Diocese of Norwich
St Benet's
Multi Academy Trust

Collective Worship Policy

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Our Christian Ethos and Values
Our academies are open to all and accepting of all regardless of faith. Our passion and ambition are to see children and young people in all our academies achieve excellent educational outcomes alongside developing and growing into their potential as individuals made in the image of God.

Our culture is one of high aspiration for all. This is rooted in our Christian values as demonstrated in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. We have a desire to see our academies acknowledged as places of aspiration, high quality learning, achievement and hope making a significant contribution to the communities they serve.

All policies within St Benet's Multi Academy Trust (hereafter referred to as "the Trust"), whether relating to an individual academy or the whole Trust, will be written and implemented in line with our Christian ethos and values.

Overall accountabilities and roles
The Trust has overall accountability for all its academies and staff. Through a Scheme of Delegation it sets out the responsibilities of the Trust, its Executive Officers, the Local Governance Committee and the Headteacher. The Headteacher of each academy is responsible for the implementation of all policies of the Trust.

All employees of the Trust are subject to the Trust's policies.

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Policy Statement

As a Church academy, worship is an affirmation and celebration of our Christian ethos where adults and children have the opportunity to learn, worship and grow in their understanding of God and of themselves. It is therefore the 'heartbeat' of everything that we do and an expression of our academy's Christian vision and values.

We believe that we and our children are made in the image of God and that worship is a vital factor in this image becoming more real and meaningful. It should enable participants to develop an understanding of Jesus Christ and God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Worship in our academy is not simply a statutory duty although the legal requirements provide a framework for practice.

Worship in our academy aligns itself with the Church of England Collective Worship National Statement for Entitlement and Expectation (March 2021). Guidance Document – Inclusive, Invitational and Inspirational (18 May 2021). We expect our academy to offer high quality collective worship that is inclusive, invitational and inspiring.

The Legal Requirements

We seek to comply with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Section 70 and Schedule 20) which requires that:

- All registered pupils (apart from those whose parents exercise the right to withdrawal) must on each academy day take part in an act of Collective Worship.
- The daily act of Collective Worship should be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Deeds of the academy and the ethos statement in the Instrument of Government and should be consistent with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England.
- All acts of Collective Worship in Church schools/academies must be Christian in character. Pupils can be grouped in various ways for worship such as the whole school, year groups, tutor groups, classes, or other combinations.
- Acts of worship must be appropriate for the pupils in that they should take account of the pupils' age, aptitude and family backgrounds.
- The daily act of Collective Worship will normally take place on the academy premises, but all academies are able to hold their Act of Collective Worship elsewhere (e.g. the local Parish Church) on special occasions or to support local church services where prior agreement has been made. In addition, schools might undertake eucharist services in their local church or hold outdoor worship in forest church etc.
- Responsibility for the arrangement of Collective Worship in a Church of England academy rests with the Local Governance Committee in consultation with the Headteacher. Trust appointed Governors have a particular responsibility because they are appointed to promote and uphold the ethos and values of the Trust. The Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure that all arrangements for Collective Worship are secured. They act as the Collective Worship coordinator.

Anglican Faith and Practice

In addition to the above, we seek to provide acts of Collective Worship that reflect the faith and practice of the Church of England therefore:

We use the Bible as a sourcebook for inspiration and learning and make pupils familiar with the Lord's Prayer, psalms and other verses of scripture. We also introduce them to a variety of well-known prayers – many of which express the central beliefs of Christians throughout the ages.

We use aspects of Anglican liturgy to create a framework for worship. We use Christian symbols as a focus for reflection and provide opportunities to discover the value of meditation and silence. We observe the cycle of the Anglican year including celebrations of the major Christian festivals.

In Lighthouse Federation, (hereafter referred to as the academy), we provide a worship space which is attractive and well prepared with appropriate thought having been given to colour, space, seating, ambience and music.

