



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL
“Realising the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community”

Collective Worship Policy



Date of Amendment: January 2021
Review Date: September 2023



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COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

Introduction

As with Religious Education, we regard Collective Worship as one of the most, if not the most, important part of every child's daily experience in our school. A daily act of worship is a legal requirement, but we feel that our Christian and Anglican foundation points to worship as a central focus for the ethos of the school.

There are many varied definitions of what 'worship' is. We feel it is summed up in this quote:

"Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes." (DfE Circular 1/94)

Rationale

At St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School we firmly believe that we are all children of God learning together and on a spiritual journey through life. This journey is strengthened and supported by daily whole school acts of collective worship allowing children and adults the invitation and time to offer praise and thanksgiving to God.

Our daily worship and half termly Eucharist services very much sit at the heart of school life and offer a focus for reflection and thought in an atmosphere of calm and reverence. Within worship there are times when we share and celebrate the ideas, beliefs and values based on the Anglican tradition, that the school considers most important.

Through our collective worship we seek to develop a greater understanding of the faith that is a focal point of our school life. We see these acts of worship as instilling a sense of empathy as well as offering something worthwhile in praise and glory to God. These acts of worship are appropriate to the age of the children, are educational and reflect the spiritual quality of the Anglican heritage.

Aims

Our core aims at St Thomas' are to:

- Bring children to the threshold and beyond of worshipping God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- Develop a deeper awareness and understanding of ourselves, our feelings and our experiences considering spiritual and moral issues;
- Appreciate the feelings and needs of others through a shared common ethos, developing a sense of community spirit in the school, and as part of a wider community;
- Become aware of, and celebrate what has meaning, value and purpose for us, for the school and the wider community;
- Feel a sense of awe and wonder at the world about us and an appreciation of beauty and mystery;
- Be meaningful for all children and to be seen as part of the whole school curriculum, but unique within it;
- Develop an awareness of feelings such as joy and sadness, love, trust, security and doubt;
- Use silence and stillness for reflection, contemplation, and strengthen this with prayer;
- Be a focus for celebration and recognition of achievement.



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL

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Christians worship in a variety of ways. Within the Anglican tradition there is a diversity of practice which should be recognised. Certain beliefs are common to all Christians and these have always been expressed in worship. At the core of these beliefs are the following:

- Belief and trust in God as Father and Creator
- Belief and trust in Jesus
- Belief and trust in the Holy Spirit
- The Trinity – one God, but three persons
- The Bible – the Bible has unique authority as God’s Word for Christians and its use is central in Christian worship and life.

Organisation & Implementation

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body, delegated to the Headteacher, to organise and implement this policy in respect of the daily act of collective worship and its impact on the school. The other staff aid in this unless the right to withdraw has been exercised. All staff assist in implementing this policy and participate in daily worship otherwise. The Headteacher/Worship Subject Leader plan the acts of worship on an annual basis working on a 4 year rolling plan. This worship agenda is made available in September each year mapping out the themes, festivals and other content for the academic year ahead.

The general weekly pattern of worship is as follows;

- MONDAY:** Whole school collective worship led by the Headteacher exploring a theme from the Liturgical calendar based around a Christian value explored through Bible stories (Old and New Testament) and Gospel readings.
- TUESDAY:** Class-based collective worship [Week 1 & 2] followed by a class-led collective worship [Week 3] on a rolling rota starting from Year 6 down to Year 3 – themes are drawn from the needs of the class, topics/themes of interest and relevance.
- WEDNESDAY:** PSHE collective worship with a link to social and emotional aspects of learning or our Jigsaw scheme of work (6 units) led by the members of the Senior Leadership Team on a four-week rota.
- THURSDAY:** ‘Prayer & Praise’/hymn practise led by all members of staff on a weekly rota basis (x2 teachers, x2 TA). Hymns are sung and practised to celebrate festivals and feasts as well as praise for common worship.
- FRIDAY:** Clergy led collective worship, often a continuation of Monday’s theme introducing a new story or one with a conflicting viewpoint to generate discussion and debate. Led by Fr. Mark.

In addition, there are times for classroom collective worship and use of each room’s ‘Sacred Space’. Worship is also supported by links with organisations outside of school, within the parish and further afield.



