Collective Worship Policy

Ratified by Full Governing Body: 13th February 2025

Draft Prepared	January 2026
Date Agreed	5th February 2026
Signed by Headteacher	N.Hirst
Signed (Chair of Governors)	E. Worthen
Date Policy to be Reviewed	February 2027
VERSION CONTROL: Annual update	

Ashford St Mary's Theologically Rooted Christian Vision

Shine as lights in the world

Our school is a place where all are welcomed, accepted and valued. Inspired by our Christian values, we seek to ensure that we shine our lights to bring positive change to our community and beyond.

We work together to ensure that we all fulfil our potential, developing resilience and self-belief.

Through enriching curriculum opportunities, we empower all learners to be creative and curious.

We support one another to shine together, thriving and growing in our appreciation of one another and the world.

Biblical Text: Matthew 5: 14-16 (CEV)

14 You are the light for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, 15 and no one lights a lamp and puts it under a clay pot. Instead, it is placed on a lampstand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. 16 Make your light shine, so others will see the good you do and will praise your Father in heaven.

Our Christian Values:

RESPECT FRIENDSHIP PERSEVERANCE FORGIVENESS COMPASSION TRUST

How is this policy a reflection of our distinctive Christian Vision?

This document provides a framework to enable us to ensure that all of our children, regardless of background or circumstances, fulfil their potential within our Christian community. Our school Christian Values of Respect, Friendship, Perseverance, Forgiveness, Compassion and Trust are applied when following this policy, and we will use this guidance to ensure that our children will be fully prepared for the future, with high self-esteem and having forged strong and respectful relationships with other people.

We want our children to be fully prepared for God's ever changing world.

Our collective worship policy strengthens and supports the Christian identity of our school, reaffirms our values and celebrates the contribution that each child makes to our community. Worship will reflect the variety of traditions found in the Church of England, and will recognize and follow the Christian liturgical year. The daily Christian act of worship is central to our ethos and is supported by all staff and governors.

Collective worship provides an opportunity to strengthen the sense of community within the school and reinforce the respect and care we have for each other. It makes a significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

An Introduction to collective worship at Ashford St Mary's C of E VA Primary School

As a Church of England school, Collective Worship is the beating heart of our school life. It brings and gives life to all we do. Collective Worship is a sacred and significant time of each school day, where we gather together as a school family.

Collective Worship strengthens and supports the Christian identity of our school, reaffirms our vision and associated values of Respect, Friendship, Perseverance, Forgiveness, Compassion and Trust and celebrates the central role that each pupil and adult have to play in our community.

Our acts of Collective Worship reflect the variety of traditions found in the Church of England and recognise and follow the Christian liturgical year. The daily Christian act of worship is central to our ethos and is supported by all staff and governors. It makes an important contribution to the overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the whole school community.

Each adult and pupil will experience worship that is truly welcoming, inclusive, invitational and exemplifying the principles of Christian hospitality.

Collective worship therefore will be:

- **Inclusive** – Our acts of worship recognise that pupils and staff come from homes of different faith backgrounds as well as no faith backgrounds, so it will be inclusive of, and fully accessible to all. Care will be taken to ensure that language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith of those participating, listening or watching.
- **Invitational** – In our acts of worship, there is no compulsion to 'do anything'. Rather, worship will provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. Pupils and adults will only be invited to pray and sing if they wish to do so.
- **Inspiring** – By asking and discussing big questions about who we are and what we do in worship we hope to motivate pupils and adults into action. There will be opportunities to think, reflect and ponder on their and the wider community's behaviour and actions.

What is Collective Worship?

Legislation requires schools, including Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools, to conduct daily acts of Collective Worship. However, the legislation does not define what is meant by the term 'Collective Worship'.

> *"… Worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common.* ***The legislation reflects this difference in referring to 'collective worship' rather than 'corporate worship'.*** *(DfE Circular 1/94 para 57)*

Corporate worship assumes a shared set of beliefs and values, i.e. a worshipping congregation meeting on a Sunday, where the worship is confessional and evangelistic (to spread the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness).

Collective worship, in recognising the collectivity of all participants, can make no such assumption that all have the same beliefs and values.

Collective Worship should be:

"Appropriate to the family backgrounds of the pupils and their ages and aptitudes."

