



Collective Worship Policy

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The policy is based on guidelines from Buckinghamshire SACRE

1. Introduction

At High Ash CE School, our daily Reflections (the name chosen by our children for collective worship) are an integral part of our school week and calendar, are the 'heartbeat' of the school and play a key role in the character and personal development of our children. Our Reflections also serve to bring us together as a school community and ensure we maintain a strong sense of belonging, they are an opportunity to praise, celebrate, reflect, wonder and live out our school vision and how it can enrich our daily lives.

Our collective worship is underpinned with our vision of 'Let your Light Shine' and 'Grow Together, Shine Forever' through Christian values, bible stories, our PROUD principles and through key Christian festivals and events in the Church calendar. This is through the format of our symbols of a window (British Values), a mirror (our PROUD principles) and a door ('letting our light shine' through courageous advocacy and being a Good Samaritan).

This collective worship policy at pays due regard to statutory requirements and has taken account of the guidance offered by the local authority through its SACRE. Collective worship is a valued and valuable part of school life and is taken seriously, as it shapes our approach to others and to what we do in school. Our policy sets out our aspiration that collective worship will be a valuable and valued experience for all members of our school community whatever their backgrounds and beliefs. It is invitational, inclusive and reflective in nature and never coercive or indoctrinatory.

2. Our School's Vision

Our vision for our school is that we 'Grow Together Shine Forever' to become the very best version of ourselves to then let our light shine on others. We know our children are going to be influencers and leaders of the future, yet we are committed to also ensuring that they are compassionate and caring community members, with a generosity of spirit and a sense of social responsibility that enriches the world and people around them and feeds their soul.

As a high achieving school, we encourage our children to be the best they can be; yet we also base our vision on the parable of the Good Samaritan so that they too will wish to help others no matter who they are, show acceptance, be culturally aware and inclusive and not always expect something in return.

Our bible quote of 'Let Your Light Shine' (Matthew 5:16) is to show the children the joy there is to be had in spreading goodness and having the courageous advocacy to make a difference in the world for the community good and not just that of the individual.

3. Collective Worship – the legal background

The legal requirements for collective worship are laid down in the 1988 Education Reform Act and in the Collective Worship Circular 1/94 [Collective worship in schools.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/314222/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf) (1993 – 1994), which was an attempt to explain and enhance the 1988 Act. It states that collective worship: '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, 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'.

- **All pupils in attendance at a maintained school shall take part in an act of collective worship each day.**

Guidance states that this can take place in groups at any time during the school day. Children under the age of five are not required to take part in an act of collective worship. Children in reception classes are required to take part in a daily act of collective worship. The law applies to all registered pupils. Maintained voluntary aided and controlled schools are also required to have a daily act of collective worship, however, its character and content is determined by the governing body.

- **Collective worship shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.** This means it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any Christian denomination. Across a term most acts of collective worship should be of this character, however not all individual acts of worship need to be of this nature.

- **Collective worship should be appropriate to the ages, aptitudes, and family backgrounds of pupils**

- **The Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) may determine that it is not appropriate for a school to have collective worship of a wholly or mainly broadly Christian character.** The headteacher of a maintained school may apply to SACRE for a determination after consultation with the governing body to consider whether it is appropriate for the requirement for Christian collective worship to apply in the case of their school. Further information can be sought from the SACRE advisor. [SACRE | SchoolsWeb \(buckscce.org.uk\)](http://buckscce.org.uk)

- **Parents have a right to withdraw their child(ren) from all or part of collective worship.** Further guidance on the right to withdraw is given later in this document.

- **Teachers should not be disqualified from employment or discriminated against in terms of pay or promotion on the grounds of their religious opinions or practice in participating or not participating in acts of worship.** This applies to all teachers except those in voluntary aided schools and some in voluntary controlled schools. It is a teacher's duty to attend assemblies, but they are not required to lead the collective worship part of this occasion. It is hoped that this document outlines a fully inclusive approach to collective worship within the realms of the law which all teachers will feel able to attend.

- **Nature of collective worship in schools** 'Worship' is not defined in the Education Act. This guidance therefore draws on the DFE circular 1/94 for clarification. This states that: *'worship must in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power... worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common.'* It is not possible to compel people to worship, but we can provide opportunities for it to happen and enable pupils to respond reflectively. As collective worship takes place in schools, its primary function is an educational one, that is to promote spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) as well as intellectual development. Considering this, collective worship should be a) active, rather than passive (e.g., children are actively involved in answering questions) b) directed towards something (e.g., a value/someone) c) personal (e.g., time for reflection and response to God if appropriate).

- **Collective worship and religious education (RE)** - Collective worship and RE are separate areas of school life. The legal requirements for RE and collective worship are distinct and should not be confused. Schools should have separate policies for RE and collective worship. Schools should not assume that the RE coordinator is responsible for collective worship; this should be a matter of negotiation. The only part of the law which is similar for both areas is that of withdrawal. All other areas including time, the Christian character of collective worship and determinations DO NOT apply to RE. Nevertheless, there may be opportunities for children to use their RE work in collective worship or for collective worship to reinforce the learning taking place in RE e.g., at times of religious festivals.

- **Collective worship and assembly** - Collective worship and assembly are distinct activities, although they may take place as part of the same gathering. Collective worship is a special time for pupils to reflect upon life experiences and ultimate questions and, if appropriate, focus on God. It should allow the pupils to be able to make a spiritual response. A model combining the 'assembly' and 'collective worship' aspects can be found in section seven. An assembly is a gathering of part or all the school. It is concerned with administrative matters and other announcements about school life. Schools often gather for achievement assemblies, singing assemblies and curriculum assemblies. These can be made into an act of collective worship through the addition of an opportunity for reflection or prayer at the end of these times. Without it they stay as an assembly.

