COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

Our Motto: 'Let your light shine… as you grow', (inspired by Matthew 5: 15-16)

St Mary's School vision: 'We nurture our pupils to be the best they can be in every way - in an inclusive and supportive environment, rooted in Christian teachings.'

Our six core Christian values of perseverance, truthfulness, friendship, respect, trust and compassion guide us all to live our vision in our school.

Introduction

At St Mary's, collective worship is a key part of school life. It provides opportunities for everyone—pupils, staff, governors, parents, and visitors—to reflect, celebrate, and learn about Christian values. Our worship follows the traditions of the Church of England and celebrates important festivals like Christmas, Easter, and Harvest. It helps us build a caring community and supports the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of all pupils and staff.

Our worship aims to be welcoming and respectful of everyone, whether they have a faith or not. It encourages reflection, respect for others, and understanding of what it means to live well.

Aims and Purpose

The main aims of our collective worship are:

- To give pupils the chance to worship God.
- To explore moral and spiritual issues that are important in their lives.
- To help pupils reflect on their own beliefs and respect others' beliefs.
- To encourage participation and response.
- To build a caring community based on shared values.
- To support pupils' moral and spiritual growth.
- To celebrate festivals and achievements.
- To promote quiet reflection, prayer, and thoughtfulness.

Legal Requirements

As a Church of England Voluntary Aided school, we provide an act of collective worship for all registered pupils on each school day, in accordance with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Section 70 and Schedule 20). Worship is Christian in character, consistent with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England and with the school's trust deed and Instrument of Government. It is appropriate to pupils' ages, backgrounds and needs, and may take place in school or, on appropriate occasions, elsewhere such as the parish church. The governing body is responsible for ensuring that collective worship meets these requirements, in consultation with the Headteacher. Parents and carers retain the legal right to withdraw their child from collective worship, as explained later in this policy.

Principles of Collective Worship

Our worship will be:

Inclusive: Recognising the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and faiths of everyone in our school community. We use language that is respectful and considerate.

Inviting: Everyone is welcome to join in, but no one is pressured. Pupils and staff can choose to listen, reflect, pray, sing, or simply observe.

Inspiring: Worship will encourage pupils to think about life, faith, and how they can act kindly and make a meaningful difference to their communities.

How Worship is organised in our school

Worship is led by staff, pupils, visitors, and members of the local church.

The Worship Council, made up of pupils, plays an active role in planning and leading key Collective Worships throughout the school year.

Worship follows the cycle of the Church year, focusing on festivals like Christmas and Easter; seasons such as Advent and Lent; and our school vision and values.

What Worship looks like

Collective Worship includes prayers, Bible stories, singing, music, drama, silence, and visual symbols.

We use artefacts, candles, crosses, and other symbols from the Anglican tradition to create a calm, reflective environment.

Collective Worship can happen inside in the hall or classrooms, or sometimes, outside.

The Collective Worship space often reflects the seasonal or festival period.

The atmosphere is calm and respectful, helped by music, symbols, and lighting.

Our normal pattern of Collective Worship follows:

Monday – Singing and praise

Tuesday – Led by our Head teacher on a Bible story linked to our half-term value

Wednesday – Celebrating our vision and values as a lived reality

Thursday – Reflections on current events in the wider world

Friday – Rooting our vision and values through bible stories

Following the Christian Year and Festivals

Worship themes follow the Christian calendar.

Major festivals such as All Saints Day, Christmas, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost are celebrated with special activities.

Bible stories and Christian values are linked to everyday life and school activities.

Using Anglican Traditions

We follow the structure of Anglican worship: gathering, engaging, responding, and sending.

Prayers, responses, and activities are linked to our school vision, the Church calendar and Christian teachings.

Spirituality within Collective Worship

Collective worship provides regular opportunities for pupils and adults to develop spiritually. Our shared understanding is: 'Spirituality is noticing the light in me, in you, in the world around us and beyond what we know. It helps us to wonder, think and grow.'

Through Bible stories, prayer, music, stillness and reflection, worship encourages us to notice and explore questions about ourselves, others, the world and matters of faith and meaning.

Our approach of Encounter – Reflection – Transformation helps us to plan opportunities to encounter a story, idea or experience; reflect on its meaning; and consider how it might influence our understanding, relationships or actions. Spiritual responses are personal and may be expressed in different ways. We make space for pupils and adults of all faiths and none to reflect and respond freely, without assuming a particular belief or response.

Working with Other Faiths and Churches

We work with local churches and Christian groups; St Mary's Church visits our school weekly and key events in the Christian Calendar are celebrated in the church, and children visit churches in the locality.

We respect and include children and families from different faiths and backgrounds.

Leaders from different Christian denominations are invited to contribute and lead worship.

Making Worship Accessible and Inviting the Whole School Community

We are committed to ensuring that collective worship is accessible and meaningful for everyone in our school community. This includes:

- Adapting activities and resources to meet the diverse needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs, disabilities, or other individual requirements.
- Using a variety of approaches—such as stories, music, silence, visual symbols, and discussions—to engage children with different learning styles and spiritual needs.
- Respecting and acknowledging the different backgrounds, faiths, and beliefs of our pupils and staff. We aim for worship to be a place where everyone feels valued and respected.
- Providing support for children who may find participation challenging, ensuring they can still be part of the worship experience in a way that suits them.
- Offering opportunities for pupils to contribute to planning and leading worship, helping them feel ownership and involvement.
- Ensuring that worship spaces and environments are welcoming, safe, and comfortable for all members of our school community.

We believe that worship is an important part of school life, and we warmly invite all members of our school community—including pupils, staff, governors, parents, and visitors—to attend. Participating in worship helps us all to reflect, celebrate, and grow together in our shared values and faith. We encourage families and the local community to join us during festivals and special occasions to strengthen our sense of belonging and community.

Parents and carers' Right to Withdraw

Parents and carers have the right to withdraw their children from worship if they wish. We ask parents and carers to speak with the Headteacher to discuss this. We will work with families to support their wishes and ensure children are cared for during worship times.

Monitoring and Developing Worship

We regularly check how well our worship is working through feedback from pupils and staff.

The Worship Council and school leaders review and improve worship activities.

The findings are used to plan better worship in the future.

The results are shared with governors and used to develop the school.

Governors attend to spot-check and review Worship practices.

Responsibility and Review

The Headteacher and Worship Coordinator are responsible for this policy. It will be reviewed every two years to ensure it continues to support our Christian ethos and meets the needs of our community.

To be reviewed June 2028