(DfE Circular 1/94 p.22)

Therefore, Collective Worship in Church of England schools must be inclusive and invitational of all, to ensure all can be present with integrity.

The legal requirements of Collective Worship in Voluntary Aided and Voluntary Controlled schools.

- Be conducted in accordance with the provision of the Trust Deeds of the school and Instrument of Governance and should be consistent with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England.
- The Governing Body should ensure that **all** pupils **each day** engage meaningfully in a real act of Christian worship which is in accordance with the faith and practice of the Church.
- Arrangements for Collective Worship, in foundation schools of a religious character, are the responsibility of the Governing Body, after consulting with the Headteacher *(DfE Circular 1/94 para 52 & 53).*
- All acts of worship in Church schools must be Christian in character (based on Biblical teachings).
- **All** registered pupils (apart from those whose parents exercise the right to withdraw) must on 'each school day take part in an act of collective worship'.
- If the parent asks that a pupil should be wholly or partly excused from attending Collective Worship at the school, then the school must comply. *(Education Reform Act 1988. s9 (3))* The school continues to be responsible for the supervision of any child withdrawn by its parent from Collective Worship.

Parental Withdrawal

Worship is regarded as a special time in our school day where we gather as a school family. Reflecting our ethos as a Church of England school, Collective Worship is an inclusive opportunity for those of all faiths and those of no faith to be present with integrity. We respect the legal right of parents to withdraw their child/children from acts of Collective Worship, so would welcome the opportunity to discuss this decision with them. Following these discussions, any desire to formally withdraw children from worship must be done via a letter to the Headteacher.

Aims of Collective Worship

Collective Worship offers pupils, staff and the wider school community the opportunity to:

- Gather together to share sacred moments of joy, challenge, grief and love.
- Explore the school's distinctive Christian vision and values in action.
- Reflect on the nature of God and on the teachings of Christ through Biblical texts.
- Express praise and thanksgiving to God.
- Be still, pray and reflect.
- Explore the big questions of life and respond to national events.
- Foster respect and deepen spiritual awareness.
- Explore Christian values and attitudes.
- Share each other's joys and challenges.
- Celebrate significant and special times in the Christian calendar.

In line with the requirements of the requirements of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) schedule, we aim to ensure that collective worship:

a) Offers the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection whether they are engaged in learning in school or at home.

b) Enables all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican/Methodist worship, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.

c) Helps pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world, to encounter the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and to develop their understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God and its language.

d) Enables pupils as well as adults to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice. Leaders of worship, including clergy, have access to regular training.

e) Encourages local church community partnerships to support the school effectively in developing its provision for collective worship.

The Anglican Christian Tradition

The following are shared as Christian elements of Collective Worship through invitational and inclusive language:

- Exploring the Christian understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- Using the Bible for inspiration, stories and guidance.
- Observing the cycle of the Church's Year – Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and Saints Days amongst ordinary days.
- Saying prayers from a number of sources, in particular the Lord's Prayer and the blessings in common use.
- Singing a wide variety of hymns and songs from traditional to modern.
- Experiencing Christian symbols in worship and reflecting on their meaning.
- The use of prayer, silence and reflection.
- Using Psalms with simple responses – Taizé style.

We may also use elements which are more distinctively Anglican:

- Using prayers from Common Worship.
- Using Anglican sentences and responses e.g.

  The Lord is here / His Spirit is with us
  Peace be with you/ and also with you
  Go in peace to love and serve the Lord / In the name of Christ, Amen

- Using Collects as a focus for worship.
- Encouraging links with the worship of the St Mary's Parish Church and other Ashford Churches.

Implementation

Collective worship is planned by a variety of stakeholders including staff, pupils, the incumbent of our local church and external visitors in consultation with the collective worship leader. Acts of worship can take place at any time of the school day and in any regular school grouping e.g. whole school, key stage or class. Our school plans systematically and cohesively using ***Canterbury Diocesan Collective Worship Planning*** which is adapted and changed to meet the needs of our school community. This ensures that there is a shared understanding of the long and short term planning of worship and this enables continuity.

