concern for, members of the school community
- Celebrate special occasions together
- Show concern for the daily happenings in school life, the local community and the wider world
- Share appreciation of worthwhile projects undertaken by groups within the school
- Explore and review the variety of values, attitudes, standards, manifested in religions and society
- Reflect upon dimensions of human life – the wonderful, beautiful, joyful, heroic, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn....;
- Reflect on the way in which humankind has expressed the deepest spiritual feelings, through the creative and expressive arts, scientific discovery, religious practice, service to God and other people.

PLANNING

At Willingham Primary School we provide our acts of worship in a variety of forms including, but not limited to; assemblies, appreciations; class reflections; and in celebration events.

Assemblies take place on four out of five days in the week.

Monday, whole-school assembly introducing a theme for the week. This theme is on a rota and reflects the school's values and drivers. Often there will be reference to a character of inspiration or importance, which may or may not be predominantly 'religious' in their nature, who represents or exemplifies/d the theme. Alternatively, the exemplification may come from a national or international event of significance, again this could be religious in nature (Christmas, Easter, Diwali for eg) or non-religious (Safer Internet Day, Anti-bullying week etc.). Pupils are given an opportunity to approach the 'threshold of worship' through a moment of reflection at the end of the assembly. This will include students and staff bowing their heads and closing their eyes and being asked to concentrate on the words that the assembly lead is saying. Pupils and staff will be asked to think about their effect on the world around them and how to use the theme of the week and the learning



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from the assembly to become better versions of themselves. They will be given the opportunity to say a silent prayer in their heads if they wish to do so at this point.

Assemblies on Tuesdays give pupils the chance to express their worship in song. These assemblies are led by teachers and songs are drawn from a variety of sources, some of which may have a religious context (carols and harvest songs for example).

Assemblies on Wednesday are 'Reading Assemblies' where Key Stages come together to enjoy a wide range of fictional stories from the school's 'Literary Spine'. These included classic works of fiction that are part of the nation's history and psyche.

On Fridays the whole school come together to celebrate success from the week. Pupils are awarded Golden Awards for exemplifying the theme of the week and a variety of other certificates and acknowledgements of success (Brian Retallick cup, TTRS certificates, Attendance bears, House Cup award etc.) and are have a true celebratory atmosphere.

'Appreciations' give the staff and pupils regular moments throughout the school day to reflect on success and the efforts of others. These take place at the end of each KS2 playtime and at other period during the day when year groups meet collectively (for example in the lunch hall).

In class collective worship can, again, take many forms and will include moments of reflection in Religious Education lessons; sharing of news features (watching and discussing Newsround for example) and wider moments of reflection and contemplation (in PSCHE lessons for example).

We believe that creating the right atmosphere is crucial to the quality of the worship. Therefore, the time is not over-dominated by school administration or moralising. We plan multiple times each day, with a variety in content and methods, allowing opportunity for quiet personal reflection/worship for all pupils.

The school also invites guests both from religious contexts and broader societal contexts to conduct assemblies. These include but are not limited to:

- Local religious leaders
- The GenR8 team
- Local authors
- Sports people
- People from industry with inspirational stories
- Parents from a variety of religious backgrounds to share their faith's significant festivals

SUCCESS CRITERIA



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At this school evaluate our acts of worship against some of the following:

- Involvement, enjoyment, attention, reaction of pupils
- The growth of respect and tolerance within the school community
- Positive response to shared experience
- An atmosphere that matches the theme
- A contribution to individual and community sense of well-being
- A sense of occasion
- Good order
- Staff affirmation
- A sense of challenge
- A place in the overall plan of the school
- Enrichment of pupil's experience

