

Heathlands School

Collective Worship Policy

Approved by PWC Committee 13th June 2016

Review due June 2018

BACKGROUND TO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AT OUR SCHOOL

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 from a variety of backgrounds and religions including some 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 child’s family is respected at all times.

The Head Teacher 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 Heathlands 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wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at the school the school will comply unless the request is withdrawn. Any parent who wishes to exercise this right should consult the Head Teacher. Teachers may also withdraw from collective worship.

SOME DEFINITIONS

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.

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 a variety of ways.

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 everyday 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
- Share and affirm work done by themselves and others
- 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.

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.
- Reinforce positive values and attitudes
- Recognise and reward effort and attainment through the use of house points, certificates and (in Lower school) the weekly house cup.

PLANNING

In this school we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework.

Department Assemblies take place at the following times

Monday: Lower School 10.45-11

Tuesday: Upper: 8.45-9.00

Wednesday: Lower School 10.45-11

Wednesday: Upper School House Assemblies 8.45 – 9.00

Friday: Upper school 8.45-9.00; Lower School 3-3.30.

On days when there is no assembly there is a short act of 'worth-ship', thought sharing or reflection in each form or class group linked to the theme for the week.

The Head Teacher or members of the SLT usually leads the whole school worship alongside a rota of other staff. Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in both planning and contributing to assemblies. Issues and values raised in assemblies are then reflected on throughout the week.

Assembly time draws from a range of stimuli including:

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

SUCCESS CRITERIA

At this school our acts of worship are evaluated 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 pupils' experience

Prayer and Reflection

Within Lower School a 'school prayer' has been written which encompasses the values of hard work, good behaviour, clear communication and thanksgiving. Pupils are invited to join in signing this together and take it in turns to lead. Time is also given for pupils to reflect on the assembly theme.

In Upper School there will be a time of reflection which allows pupils the opportunity to think about and commit to the value or message conveyed by the assembly theme. Pupils will be encouraged to relate these values to their daily lives and the theme will be referred to during the week in form groups.

Visitors

We enjoy the fresh approach which visitors can bring to our school worship, but we require them to adhere to our values.