

# Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School



## Collective Worship Policy

Review Date:	February 2021
Next Review Date:	February 2023
Committee:	LFL
Reviewed by:	Vicky Penn and Isabel Parfitt

# **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN BERNARDS HEATH INFANT SCHOOL**

## **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”.

The most frequently disclosed religion in school is Christianity. Families follow religions other than Christianity and some define themselves as from non-religious backgrounds. We recognise that in asking our children to worship we have to consider the background that our children come from and it is therefore not the practice of this school to preach to or convert the children. The faith background of staff and children is respected at all times.

The head teacher 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. 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wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at the school the school must comply unless the request is withdrawn.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 the headteacher. Teachers may also withdraw from collective worship.

### **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. 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 which 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 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 those that are 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 in this 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 in this school 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 faiths.

## **VALUES AND AIMS**

We believe at this school that collective worship both supports and strengthens what we 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 special 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 everyday 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 worship here develops the feeling of belonging to a community which 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

In this school we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework. In this school we have renamed Collective Worship '**Reflection Time**' as we feel this is more child friendly.

In Key Stage 1 different staff lead assembly in the hall (Covid-19 restrictions may mean assembly is moved to MS Teams) and teachers plan **Reflection Time** at different times of the week. When Reflection Time is 'in class', the teachers lead a short 10-15 minute session, where a social story would be shared or a discussion would take place. Teachers have a specific visual timetable icon to use so the children know when Reflection Time is in the day.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
EYFS	Assembly Time (Aut 2)	In class	In class	In class	Assembly Time (Aut 2)
KS1	Assembly Time (citizenship/British values)	Music assembly	Assembly Time (current affairs)	Assembly Time (religious story)	Class assembly/Whole school assembly

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 the time so that there is a variety in content and methods, allowing opportunity for quiet personal reflection/worship. On Fridays spread throughout the year each class has a class assembly where they share the learning that has taken place over the term. Parents are invited to attend this assembly and share this with the children and staff. When there is not a class assembly on a Friday there is a whole school assembly.

### We choose from a range of methods, including:

- Pupil's contributions
- Sacred and secular stories/readings
- Dance/drama
- Prayer/reflection/stillness/songs/hymns/music
- Artefacts/natural materials
- Visual aids/focal points
- Dialogue/creative silence
- Visitors

## **REMOTE LEARNING**

When remote learning occurs, the schools has saved assemblies they can share online concerning many different topics and areas of learning. These are shared with the families at home when needed. We hold weekly Teams calls where books are shared and behaviours discussed, this also acts as a mini Reflection Time. Assemblies in school will echo the recorded assemblies at lockdown times.

## **SUCCESS CRITERIA**

At this school we 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 which 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

## **Song/music**

Song/music is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and unifies and uplifts the school community. We have a bank of music from which to draw, taken from a variety of cultures and types. Likewise with the songs we sing. We are selective with our songs and have changed the words of some to make them more inclusive. We select our songs/music carefully to match the theme.

Every week we have a singing practice. During this we take time to consider carefully the words of one of the songs and make this into a worshipful experience by reflecting on and responding to that song.

## **Our School Poem**

We feel that poetry is a good way of enabling children to focus their thoughts. We have renamed our school prayer our 'school poem' as we feel 'prayer' lends itself to religious connotations and the large majority of our school make-up is non-religious. Our school poem allows for quiet reflection and is not religious. We say this at the end of every assembly.

Our School Poem:

*We are friends, together we share.  
Look after our world, show kindness, take care.  
Learning, playing, having fun,  
Our school day has now begun/is nearly done.*

### **Visitors**

We enjoy the fresh approach which visitors can bring to our school worship, but we require them to adhere to our values. Through careful conversations about pace and appropriateness this is able to happen.

We have made links with some people who visit us regularly to lead worship.

This policy should be reviewed every two years.

**Isabel Parfitt / Vicky Penn**

**Feb 2021**