



## Merry Hill Infant School and Nursery

### Collective Worship Policy

<b>Name/Title of responsible committee/individual:</b>	Curriculum Committee
<b>Date issued:</b>	November 2015
<b>Review frequency:</b>	3 years
<b>Target audience:</b>	Governors

The Governing Body shall conduct the School with a view to promoting high standards of educational achievement.

Merry Hill Infant School and Nursery is committed to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different groups. These factors were considered in the formation and review of this policy and will be adhered to in its implementation and application across the whole school community.

The School will promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and will actively challenge pupils, staff or parents expressing opinions contrary to fundamental British Values, including 'extremist' views.

Version	Date	Notes
V1.0		Approved by Curriculum Committee
V1.1	July 2017	Interim review & updated School Assembly Schedule

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## **i. Statement of adoption of model collective worship policy**

Merry Hill Infant School and Nursery has chosen to base its policy on the Hertfordshire County Council's Model Collective Worship Policy for Primary Schools (CSF0064, September 2015).

## **ii. Arrangements for monitoring and review**

This policy shall be reviewed every three years in accordance with the Governing Body Year Planner or earlier at the request of the governing body or in the event of any changes to statutory or non-statutory guidance. The Headteacher shall inform the Governors of any changes to the Model Policy.

# **1 Background to Collective Worship at Merry Hill Infant School and Nursery**

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 or Jewish but we also have children who are from other religions and children 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 children's families 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 of a pupil at a community, foundation or voluntary school 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 consult the Headteacher. Teachers may also withdraw from collective worship.

## **2 Definitions**

### **2.1 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 worthy 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.

### **2.2 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 according 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 according 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.

### **3 Values and Aims**

We believe at this school that collective worship both supports and strengthens what we aim to do in every aspect of school life. Our caring ethos, and the value which we place on the development of the whole child; spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually is reflected in our worship. We value this special time in the school day for the space it gives children to develop a reflective approach to life and the ability to express their reflections in traditionally religious ways or any other appropriate manner.

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 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
- Grow in confidence when making a presentation to the group or whole school
- 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.

### **4 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 and the wider world
- Share appreciation of worthwhile projects undertaken by groups within the school
- Explore and review the variety of values, attitudes, standards, manifested in religions and society
- Reflect upon dimensions of human life – the wonderful, beautiful, joyful, heroic, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn ...
- 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.

## 5 Planning

In this school we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework. As of Autumn 2017, whole school assemblies take place as follows:

Monday – Achievement Assembly

Tuesday – No Assembly

Wednesday – Values / PSHE

Thursday – Birthday Book Club

Friday – Music Assembly

We believe that creating the right atmosphere is crucial to the quality of the worship. Therefore, the time is not over-dominated by school administration or moralising. We plan the time so that there is a variety in content and methods, allowing opportunity for quiet personal reflection/worship.

**We choose from a range of methods, including:**

- Pupils' contributions
- Sacred and secular stories/readings
- Dance/drama
- Prayer/reflection/meditation/songs/hymns/music
- Artefacts/natural materials
- Visual aids/focal points
- Dialogue/creative silence
- Visitors

## 6 Success Criteria

At Merry Hill, we evaluate our acts of worship against some of the following:

- Involvement, enjoyment, attention, reaction of pupils
- The growth of respect and tolerance within the school community
- Positive response to shared experience
- An atmosphere which matches the theme
- A contribution to individual and community sense of well being
- A sense of occasion
- Good order
- Staff affirmation
- A sense of challenge
- A place in the overall plan of the school
- Enrichment of pupil's experience

## 7 Song/music

Song/music is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and unifies and uplifts the school community. We have a bank of music from which to draw, taken from a variety of cultures

and types. Likewise with the songs we sing. We are careful with our songs to recognise that there might be some words which some of our children would find offensive to sing. We have changed the words of some songs to make them more inclusive. We select our songs/music carefully to match the theme.

We have a weekly Singing Assembly.

## **8 Prayer**

The use of prayer has led to a great deal of debate. We feel that prayer is a good way of enabling children to focus their thoughts. Nevertheless, pupils should not be required to say or affirm prayers in which they do not believe. We have developed various forms of introductions to our prayers which distance children, but gives them the opportunity to participate if they so desire; e.g., 'And now in a moment of stillness, listen to the words of a well known Christian/Hindu/Muslim prayer/poem/reading...' In this way we are able to use prayers from many different traditions.

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

In our assemblies we often say the following poem, which demonstrates our vision and we hope is acceptable to all faiths. It is based on a verse first used in a one-room school in Canada, but this version has been devised to use more modern words, e.g. 'live' for 'dwell', and 'happiness' for 'contentment'.

This is our school,  
Let peace live here.  
Let the rooms be full of happiness.  
Let love be all around,  
Love of one another,  
Love of all people,  
And love of life and living.  
Let us remember  
That as many hands build a house,  
So many hearts make a school

The children learn the poem by heart and even the youngest ones are able to remember the words. It is very worthwhile as an act of togetherness in which all can participate.

## **9 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 issued with this policy and, unless otherwise agreed, will fit into the theme for the week.

Tricia Bastable from the Watford Trust visits us regularly to lead worship.