We actively seek to develop church partnerships to enhance our provision for Collective Worship. This includes the local Anglican church and other Christian denominations. We view our academy as part of the global church and aim to provide opportunities for pupils to appreciate the diversity of Christianity.

We believe as stated in the Church of England National Collective Worship Guidance Document - Inclusive, Invitational and Inspiring (18.05.2023) that Collective Worship is the unique heartbeat of the school and is offered as part of a wider opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter faith by engaging in conversations about God, both as individuals and together.

Rights and Responsibilities

Worship is regarded as a special time in our school day where we gather as a school family. Reflecting our ethos as a Church of England school, Collective Worship is an inclusive opportunity for those of all faiths and none to be present with integrity. However, we respect the legal right of parents to withdraw their child/children from acts of Collective Worship, and should such a situation arise, appropriate arrangements would be made in keeping with the requirements of the Act. A request can be made verbally, via messaging apps or in any written form. Immediate withdrawal will be granted, but following a withdrawal we will offer parents an optional discussion with the Headteacher to explore if any appropriate accommodations might be made.

Aims and Purpose

The aims and purpose of Collective Worship as defined by the Education Reform Act 1988 are as follows:

- To provide an opportunity for the children to worship God
- To enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues
- To enable children to explore their own beliefs
- 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

Planning

Planning for Collective Worship is overseen by the Headteacher and is undertaken in consultation with the academy's adult community. Plans follow the cycle of the Anglican year. The Headteacher ensures that leaders and visiting speakers receive copies of the plans. Individuals and groups are responsible for using the plans as a basis for developing their own short-term plans for individual acts of worship. This approach is inclusive of pupils, who have regular involvement in planning and leading Collective Worship.

Organisation

We plan to enable pupils and staff to encounter God and the teachings of Jesus Christ through worship that is truly welcoming, inclusive and exemplifies the principles of Christian hospitality. This is an approach that seeks to meet the needs of all, wherever they may be on their journey of faith and belief.

The Headteacher and other members of staff together with groups of children take turns to conduct Collective Worship. At Happisburgh, the local vicar takes collective worship fortnightly. At both academies an 'Open the Book' team from the local churches provide worship fortnightly, based on Bible stories. This underpins the principles of the Church of England Collective Worship National Statement of Entitlement and Expectation – *Developing Staff Expertise and Knowledge*.

An act of Collective Worship is held daily. This may involve the whole academy or smaller class or key stage groups. Where collective worship forms part of an assembly, we ensure that there is a clear distinction between the two elements of gathering.

Singing is an important part of worship in our academies and this forms the basis of one worship session each week. Singing is also woven through many of our other worship times. On Mondays we hold celebration worship as an opportunity to share children's work and to celebrate their successes. These include an act of Collective Worship and play an important role in promoting the ethos of the academy. At Happisburgh we invite parents to these worships to see their children receive their awards and, at both schools, we regularly invite parents or friends to join us in worship. Governors are also welcome to attend acts of worship at any time.

We conduct Collective Worship in a dignified and respectful way expecting children to behave appropriately. We create a suitable atmosphere by using music, pictures or other artefacts to act as a focal point.

We use a four-part model to structure our Collective Worship, which includes liturgical greetings and the format "Gathering, Engaging, Responding, Sending"**.**

Collective Worship should be the central place where spirituality and reflection are explored, developed and practised. In our academy we undertake the following within daily worship to promote spiritual development:

- Frequent opportunities for stillness and reflection
- invitational approaches to include everyone in reflection such as images, spoken words, questions etc.
- The use of I wonders…to prompt and deepen children's thinking

- Opportunities for the whole school to take part in the writing and sharing of prayers
- Opportunities for children to write prayers and plan/lead worship sessions, especially on topics which are important to them.

Resources

The budget for Collective Worship is distinct from the budget for Religious Education. There are a wide selection of resources in books and online which we use to support the planning and delivery of Collective Worship. We use online resources to provide suitable music as children enter and leave the hall as well as to accompany singing. Leaders of worship, including clergy, have access to regular training. Our Executive Headteacher attends the Diocese of Norwich Collective Worship networks.

