# Collective Worship Policy for Taverham VC CE Junior School

*As a Church of England school, we see it as our duty to give children and members of the school community the skills to maximise their engagement with the world around them, enable them to grow spiritually, emotionally and personally, and develop the character and values which will serve them well in future life and support success.*

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| Formally adopted by the Governing Board/ Trust of:- | Taverham VC CE Junior School |
| Latest review:- | 3rd February 2025 |
| Chair of Governors/Trustees:- | Matt Lambert |
| Next Review:- | February 2028 |

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" – John 10:10*

This policy outlines the delivery, organisation and management of Collective Worship at Taverham VC CE Junior School.

**Aims and Objectives of Collective Worship**

- to provide opportunities for spiritual development
- to provide an opportunity for children to worship God;
- to teach children *how* to worship and reflect;
- to celebrate our children's achievements;
- to experience silence, stillness, meditation, contemplation and prayer;
- to enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues;
- to deepen the sense of awe and wonder for and responsibility towards the world around them;
- to enable children to explore their own beliefs and those of others;
- to encourage participation and response;
- to develop in children a sense of community spirit;
- to promote a common ethos, with shared values, and to reinforce positive attitudes.

We believe that worship should provide the opportunity for questions of the meaning and purpose of life to be explored, assumptions to be challenged and ways of life and behaviour to be considered. A wide variety of means of presentation, including stillness and reflection, should be used to evoke responses that lead to a sense of awe and wonder, resilience and tolerance, individuality, belonging and responsibility through exploration of Christian values and parables found within the Bible. Our caring ethos and the value which we place on the development of the whole child is reflected in our worship. Collective worship also provides opportunities for pupils to develop all areas of their spirituality (self, others, beauty and the beyond). Please see Spirituality Policy for more information.

**Terminology[1]**

Worship can be defined as paying homage to (revering) that which is of worth ('Worth-ship'). Religious Worship is the acknowledgement of 'worth' which is attributable to a supreme being. Therefore in Church of England schools, opportunities should be provided for children to offer worship to God, through Jesus Christ. We can never make anyone worship because it is an attitude of the heart focused on God; in a school situation we should seek to lead people to the threshold of worship by providing a setting where they may worship God if they so wish.

Collective Worship is a gathering of a 'collection' of people of diverse religious, agnostic and non-religious backgrounds and does not pre-suppose any particular religious commitment. In our context it refers to a service of worship which is educational and inclusive in its nature, rather than being a gathering of believers. Opportunities are provided for children to offer worship to God, through Jesus Christ, without losing sight of either the different starting points of each of the children, or the need for the act of Collective Worship to take account of the developmental ages of the children.

[1] Collective Worship Guidelines for the Primary School

School Assembly is a gathering of the school community; it is often used to celebrate and focus on the life and values of the community itself and is without religious content. In Taverham VC CE Junior School, our Collective Worship overlaps with our school assemblies in that we use the opportunities assemblies provide, of gathering all children together, to provide opportunities for Collective Worship.

**Christian Values at the Heart of our School Ethos**

At Taverham VC CE Junior School, we provide daily opportunities for all children to engage with Christian values and to explore these thoroughly and in a safe environment. The Christian values we promote through Collective Worship are the foundation of our school ethos and are important for all of our pupils to learn, whether they come from a Christian background or not. They are values that are distinctively Christian although of course many of the values that we have suggested will be shared with community schools and with other faiths.

Every half term, we use one of these core Christian values as a whole school theme around which we organise time for discussion, thorough exploration, association with Bible stories, key figures in history who have demonstrated this value and opportunities for pupil-led prayer. Each value is explored both explicitly through Collective Worship and class discussions, and implicitly, in PSHE/ Life Skills lessons and across the curriculum. We return to each value as a whole school theme within children's journey through the school, from Year 3 to Year 6, on a three-year rota.

The Christian values we have chosen are trust, friendship, courage, thankfulness, peace and wisdom; hope, compassion, creativity, humility, truthfulness and service; justice, forgiveness, perseverance, respect, generosity and responsibility. At Taverham VC CE Junior School we recognise the importance of providing pupils with opportunities to develop an awareness of worldly affairs and environmental issues; classes will hold discussions about these through the lens of the core Christian value of the half term, and ample opportunity is given to different groups of pupil voices to share their ideas with the class, for example Eco Council and School Council representatives.

At the beginning of each half term, the head teacher introduces the new Christian theme (and associated symbol) during Monday's dedicated Christian Values assembly and explores it in different ways, providing also a range of ways of thinking about this theme. This is in addition to our daily Collective Worship. Every pupil is given the opportunity to reflect on the value; pupils write their prayers and reflections on Christian ichthys (fish) emblazoned with our focus Christian value, that are shared within classes and displayed in classrooms or centrally in each year group. Every teacher is responsible for choosing some of these prayers so that, during Collective Worship, the school can engage with pupil-led, Christian value focused prayer as part of our Collective Worship. We also celebrate pupils' achievements during Friday Celebration Assemblies, celebrating the 'worth' and successes of individual pupils and pupil groups reaching 'over and above' expectation, often demonstrating the Christian values of our school. In whole school Wednesday assemblies, we lead pupils to focus on how each individual Christian value can aid the development of a 'Growth Mindset.'

