



Mountford Manor

# Collective Worship & Religious Belief Policy

**Status and review cycle:** Legally Required      Bi-Annual review required

**Reviewed:**      December 2015

**Ratified by governors on:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Next review date:**      December 2017

## **I. Collective Worship Statement**

### **I.1 Collective worship can be part of assemblies.**

- Acts of collective worship are kept separate from announcements or matters of discipline.
- The act of worship is seen as part of the whole curriculum of the school and is integral to the life of a school. It is seen to be important and is valued.
- Act of worship must satisfy the legal requirements.
- Acts of worship are provided for all pupils on a daily basis.
- Acts of worship, through the words used and/or the activities recognise the existence of a supreme being.
- Acts of worship need to respect the integrity of the individual; it gives the opportunity to participate and allows and encourages each pupil to make an individual response to the shared experience.
- Acts of worship are designed to allow pupils to explore their personal beliefs and spiritual and moral issues.
- Acts of worship need to create an atmosphere conducive to silent contemplation, reflection and if appropriate, prayer.
- Acts of worship need to make explicit the values and assumptions that underpin the day to day life of the school and the wider community. It celebrates and affirms difference and diversity.
- Pupils are enabled to co-operate in the planning and delivery of assemblies and collective worship through class assemblies.

### **I.2 Making worship 'broadly Christian'.**

Acts of worship can include material drawn from non-Christian, and even non-religious, traditions provided that, taken as a whole, it reflects the traditions of Christian belief.

They should reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief, not the broad traditions of Christian worship. There are many values and beliefs, which are part of the broad traditions of Christian belief but which, are also widely held in society. Examples include a sense of awe at the natural world and the merits of sacrificial love. These can be explored and celebrated in school worship in a way that complements class teaching and the ethos of the school.

## **2. School Guidance**

### **Key Issues**

#### **2.1 The activities associated with worship**

- Reflection on the meaning and purpose of life
- Pondering ultimate questions
- Responding to challenge
- Experiential exploration of a religious idea
- Celebration of learning about religion
- Learning from the experience of others
- Opportunities for singing and prayer.

#### **2.2 Some pupils will be familiar with the experience of worship, some will be looking at worship for the first time and some will be 'crossing the threshold of worship'.**

## **The importance of atmosphere**

2.3 This is crucial to the success of an act of worship. Atmosphere can be affected by a number of factors:

- The way pupils and staff are addressed
- The ethos and relationships within the school generally
- The room, its size and arrangement and the physical atmosphere
- The use of music, drama, poetry and art as a focus for worship
- The presence or absence of members of staff, their degree of involvement and their attitude towards what is taking place.
- Distractions
- The degree of comfort for staff and children
- The separation of notices and discipline issues from the act of worship
- The way pupils enter and leave
- The amount of participation or passive listening
- The balance between talk and silence or music
- The degree to which there is a relaxed but ordered and secure environment.

## **Promoting spiritual and moral development**

2.4 If acts of worship are to contribute to the spiritual and moral development of pupils the religious material must relate to their experience. It must also take them beyond everyday experience so that they can reflect on their values and beliefs in the light of the religious stimulus.

Part of the task of promoting spiritual and moral development lies in developing a sense of community. Acts of worship can celebrate and affirm the values of the school community.

## **Respecting pupil integrity**

2.5 Acts of worship must be appropriate to the background of the pupils, showing respect for the children and their parents. Modelling such respect through acts of worship will encourage pupils to respect each other. This can be done through encouraging appropriate participation, and using noninclusive language (avoid 'we will now pray' or 'we believe' ). Such language leaves both staff and pupils free to identify with the religious content or not as is appropriate to them.

2.6 Acts of worship should be conducted in a way that allows a variety of response. Appropriate responses might range from simply appreciating that what has been said is important to Christians right through to adoration of God.

## **The use of prayer**

2.7 At some stage in an act of worship we introduce a 'prayer dimension'. This is done in four ways:

- An atmosphere that can be described as reflective, contemplative or meditative allows those present to reflect on matters of importance and encourages a free response including prayer.
- A use of reflective statements that have no obvious connection with any particular religious tradition
- Prayers or reflective thoughts written by the pupils can appeal to other pupils.
- The use of prayers from particular religious traditions.

2.8 In developing these elements of prayer we have tried to establish an opening formula that triggers an appropriate response in people. Phrases such as ‘And now in our time of stillness and quietness, a time to think or pray .....

In this way, we can say that:

- Those taking part in collective worship are being introduced to the prayer tradition
- Personal integrity is preserved by allowing freedom of response
- Different people can respond in a way or at a level that is appropriate for them.
- A contribution to the spiritual development of pupils is being made.
- Responses to prayer will be varied – ranging from an appreciation of the beauty or meaning of the language to a personal religious response.