Contribution to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development

We recognise that although SMSC development should be fostered across the whole curriculum, acts of Collective Worship provide a multitude of opportunities in this area. For example, children will be encouraged to reflect on and celebrate the deeper meanings of life, consider their own behaviour and recognise the need for forgiveness, appreciate the contributions of others and respond to their needs, value their own culture and the cultures of others.

The organisation and delivery of our Collective Worship is therefore, connected through the communities of school, home and church. Each plays a crucial role in delivering worship in our academy through:

- Connected Communities: looking for meaningful community connections in the intersection between church, school and household.
- Encounters with God: encountering faith and belief by engaging in conversations about God as individuals and together.
- Imaginative practices: searching for 'a new way of being church' and creating new thinking and new doing in relation to children, young people and households.

Monitoring and Evaluation

We aim to develop the monitoring and evaluation of Collective Worship by continuing to keep records of Collective Worship and surveying adults and children as to their views on its impact and expression of the school's Christian vision. We intend to make the criteria for successful worship available to all those who plan and lead it before asking them to submit short term plans. The coordinator and others will routinely observe and monitor acts of Collective Worship in line with these criteria. In conjunction with members of the Local Governance Committee, pupils will also evaluate the impact of Collective Worship on themselves and the wider academy community.

Inclusion

We are committed to equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, cultural background, ability or any physical or sensory disability. We therefore aim to make Collective Worship accessible to all and accommodate ourselves to individual needs when appropriate. As when teachers prepare lessons, worship leaders take account of different learning styles and aim to present materials using multi-sensory approaches.

Implementation of Policy

The Headteacher as Collective Worship Co-ordinator is responsible for this policy which will be reviewed every three years. Its implementation is the responsibility of all those planning and leading Collective Worship.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Links to Other Policies:

- Religious Education Policy
- PSHE Policy
- Academy vision statement
- Spirituality Policy

Appendix 1 – Collective Worship in Church of England Schools, Inclusive Invitational Inspiring, Guidance Document

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND EDUCATION OFFICE

Collective Worship in Church of England Schools

Inclusive Invitational Inspiring
Guidance Document

Introduction

Church of England schools are committed to offering high quality collective worship. They are places that recognise and value collective worship as central to fostering a sense of community and to expressing the school's Christian vision. In practice this means that structure, planning, evaluation, participation, collaboration, and inspection of worship are all taken seriously by the school and by diocesan authorities.

This document has been produced to challenge, to guide and set expectations for Church school communities and diocesan authorities encouraging them to reflect on their practice and to ensure

that collective worship remains the relevant and essential component of an education that enables all pupils to flourish and to 'live life in all its fullness' John 10:10.

In Church of England schools, collective worship is seen as more than a daily 'awe and wonder' moment. It is the unique heartbeat of the school and is offered as part of a wider opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter faith by engaging in conversations about God, both as individuals and together.

> *We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way that enhances their lives...Collective worship in schools, including prayer, reading and reflecting on the Bible, liturgy, sacrament and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity, provide a vital opportunity for this.*[1]

This form of encounter through worship should be truly welcoming, inclusive and exemplifying the principles of Christian hospitality. This is an approach that seeks to meet the needs of all, wherever they may be on their journey of faith and belief.

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[1] The Church of England Education Office, *Church of England Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good.* (The Church of England Education Office 2016) page 10

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Collective Worship and the Law

Collective worship in community schools is grounded in the historical past and enshrined in educational law to be *'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'*[2]. In Church schools the requirement instead to reflect the Anglican status of the school as expressed in its trust deed liberates those leading collective worship to build on the rich, lived diversity of Anglican tradition and identity. In the same way as worship in churches is aspirational, constantly evolving and being re-imagined there is an expectation of a continuous, dynamic reimagining of what collective worship means in the Church school.

