

Yorke Mead Primary School

Collective Worship Policy

November 2020



Our School Vision Statement

BRINGING LEARNING to LIFE

We are a school dedicated to creating an environment where children are able to grow into happy, well-rounded individuals with a love of learning through which they can achieve to the best of their abilities.

We want our pupils to enter the wider world as

- o Happy, positive individuals*
- o Responsible citizens who make a positive contribution*
- o Confident, resilient, healthy & life-long learners.*

DARE TO...

D - Determination

A - Ambition

R - Resilience

E – Enjoyment

T - Trust

O - Openness

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 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.

Collective worship

Collective worship involves all members of the school community coming together and participating in an assembly.

In line with the 1989 Reform Act, which states that collective worship should be wholly, or mainly of a broadly Christian character, we base our assemblies on the moral values of the Christian faith. We also respect the individual faiths and beliefs of all members of the school including those who do not have a faith.

We also hold assemblies that reflect other religious traditions that are represented in the school and wider community. Due to the current situation with COVID 19 and social distancing in schools we currently cannot gather in large groups to hold our assemblies. These still take place in smaller groups within the 'bubbles'. When it is safe to gather in larger groups the school will resume their assembly routines, prior to this alternative arrangements will be put in place.

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”. Teachers currently support this within their classrooms due to COVID 19.

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 religions other than Christianity and some from non-religious backgrounds. We recognise that in asking our children to worship we have to consider the 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 background of both the staff and the child’s family is respected at all times.

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 worship.

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 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.

Worship of a broadly Christian character

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. 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.

Organisation of collective worship

We hold a daily act of collective worship. Prior to the COVID 19 situation the daily act of collective worship formed part of each morning assembly. Due to COVID 19 any assemblies are held within year group bubbles. On days when there is no gathering, class teachers will undertake this process. Assemblies will

be led by the head teacher, senior leaders, phase leaders and class teacher in rota to allow the children to experience the range of adults and to maintain the sense of community within the school.

We tell the children that assembly time is a period of calm reflection. We regard it as a special time and expect children to behave in an appropriate way. We ask them to be quiet and thoughtful, to listen and to participate in songs and thinking time. We create an appropriate atmosphere by using music at the beginning and end of assemblies.

Opportunities to reflect upon what has been said are always given. Children are encouraged to be still and focus on their thoughts. A prayer or thought may be said to help them to reflect silently. Children and staff are not required to say or affirm prayers in which they do not believe or which they may not understand.

The head teacher or other members of staff normally conduct assemblies. School governors are welcome to attend. Regular visitors from local churches also take assemblies. We hope to continue this moving forward, obviously in a COVID 19 safe manner.

Sometimes our assemblies reflect and build on parts of the school curriculum. Our assembly themes are linked to the school's PSHE curriculum. Assemblies are also used to portray key messages to the children as part of the school development.

Assemblies offer an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate children's achievements both in and out of school. They play an important part in promoting the ethos of the school which is that all children are valued and a full range of achievements is recognised.

Our assemblies reflect the achievements and learning of the children. We celebrate achievements in assemblies on Fridays.

In "Talking Assembly" the children have an opportunity to raise issues that they have discussed in class. "Talking Assembly" is linked to the PSHE curriculum in KS2.

Twice a year we have a "Celebration Assembly". Achievements during the term by individual children and by groups are celebrated. In the autumn term we have a Harvest assembly, which is linked to fund-raising for a charity. We welcome governors' attendance at our assemblies at any time.

Right of withdrawal.

We expect all children to attend assembly. However, any parent can request permission for their child to be excused from attending religious worship and the school will make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the child during the period concerned. Parents do not have to explain or give reasons for this. This complies with the 1944 Education Act and was restated in the 1968 Education Reform Act. Staff members are also permitted to withdraw.

Monitoring and review.

It is the role of the governing body to monitor the policy and practice of collective worship. The policy will be reviewed in November 2023 or as legislation and/or guidance requires.