

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY



St John's
CofE Primary School

Approved by: LGC **Date:** 22/05/2024

Last reviewed on: New Policy

Next review due by: May 2025

St John's Church of England School

In our school our Christian vision shapes all we do.

At St John's we inspire our whole school to love learning and work together so everyone can reach their full potential.

Through shared Christian values we recognise the skills and talents of all, nurture creativity and contribute to our community.

With engaging lessons, exciting opportunities and challenging experiences we deepen knowledge and understanding, have fun and succeed.

'Collective Worship in a Church school should enable every child and adult to flourish and to live life in all its fullness. (John 10:10). It will help educate for wisdom, knowledge and skills, hope and aspiration, dignity and respect, and developing community and understanding of living well together.

Policy Statement

In St John's Church of England Primary School worship is central to the life of school and is the main platform for exploring the school's vision. It is well planned and of high quality so that the whole school community is engaged on a journey of discovery, exploring the teachings of Jesus and the Bible.

For Christians in Church, worship is about honouring God and responding to the loving nature of God as revealed through the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A school is not a Church but is a collection of people who come from a variety of backgrounds for the purpose of education. The family backgrounds may be very different and collective worship must take account of the varied circumstances of staff and pupils.

At St John's Church of England Primary School collective worship aims to be inspirational, invitational and inclusive and will lead people to a threshold where they can witness worship and join in, if they wish.

Through Collective Worship pupils will be offered a space and a place for the telling of the Christian story. They will be offered an understanding of worship through being invited to participate in or observe prayer, reading and reflection on the Bible, liturgy, sacrament and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity. Opportunities to reflect on the beauty, joy and pain of the world will be given. Pupils will be given time to consider their responsibilities to others and to grow in love and

service. Time will be given for celebration, both for the accomplishments of school members and to mark the seasonal festivals of the Christian (*and other faiths*¹) calendar. Pupils will be offered time to be able to contemplate and develop spiritually.²

Legal Requirements

Collective worship in a Church of England School must be in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Church of England. In other words the law on collective worship that applies in a community school, “that it should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character”, is not relevant. Worship in St John’s Church of England Primary School should be distinctly Christian and reflect Anglican traditions.

The governing body of the school has the responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the requirements for worship detailed in the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Evaluation Document. They are also tasked with monitoring and evaluating the impact of worship on the school community in consultation with the headteacher.

The right of withdrawal

In St John’s Church of England Primary School there are a number of children whose families are members of another faith, or who hold a non- religious world view. Part of the distinctively Christian nature of Church of England Schools is that they should be as hospitable and inclusive to all in the community they serve. As collective worship occupies such a central place in the life of the Church school, this should be made clear on induction, and it is hoped that parents will be making a specific choice of the school knowing that the distinctive ethos will determine a Christian tradition within collective worship.

The 1944 and 1988 Education Acts state that parents have the right to withdraw children from collective worship and suitable arrangements should be made to accommodate these children.

On occasions, a parent may make a request for their child to be withdrawn from Collective Worship. There is an expectation that parents wishing to request a withdrawal will meet with the headteacher to discuss their concerns and requirements.

¹ Collective Worship in a CofE school must be in alignment with the religious foundation of the school (Christian), however there is a responsibility for schools in all contexts to mark, respond and learn from the festivals of other faiths. This may be designated as a separate act, not to be conflated with collective worship.

² “To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God and to devote the will to the purpose of God”. William Temple (1881-1894)

It may be helpful to establish:

- The elements of worship in which the parent would object to the child taking part
- The other aspects of school life that are impacted by the Christian foundation of the school such as prayer and reflective areas
- The practical implications of withdrawal
- Whether the parent will require any advanced notice of such worship, and if so, how much

Where parents have withdrawn their children from collective worship and request religious worship according to their particular faith or denomination, the governors and head teacher will seek to respond positively to such requests providing:

- Such arrangements can be made at no additional cost to the school
- That the alternative provision would be consistent with the overall purposes of the school curriculum as set out in the Education Acts

If the Parent asks that a pupil should be wholly or partly excused from attending any religious worship at the school, then the school must comply.

(This means that a parent may, for example, request their child does not take part in a carol service when otherwise the child takes part in daily collective worship.)

Guiding Principles

Collective worship in St John's Church of England Primary School aims to:

- Have a pivotal place in the life of the school.
- Support pupils and adults in their spiritual growth
- Be the central vehicle by which the school's vision is unpacked and explored so that the whole school community is challenged and engaged with the teachings of Jesus and the Bible.
- Provide an experience of worship that will offer opportunities for those present to observe and/or respond to the presence, power and peace of God as understood by Christians. This will always be invitational, offering an opportunity to take part whilst allowing the freedom for those of other faiths and none to be present with integrity.
- Support pupils in the development of their understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God in Christian belief
- Provide a variety of different opportunities for reflection, understanding of diverse liturgical traditions, participation, challenge and enjoyment where all present can be

actively involved and develop their own spirituality whilst contributing to the communal journey.