Inclusive, Invitational, and Inspiring

Inclusive: Worship is collective in that it involves meeting, exploring, questioning, and responding to others and, for some, to God. In the Church school pupils, their families and other adults can expect to encounter worship that is inclusive of, and fully accessible to, all. Many pupils and staff in our schools will come from homes of different faith backgrounds as well as of no faith background. Moreover, many pupils will naturally be at different stages of their spiritual journey during their time in school. Pupils should be given the opportunity to think and ask questions. There should be space to consent, and dissent: to participate and to stand back; and to consider. It is an expectation that care will be taken to ensure that the language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith in all those participating, listening and watching.

Collective worship should not be 'done to' but will involve meaningful contributions from the whole school community, including pupils. It is recognised that pupils will bring their own experience to worship. Inclusion requires pupil involvement in planning, leading and the evaluation of worship. Although part of a national legislative framework, collective worship in the Church school grows out of the local context and out of pupils' experience, including their cultural backgrounds.

Invitational: Parents, pupils and adults can expect to encounter worship that is consistently invitational. There should be no compulsion to 'do anything'. Rather, worship should provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. The metaphor of 'warm fires and open doors[3]' captures this idea. The warmth of the fire derives from the clarity and authenticity of the Christian message at its heart. There is no value to an encounter with a watered down, lowest common denominator version of faith. Importantly the door is open, all are welcome to come in and sit as near or as far away from the fire as they feel comfortable. Pupils and adults should always only be invited to pray if they wish to do so and should be invited to pray in their own way. Prayer should always be accompanied by the option to reflect.

Music and liturgies[4] used in worship should reflect the best of traditional and modern Anglican worship, it should connect with the theme and explore the sacred to educate and engage. Music used should reflect the diverse worship experience of the wider Christian community.

[2] *Education Reform Act 1988 section 7(1) and the corresponding section of the Education Act 1993*
[3] Speech by David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon 2014 quoted in *The Fruits of the Spirit: A Church of England Discussion Paper on Character Education* (The Church of England Education Office 2015) page 13
[4] Where there are joint schools the liturgies should reflect this status

Care should be taken with the music and liturgy: the traditional and modern riches of Christian hymnody and music will be drawn upon, but schools should think about what is most appropriate, at a given time, for the spiritual life of their particular community.

Inspiring: Pupils and adults can expect the worship they encounter in a Church school to be inspirational. Worship should be formational and transformational: it should enable pupils and adults to ask big questions about who we are and why we do what we do. It should motivate pupils and adults into action, into thinking differently, and into reflecting on their and the wider community's behaviour and actions. As a result of inspirational collective worship, they should be inspired to become courageous advocates of causes. It should encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and/or philosophical convictions.

There will always be those who are uncomfortable to enter through this open door of worship in our schools and so the Church of England recognises the right of withdrawal from collective worship for those parents or pupils[5] who wish to exercise this option. This, and how to exercise this choice, should be explained fully in the school's collective worship policy and referenced on the school's website.

Aims and objectives

The aspiration to provide collective worship that is Inclusive, Invitational and Inspiring is underpinned by the following aims and objectives and will be monitored and quality assured through the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools[6] (SIAMS)

Collective worship in a Church of England school will do the following:

- Explore the school's vision and how that underpins shared values and virtues. In doing so, it will reflect on moral values such as compassion, gratitude, justice, humility, forgiveness and reconciliation; and develop virtues such as resilience, determination and creativity that develop character and contribute to academic progress.
- Help pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world by encountering the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and developing understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God.
- Offer the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection.
- Enable all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, as well as through the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican worship, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- Enable pupils to develop skills through engaging in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice.

