



## **POLICY DOCUMENT**

### **Collective Worship and Assemblies**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
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# **Collective Worship**

## **1 Introduction - Aims and objectives**

In line with the Spring Partnership Trust, St Mary Cray Primary school believes that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of each student is fundamental to every aspect of the curriculum including assemblies. Whilst it is within Religious Education in particular that religious beliefs, teachings and practices are taught, other subjects also invite students to reflect both implicitly and explicitly on the purpose and meaning of life. It is intended that in every area students feel valued and have a sense of purpose and identity.

## **2 Definition:**

St Mary Cray aims to comply with the requirements set out in the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act regarding Collective Worship. Collective Worship is the opportunity for students to meet for reflection, in support of three principles:

- It is inclusive, helps pupil to develop a sense of community and an understanding of 'World View'.
- It is Educational.
- It contributes to the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development of the pupils.

These principles allow students not committed to a particular religion, opportunity for collective reflection, whilst safeguarding the integrity of the participants.

## **3 The Role of Collective Worship:**

The law states that all pupils (see Right of Withdrawal for exceptions) are required to participate in a daily act of collective worship. The legal requirements allow for a certain degree of flexibility with regard to the nature of 'worship' and this document has been constructed largely to define St Mary Cray Primary School's interpretation of those requirements, as well as to outline the practicalities of planning and organising collective worship.

Collective worship occupies an important and unique place in the life of St Mary Cray Primary School. It provides an opportunity for members of the school community to pause from activity, to gather together, to remind themselves of and to reflect upon the beliefs and values which bind the school community together.

## **4 Worship in an Educational Context:**

Our approach to this is two-fold:

1. We have chosen to interpret the concept of 'worship' as providing an invaluable opportunity for the school community to focus on and reaffirm those values which are considered to be of supreme worth and importance. Values which are regularly re-visited as themes for collective worship include: care, co-operation, commitment, courage, empathy, honesty, forgiveness, friendship, loyalty, respect, responsibility, tolerance, sacrifice and self-worth.

2. We believe that our times of collective worship can play an important role in deepening the spiritual awareness of our pupils. Collective worship, at its best, provides pupils with an opportunity to reflect upon the value, purpose and meaning of things. Pupils are led into an experience of quietness to counterbalance the busy activity which generally marks the rest of the

school day. We are also able to sensitively explore issues of loss and suffering, limitation and frustration. Collective worship at St Mary Cray gives pupils the opportunity to hear stories and words from religious and other literature which suggest that there is more to life than meets the eye. We consider values and stories which are from different faiths as well as reflecting on the character and achievements of Jesus, as recorded in the Christian Bible.

In addition to the above, special times of collective worship are planned in the school year to acknowledge the significance of key religious festivals from the main religions. In line with legislation that collective worship should be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character", we place particular emphasis on the Christian festivals of Harvest, Christmas and Easter. In order to reflect our school population and understanding of others we also value opportunities to incorporate Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Jewish festivals into our assembly or celebration timetable. Pupils are not themselves required to celebrate religious beliefs which neither they nor their family adhere to but to be aware of reasons for them for others.

At St Mary Cray Primary School, we also believe that collective worship makes a vital contribution to the development of pupils in the following areas:

1. Collective worship contributes to the **moral** development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- reflect on matters concerning right and wrong;
- hear about incidents in which, and people in whom, goodness or right are exemplified;
- learn about religious and other teachings concerning right and wrong.

2. Collective worship contributes to the **social** development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- gather with others for a common purpose;
- share times of joy and sadness with others;
- learn how to behave appropriately within a specific social setting;
- increase self-confidence in public speaking / dramatic performance.

3. Collective worship contributes to the **cultural** development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- hear and respond to music from a range of times, places and cultures;
- reflect upon ideas concerning the concept of beauty;
- appreciate the range of talents and gifts found within the school community and beyond.

4. Collective worship contributes to the **intellectual** development of pupils by providing them with an opportunity to:

- learn and to engage with their minds;
- have ideas concerning values confirmed or challenged;
- reflect on the importance of learning in the context of our school community;
- consider the power of words.