### Means and moods of worship

2.9 It is useful to draw a distinction between the means of worship such as: Artefacts, collaboration, drama, listening, dance, music, personal experiences, pictures, poetry, prayer, readings, silence / stillness, singing, speaking and story.

And moods of worship such as:

Asking, awe, celebration, community, compassion, delight, giving, hope, joy, mystery, peace, praise, reassurance, reflection, regret, respect, response, reverence, sorrow, thanksgiving.

We try to use means and moods appropriately to create a sense of a shared experience to develop:

- An awareness of beauty and goodness;
- A sense of awe and humility;
- Feelings of sorrow and regret;
- Praise and thankfulness, reflection and prayer;
- Celebration
- The mystery of life.

### 3. Music

3.0 Music is important as an aid to thought and reflection. We use music to create the atmosphere for worship, trying to choose a wide variety of extracts. We encourage pupils to join in to sing hymns and songs as part of the act of worship. We also provide an opportunity for school music groups to lead the singing or to play for us. These groups may be recorder players, instrumentalists or a choir. We are careful to consider the words of hymns.

### 4. Artefacts

4.0 Special objects can arouse a great deal of interest as a focus for discussion and reflection. The objects can be religious or symbolic ( a suitcase for a theme on journeys )

### 5. The use of stories

5.0 The story is a powerful way of making an impact in an act of worship. We use stories to:

- Set a scene outside the realm of pupils’ normal experience;
- Increase pupils’ understanding of themselves;
- Enlarge their perspective on the world;
- Increase empathy;

- Increase their knowledge and understanding of the nature of faith;
- Demonstrate the joys and difficulties of life that pupils may, or may not, have experienced;
- Provide insights into the lives of others – their beliefs and motivations;
- Pose moral questions and dilemmas that are relevant across the boundaries of the major faiths as well as being relevant to non-believers;

## 6. Visitors

- 6.0 We occasionally invite a visitor to join us for an act of worship, this can:
- Have a diverse offer in that they bring a fresh face and a fresh voice;
  - Bring a range of expertise which is not found within the school;
  - We discuss with a visitor their contribution to the act of worship, before the event.

## 7. Class assemblies

- 7.0 Occasionally parents and members of the community are asked to join us as part of the act of worship.

## 8. Recording acts of worship

- 8.0 We use ready forms to record information about each act of worship. Collective worship at its best:
- Fulfils a range of purposes
  - Allows those involved to make a range of responses, including for some, a religious response
  - Is of value to all members of the school community, whether or not, through background or inclination, they make a religious response.

# SUMMARY OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

There must be a daily act of worship for every pupil. This can be held at any time of the day in any normal school grouping and should usually take place on the school premises.

The majority of acts must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character meaning they should reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief. They can contain non-Christian elements, but must contain some elements that accord a special status to Jesus Christ. Worship must not be distinctive of any particular denomination.

Worship must be appropriate to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of all pupils such that they can all take part. Decisions about the nature of broadly Christian worship will take these factors into account.

Taking part implies more than a passive attendance. Collective worship should elicit a response from all pupils even though they may not all feel able to identify with a particular act of worship.

### The aims of worship are:

- 'To provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their beliefs; to encourage participation and response whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to, (watching) and joining in worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values and reinforce positive attitudes.'

- Worship should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power. This is the natural and ordinary meaning of the word worship. It should reflect something special or
- Separate from ordinary school activities, although it can be related to the day to day life, aspirations and concerns of the school.

Collective worship in schools will 'necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common.' It is not corporate.

**Non-broadly Christian worship is allowed:**

- In minority acts of worship
- If a determination is granted to a school by SACRE
- If parents request and arrange it.

Both teachers and parents have a legal right of withdrawal.

**Parents who withdraw their children may:**

- Supervise them at home (or off the school premises) while worship is taking place
- Ask for them to be supervised in school by a member of staff
- Ask the school to apply to the SACRE to vary the legal requirement
- Ask the Head to make informal parallel provision for those of a different faith. This would not require an application to SACRE so long as it does not become the school's main act of worship.
- Parents are advised of their right to withdraw their children from acts of worship and Religious Education in the Prospectus and the Handbook for Parents. The wording used is as follows:
- 'Parents who wish to exclude their children from these(acts of worship) or from Religious Education under Section 25 of the Education Act 1944 are invited to discuss this with the Head teacher (Principal).'

**Days of obligation**

Section 39 of the 1944 Act allows a parent the right to withdraw pupils from school attendance on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. This observance does not have to involve the child in any form of worship.