[5] Under Section 55 of the Education and Inspections Act, it remains the case that only pupils in sixth form education or over the age of compulsory school age (Section 55. 9) may withdraw themselves from collective worship.
[6] The Church of England Education Office, *Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Evaluation Schedule* (The National Society 2018)

Provision

The rhythm of daily worship allows pupils and adults to step away from the target-driven culture of much of education, creating a space for an encounter with faith in God. It also provides the opportunity to reflect on larger questions of meaning and purpose. Pupils and adults can expect that the school's collective worship practices will provide a shared set of symbols, signs, words and actions which give the community a language upon which it can draw, in times of joy and grief. Such an experience is key to fostering a sense of fellowship and cohesion within the school community. Whether in times of crisis or celebration, this time set aside in the school day provides staff and pupils with the opportunity to gather and support one another as a community.

Throughout the year, Church school communities may meet to celebrate and mark certain seasons in the Church calendar, such as Lent and Advent. Other important events in the school year, such as the start and end of the academic year, may be marked by formal acts of collective worship. Pupils and adults will encounter the practice of regular prayer and worship as a normal part of the life of the school. These activities will help provide a rhythm and stillness as a pattern of community life.

Parents, pupils and adults can expect that worship in a Church school will follow a recognisable structure that will help focus worship on one idea. This helps to give organisation and clarity to the unfolding of that idea, as well as helping the leader to ensure that worship is age-appropriate and moves away from making it a performance art. This could take the form of a welcome or prayer followed by a consideration of a Bible passage or story that the group can then reflect on through discussion, prayer, silent reflection or music. It will be something that pupils and adults may want to share and discuss with others in school, in the community and at home.

Developing staff expertise and knowledge: Confidence through professionalism

Parents, pupils and adults are entitled to be led in worship by those who have a secure understanding of the nature of collective worship in a Church school context and by those who are professional in their approach to working with pupils and adults from all faiths and none. Therefore, it should be a priority to build up the expertise of staff, pupils, clergy and other adults in facilitating collective worship in Church schools. To do this the school should ensure the following.

- Worship leaders, including clergy, should have access to regular training, primarily through local diocesan education teams.
- Pupil worship leaders should be supported, encouraged and resourced to contribute meaningful acts of worship.
- Worship leaders, including clergy, should have access to high quality and current resources.
- The governing body should have robust systems in place to monitor the impact of worship effectively; this monitoring will include and meaningfully involve pupil voice. Those facilitating worship should have the opportunity to receive feedback and the hear the outcome of evaluation.
- Those from outside agencies and church groups invited into the school to facilitate

worship should be trained and properly briefed about the school, its pupil context and the school's vision. They should be supported and monitored as part of the school's systems for the evaluation of the impact of worship.

- There should be a named member of staff responsible for collective worship with responsibility for ensuring that appropriate policy and practice are in place and publicly available.

Collective Worship and Growing Faith[7]

Church schools owe their existence to the vision of Joshua Watson and the founding of the National Society, and their trust deeds to the foresight of past church communities. The local church community, through its foundation and ex officio governors, are inheritors and guardians of the school's historic trust deed. This involves honouring tradition while re-imagining how this might look today. Today this has found new expression in the 'Growing Faith adventure'.

'Growing Faith' promotes a partnership between the three local communities of church, school and household to provide space to talk of faith & spiritual matters or ask challenging questions within and between these three communities.

Three principles exemplify this approach:

- Connected Communities: looking for meaningful community connections in the intersection between church, school and household.
- Encounters with God: encountering faith and belief by engaging in conversations about God as individuals and together.
- Imaginative practices: searching for 'a new way of being church' and creating new thinking
  and new doing in relation to children, young people and households.

This has been described as developing 'faith talk' in the 'Faith in the Nexus' report[8]. Specifically, the Church school is a place for 'faith talk' where Encounters with God may happen. The 'Growing Faith adventure is not part of the SIAMS schedule but the local church should normally expect to be part of a church school partnership that encourages and supports the school in effectively developing the impact of and provision for worship. Families can also expect to be partners in collective worship: involved, informed and enabled to collaborate at home if they should wish.

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[7] https://www.churchofengland.org/about/renewal-reform/growing-faith

[8] National Institute for Christian Research in Education, Christchurch Canterbury , *Faith in the Nexus,* (November 2020) Faith In The Nexus (nicer.org.uk)