

# **West Exmoor Federation**



## **Collective Worship Policy**

**March 2008**

## **West Exmoor Federation – Collective Worship Policy**

### Vision Statement and Introduction

This Policy is carried out within the context and spirit of the federation's Vision Statement. It supports and reinforces the aims of the schools within our federation, that of valuing all children equally.

*We aim to encourage intellectual, moral and spiritual development through a caring education.*

The ethos of the federation, encompassing all that we stand for, is reflected in and expressed through Collective Worship; it derives from the Christian tradition and seeks to activate our beliefs and values which are set out, clearly, in each School Prospectus.

Collective Worship, within a Christian context, plays an important part in the life of our school. It is an oasis in the school day when children meet together with members of staff in calm and peaceful atmosphere and where all present are given the opportunity to reflect and participate. It is regarded as 'quality' time and represents something special or separate from ordinary school routine.

*"Praise, prayer, silence, a sense of community, common ideal, the power of the spoken word, ritual, and an awareness of important experiences all contribute to worship."*

### Definitions

Worship: can be defined as paying homage to that which is of worth. Religious Worship is the acknowledgement of 'worth' which is attributable to a supreme being. Worth can also be registered in other people and in values and attitudes.

School Assembly: is a gathering of the school community; it is often used to celebrate and focus on the life and values of the community itself.

Corporate Worship: is a gathering of a body ('corpus') of believers and presupposes a particular religious commitment.

Collective Worship: is a gathering of a 'collection' of people of diverse, religious, agnostic and non-religious backgrounds and does not pre-suppose any particular religious commitment.

NB: We note that Collective Worship and Assembly are not one and the same thing. They are, in essence, different from each other, but in practice they often overlap.

### Rationale

Collective Worship is carried out in accordance with the principles and practices of the Church of England and will, therefore, be wholly Christian in character. The 1988 Education Reform Act states that Collective Worship should be part of a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and society. All maintained schools, whether a church or community school, must provide a daily act of Collective Worship for all registered pupils.

Collective Worship:-

- gives children the opportunity to enter into experiences which lie at the heart of religion. These experiences help them to learn about religious worship and provide a framework for later understanding;
- fosters a reverential attitude to God, the Divine, the transcendent;
- encourages pupils to consider fundamental questions about the purpose of being and about moral and ethical stances;
- provides an opportunity, for those who can use it, to participate in religious worship;

- allows us to learn and celebrate values we hold to be important;
- brings children together, enabling them to experience the security of belonging to a community with an identity of its own;
- is the source of much interesting and thought provoking knowledge;
- offers pleasurable expression through literature, art, music and drama;
- makes an important, though not exclusive, contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Aims and Principles

*“Collective Worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values and reinforce positive attitudes.” (DfEE – Circular 1/94)*

The following principles guide our approach to Collective Worship:

- Collective Worship should have a sense of occasion;
- Collective Worship should provide experiences within which pupils’ spiritual development may flourish;
- Collective Worship should be a means of expressing the ethos and values of the school;
- Collective Worship should be educational and should contribute to the Religious Education of all pupils;
- Collective Worship should be shaped to the needs of the school, (time, place, content, style etc.);
- We should provide a varied pattern of worship to broaden pupils’ experience of its different forms;
- Collective Worship should recognise that the schools within the federation include children from different religious and non-religious backgrounds;
- During Collective Worship some will be worshipping and some will be experiencing something approaching worship; others will be finding out what it is like to worship by being with those who are.

