

# Highwood Primary School



*Promoting Resilience - Achieving Potential*

## Collective Worship Policy

**Approved by: School Development Committee**

**Prepared: May 2026**

**Next review due by: May 2028**

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN COMMUNITY and FOUNDATION SCHOOLS (without a religious character) (Note 1)**

### **Background to collective worship at our school.**

It is a legal requirement that all registered school age pupils take part in an act of worship each day. These acts of worship must be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character” for the majority of the time. They must also be “appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils”.

Families who send their children to this school are from a variety of backgrounds, some non-religious and some from a range of faith backgrounds including Christian, Humanist, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim. We recognise that in asking our children to worship, we must consider the background that our children come from. Therefore, it is 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.

### **Withdrawal**

The head teacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging the daily collective worship after consulting with the governing body. Parents of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school 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wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at the school the school must comply unless the request is withdrawn. Any parent who wishes to exercise this right should consult the headteacher. Teachers may also withdraw from collective worship.

Our assemblies will be conducted in a manner as sensitive and inclusive as to ensure that all children feel comfortable to attend the assembly.

### **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 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 to 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 to 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.

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.
- Grow in understanding of the feelings of 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, whether it 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 and the wider world.
- Share appreciation of worthwhile projects undertaken by groups within the school.
- Explore and review the variety of values, attitudes, 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.

## Planning & leadership

Every member of the teaching staff and occasional visitors will be involved in leading acts of worship at some point in the school year.

## Planning Acts of Collective Worship

The content of all acts of Collective Worship will be considered carefully, to ensure relevance and suitability for the ages, aptitudes and backgrounds of all pupils.

Termly assembly rotas including a range of themes, special occasions and events will be followed, but will be flexible to allow the inclusion of current and topical issues.

All Subject and Progress Phase Leaders are invited to have the opportunity to lead class assemblies during the year.

<b>Collective Worship Assembly</b>	<b>Foundation Stage &amp; KS 1</b>	<b>KS2</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>9.15 – 9.30</b> SEAL Thought of the Week, Headteacher Assembly	<b>9.35 – 9.55</b> SEAL Thought of the Week, Headteacher Assembly
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>9.10 – 9.30 KS1 Singing</b> Music/ Singing Assembly, Music Specialist, Headteacher, Supporting staff	<b>9.15 – 9.30</b> Own class assembly
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>9.15 – 9.30</b> Own class assembly	<b>9.10 – 9.30 KS2 Singing</b> Music/ Singing Assembly, Music Specialist, Headteacher, Supporting staff
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>9.15 – 9.30</b> Class or Year Group or Headteacher Celebration Assembly	<b>9.35 – 9.55</b> Class or Year Group or Headteacher Celebration Assembly
<b>Friday</b>	<b>9.15 – 9.30</b> PSHE/ School Council Pupil Voice / Pupil Leadership within the classroom	<b>9.15 – 9.30</b> PSHE/ School Council Pupil Voice / Pupil Leadership within the classroom

At Highwood we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad, educational framework. When each key stage meets together, usually on Monday and Thursday) there is a worshipful time. Every Tuesday or Wednesday we have a singing practice led by the music subject leader.

The headteacher usually leads the whole school worship, with a rota of other staff leading worship on other days. Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in both planning and leadership, and we have a School Council committee consisting of some year 5 and 6 children and a teacher. This group comes up with many ideas and gets other children involved.

The school year has been divided into fortnightly 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.

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.

### **We choose from a range of methods, including:**

- Pupil's contributions
- Sacred and secular stories/readings
- Dance/drama
- Prayer/reflection/meditation/songs/hymns/music
- Artefacts/natural materials
- Visual aids/focal points
- Dialogue/creative silence
- Visitors

### **Success criteria**

#### **At Highwood 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 pupil's experience

## **Some challenges**

### **Staff non-contact time**

We appreciate the need for staff to have some time during the school day set aside for planning and preparation. We also recognise the value of the whole school, including staff being involved in our school worship. Therefore, staff have a rota of non-contact time which includes the singing practice time every Tuesday and Wednesday assembly. This is usually led by a specialist Music Teacher.

### **Song/music**

Song/music is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere, unifying and uplifting the school community. We have a bank of music from which to draw, taken from a variety of cultures and types. Likewise with the songs we sing. We are careful with our songs to recognise that there might be some words which some of our children would find offensive to sing. We have changed the words of some songs to make them more inclusive. We select our songs/music carefully to match the theme.

Every alternate week we have a singing practice. During this we take time to carefully consider the words of one of the songs and make this into a worshipful experience by reflecting on and responding to that song.

