



# The Academies for Character and Excellence

## Collective Worship / Assembly Policy

Reference: E&D



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|--------------------------|--------------|--|
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## Collective Worship/Assembly Policy

### Policy Statement

In the schools in the Academies for Character and Excellence, part of our vision is, "Achieving excellence through cultivating character." The daily act of Collective worship (in our Church of England Schools) and the regular gathering of pupils for Assembly (in our community schools) is viewed as an integral and important part of school life and a vehicle to live out the Trust vision. Through Collective Worship and Assembly and in the general ethos of [insert school's name] we seek to promote not only our Trust's vision and the school's own vision, but also our Character Gateways. In our Church of England Schools, the theology from where this vision derives will also be explored.

*VISION: We "Live life in all its fullness." John 10:10.*

*CHARACTER GATEWAYS: Citizenship, Leadership, Explorers, Expression, Flourishing,*

We gather as a whole school for Collective Worship/Assembly:

- To come together as a community
- To balance the 'what' of academic pursuits with the 'why' found in spiritual reflection
- To create time for spirituality and stillness, connecting the inner with the outer
- To reflect on stories of inspiration, struggle and hope
- To share and reflect, where any prayers (in our Church of England Schools) are *inclusive* and *invitational*
- To gather as a school family to support each other
- To communicate and live out the shared values and expectations of the school

### Church of England Schools

Collective Worship is a time where we come together to share our love of God and celebrate our achievements (and sometimes failures) together. The worship of the school is based on promoting the Christian values through the Character Gateways, which permeate the ethos of the school. As such, the contributions of staff, pupils, church clergy and other visitors are valued highly.

All worship opportunities in the school are inclusive and invitational.

The school recognises that there is a difference between Acts of Collective Worship and the assembly of children. On some occasions, our Church of England schools may have the need to have an Assembly after their Act of Worship. When this happens, the transition from Assembly to Collective worship will be marked in a clear and appropriate way.

A further aspect of our Collective Worship is that the school provides a variety of opportunities to allow the children to engage in prayer and reflection in a number of different ways. Each class within a Church of England Academy has a Prayer/Reflection Corner which is kept fresh, up to date and relevant.

In addition to the whole school Act of Worship, set prayers in classrooms throughout the day may include the following: 'The Morning Prayer', 'lunch time prayer' and 'The Lord's Prayer.'

Other opportunities to engage in prayer and reflection may include:

1. Prayer Corners
2. Set prayers
3. Prayer Spaces in Schools

#### 4. Visits to the local church in the parish

##### Christian Values

Although difficult to define, we identify the values of generosity, thankfulness, trust, compassion, perseverance, justice, respect, forgiveness, friendship, service and courage through the lense of our Character Gateways. Understanding of these values is developed through use of the Imaginor Roots and Fruits resources.

##### Visits and visitors

As part of the curriculum, St Gabriel's C of E Primary ensures that appropriate visits are made available for the children in order for them to have first-hand experiences and gain a greater understanding of various places of worship. Visitors to the school are welcomed and enabled to share their experiences and knowledge – their role is to educate, not to evangelise. Each Church of England School's Parish Church is their most valuable and frequently used resource, with the whole school attending at key points throughout the year.

##### **All Schools**

Opportunities are provided for spiritual growth through reflection time, music, singing and engaging in stories and discussion.

We aim to provide opportunities to explore the beliefs and practices of a variety of faiths and worldviews. These may include opportunities to:

- Develop respect and sensitivity for the beliefs and practices of people of other faiths and worldviews
- Foster and enable a concern for the needs of others
- To encourage global citizenship and social responsibility
- To encourage positive contribution to the wider community
- To develop a sense of increasing respect and understanding in order to live cohesively in pluralistic societies

##### Legal Requirements

We acknowledge the legal requirement stated in the 1988 Education Reform Act 6 (1) and 9 (3), which states the need for each child to attend a daily act of worship either as a whole school, class or group. Parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from the act of worship either partially or wholly. Any parents wishing to do so should contact the Head teacher. However, as collective worship is central to our ethos, we would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this decision with parents. Teachers also have the right to withdraw from leading and taking part in worship. In Church of England schools, Collective Worship will be in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Church of England. In community schools, acts of worship "must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, i.e. reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief." - *1988 Education Reform Act*

##### **Character Gateways**

We use our Character Gateways to create opportunities for children to develop physically, emotionally, personally, socially, mentally and intelligently so that their self-esteem and well-being is sound and supported by ever growing emotional intelligence; leading to an understanding of their rights and responsibilities as young citizens. We believe that our children need to understand and to be equipped with the characteristics they need to live good lives and to be good people. The systematic introduction of a common values vocabulary allows children to access moral and ethical thought. .