- Help children to become familiar with Christian language and symbolism and the cycle of the Church year so that they are offered a pattern of meanings and a framework into which they can begin to integrate experience.
- Explore a variety of ways of praying, giving children the opportunity to form their own prayers using multi-sensory foci and introduce them to some well know Christian prayers, as well as a variety of prayers of thanksgiving before mealtimes and during collective worship.
- Offer opportunities to all children and staff to develop their skills in planning, leading and evaluating the impact of school worship with the support and shared engagement of the local church community. Pupils will be at the centre of this process taking on increasingly independent roles in planning and leading worship.
- Ensure that materials and themes for worship are carefully selected to make sure pupils understand the work of Christians and the church locally, nationally and globally and how this reflects the teachings of the Bible and the example of Jesus.

Development of the policy and links to other policies and documentation

This policy was developed by the Head teacher and Collective Worship lead in consultation with:

- The Governing Body, especially through the Foundation Governors.
- The teaching staff through discussion at Inset days and staff meetings and through feedback to Collective Worship lead
- The Spiritual Leaders at their meetings

The CEE0 Guidance published in May 2021 is useful to support school leadership in developing good collective worship. <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-children/school-effectiveness/collective-worship/>

We ensure that the principles for collective worship are reflected and applied in our policies and practice including those that are concerned with:

- Pupils' personal development and wellbeing
- SMSC and PSHE
- Staff recruitment, retention and professional development
- Care, guidance and support
- Behaviour, discipline and exclusions
- Working in partnership with parents, carers and guardians
- Working with the wider community

We also ensure that information about collective worship is included on the school website.

How Collective worship is organised

Leadership

- Daily worship at St John's Primary School is led by a variety of people including the Head teacher, the Clergy team from St John's Church, a member of staff, our Spiritual Leaders or a whole class.
- We ensure that all visitors who come to lead worship are well aware of its purpose and especially how it might differ from an act of worship in a church.
- Collective Worship should not be seen as an opportunity to tell children what they should believe or that what other faith groups believe is wrong. Leaders of Collective Worship must be aware of and sensitive to the broad range of beliefs held by families at the school and respect the fact that some families do not adhere to any faith group.

Planning

- Worship is planned by those leading it in consultation with the Collective Worship coordinator.
- If children are planning worship, appropriate guidance is given by teachers as to what content is appropriate, style of language, inclusion of traditional prayers etc.
- All members of the school community, especially children, are encouraged to plan and lead acts of worship and they are equipped with the advice or support they might need in terms of content, organisation, worship song choices etc by the Collective Worship Coordinator or by another member of staff.
- At St John's Primary School we have whole school celebrations of the major Christian festivals: Harvest Festival, Armistice Day, Advent, Christmas, Shrove Tuesday, Lent, Easter.
- We also celebrate some saints' days when appropriate.
- There is an altar at the front of the school hall, which has a cloth which is changed according to the liturgical season. This change of colour is discussed at the beginning of worship.

How the Christian values of the school are identified, expressed and celebrated through collective worship

- Explicit links are made between Bible stories and the Christian values of the school in a variety of ways.
- As mentioned above, all major Christian festivals are celebrated.
- We use a wide range and variety of materials to support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship, including: websites, artefacts, stories, drama scripts, artwork, music, songs, video clips. At the front of the school hall we have an altar with two candles upon which are lit at the beginning of worship when Opening Sentences are said. They are extinguished at the closing sentences.
- Opportunities are provided for children to learn about and reflect upon the effect of Christian faith upon the lives of others. Sometimes this might be through a special

class assembly focussing on a significant Christian e.g Martin Luther King or Saint Theresa of Calcutta.

- When possible, explanations of Christians' experience of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit are given. This often happens in worship connected with festivals e.g. thanking God the Father for his Creation at Harvest, at Christmas, remembering the role of the Holy Spirit in making Mary the mother of Jesus. At Epiphany, recalling the baptism of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit like a dove, focus upon the humanity and suffering of Jesus as Son of God during Lent and Passiontide and the various ways in which God was active and present as father, Son and Holy Spirit in the drama of Good Friday, Easter and Pentecost

Organisation

At St John's Church of England Primary School the children participate in a daily act of collective worship. Teaching staff and members of the school/church community lead services every day in the school hall. These usually follow this pattern:

- Monday: Whole school service (where a theme is introduced) - Led by the Headteacher, Mrs Bamfield or the Deputy Headteacher, Mrs Bruton and the Spiritual Leaders.
- Tuesday: Whole school service – led by a member of SLT
- Wednesday: Whole school service – led by a member of the St John's Church Clergy Team
- Thursday: All classes take part in act of collective worship led by the class teacher or the children
- Friday: Whole school celebration service (where certificates, medals etc are awarded) led by the Headteacher, Mrs Bamfield

We follow a series of themes throughout the term linked to Christian values and our school values.