### **Reflection and Prayer**

There must be a time of silent prayer/reflection during the collective worship time for it to comply with legal requirements. Pupils must be allowed to respond in ways that are appropriate to them. At Highwood Primary, there are children from a huge number of faiths, and relatively few withdrawals. The leader of the collective worship must respect the variety of faiths and therefore mainly Christian based prayer is not always suitable. We cannot pressurise children into praying, therefore we think of different strategies to introduce this part of the collective worship. The leader should make it clear when the time to be silent has come.

This can be done in several ways:

- The leader can say 'I am going to say a prayer from the ..... faith now and I want you to listen and think about what I am saying'
- 'I am going to say some words found in the inspirational writings of the ..... community which I want you to think about quietly'
- 'Now, while we are quiet, I would like you to listen to the words of a well-known prayer'
- 'I would like you to either say a quiet prayer now or think quietly about what we have heard this morning'

Using an interactive whiteboard with a suitable image for pupils to focus on. Different faith communities pray in different ways and in different positions. It is important to openly respect pupils' method of thought, reflection and prayer. It may be better to tell children to sit quietly and comfortably and to suggest that it may help to either close their eyes or focus on a visual aid you have chosen. It should be remembered that it is the private response of each participant that constitutes the worship. If each person has the opportunity to make their own response, then no one is excluded by their religious or nonreligious attitudes.

## Visitors

We enjoy the fresh approach which visitors can bring to our school worship, but we require them to adhere to our values. All visitors are issued with this policy and, unless otherwise agreed, will fit into the theme for the week.

### Using Visitors in Collective Worship

Inviting a visitor from a faith community to lead our collective worship can be a valuable exercise. A visitor can affirm pupils, particularly if they are of a minority faith in the school or community, they can demonstrate the idea of faith to those who have none and can explain a celebration or festival from a personal point of view. If a visitor is a leader from a faith community, then they might bring vestments or artefacts and explain their use and meaning.

A visitor may also be a councillor, a school governor, a parent or one of the youth groups that brings prepared collective worship to our school.

### Information for a visitor:

- the nature of collective worship and approach
- the theme of the proposed worship - particular subject matter
- age of the pupils
- length of the worship
- whether they will be expected to lead prayers
- resources you will provide
- an understanding that they are not there to proselytise.

Visitors should be greeted on arrival and shown the arrangements, afterwards it is mutually beneficial to give some feedback on their contribution.

See SACRE Guidance and Protocols on Faith Visits and Visitors.

<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/re/sacre/#visits>

See Hertfordshire Faith Communities Directory 2015

<http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/re/general/index.shtml#Faith>

### Evaluating Collective Worship Self-evaluation

This helps focus on an aspect of school life and as a community to set shared goals.

Internal self-evaluation should be a built-in and on-going process which staff and pupils are happy to use, and which they believe will bring benefits and enhanced performance leading to school improvement. Evaluation can take place at any time.

School:	Venue
Leader:	Start Time:
Date:	Finish Time:
Observer:	Age Group:
THEME:	
CONTENT – Christian element - age appropriateness - use of music, visual focus, quietness, relevance to pupils	
SELF-PRESENTATION: leadership - delivery – structure – pace - quality of interaction - strategies for engaging and involving the pupils – warmth	
ATMOSPHERE: calm – respectful - reflective – joyous - inclusive	
PUPIL/STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT: ready listening - willing response to questions - willing to share ideas – willingness to participate e.g. through drama, singing, reading	
BRITISH VALUES / SPIRITUAL MORAL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	