### Objectives

The objectives of Collective Worship are to:-

- affirm the Christian faith and the Christian status of Jesus as Son of God;
- introduce pupils to the practice of religious worship through music, art, story, poetry, movement and prayer;
- create a warm, caring and respectful atmosphere in assemblies, conducive to worship; including the manner of entry and exit;
- encourage, in children, a thoughtful and reflective attitude;
- help pupils experience a sense of awe, wonder, reverence and inner stillness;
- enable pupils to use silence for reflection and contemplation;
- raise pupil’s curiosity about the ultimate mysteries of life;
- enable pupils to learn about and consider in depth Christian teaching Christian festivals and biblical material;
- help pupils appreciate that we are ‘stewards’ of God’s world;
- enable pupils to reflect upon their own beliefs in relation to those of others;
- enhance pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- guide children towards the spiritual and religious options open to them;
- help children distinguish between right and wrong;
- affirm pupils’ personal worth and responsibility;
- celebrate individual and collective achievements;
- develop a sense of community within the schools and across the federation;
- celebrate religious festivals and special occasions with specified worship.

## Management of Collective Worship

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Foundation of Lynton and Parracombe School is honoured and that the worship policy is firmly based upon the intentions set down in the Trust Deed;
- Ensuring that the Collective Worship Policy is put into practice and monitored by the appropriate Governor;
- Engaging an appropriate inspector to carry out the SIAS Inspection of a church school alongside the OFSTED Inspection (Lynton and Parracombe) and support the Section 5 Inspection (Kentisbury).

The Collective Worship Co-ordinator is responsible for:

- Managing the worship on a day to day basis, ensuring that all legal requirements are complied with;
- Keeping in touch with national developments in school worship and acts in an advisory capacity, supporting colleagues.

Monitoring and evaluating of Collective Worship is an on-going process carried out on a weekly and termly basis so that effective review can take place by the appointed date.

## Organisation of Collective Worship

Daily acts of Collective Worship take place in the school/village hall or within classrooms. Each week the worship follows a planned theme. The themes are planned a year in advance. The structure of assemblies will include music, a song of praise, a story or talk, a reading from the Bible, a period of reflection, a prayer, the Lord's Prayer, the school prayer and a reminder each day of the theme for the week which may have an accompanying 'saying.'

Staff are expected to attend Collective Worship. The schools worship in church on the occasions such as Harvest, Christmas, Easter and Transition. Parents/cares and the wider community are invited to join in with these services. Visitors and outside speakers are invited to lead our worship on a regular basis.

## Elements of Worship

*"There are times when worship will be quiet, contemplative and serene and others when laughter, music and dance will be the appropriate form of expression."*

Atmosphere is all-important in creating the right foundation for Collective Worship. Quiet, orderly behaviour and respectful attitudes on entering, leaving and throughout the assembly are expected. Staff enhance the atmosphere by their presence and participation.

Music should be played at the beginning and end of the assembly. One piece is selected each week appropriate to the theme. Pupils' attention is drawn to it each day and a simple explanation/ description may be given in Hymn Practice.

Stories and talks are carefully chosen to fulfill the objectives of Collective Worship. Stories of a religious or secular nature may be used whilst personal anecdote from pupils, teachers and visitors is effective in expressing that which is important in our own lives. Particular emphasis is laid upon helping children to understand themselves better, to develop empathy and to face up to moral issues.

Songs are chosen from a wide variety of traditional and modern hymns and choruses. One or two are used at each assembly, relative to the theme and there is sometimes percussion accompaniment provided by the children. Some are learned by heart and actions are incorporated, whilst others are displayed on the overhead projector. Hymns and

songs create the opportunity for children to express thoughts and feelings that are difficult to put into words; and they provide a real source of pleasure.

Prayer and reflection are the most personal part of an act of worship. Collective Worship in school should provide opportunities for children to be taken to the threshold of prayer, and to cross it if they wish, in a way that respects the integrity of all present. Participation in prayer can never be imposed but we stress the need for stillness, reflection and respect for others. Silence, written prayers, impromptu prayers, The Lord's Prayer, children's prayers and the school prayer may be used. A large candle is lit and provides a focus for pupils' thoughts. Reflection and thinking time are given some direction by the leader in order to concentrate pupils' response. Scripture sentences may be quoted from the Bible and, where appropriate, from sacred books and writings of other world faiths. Longer passages may be used as readings.

Presentation sets the tone within the act of worship. In keeping with the reverent atmosphere, use is also made of visual aids, artifacts, drama, demonstration and video.

