

INSTOW COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Collective Worship Policy Updated Reviewed February 2022

Review

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated in line with the school's policy review programme. The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for reporting to the Full Governing Body about the quality of its implementation.

Legal Requirements

The Education Reform Act (1988) requires schools to provide a daily act of worship for all registered children.

Parents have the right to withdraw their children from acts of worship.

Acts of worship must be 'wholly or mainly of a broad Christian nature' and 'not to be distinctive of any denomination' and must not be evangelistic in their content or delivery (ERA Section 7.1)

They should make a contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children

In providing acts of collective worship the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the children should be taken into consideration.

Community schools must not hold the daily act of worship off school premises. However, events of a non-denominational character may be held in a local church in addition to daily worship in schools.

Worship

'Worship has to do with worth and worthiness. It is recognising, affirming and celebrating that which is worthy of honour and respect - ideals and the highest achievements of which humanity is capable, matters of truth, goodness and beauty, an appreciation of the world, a recognition of the interdependence of human beings, a response to the plight of those in need. The word 'worship' has at least two meanings:

- a) Adoration offered by believers to a Supreme Being*
- b) The concerns, concepts, principles, conduct worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit.*

Schools should provide opportunities for both'.

(RE Devon Curriculum Advisory Team)

A daily act of worship forms part of each day's structure. It can be arranged to take place at any time of the day and may happen in class, year groups, key stages or whole school assembly time. Unless withdrawn through parental choice all children will be present at times of collective worship.

(A list of suitable themes for use throughout the year will be held on the assembly timetable)

At Instow Community Primary School children will not be required to participate in activities which are contrary to their family's beliefs. We attempt to achieve a real sense of purpose by sensitively trying to *'evoke those senses and feelings from which it might be said that worship most naturally arises'*. These might include:-

- a sense of awe and wonder,
- a sense of beauty,
- a sense of sympathy and pity,
- a sense of perspective; smallness in the face of greatness; grandness in the face of smallness,
- a sense of justice and injustice,
- a sense of shared loss,
- a sense of gratitude and appreciation,
- a feeling of shared sadness, joy; a feeling of being 'moved' and the need to take action,
- a sense of inner peace,
- a sense of right and wrong,
- a feeling of pride and achievement,
- a sense of stillness in the midst of a busy and changing existence,
- a sense of community.

(developed from: Bill Gent School Worship, Perspectives and Practices)

At Instow Community Primary School collective worship is seen as directly contributing to our RE curriculum and the spiritual, moral and social development of the children. In order to achieve the above, our acts of worship are conducted within an educational context. It therefore follows that, any form of evangelism (an attempt to persuade the participants to adopt a particular religious belief) is inappropriate. Our daily acts of worship are based upon the mutual respect for the integrity of all those involved in it and for the literature and artefacts being drawn upon.

Good Practice

Acts of collective worship at Instow Community Primary School:

- are conducted within an educational context
- utilise the SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) programme as an annual calendar of themes
- exploit any cross-curricular opportunities that arise
- link to British Values
- recognise the wide variety of backgrounds from which children come
- are 'inclusive' (i.e. allow for every child, who may not have any religious belief, to be included and fully involved in a meaningful manner)

- encourage the active participation of children and other members of the school community
- are part of a curriculum programme which has been appropriately planned
- take place, whenever possible, in an inspiring atmosphere
- employ a rich variety of methods of delivery, media, format and participation
- include visiting speakers and groups from the local and broader community.

It should be emphasised, however, that ALL who are invited to lead acts of collective worship should have the opportunity to read the school's policy and are fully aware of those aspects of the law concerning evangelism.

'Collective Worship is a whole school issue. A balanced, planned programme will reflect the life and work of the school and local community. The programme will contain themes which during the course of the year are likely to centre around

- ❖ *Religious festivals and special days*
- ❖ *Annual events and anniversaries*
- ❖ *Aspects of the school curriculum*
- ❖ *Developments from classroom activities*
- ❖ *Published assembly books and other literature*

In order to prevent too many restrictions the full plan should leave room for the more topical and spontaneous acts of worship (for example exploring current affairs and responding to events in the life of the school)'.

(RE Devon Curriculum Advisory Team)

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR THOSE TAKING ACTS OF WORSHIP

1. Avoid tying religious faith with the children's behaviour too tightly.

Of course there is a close connection between faith and action but faith should never be used to manipulate. Children rightly resent such attempts. Religious faith should be seen as something that changes both the child's and the adult's behaviour. Religious faith should not be used to bolster school rules.

Example: Good Christians do not run in the corridor or drop litter.