## Useful websites for Collective Worship

Website address	Types of resources	Phase
<a href="http://www.assemblies.org.uk">www.assemblies.org.uk</a>	Updated weekly to fit in with seasons and times in the year, but also deals with topical issues and archived materials, prayers and reflections also available	Primary & secondary
<a href="http://www.teachersdozen.co.uk">www.teachersdozen.co.uk</a>	Collective worship presentations, CDs and DVDs, also linked with SEAL themes	Primary
<a href="http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com">www.prayerspacesinschools.com</a>	Wider than collective worship but gives opportunities for pupils age 5-18 to explore faith and spirituality in an experiential way	Primary & secondary
<a href="http://www.fischy.com">www.fischy.com</a>	Music resources for use in collective worship – linked with spiritual health and wellbeing – links with SEAL	Primary
<a href="http://www.worshipworkshop.org.uk">www.worshipworkshop.org.uk</a>	A Church of England website focused on helping schools build better worship	Primary & secondary
<a href="http://www.collectiveworship.com">www.collectiveworship.com</a>	Multimedia resources in the form of ready-made acts of collective worship	Primary & secondary
<a href="http://www.stapleford-centre.org">www.stapleford-centre.org</a>	There are some free downloads for collective worship taken from Margaret Cooling's book Wisdom for Worship	Primary
<a href="http://www.fischy.com">www.fischy.com</a>	Music resources for use in collective worship - linked with spiritual health and wellbeing - links with SEAL	Primary
<a href="http://www.imaginer.co.uk">www.imaginer.co.uk</a>	Out of the Box Worship is a multi- sensory approach to KS1 class worship linked with values themes	Primary
<a href="http://www.reboo.co.uk">www.reboo.co.uk</a>	Subscription based websites providing digital, 'ready to use' material each week for from time and class collective worship	Primary & secondary
<a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship">www.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/subjects/collectiveworship</a>	School radio offering two Collective Worship series one for Infants and Juniors	Primary
<a href="http://www.spinnaker.org.uk">www.spinnaker.org.uk</a>	A Christian organisation that seeks to support primary schools in the delivery of Christian religious education and collective worship.	Primary
<a href="http://www.schoolswork.co.uk">www.schoolswork.co.uk</a>	Dedicated to resourcing and training Christian schools work. Features resources and links	Primary & secondary
<a href="http://www.yfcschoolsconnection.co.uk">www.yfcschoolsconnection.co.uk</a>	A website from Youth for Christ featuring assembly ideas and material	Primary & secondary
<a href="http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk">www.barnabasinschools.org.uk</a>	Variety of ideas and resources to support collective worship in schools	Primary
<a href="http://www.tentenresources.co.uk">www.tentenresources.co.uk</a>	Daily collective worship resources designed to be used within the classroom or whole school	Primary & secondary

## Additional information

### British Values

All schools have a duty 'to promote actively' the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

- **Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs:** British law protects freedom to choose and hold other faiths and beliefs. This should never be the cause of prejudice or intolerance from others. Collective worship can embody this attitude. Learning about different ways of life requires openness. Rather than just aiming for tolerance, collective worship can help pupils to value and celebrate diversity.
- **Mutual respect:** Collective worship can help to engender positive attitudes towards diversity. It can allow pupils to explore what happens when people are not treated respectfully due to their faith or beliefs.
- **Democracy:** Collective worship is a time where pupils can carefully think through issues for themselves
- **The rule of law:** Rules and laws from different faiths are often a focus of collective worship. Pupils may focus on how these rules would affect their own lives and lives of believers
- **Individual liberty:** Collective worship can be a time for pupils to consider questions about identity and belonging. They may think about the way they are themselves and free, but also think about constraints and responsibilities placed on all of us by our cultures, faiths, and beliefs.

### When planning for Collective Worship the coordinator could reflect on the following questions:

- Are pupils involved in the planning and delivering of collective worship?
- Are pupils given the opportunity to feedback on collective worship – on the values that they have covered?
- Does collective worship promote respect of all people regardless of their background and belief? Also, consider whether the displays in school promote British values through:
  - Celebration of key religious festivals
  - Celebration of key events – Remembrance Day – are staff/pupils encouraged to wear a poppy?
  - Are the school values endorsed by the collective worship programme?

### Brief definitions of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education

Ofsted reports on collective worship within the context of spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Inspectors assess the extent of the support and enhancement of the corporate life of the school and the importance of celebrating that which is worthy and good within the school. The following accounts of what is involved in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development are offered as suggestions for schools to adapt as they wish.

### To promote pupils' spiritual development is actively to encourage:

- the growth of pupils' inner life, their capacity to relate to others and their non-material well-being; for example, their self-respect, their creativity, their will to achieve their full potential and their ability to ask, and try to find answers to, life's major questions, including questions about the existence and nature of God

- pupils' acquisition of the knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and qualities they need to foster their own inner lives and non-material well-being throughout life

**To promote pupils' moral development is actively to encourage:**

- pupils' understanding of the difference between right and wrong, the will to do what is right and their willingness to consider others with concern and compassion
- pupils' acquisition of the knowledge, understanding, skills, qualities and attitudes they need to do what is right and to cope with moral conflict

**To promote pupils' social development is actively to encourage:**

- pupils' understanding of the responsibilities and rights of being a member of families and various communities, local, national and global
- pupils' acquisition of the knowledge, understanding, skills, qualities and attitudes they need to live up to these responsibilities and exercise these rights

**To promote pupils' cultural development is actively to encourage:**

- pupils' understanding of the cultural influences that affect them and others, a sense of belonging to local, regional, national, global cultures, and their appreciation and response to a range of aesthetic experiences
- pupils' acquisition of the knowledge, understanding, skills, qualities and attitudes they need to understand, appreciate and contribute to their own and different