

Collective Worship Policy

Approved by: The Rydal Academy LGB

Review frequency: 3 years

Date of last review: October 2024

Date of next review: October 2027

Background to Collective Worship

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 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 Headteacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging the daily collective worship after consulting with the governing body. Parents 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wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at the school the school must comply unless the request is withdrawn.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 inform the Headteacher in writing. Teachers may also withdraw from worship.

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 affording 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 affording 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

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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 every day situations and beliefs.
- Explore the language which people use to express their feelings.
- Deepen their sense of wonder about the world around them.
- 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 and individuals within the school.
- Explore and review the variety of values, attitudes, standards, manifested in religions and society.
- Reflect upon dimensions of human life.
- 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.

Provision of Collective Worship

In this school we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework. The Headteacher or a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) usually leads the worship, with other staff and visitors leading worship on occasions. Collective worship takes the form of: a prayer, hymn, story and/or personal reflection. We also say a poem together at lunchtime.

The school year has been divided into themes which encompass religious festivals, known national or international events, and aspects taken from the school calendar.

Prayer

It is not always necessary to have a prayer and the use of regular moments of silence provides opportunities for some pupils to respond in a personal way if they so wish.

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 supported in adhering to this policy by a member of staff.