

Whitstable Junior School

Collective Worship Policy

Agreed by Gobs: March 2018

Review Date : March 2021

Collective Worship: policy and practice

Importance statement:

The daily act of collective worship at Whitstable Junior School plays a central role in our life and work. It provides us with valuable opportunities to reaffirm our values and ethos. It offers important opportunities to strengthen our sense of community, belonging and inclusiveness and to reinforce the respect and care we have for each other. Through collective worship we make a significant contribution to the religious, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of those present. We want all our children/young people to 'enjoy and achieve' and collective worship provides a valuable vehicle for this.

Aims:

- to provide pupils/students with a range of opportunities to worship God (however defined or understood);
- to give pupils/students opportunities to reflect on the significance of Christian (and other faith traditions') stories, events and festivals and how these might affect their lives;
- to offer experiences and opportunities for pupils/students to join in with and respond to a variety of forms of collective worship in order for them to reflect on the significance of their own and others' beliefs;
- to promote our shared values and contribute to our common life together by celebrating individual achievement, school achievement and wider community achievement within the context of collective worship.

These aims mean that our collective worship programme is such that we can include all our school community.

Collective worship and the law: We comply with legal requirements by providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils/students on the school roll, unless they have been withdrawn by their parent(s) 'on grounds of conscience'. Teachers also have the right not to attend or lead an act of collective worship 'on grounds of conscience'. The majority of our acts of collective worship are 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' whilst recognising the religious, spiritual, moral, social and cultural insights provided by other principal religions and life-stances represented in Kent and in Great Britain.

We emphasise the importance of our collective worship programme in developing our school's ethos and values and in providing a range of opportunities for children/young people to consider important issues for life and living. Parents do however have the right to withdraw their child(ren) from the daily act of collective worship. This is made clear through the information contained in our prospectus. Parents who wish to consider withdrawing their child(ren) are asked to make an appointment with the headteacher (the collective worship co-ordinator). If a child is withdrawn from collective worship they are supervised by an adult outside of the hall/room and are reintegrated for any notices or presentations. Currently there are no withdrawals from our collective worship programme.

Collective worship and staff:

Teachers (and sometimes teaching assistants/supervisors) attend collective worship with their class. Each class prepares and leads an act of collective worship (either for the whole school or for a Phase) once every Year. Pupils and staff organise and lead the weekly class-based act of collective worship. Resources are provided to help with this. Non-teaching staff are invited to attend collective worship. However, if an individual teacher feels their own beliefs might be compromised by our programme of collective worship they can discuss this with the headteacher (and collective worship co-ordinator), since they do have the legal right not to attend collective worship 'on grounds of conscience'. Currently there are none of our teaching staff that withdraws.

Collective worship organisation:

We hold acts of collective worship every day. On Monday and Friday these are whole school and on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursday in Phases/classes. We organise the programme around six themes (one for each term linked to our school values) and materials/suggestions are provided to support staff and pupils/students as they lead collective worship. It is the responsibility of staff leading the act of collective worship to ensure that the content and form of delivery is accessible for all those present. Collective worship leaders need to ensure that over time the following opportunities are provided:

Use of the Bible and other sacred texts as a source for stories and teachings, emphasising common themes and ensuring the inclusiveness of the school community is reinforced. Moral tales/teachings and contemporary situations may also be drawn on where appropriate;

Marking of appropriate festivals and other significant days;

Opportunity for Christian children to pray 'the Lord's prayer' as an important traditional Christian prayer periodically and that others listen to it respectfully.

Whole school/Phase acts of collective worship:

We aim to create an atmosphere of stillness and calm. To aid this, appropriate music is played for entry and exit from the hall.

The usual format consists of an input from the leader, an appropriate song or hymn, followed by a time of prayer and/or quiet reflection. Leaders are encouraged to actively engage pupils/students through for example questioning and drama;

The act of collective worship is kept separate from any notices or other items which may be included in this assembly time, with a different person leading each section;

Visitors may be invited from time to time to lead one of our whole school acts of collective worship;

The assembly, including the act of collective worship, usually takes 15 minutes altogether.

Class-based acts of collective worship:

We aim to give our children/young people some 'space' to be quiet and to think reflectively during collective worship in their classroom;

These acts of collective worship may be led by the class teacher or by one or more of the pupils/students;

They usually take between 5 to 10 minutes.

Use of Visitors

The worship co-ordinator is responsible for liaising with any visitors who come into school to lead collective worship. Practical arrangements such as timing, age range of audience and appropriate content are agreed through discussion. By drawing on people from the local community to lead acts of collective worship we enhance community cohesion.

Health, Safety and Well-being

In collective worship we follow the school's health, safety and well-being policy. For example, appropriate care must be taken when using lighted candles and electrical equipment. In the event of fire all pupils must be familiar with exit routes from the halls and other areas of the school where collective worship takes place. Visitors are not left unaccompanied with children/young people.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

Collective worship will challenge stereotypes, misinformation and misconceptions about race, ethnicity, religion and gender. During collective worship, religions will be presented fairly and accurately and diversity and equality will be affirmed.

Resources

A range of resources, including age-appropriate DVD material and PowerPoints, is available to support teachers and pupils with collective worship and is situated in the Heads Office. An annual allocation, managed by the co-ordinator, is available to purchase resources and for training purposes.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Date received by the governing body: March 2018

Due review date: March 2021