

# Parklee Community School

## Collective Worship Policy



### 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 in the main ‘nominally’ Christian, but we do have some children from practising Christian families. In addition there are an increasing number of children who are from non-religious backgrounds and some from religions other than Christianity, we recognise that in asking our children to worship, we have to consider the culture and 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, culture and background of both the staff and the child’s family is respected at all times.

We would ask any parent considering withdrawing their child from daily worship to contact the Headteacher to discuss any concerns or anxieties about the policy, provision and practice of religious education and Collective Worship. Any children who are withdrawn will be supervised by an adult, however this may not be their own teacher or TA. Staff may also withdraw from worship.

Collective Worship at Parklee Primary is first and foremost for the educational and spiritual benefit of its pupils. It is a shared activity, which allows a variety of responses. It is an inclusive activity, which builds with the broad dimensions of the curriculum. The creation of atmosphere is assisted by appropriate music, visual foci and symbols. Opportunity for reflection and responses, prayer, story, drama and art are also used to appeal to the pupils’ imagination.

### SOME DEFINITIONS:

Collective Worship in school 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 worth 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. 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.

The requirement to promote British values as part of SMSC (Ofsted, September 2014, DfE, November 2014) and 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. Through our collective worship we aim to provide a caring and supportive 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 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, 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, 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.

In our school we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework. Assemblies will take place in the hall, in our bubbles, led by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher or another member of staff.

Themes which encompass religious festivals, known national or international events, and aspects taken from the school calendar are also used by staff leading worship. 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/meditation/songs/hymns/music
- Artefacts/natural materials
- Visual aids/focal points
- Dialogue/creative silence
- Visitors - We enjoy the fresh approach which visitors can bring to our school worship and we have good links with those who visit us regularly to lead worship from the local Parish Church.

#### SUCCESS CRITERIA:

At Parklee 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
- Good order with an atmosphere which matches the theme
- A contribution to individual and community sense of wellbeing
- A sense of occasion
- Enrichment of pupil's experience through a diverse approach

#### 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. During the Thursday assembly, staff have the opportunity to

meet with their teaching assistants (this assembly will be led by the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher).

Songs/music - this is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and can unify and uplift the school community. A bank of music from which to draw, taken from a variety of cultures and types is available on the shared staff area.

Assembly - During our assemblies, we take time to consider carefully the words of the songs and make this into a worshipful experience by reflecting on and responding to that song.

Prayer - The use of prayer has led to a great deal of debate. We feel that prayer is a good way of enabling children to focus their thoughts. Nevertheless, pupils 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 distance children, but give them the opportunity to participate if they so desire; e.g. I am going to pray, please listen if you want to join in at the end you can say 'Amen' or '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, mindfulness and reflection provides opportunities for some pupils to respond in a personal way if they so wish.

[Collective worship in schools - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Advice template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)