The Character Gateways have been blended with the Christian values to enable our Church of England Schools to use Collective Worship to explore how Christian teachings and the Bible can support spiritual growth. Collective Worship is an opportunity to explore virtues that Jesus and others in the Bible demonstrated and allow children time to reflect on how they too can learn to develop these strengths of character themselves.

## Mental Health and Well-being

When stories are used in Collective Worship and Assembly, opportunities are taken to relate to the emotions and feelings the characters in the stories have. This enables pupils to learn more about how to stay mentally healthy and to understand their own mental health better.

## Organisation

We aim to provide a variety of worship experiences for the children. Our current schedule is as follows:

| Day       | Collective Worship/Assembly | Lead member of staff                      |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---|
| Monday    | Whole school values worship | LW  |
| Tuesday   | Class values worship        | Class teacher                             |
| Wednesday | Family group worship        | CK / class teacher                        |
| Thursday  | Guest speaker worship       | Father David / Reverend Sarah or ICT Team |
| Friday    | Celebration Worship         | LW  |

## Planning, Content and Detail

Collective Worship and Assembly is planned by each individual school within the Trust. Planning follows the Character Gateway being focused on by the Trust at any given time. A range of resources and thinking points are explored in our daily Acts of Worship or Assemblies including for example: the Church of England's Vision for Education and Picture News.

### Church Schools

The three candles on the altar table are lit in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit and the appropriate coloured cloth is on display to represent the time of year.

The children are regularly invited to be involved in the worship, which finishes with a prayer and a blessing which everyone says together. Pupils are reminded about the current challenge displayed in the class reflection area which is linked to the worship theme. The candles are then blown out before any messages are given. This allows for us to make a clear distinction between worship and assembly.

### All Schools

Children are reminded at the end of Collective Worship/Assembly that there is a task to engage with throughout the week, displayed in the class prayer/reflection area in their classroom.

### Live Streamed Collective Worship and Assembly

We learned during the Covid pandemic, the value of live streaming Collective Worship/Assembly - even when all pupils are present in school. This led to full engagement of staff and pupils as they were able to fully discuss and debate 'big questions' within their own classes and then feedback to the whole school using the 'chat' function. Many more pupils had a 'voice' when worshipping/gathering in this way. As a result of this, a hybrid approach to Collective Worship has been adopted, with some Acts of Worship/Assembly being held in person and others online.

### Prayer and Reflection in Church of England Schools

Collective worship always includes a time of prayer and/or reflection, including Worship Through Song. A range of prayers is used including the Lord's Prayer, prayers are sometimes written by the children and others. They are introduced in an appropriate manner with a short time of quiet. At the beginning of the whole school worship led by the Headteacher or Deputy Head, a time of reflection and quiet is encouraged by the lighting of candles. A cross is also displayed on the altar table.

### Record Keeping, Evaluation and Monitoring

Each Act of Worship/Assembly led by school is planned with full notes onto a PowerPoint/Google Slides and kept electronically. Collective Worship/Assembly is observed and monitored by school staff, pupils and governors. Evaluations are used to inform changes and are kept on file.

### Parents/Governors/Diocesan Liaison and Local Community Issues

- Children may be withdrawn from Collective Worship at the wish of their parents. The Headteacher will ensure that suitable provision is made for such pupils.
- The Governor Curriculum and Ethos Committee plays a key role in the monitoring of the effectiveness of Worship/Assembly. This includes monitoring visits and talking to pupils and staff. The committee also supports the school Ethos Group (which consists of governors, staff and parents). The Ethos Group organises a Prayer/Reflection Tent in the summer term.

### Equal Opportunities and Special Needs Issues

All pupils, regardless of academic ability, age, gender and ethnic origin will have access to a wide range of appropriate activities to support their understanding of R.W.E and subjects covered in Collective Worship/Assembly. At each Key Stage, the teacher will draw from a range of religions and worldviews as appropriate to acknowledge and celebrate the beliefs of the children within the class.