Materials from 'Values for Life' are used to support the delivery of Collective Worship during assemblies. Additional resources are also used such as books, stories and websites; all whole school assembly PowerPoint presentations are stored on the head teacher's laptop. Worship is presented in a range of ways, including:

- Pupils contributions
- Sacred and secular stories and readings
- Drama (e.g. Open the Book)
- Prayer and reflections
- Songs, hymns and music
- Visual aids and focus points
- School candle
- Dialogue and reflective silence
- Visitors

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. Once a week we have a celebration assembly to reflect the achievements and learning of our children, which also includes elements of worship such as prayer and reflection. We refer to our Christian vision and aims, explicitly outlining where pupils have demonstrated the half term's Christian value. Through doing this, those picked out achieve recognition for their successes and positive choices and all pupils are provided with opportunities to reflect on the Christian value and consider how it fits into their individual lives. Children are encouraged to participate and acknowledgement of their achievements plays an important part in promoting the ethos of our school, which is that all children are valued and all achievements are recognised. Song/music is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and unifies and uplifts the school community. Children come in to and leave assemblies to classical music, which has a calming effect. All assemblies are started with a song sung by the whole school and finished with an opportunity for reflection/prayer. This time of prayer and reflection is clearly signalled through showing a lit candle: this visual focus provides a clear indication that children should be quiet and still to enable all to engage with the prayer. We have a bank of music from which to draw, taken from a variety of cultures and types. We select our songs/music carefully to match the theme. Pupils also sing a song together that is linked to the topic of either the content of the assembly or the focus of our Collective Worship.

Collective Worship topics tie in with the whole school Christian value of the half term, therefore leading fluently into prayer/reflection. Staff of the school and local church lead all pupils in prayer; pupils also lead prayer as far as possible. Prayers written by, and read out by, pupils are shared with parents of the school via the school newsletter; they are also displayed on our wave mural by the school office. The wave mural represents, among other Christian values, those of learning, hope and forgiveness (and is **directly related to Jesus' giving 'life-giving' water to a poor woman in John Chapter 4**); our pupils' prayers are drops in the ocean that can 'rise up' as one: 'all it takes is just a drop in the ocean!'

**Legal Requirements**

It is a legal requirement that all registered school age pupils take part in an act of worship each day, in accordance with the Christian character of the school. These acts of worship must be wholly Christian in character. They must also be 'appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils.' As a Church of England Voluntary Controlled School, we have a responsibility to support children in their understanding of the Christian faith and its values. Pupils can be grouped in various ways for worship, for example as a whole school, year group, class or other combination.

Families who send their children to this school are in the main 'nominally' Christians. In addition, there are children who are from beliefs other than Christianity and some from non-religious backgrounds. We recognise that in providing opportunities for our children to worship, we have to consider the backgrounds that our children come from and provide them with a balanced, educated understanding of Christianity within a spiritual setting. *We are not a faith school for Christians but a Christian school for all*.[2]

The head teacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998; Section 70 and Schedule 20) for arranging the daily Collective Worship after consulting with the governing body and with guidance from our church partners (St. Edmund's church and the Diocese of Norwich). Foundation Governors have a particular responsibility because they are appointed to promote and uphold the Christian vision and values of the school.

**Withdrawal and Involvement**

Collective Worship is seen as an integral part of our school day, allowing children and staff to come together as a community with a common focus. All members of staff are provided with opportunities to attend Collective Worship alongside pupils. We carry out Collective Worship together as a community: Collective Worship is the 'heartbeat' of the day during which we are all aligned. However, parents 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 until the request is withdrawn. We encourage the involvement of all pupils so that their sense of belonging as a member of our school family can be strengthened. The head teacher keeps a record of all children who have been withdrawn from Collective Worship; any parent who wishes to exercise this right should first discuss their concerns with the head teacher. Staff may also withdraw from Collective Worship, however, they are required to respect the foundation and Christian Character of the school.

We are supported by our church community (St. Edmund's) in our Collective Worship: Reverend Seabrook regularly leads worship, and all pupils are acquainted with the Reverend and his team through visits to the church during RE Days and other community and school projects, such as our Autumn Shoebox Appeal, Christmas service at St Peter Mancroft church in Norwich and celebration of Easter. This helps develop the school's ties with the wider community and is a practical demonstration of the way that home and the school work together to support the achievements of our children.

Open the Book attend Wednesday assemblies regularly to act out and discuss Bible stories with the children; during Singing Assemblies we teach a range of songs that tie in with Christian and contemporary topics, which the pupils sing at the beginnings of Monday and Friday assemblies during the week. We also welcome visitors to lead us in Collective Worship and for some special festivals, celebrations and events throughout the year, with a focus on bringing in guests from various denominations and backgrounds of Christianity, to encourage all pupils to reflect and engage with the world around us.

[2] Taverham VC CE Junior School motto.

**Attendance by Others to our Collective Worship**

Lack of space in our hall means that parents and carers are not usually invited to attend unless there is a special occasion such as the Leavers' service. However at Christmas, most of our children participate in a special service that we share with our local and wider community at St Peter Mancroft Church in Norwich City Centre, where we are joined each year by many parents and friends. Several members of Year 6 partake in reading extracts from the Bible, poems, prose and prayer relating to the Christmas story and its impact on Christians around the world today; also involved are pupil presentations from members of the choir, orchestra, Year 5 Singers and Year 3 tableau.

**Garden of Hope**

Our Garden of Hope, including outdoor classroom, provides an additional space for children and adults to reflect and pray. All children create their own ‘pebble of hope’ that forms part of the paths in the garden.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Our Collective Worship is evaluated on a regular basis by staff and governors, including Reverend Seabrook from our local church. The school’s Christian Distinctiveness Working Party monitors and evaluates Collective Worship as one of its objectives. We monitor the impact of Collective Worship through talking to pupils and attending Collective Worship. Evaluations are collated and shared with Governors. The school governors hold overall responsibility for ensuring the legal requirements for worship are met.