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL
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Acts of worship include;

- Listening to, and appreciation of music
- A greeting and response
- Lighting of a candle
- Singing hymns
- Use of artefacts, e.g. pictures/icons
- Drama/ role play
- Opportunities to reflect, ask questions and share thoughts and ideas
- Hearing and participating in a story
- Questioning and challenging children’s thinking
- Reading of a short passage of scripture or a poem
- Taking part in prayer
- Use of quiet times and silence
- Implicit and explicit links to Religious Education
- Visitors – other local clergy
- Reflection and examination of traditions

Children and adults understand the importance of worship and lead in to the hall in a calm and focused manner ready to participate. The focus of daily worship is very much around the lighting of a candle using the words that we believe ‘Jesus is the Light of the World’. We also use the cross, altar and other signs and symbols to focus the children’s attention. At the end of worship the whole school joins in prayer sometimes using the words of The Lord’s Prayer.

School Eucharist

School Eucharists are a very important part of our worship and tradition. The word Eucharist means ‘thanksgiving’. We give thanks for the gift of Jesus and his dying for us on the cross.

Different year groups lead in different parts of the services such as readings, prayers, procession of candles and presenting of the bread and wine. We always aim for the service to be relevant to all those taking part. Our present planning means that every term we have:

- A Lower School Eucharist in the school hall
- An Upper School Eucharist in the school hall
- A Whole School Eucharist at St Thomas of Canterbury Church

A good number of staff, parents, visitors and children come forward to receive communion at each Eucharist. Others will just come forward for a blessing. More children are being confirmed now as our Vicar leads Confirmation Classes for Year 6 and Year 5 children in the spring and summer term each year. This is completed as an after school activity. Staff may also attend classes and become confirmed as well.

Inclusion (differentiation)

All teachers/ adults leading and supporting worship understand that it is their responsibility to make learning and content accessible for every child regardless of gender, ability, culture or race. All SEND/G&T children will be actively included in acts of collective worship. Planning will indicate differentiation in learning needs of groups and individuals within the school. Teachers/ adults will ensure differentiation is objective based using a variety of resources to stimulate the child.



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL
“Realising the potential of every child within a caring, Christian community”

Disability Equality Scheme

At St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Junior School we recognise our duties and responsibilities under the Disability Discrimination Act as outlined in our Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan (December 2007)

It is our aim that through specific and accurate planning, resource allocation, differentiated teaching and use of adult intervention and support (where necessary), that **every** child, irrespective of disability, will have full access to the curriculum and feel and be enabled to participate actively in developing to their full potential their skills, knowledge and understanding. We will ensure that all ‘reasonable adjustments’ are made to help both children and adults with identified specific needs and disabilities to participate fully in daily acts of collective worship.

Access and Entitlement

All children and adults are invited to attend and take an active part in collective worship. However, parents do have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship and in this event alternative arrangements are discussed and agreed by the Headteacher and the parents. Teachers and other adults also have the right to withdraw from worship. However this is considered very unlikely as parents are fully aware of the Church of England traditions of the school.

Collective worship guidance is contained in Circular 1/94.

We aim to make acts of collective worship:

- Appropriate for all in the school, whatever their religious commitments or lack of religious commitments. We intend that no-one should be placed in positions where they are made to feel uneasy, or less than honest or where personal integrity is not respected;
- An opportunity to celebrate and affirm difference and diversity;
- A time when no-one is asked to pay lip-service to faith statements which they may or may not understand or to which they do not themselves adhere.

"Pupils who do not come from Christian families should be able to join in the daily act of worship even though this would, in the main, reflect the broad traditions of Christian beliefs." [DfEE circular 1/94 on RE and Collective Worship, para. 65]

Relationships with St. Thomas' Church

The Diocese and the local parish church, St Thomas of Canterbury Church, have representatives on the Governing Body (Foundation Governors). The relationship between St Thomas' Church and the school is very supportive, caring and friendly.

The incumbent visits once a week to lead worship, Eucharist's and participate in other school events. The Diocesan Educational Adviser also visits the school. Both have been involved in advising the school about its practices and have made contributions to this and the RE policy. Other members of the congregation are encouraged to join the school for special events and visits.

The school endeavours to visit St Thomas' Church on a regular basis and to hold collective worship. The school staff and children come together to join the congregation at St Thomas' Church by attending the annual Education Sunday celebration usually observed in January.



ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY C OF E JUNIOR SCHOOL
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Involvement of parents and the community

Parents are invited to attend end of half term Eucharist services and other celebrations, e.g. Harvest. These occasions are generally very well attended and the parents take a keen interest in these opportunities. Parents’ views are obtained through the annual parent perception survey and many comment positively about the importance and impact of collective worship in the ministry of the school.

Training & Continued Professional Development

The Headteacher as Worship Subject Leader is responsible for allocating and identifying training opportunities according to whole school and individual needs. The school buys into the CPD/SLA support package from the Diocese of Chelmsford and is actively engaged in local church school cluster meetings in sharing and disseminating good practice.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and recording of individual progress in the field of worship, spiritual and moral education is very difficult. We concentrate more on evaluating collective worship, the curriculum and other areas of school life to ensure that appropriate opportunities are given. Monitoring and evaluation of worship is ongoing and incorporates the responses and comments from children, staff, parents and Governors on a termly basis. All who deliver worship will be observed on a termly basis. This process supports the school’s self-evaluation, is a specific responsibility of the foundation governors and is reported to the whole Governing Body. (A collective worship observation form is available in Appendix 1.)

Pupils are also involved in evaluating collective worship through weekly feedback in class, questionnaires and pupil perception surveys. The School Council (CATS) and Year 6 House Captains are often used as a representative group to ascertain how they feel about worship and how it could be strengthened or improved. (A collective worship evaluation form is available in Appendix 3.)

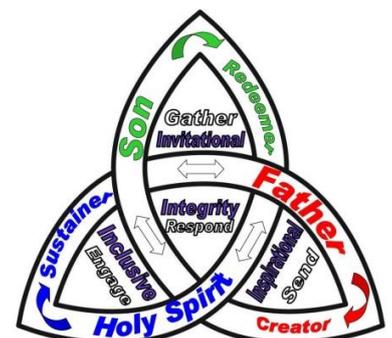
All leaders of collective worship are asked to evaluate continuously, reflect after every worship, to develop and improve their practice.

Governors are also responsible for monitoring the standards and ethos of collective worship.

January 2021

Review

This policy will be reviewed in September 2023





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APPENDIX 1 - Collective worship observation form (Staff & Governors)

Date: _____

Leader: _____ Observer: _____

Worship Theme: _____ Time Allocation: _____ minutes

Collective worship in Church of England Schools should at its simplest create a time and space where we can come closer to God and God can come closer to us.

CRITERIA	ASPECT	COMMENT
Central Attribute 1 <i>Gathering</i>	Is there a real sense of a marking the start of a very special time in the school day? Immediate impact, relevant, welcoming, stimulates interest or dull, uninteresting, lacks focus.	
Central attribute 2 <i>Engaging</i>	Does the worship leader capture the attention of the children and staff so they become actively engaged in the content? Excellent - well expressed, stimulating or poor communicator Convincing, enthusiastic, warm or lack of rapport.	
Central attribute 3 <i>Responding</i>	Does the leader allow for a response from the children and adults – whether active or passive, noisy or quiet?	
Central attribute 4 <i>Sending</i>	Does the leader send us out with a clear “thought for the day” something that changes our behaviour in some way? Clear summary, learners given opportunity to reflect or unclear what the message was.	
In addition		
Content	Clear Christian / Biblical content and teaching. Woolly, lack of structure, largely secular.	
Summary		