The current schedule for Collective Worship is as follows:

	EYFS	**Lower School**	**Upper School**
Monday	Class or Year Group	Whole School ***- led by Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher or Reverend Jeremy***	
Tuesday	Class or Year Group	Class or Year Group ***- led by teacher***	Class or Year Group ***- led by teacher***
Wednesday	Class or Year Group	Singing Worship **- led by Phase Leader**	Singing Worship ***- led by Phase Leader***
Thursday	Class or Year Group	Class or Year Group - ***led by teacher***	Class or Year Group ***- led by teacher***
Friday	Celebration	Celebration as a Phase ***- led by Phase Leader***	Celebration as a Phase ***- led by Phase Leader***

We are mindful of the variation in personal spiritual styles and provide a range of creative opportunities to enable everyone to engage in the acts of worship. These include: *music, silence, symbolism, drama and use of IT.*

Our worship consists of 4 stages:

- **Gather** – we welcome the community, for example, (*with music, liturgy and the lighting of a candle)*
- **Engage** – we share, for example, (*a Bible reading, followed by an activity to engage pupils with the Christian message)*
- **Respond** – pupils, for example, (*discuss, share, reflect, pray or sing)*
- **Send** – we share, for example, (*the message of the worship again and ask pupils to think about how they will affect their day / learning/ behaviour. We close with liturgy, final prayer, music and the blowing out of our special candle)*

Expectations of pupils

In Ashford St Mary's Primary School, there is an expectation that all pupils will be involved within worship on a regular basis. These may be opportunities planned ahead of time or unplanned through questioning, asking for volunteers or simply responding to moments of spontaneity during the worship.

Pupils are invited to evaluate and reflect on the impact of acts of worship they have joined with. Their voice is integral to improving the structure, content and in shaping future plans for worship.

Pupil worship leaders are supported, encouraged and resourced to contribute meaningful acts of worship on a voluntary basis. They work with the Collective Worship leader to develop their own understanding of worship and to design an act of worship to support the spiritual development of their peers.

Developing worship

Parents, pupils and adults at Ashford St Mary's Primary School are entitled to be led in worship by those who have a secure understanding of the nature of Collective Worship in a Church School context.

Therefore, all those leading worship, including clergy, should have access to regular Diocesan led training.

The leader(s) of Collective Worship will:

- Ensure that all pupils have access to a daily act of Collective Worship, therefore meeting statutory requirements.
- Ensure that Collective Worship is inclusive, invitational and inspiring.
- Attend regular training and network meetings with Canterbury Diocese
- Produce and regularly review the Collective Worship policy to ensure that it remains reflects current practice and thinking.
- Liaise with the HT and Governors to feedback on the monitoring and impact of Collective Worship across the school.
- Ensure all stakeholders know what the expectations of worship are when leading, planning and joining worship.
- Join those who are leading worship to provide supportive feedback on how worship could be developed.
- Evaluate the impact of Collective Worship on the whole school community by gathering pupil and adult voice.

- Signpost staff to a wide range of resources to ensure that worship is both inspiring and engaging.
- Support colleagues by sharing new ideas and resources, to help develop their confidence in leading acts of worship.
- Ensure there is a school protocol that covers safeguarding procedures and a suitability process, for when visitors are invited to lead collective worship.
- Meet with and encourage pupil leaders of worship to enable them to plan, lead and evaluate acts of worship.

Visitors leading worship

Visitors to our school are asked to read and comply with our school visitor and safeguarding policies. This should include discussing the content of any worship with a member of the senior leadership in order to ascertain its suitability for the school community. Visitors are never left alone with children as the supervision of pupils remains the responsibility of school staff.

It is the responsibility of the Collective Worship leader and extended leadership team to ensure that all visitors, who are leading worship in school, will be trained and/or properly briefed about our school, our pupil context and our school's Christian vision. They will be supported and monitored as part of the ongoing evaluation process of worship.

Self-assessment and Inspection

Our school regularly evaluates all acts of Collective Worship and the impact they have on the school and our wider community. This involves monitoring by school leaders, staff, pupils and governors in order to grow and develop.

We also welcome the contributions of parents and pupils, which are reviewed and considered on a regular basis. These are shared with our extended leadership team (when appropriate, during full Governing Body meetings) and play an integral part in developing the spiritual growth of our school.

The impact of Collective Worship is independently inspected by law under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (SIAMS).