2. Do not put people in a corner.

Both adults and children need to feel that their identity is protected. Use a non-offensive phrase such as '*Christians believe*' or '*Jesus said*'. Do not say '*You should...*' or '*We all...*' The use of non-offensive phrases allows people emotionally to opt in or out of an assembly. It allows people to decide their attitude to an assembly and either identify with the faith being explored or explore that faith from a greater distance. With very young children there is obviously a difficulty of understanding such phrases, but even so safeguards need building in.

3. Do speak to their world.

Even in the short space of an assembly the rule of starting where the children are and finishing where they are not still applies. Start from the known and lead children to the unknown. Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

Example: A simple transformer or the use of the dressing-up box can start a child thinking about changes'. You can then lead them on to thinking about changing on the inside.

4. Don't make comments about other faiths, agnostics or atheists.

5. Don't go into highly controversial areas.

Assembly is not the place for controversy. No one can disagree with you if you are taking the assembly and others might feel you are abusing your platform.

6. Don't be denominational in an act of worship.

It is better for the children if Christians share then agreements rather than dwell on their differences.

7. Be aware of the dangers of raising areas of pastoral concern unless you have been specifically asked to do so and are prepared to follow them up.

Such areas need careful preparation and follow-up by all the staff. Subjects such as war, death, divorce and similar mailers are generally better dealt with in a pastoral situation.

8. Don't make casual allusions that are not followed up.

Asides confuse children. Stick very strictly to the subject and do not deviate from it.

9. Assemblies are generally short and children understand things better if they come in small parcels.

Choose one small area and deal with it rather than a range over a large subject.

10. Do not make children pray, instead ask them to listen while you pray or read a prayer.

An acceptable formula might be something like this:

'I am going to pray (or read a Christian prayer). I would like you to keep very still, close your eyes and listen carefully to the words. Those of you who wish can join in with the Amen (I agree) at the end.'

In this way the children are not joining in Christian prayers against their will, but they are listening respectfully and possibly thinking about the prayer.

11. If you use hymns and songs remember to think carefully about the words, in the light of some of the dangers of worship already described.

For example, singing the song 'Jesus is Lord' may be inappropriate in many situations.

Advice for Visitors taking Collective Worship in Schools

Guidelines for visitors can be helpful. The following may be adapted to meet the needs of your school.

Dear Xxxxxxxx,

We are looking forward to your visit on xxxxday, xxth xxxxxx at xx am. As discussed, assembly at our school generally lasts for 20 minutes and your part will be approximately xx minutes. There will be about xxx children present between the ages of xx and xx. You will have easy access to a cassette/ CD player and OHP should you need them.

We will introduce you as:

We understand your assembly will be about:

Please allow plenty of time for reaching us. If the car park is full, squeeze in and let the administrator know which car you have blocked in!

Do report to reception when you arrive. Someone will come to meet you. You will be asked to sign in and given a badge to wear as part of the school security system.

The notes overleaf have been written to help you deliver collective worship according to legal requirements.

If you have a problem that prevents you from coming, please contact us as soon as possible. We still have to provide Collective Worship whether you are there or not. Ring the school (xxxx xxxxxxxx) by 8.20 a.m. at the latest.

Again, we are looking forward to seeing you,

Yours sincerely,

Advice for taking Collective Worship in our School

1. School 'collective' worship is different from 'corporate' worship in faith communities. Children and staff come from various backgrounds. Be aware you will be speaking to people of different religions and none.
2. As many children and staff have no religious background, take care not to *assume* great knowledge of the Bible or other religious stories, church, Jesus, festivals. This does not mean they will know nothing.
3. Do speak about your religious faith if that is why you are there, we want to know what is important to you. However, when expressing personal beliefs, make it clear this is what '*you*' believe. School is an opportunity to share, not indoctrinate or evangelise.
4. Collective worship is part of our children's *educational* entitlement. Don't just entertain us. Share something important - one simple and clear point from which we can all learn, whatever our background.
5. Please do not:
 - use sexist or racist language – *this will alienate many children or staff*
 - be highly controversial – *there is no forum for debate in the assembly situation*
 - speak badly about other faiths – *you may have their representatives present*
 - be disparaging about education, school or staff – *we do not need undermining.*
6. Please do:
 - make any visuals large – *we all need to see*
 - remember sight reading is an adult skill - *capital letters are worst to read*
 - check on hymns or songs – *are they suitable for children to sing or just hear?*
 - remember you have limited time – *we have to go to lessons!*
7. If you want helpers, let us know when you arrive and we will give you an idea of how best to organise this. Selecting from the audience can be very time consuming, unless done as children come in.
8. Introduce prayers or thoughts in a way which does not compromise children or staff but offers time to think or pray e.g. *Let's be still and quiet. Time to pray or think. Please listen carefully while I say / read a prayer*
9. Don't be afraid to discuss with us what you want to do. We will try to give you feedback on what you do. If we get something wrong, please let us know too.
10. If you have not been to assembly at our school before and want to come on a visit, please ask and we will arrange this for you.