### Content

Planning for Collective Worship is the responsibility of the Co-coordinator for Collective Worship. Plans and schedules are approved by the executive head. Suggestions and requests from staff are welcomed, whilst input and guidance from the incumbent on the selection of themes is valued. The Music Coordinator collaborates in the selection of songs/hymns,

Themes may:-

- have a specific religious base such as 'the early Christian Church' or 'miracles of Jesus';
- reflect a theme common to all religions such as 'creation';
- be concerned with common values held by religious and non-religious people alike such as 'caring and sharing'.

Themes are closely related to the school communities and are often illustrated by stories of human endeavour.

Links with R.E. and the Curriculum are incorporated wherever possible. Common themes link R.E. and Collective Worship. The apt choice of story can link worship with current topic work e.g. 'Caring' = 'Florence Nightingale' = 'Victorians'. Assemblies can be followed up in the classroom by further discussion and emphasis throughout the day. There is often an overlap between Collective Worship and Personal and Social Education.

N.B. No worship programme can ever be entirely pre-planned. There will always be the spontaneous moment or occasion when it is important, spiritually, to focus on the immediate, so that pupils become aware of how the spiritual dimension transcends all our experience. Do not worry if the theme is neglected, occasionally, just ensure your records show why!

### Resources

Staff, pupils, visiting speakers.

Prayer table including selection of religious artifacts and a candle and cross as a focal point

Selection of assembly topic books for teachers including the Primary Assembly File

Selection of assembly song books including Come and Praise

Range of music suitable for Assembly

Overhead projector

Piano and other instruments

OHP/ICT Projector

## Records and Assessment

Themes for Collective Worship are noted on an assembly rota. Stories, songs, prayers/thoughts and music are entered on the daily Collective Worship planning sheet also, an annotated copy of which is kept in the Collective Worship file.

Assessment of Collective Worship is carried out jointly by the executive heacher and the Coordinator through:-

- checking that practice matches aims and objectives;
- observation of children's' attentiveness and level of interest;
- classroom feedback from pupils, both written and verbal;
- comments from parents, visitors and governors;
- the extent of the influence upon pupils' attitude and behaviour throughout the school day;
- self-evaluation/comment by the teachers;
- staff meetings are used for discussion and the update of information as and when necessary.

## Equal Opportunities

All pupils have equal opportunity to take part in Collective Worship and to benefit from the experience. The schools prospecti inform parents of their right to withdraw pupils from Collective Worship. Such pupils are fully supervised in another part of the school.

## Multiculturalism

A variety of multicultural material is available throughout the schools within the federation. Stories are shared and festivals celebrated in accordance with the major faiths represented within the schools – Christian/Muslim/Buddhist. Tolerance and understanding of other religions is encouraged.

## Special Assemblies and Visitors

Within a Christian context, special assemblies are held for Harvest, Christmas, Easter and End of the School Year. Parents, Governors and visitors are especially welcome to attend. Occasionally outside speakers, such as representatives from charitable organisations, will lead these assemblies.

## Role of the Co-coordinator

- To write the school's policy for Collective Worship in consultation with the head teacher and foundation governors.
- To ensure that all staff are aware of and use the policy document.
- To review the policy on a regular basis.
- To plan an overall balanced programme of worship for the year.
- To draw up assembly rotas.
- To involve colleagues, pupils and visitors in worship.
- To advise on planning, ideas and resources.
- To be responsible for ordering, maintaining and displaying resources.
- To administer the budget for Collective Worship.
- To monitor and evaluate, with others, Collective Worship in all its forms.
- To report to the head teacher and governors.
- To arrange INSET for staff.
- To keep up to date with recent publications, attend Diocesan and LA courses and disseminate information and feedback to staff.

- To liaise with the incumbent, governing body and Diocesan officers on matters relating to Collective Worship.

Review

The Governing Body will review this policy bi-annually from the date of its adoption. Informal Review may be necessary in the interim and should take place as and when required.

Reviewed: March 2008

Due for Review: March 2010