- **Collective worship, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (SMSC) and fundamental British values** - Collective worship makes an important contribution to developing pupils' understanding of fundamental British values as defined by Ofsted. Effective SMSC development can support pupils in better understanding and applying these fundamental British values.

- **Responsibilities for collective worship** - It is the shared statutory responsibility of the **headteacher and governors** to ensure there is appropriate provision for collective worship.

3.1 Right to withdraw

Requests for withdrawal should be granted without delay. The 'religious grounds' do not have to be justified and explained by the parents. Should children be withdrawn, the school must provide adequate supervision to ensure their safety. Children should not be withdrawn from Collective Worship for other purposes, e.g. reading, music lessons, to do so is to break the law.

4. Collective Worship at High Ash

We are an inclusive school and so our reflections are also mindful and respectful of other faiths. We warmly invite all members of our school community to join our Reflections. Our Reflection times are there to present all our children with a firm foundation for a strong moral code based on Christian values for their life now and in the future, whatever beliefs they may choose to have. They serve as a vehicle for them to reflect, discuss, question and evaluate how they can become the best version of themselves and let their light shine on others for the collective good.

We aim to make the reflections current and relevant to the world the children live in now and reflect national and global issues. Our Reflection Leaders help senior leaders to plan, deliver and review our reflections to ensure that they have relevance and connect with their peers, so that reflections are invitational and inspire them to be a force for change.

The opportunity to gather for collective reflections comes in a range of experiences and they are interactive and fully involve the children and staff in their discussion and sharing of views and experiences. Reflections use drama, role play, music, art, symbols, stories and 'talk trios' to ensure a range of experiences is offered. We have them in the hall, in classrooms, in the woods at Christmas and outside.

The children contribute to prayers and reflections in worship, through either prayers or reflections in the Prayer Basket or impromptu prayers/reflections at the end of a Reflection time based on what thoughts/feelings it has provoked in them. We also ensure a spread of age groups lead church services at key times of the year such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest.

Our Reflections provide pupils and staff the opportunity to:

- Celebrate –
 - Christian seasons and festivals including Easter, Advent, Christmas, Harvest, Ash Wednesday, Pentecost and other Church services such as Remembrance and our Leaver's Blessing;
 - school values associated with our vision;
 - Pupils' and adults' achievements;
- experience prayer, stillness, worship and reflection
- grow in understanding of and participation in prayer;
- create a reflective approach to life including the exploration of deep questions
- develop as a community centred on our clear and distinctive Christian vision
- experience a variety of styles of worship;
- participate and respond, through active involvement in the planning, leading and evaluation of worship;
- feel safe and affirmed;
- worship God on their own terms.

Reflections mirror aspects of the curriculum and in particular:

- nurture spiritual growth;
- enable participants to consider moral questions in a Christian context;
- enhance social understanding and encourage responses to issues through courageous advocacy;
- give participants a chance to reflect on the place and importance of faith in the lives of people today;
- encourage participants to explore beliefs drawn from their own cultural heritage;
- reflect the teachings of Jesus and a Trinitarian theology.

4.1 The Pattern of Reflections

Reflection takes place in a variety of groupings, in the school hall, in classrooms and on occasions outside. Occasionally worship takes place in St Mary's Church, Great Brickhill. We follow the seasons of the Church year and within these significant festivals and other special days are observed. These always include Harvest, Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Easter and Pentecost. Other important days in the calendar such as Remembrance and the Leavers' Blessing also feature in collective worship.

Whenever worship takes place it is planned to promote participants' thinking beyond the time given to worship itself. Our Reflections follow a weekly format of:

- Monday: our 'Big Question' linked to the vision and theme- 'Time to Be'- these are in Key Stages
- Tuesday: Class Reflections- Follow up reflection time on the Big Question 'Time to Think'/'Time for Action'
- Wednesday: Music Appreciation 'Time to Sing'
- Thursday: Sharing of learning from 'Big Question' and links to our Christian vision 'Time to Share'
- Friday: Star Assemblies and Good Samaritan celebration and praise assembly 'Time to Shine'

Our local clergy support worship through leading blessings at Church Services. Governors, leaders and children review Reflections to see if it is helping us deepen our connection to our core vision.

Our themes for this year are based around our vision and the church calendar as well as supporting the aims of the Oxford Diocese and the Church of England.

4.2 Planning Acts of Collective Worship

Our acts of worship are carefully planned to ensure a balance between content and experience. Leaders, including the children, plan the content and activities included in worship according to what is most appropriate to the season/theme/topical issue and the needs of the pupils. The themes of worship are chosen to both express and explore our vision and the way in which this vision is experienced in school through the associated values. Throughout their time at our school children will encounter a wide variety of activities such as dance and drama alongside more traditional elements of worship such as prayer and song. We light a candle to mark the start of Reflection and we include bible quotes and/or stories into our Reflections. There is always time for a mindful moment, discussion and debate, a song and a prayer. Our call and response ends our Reflection as does the extinguishing of the candle.

Prayer is a vital part of our worship. It is introduced with a form of words that invites but does not coerce pupils to participate. Our prayers are addressed to God reflecting the traditions and practices of the Church of England. Pupils who prefer not to pray are encouraged to use these times to reflect on the important messages shared in our worship.

5. Review and monitoring

Our worship is regularly reviewed through discussions with participants, observation and reflection. Our evaluations are fed into the planning for future worship. We seek evaluation and guidance from the ODBE. Our reflections are monitored by leaders and Governors and we regularly seek feedback from the children on how it impacts upon them and ways to make it more meaningful for them.

This policy is reviewed every three years unless there is cause to review earlier, either due to changes in the legal framework, the school's vision or the needs of the children attending the school.