

BISHOP'S HATFIELD GIRLS' SCHOOL

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

Date of last review: Autumn 2022

Date of next review: Autumn 2025

School Based Policy

BACKGROUND TO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AT OUR SCHOOL

All maintained schools must provide daily collective worship for registered pupils (apart from those who have been withdrawn by their parents). This is usually provided within a daily assembly or through tutor time.

The Headteacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging the daily collective worship after consulting with the Governing Body. Daily collective worship must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. The precise nature will depend on the family background, ages and abilities of the pupils. However, if it is inappropriate for some or all of the pupils to take part in Christian collective worship, the Headteacher may apply to the local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for a determination to have this requirement lifted.

Families who send their children to this school are from a range of religions and some 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 both the staff and the child's family is respected at all times.

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child to be wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship the school must comply unless the request is withdrawn.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 worship.

SOME DEFINITIONS

- **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 the faiths. It is important to concentrate on these as well as those specific to Christianity.

VALUES AND AIMS

We believe at this school that collective worship both supports and strengthens what we aim to 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.

We use assemblies to reflect on our school values of Respect, Ambition, Kindness, Trust, Teamwork and Honesty.

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
- develop a community spirit, a common ethos and shared values
- grow in understanding of the feelings of the 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, values and beliefs, whether they 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, the wider world
- share appreciation of worthwhile projects undertaken by groups within the school
- explore and review the variety of values, attitudes and 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.

IMPLEMENTATION

In this school we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework.

Collective worship, whether in assembly or tutor time, will:

- be acceptable to the whole community, staff and pupils
- include a variety of elements at different times
- involve the pupils.

At Bishop's Hatfield Girls' School, pupils will attend one or two assemblies most weeks; one just for their year group and one with two year groups combined. Assemblies are constrained by the size of the Main Hall and lack of an alternative space for them to take place in. Each KS3 form group will also be responsible for arranging a form assembly once a term.

Assemblies take place in the Hall.

All staff are expected to attend assemblies, unless of course they wish to withdraw on religious grounds, in which case they should see the Headteacher. Form Tutors should escort their Tutor Groups promptly to assembly and sit near to them; they are also responsible for ensuring that girls remain quiet when seated.

Pupils are expected to be quiet on their way to and from assembly, through the corridors and in the Hall. Members of staff are asked to ensure this happens. Members of staff who are not tutors should be in the hall to assist supervision of pupils.

Assemblies are taken by the Headteacher, Deputy Headteachers, Assistant Headteachers, Heads of Year or Houses and regularly by Forms and their Tutors. Offers from any other staff to take an assembly are always welcome.

The school year has been divided into weekly themes which encompass religious festivals, known national or international events, and aspects taken from the school calendar. Staff leading worship can then plan around the themes and a development of ideas can build up.

Visitors may also be invited to specific assemblies.

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 of content and methods, allowing opportunity for quiet personal reflection/worship.

We choose from a range of methods, including:

- Pupils' contributions
- Sacred and secular stories/readings
- Dance/drama
- Prayer/meditation/songs/music
- Artefacts/natural materials/visual aids/focal points
- Dialogue/creative silence
- Visitors.

Opportunities will be created for pupils to:

- Explore "ultimate" questions, eg why is there suffering?
- Consider the importance of prayer, meditation and silence / experience silence
- Be inspired by spiritual role models such as Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King
- Explore and share beliefs across different faiths
- Explore the links between beliefs and values
- Consider the relevance of beliefs to their own lives
- Appreciate the importance of religious beliefs to those who hold them
- Discuss religious and philosophical questions
- Explore the nature of truth and commitment
- Discuss matters of personal strength and weakness
- Become aware of the "inner life", and the spiritual dimension to each person
- Celebrate achievements of members of the school community, and the local, national and international communities
- Develop a sense of right and wrong
- Contemplate moral virtues, eg honesty, patience, courage, integrity
- Understand the consequences of one's own attitudes and behaviour
- Challenge hypocrisy
- Think about the needs of others and how each individual can address others' needs

- Develop a sense of belonging to a community
- Put into practice the values of the school
- Reflect on social issues, eg events on the news
- Experience and value the natural world and its finite resources
- Develop a sense of global responsibility.

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 pupils' experience.

SOME CHALLENGES

- **PRAYER**

The use of prayer has led to a great deal of debate. We feel that prayer is a good way of enabling pupils to focus their thoughts. Nevertheless, students should not be required to say or affirm prayers in which they do not believe. We have developed various forms of introductions to our prayers which distances students, but gives them the opportunity to participate if they so desire; e.g., 'And now in a moment of stillness, listen to the words of a well known Christian prayer...' In this way we are able to use prayers from many different traditions.

It is not always necessary to have a prayer and the use of regular moments of silence provides opportunities for some pupils to respond in a personal way if they so wish.

- **VISITORS**

We enjoy the fresh approach which visitors can bring to our school worship, but we require them to adhere to our values. This is explained to all visitors and their contributions, unless otherwise agreed, will fit into the theme for the week.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The school will review this policy regularly and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.