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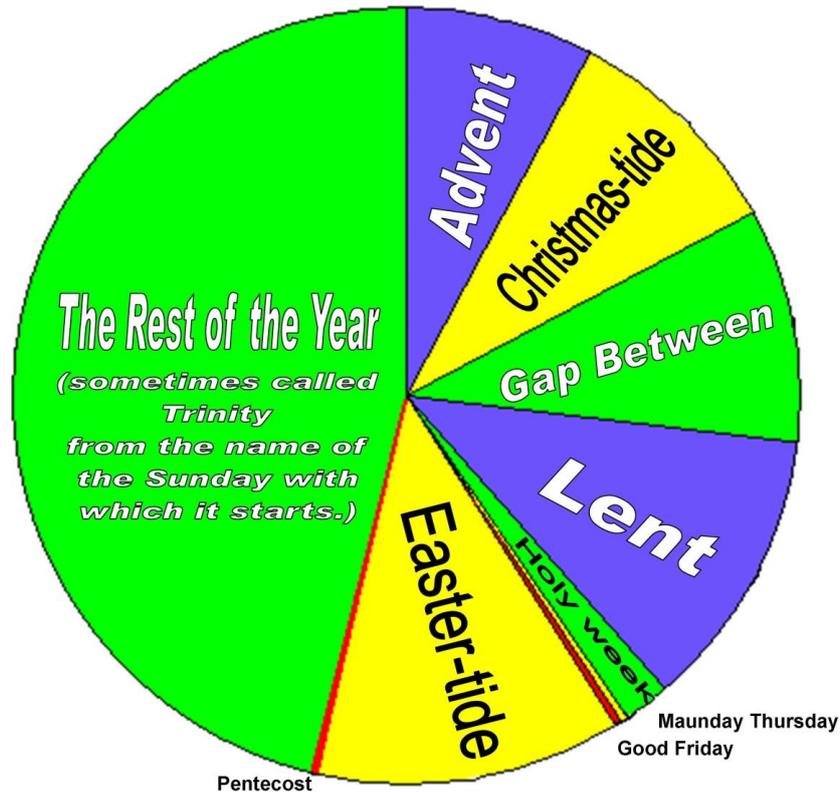
Observation form pointers for consideration - NB not a check list.

Gathering	Music (entry/exit)	appropriate / random, linked to theme, creates atmosphere, delivers a message
	Welcome	whether greetings exchanged and introduction made
	Atmosphere	extent to which act of worship is portrayed as special and important
Engaging	Focus	table, cloth, Bible, cross, candle, artefacts ICT / Visual / drama provides appropriate, linked relevant visual/factual information
	Awe and Wonder	sense given of marvel of world / creation
	Conviction	extent to which message is clear and compelling or words lack power and appear as paying lip service
Responding	Participation	extent to which learners involved in responding, partner talk, opportunities for some to participate directly
	Singing	whether there was appropriate hymn / song, quality, enthusiasm of participation
	Reflection	learners given time to pause and reflect
	Prayers	extent to which prayers are appropriate and learner friendly, whether learners are invited to respond
Send- ing	Dismissal	whether the person takes charge, smiles, engages with some learners, says 'thank you'
Other aspects	Distinctively Anglican	clear reference is made to the Bible and Anglican Christian teaching and belief e.g. the Trinity - God, Jesus and Holy Spirit
	Inclusive	the worship reflects the multi faith / cultural nature of the world and feels inclusive to those of other and no faith
	Dynamism & Theatricality	was it a performance rather than an act of worship
	Open or Closed	does the leader give room for the children to build their own meanings / connections / links or are they told what to think?
	Age Appropriateness	are the language, concepts, ideas appropriate? Is it meaningful for the youngest yet appropriate for the oldest?



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APPENDIX 2 - Liturgical Colours and seasons of the Christian year



Season	Liturgical Colour	Description
Advent	Purple	The period covering the four Sundays before the 25th December: Period of preparation for Christmas.
Christmas-tide	White or Gold	25 th December to 2 nd February
Gap Between	Green	Gap of Green until Tuesday before Ash Wednesday
Lent	Purple	The 40 days of preparation for Easter
Maundy Thursday	White or Gold	The Last Supper
Good Friday	Red	The Crucifixion
Easter-tide	White or Gold	Easter Day until Pentecost
Pentecost	Red	50 Days after Easter (lasts a week)
The Rest of the Year	Green	From Pentecost to Advent

Meaning of the colours	Purple	Penitence, preparation
	White or Gold	Joy, purity, innocence, Saints who are not martyrs
	Red	Fire & Blood, therefore Holy Spirit and Martyrdom
	Green	Everything else

In some places	Blue	The Blessed Virgin Mary
	Pink	Mothering Sunday (4 th in Lent) and 3 rd in Advent

There are different versions of the colours used.
 Please consult your parish for the colours used locally.



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APPENDIX 3 - Children's Evaluation and Reflections on Collective Worship Evidence Form

Date: _____

Name(s) of children completing form:



QUESTION:	COMMENT:
How did the music compare to last week? What did you think of it?	
What did the greeting and response mean to you ? Why do you think it had been chosen?	
How did Collective Worship make you feel this week? What made it a special time for you?	
Which Collective Worship did you particularly enjoy this week and why?	
Have you got any appropriate Worship song recommendations or requests ? Are there any changes you would make to Collective Worship this week?	
In addition....	
What do you think were the key lessons from worship this week ?	