At St Mary Cray Primary School, we hope that each act of collective worship will touch on one or more of the above areas. Even when the majority of the 'assembly' time on a given day has been

devoted to a class performance or a singing practice, we are concerned to safeguard at least one of the above elements, as well as a clear focal point.

## **5 Principles and Practicalities**

When leading assemblies, teachers are asked to note the following principles and practical considerations. The main consideration is of course that an assembly is properly prepared, presented and evaluated.

### **5.1 Variety in presentation** is important.

Tools to aid delivery can include:

PowerPoint, video, recordings (DVD and CDs), slides, drama (rehearsed or spontaneous), music, dance and religious or other artefacts. Stories can be told as well as read.

**5.2 Good timing** is essential, especially with the increasing demands of the curriculum. The entire assembly, with the exception of singing/celebration assembly, including the focus, the supporting song and notices, should not exceed 20 minutes.

Responses are private, conditional and may well be reflective in nature and are certainly open to subsequent review. Therefore it is important not to put pressure on the children. Similarly, it is important to phrase statements carefully.

Rather than "We believe" or "It is true that...", it is more appropriate to say, for example, "Christians believe" or "Hindus believe". Equally appropriate is the term, "I'd like you to listen to these words."

**5.3 High expectations** of behaviour are expected throughout the assembly. This is made easier when class teachers bring their class into the hall promptly and in an orderly fashion, having walked down the corridor quietly and calmly. Staff are seated once the assembly leader makes a start. It is the school's expectation that children will sit quietly and wait for the assembly to begin, listening to the music being played. This preliminary 'quiet space' is an important aspect of preparing for collective worship. Inappropriate behaviour during an assembly should not be allowed to detract from the content. Offending pupils are to be immediately moved to sit out and then sent, either directly after the assembly or at playtime, to apologise to the assembly leader, with further sanctions at her or his discretion.

**5.4 Organisation** of Collective Worship will either take place in the hall as part of a Key Stage Group or in the classroom as a class group. Participation by the children will be encouraged.

Friday will be a whole school Celebration Assembly. All staff will be present during whole school assemblies. Parents will be also be invited to the following events:

- Christmas celebrations
- Religious festival celebrations
- End of year assemblies
- Class sharing assemblies

Collective Worship will take place in the classroom on days when the children are not in the hall.

## **5.5 Format of collective worship**

It will include some of the following elements:

- Hymns, songs and music
- Prayer
- Story
- Drama
- Visiting speakers
- Responses from the children

Inspirational music will be played to assist in creating a reflective mood that the children know as 'thinking time'. The music coordinator will be responsible for this. We will endeavour to create an atmosphere which promotes worship. We will do this by playing appropriately different types of music as the children enter and leave the room.

## **5.6 Visitors (including the role of prayer)**

St Mary Cray Primary School has a long tradition of inviting visitors to contribute to or lead collective worship. If outside speakers do take part in an act of collective worship, we ensure that they are carefully briefed about the school's policy. We endeavour to choose visitors who can communicate well to children. We also aim to invite visitors who understand the nature and purpose of collective worship in schools and who will not, therefore, use the opportunity to seek converts. Having made that clear, we do allow visitors the freedom to include prayers, if they are considered appropriate, but we ask for prayers to be introduced in such a way that a response is left open. Our policy is that an 'invitation' to listen to the words of the prayer should be offered, so that a variety of responses is possible – for example, there is value in using phrases such as "I would like you to listen to some words which are very special for ... (e.g. Christians)." We do not believe that the expression "Let us pray" is an appropriate introduction to a prayer in the context of our school collective worship. Visitors are provided with all necessary practical information (with regard to timing, age-range of children, parking arrangements etc) and publicly thanked for their contribution.

## **6 Right of Withdrawal**

Parents/carers have the legal right to withdraw their child from collective worship, provided they give written notification to the school. Teachers can also exercise their right to withdraw from leading or attending acts of collective worship, but attending 'assemblies' is part of a teacher's contractual duty. At St Mary Cray Primary School, we are confident that our approach to collective worship is educationally sound and crucial to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and intellectual development of our pupils. We believe that our collective worship policy embodies an integrity which parents and teachers alike will be pleased to acknowledge.