

St Thomas of Canterbury Catholic Primary School

'To Love and To Serve'



Collective Worship Policy

Review Date: February 2022

ST THOMAS OF CANTERBURY CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

'To Love and To Serve'

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

As a Catholic school, it is important that we gather as a community to worship God. This may be as a whole school group, in individual key stages or as class groups.

School Worship and the Church

“You shall worship the Lord thy God” (Mt 4:10). Adoring God, praying to him, offering Him the worship that belongs to Him, fulfilling the promises and vows made to Him, are acts of virtue of religion which fall under obedience to the first commandment. - *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

School Worship and Compulsory Education

“The school day in every county school... shall begin with collective worship on the part of all pupils in attendance at the school, and the arrangements made therefore shall provide for a single act of worship... unless in the opinion of the local education authority ... the school premises are such as to make it impracticable to assemble them for that purpose.”
- *1944 Education Act Section 25 (1)*

Collective worship includes services, assemblies and class prayers.

The Aims of Collective Worship

The aims are to

- provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God;
- consider spiritual and moral issues;
- explore beliefs;
- encourage participation and response;
- develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values;
- reinforce positive attitudes.

The format

There is general agreement that worship should be an educational activity and, as in any effective lesson, the teacher should employ a variety of teaching styles. The spiritual dimension of worship can be expressed through a range of activities. These include

- introductory music to create a mood and focus attention;
- the singing of hymns and songs;
- the reading of a short passage of scripture;
- appreciation of a piece of music;
- hearing a talk or story;
- taking part in a closing prayer;
- the use of artefacts;
- television or slide presentations;
- drama and role-play;
- the questioning of pupils;
- opportunities for quiet reflection.

Worship in School

- Liturgies/Services to mark holy days and events in the Church and school year.
- Whole school assembly
- Key stage assemblies
- Classroom acts of worship

School liturgies, whether masses or other services, should be seen as an opportunity for participation by the whole school community. Although the RE subject leader is a key figure in arranging these, the co-operation and contribution of other staff and pupils is important at all levels.

School assemblies are a gathering of the school community for worship. The theme of the assembly may reflect the topics studied in the “Come and See” RE scheme or a response to current issues in school, the wider community or world news. It is also appropriate to celebrate pupil or school achievement at assembly, although this should be clearly separated from the act of worship unless it is actually related to the theme of the assembly.

Class acts of worship should begin and end the school day. On days when there is no assembly, they should also provide a theme or reflection. During class worship, the pupils should be encouraged to focus on the Prayer Focus area in the classroom. Prayer Focus areas should be maintained as an attractive and valued part of the classroom environment and a reminder of our ethos as a Catholic school. Prayers may be chosen or written by the children themselves. It is also an opportunity to familiarise children with the great prayers of the Church.

Marking the occasion

One consequence of the notion of a daily act of collective worship is that it can easily become humdrum. In order to mark collective worship as something special in the life of the school, thought needs to be given to the setting and logistics of the occasion.

It helps to give it a focus: a simple table with a bowl of flowers can be quite adequate. Lighting candles is a sign that the atmosphere is changed, especially at times when you want pupils to reflect, pray or meditate. It is important to teach pupils that candles are used by religious believers to create an atmosphere, as a symbol of light and enlightenment or to focus attention. Music also creates a sense of occasion. It can be played whilst pupils enter or leave the room, or as a background to reflection and prayer.

Using visitors

The use of visitors is important because they can bring a wealth of experience into the school and add personal testimony and conviction to collective worship. They can provide a different insight – as might be provided by a visiting rabbi – or bring specialist skills to the school – as a drama or music group can. They can also provide a first-hand insight into spirituality and religious faith. For example, a Christian parent explaining why being married in church is important to him. Visitors also serve to locate the school as part of the wider community.

Record of Acts of Collective Worship

It is important to keep a record, however simple, of themes and content used. This helps to ensure curriculum development and integration and lessens the risk of repetition. It also enables teachers to build their own class work upon the worship if they wish.

Developing Good Practice

It is vital that worship does not become habitual in the sense that its originality and power are lost.

Characteristics of the best acts of worship include: a good variety of stimuli including drama, music, literature, artefacts and pictures, which capture and sustain the attention of pupils of all ages; relevant content which promotes the spiritual growth and development of the pupils; questioning which elicits thoughtful and extended responses; opportunities for quiet reflection as well as prayer; and the involvement of the pupils in the planning and presentation of worship.

One thing is clear: There are skills required for worship just as for drama or dance. As an educational activity, worship requires the development of specific abilities that have to be carefully taught – and regularly practised – if they are to be learnt. Among them is the skill to be still, the skill to be silent, the ability to focus attention and reflect and, perhaps, the skill of singing.

Timetable

Assembly	Key Stage	Day of Week	Staff responsible
Whole school assembly	All	Monday Friday	Headteacher
Phase assemblies	Phase 2	Tuesday	Phase 2 Staff Rota
	Phase 3	Wednesday	Phase 3 Staff Rota
Class Worship	Foundation	Daily	Class Teachers
	KS1	Daily	Class Teachers
	KS2	Daily	Class Teachers
Hymn Practice	KS2	Fortnightly	Phase 3 Leader