Settings and places for worship

- Worship usually takes place in the school hall. At the front there is a cross on an altar with candles either side. A cloth on the altar is changed with the liturgical seasons. Sometimes, for special festival services, there might be an extra focus e.g. a display of harvest gifts and harvest loaf, a poppy wreath for Remembrance, a Jesse Tree and Advent wreath for Advent, Nativity crib scene and Christingles at Christmas, bare wooden cross which is later dressed with flowers at Easter service etc.
- All children visit St John's Church at least twice a year for a whole school service.
- Year 6 pupils participate in the Moving Up Celebration at Wells Cathedral.
- Each year in June, all children participate in a Patronal Festival, held at St John's School, led by the clergy team from St John's Church.
- A grace or other pre-meal prayer is said in class at the end of each morning, before the lunch break begins.
- Opening and closing sentences are said at the beginning and end of all acts of Collective Worship.

- Children are given the opportunity to pray, to think, to be reflective. It is suggested that, in the silent prayer time, they might also listen to God.
- Bible readings are used at all major festivals with traditional introduction and response. Forms of thanksgiving, acts of penitence, intercessions and collects from Common Worship are used throughout the year at special times e.g. harvest.
- Worship is held at various times in the school day.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of each member of the school community is to uphold the principles and actions of this policy:

- The governing body has ultimate responsibility for the provision and oversight of Collective Worship. Members, who are Foundation Governors, will observe Collective Worship regularly and discuss ways in which it can be developed and improved. The governors will also review and approve all relevant policies and action plans related to Collective Worship.
- The head teacher and the senior leadership team will support the CW lead in the delivery of worship in terms of timetabling, provision of training etc. The head teacher and other senior teachers will sometimes be the leaders of worship and will encourage and support others in this role.
- Clergy and church partners will plan and lead acts of worship. This will usually be a Wednesday whole school worship and led by the St John's Clergy team. The Clergy team will also lead worship, including festivals and special events.
- Teaching and support staff will participate in Collective Worship when appropriate. We recognise that, whilst all teachers may be required to attend assemblies, some may choose not to participate in Collective Worship. Most teachers will lead class Collective Worship, and will, on occasions, lead whole or part class led assemblies.
- Pupils will attend some form of collective worship every day, unless their parents have withdrawn them. They will be encouraged to be active leaders and participants and to join in with prayers, responses and singing where appropriate. They will be given opportunities to reflect upon the importance of worship and its meaning for themselves and others. Children will be asked to write prayers and other material to be read during worship on special occasions, class assemblies etc.
- Parents and carers will be informed of what is happening in Collective Worship, including reports of special occasions like Harvest Festival, the Christingle service and the Easter service in the newsletter and on the school website. When possible e.g. Harvest Festival, parents will be invited to be guests at acts of Collective Worship. Parent's views about Collective Worship will be gathered at the annual Parents' Forum and they will be encouraged to give feedback after attending acts of worship.
- Visitors will sometimes be invited to lead or participate in Collective Worship. This might be a regular event or a single visit linked to a project or current theme. The

philosophy and purpose of Collective Worship within a Church of England primary school will be made clear to any visitor. People who cannot subscribe to our inclusive and affirmative approach to Collective Worship or to the Anglican policy of gender equality in ministry will not be invited to lead or take part.

Staff development and training

We ensure that all staff, including support staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams. Provision is made within the rolling programme of staff meetings and INSET training for focus upon Collective Worship, sharing of good practice, information for staff about where to find good resources for their own or children's use.

Foundation Governors in particular will take the opportunity to participate in diocesan Collective Worship training and to feedback what they have learned to members of staff.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Collective Worship will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. The head teacher will sometimes ask children for feedback about the acts of worship she leads.
- Pupils will be asked their opinions about Collective Worship during Circle Times, in the annual online questionnaire and at meetings of the School Council.
- The Head teacher, the CW coordinator, a member of the Clergy team and Foundation Governors will sometimes evaluate specific acts of worship led by a member of staff, pupils or visitors. Children will also take part in these evaluations and will meet with an adult immediately afterwards to discuss the assembly. They will consider its impact in terms of prayer, atmosphere, clarity of speech, quality of story and its interpretation, music etc. A record will be kept of all these evaluations.
- Evidence from evaluations carried out by members of staff, Foundation Governors and children will be used by the Head teacher, CW coordinator and governors to assess the effectiveness of Collective Worship and formulate ways to develop and improve it and make it more meaningful to the school community including children, members of staff and parents.

Disseminating the policy

We ensure that this policy is known to all staff and governors, parents and carers and, as appropriate, to all pupils. This policy is available on our school website.

Other Useful Documents: (can be found on the diocesan website)

- Guidance for visitors leading Collective Worship, including a code of conduct
- Example Visitors Leaflet about Collective Worship
- Collective Worship Planning Proformas
- Evaluation and Monitoring – Ideas and Systems

- Suggested Resources for Collective Worship
- Spirituality – What is it?