

# Collective Worship Policy

**St George's School: A Church of England Academy.**

**DIGNITY HOPE  
COMMUNITY  
WISDOM  
HUMILITY  
KINDNESS**



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## Vision

Through appreciating and promoting the Christian values of dignity, hope, community, wisdom, humility and kindness, all members of St George's are encouraged to be aspirational.

We aim to positively impact upon each other and society so that we contribute to a world where, inspired by St Paul, we can **'be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves'**

St. George's School is a Church of England Academy. We believe that worship is a central part of Christian formation, and thus is essential to our life together as a school. Worship is an offering to God, and it should be both inclusive and invitational. It reminds us that each member of our school community is enfolded in Divine Love and made in the image of God. An orientation toward God, such as good worship can nurture, sets the foundations for a life focused on living out Gospel principles in the service of God and of others.

## Philosophy

Worship is an important part of the school day. It gives pupils and staff the opportunity to discover the imminent Creator God, as well as expressing and celebrating our commonality, and encouraging the whole school community to reflect on how we live our lives. Collective Worship is attended by all pupils, staff and any visitors in school are welcome to join in.

At St. George's we recognise that Collective Worship is an important means by which to provide opportunities for our pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and a sense of belonging to the world-wide Church. This is vital because our connection to one another across our world teaches us about faith and expands our understanding of God and God's work in and through the Church.

We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way that enhances their lives. Collective worship including prayer, reading and reflecting on the Bible, liturgy, sacrament and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity, provide a vital opportunity for this.

## AIMS

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## Worship at St George's should:

- Offer well-ordered and thoughtful praise to God which offers the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection.
- Be woven through the life of the school and allowing pupils to explore the school's vision and how that underpins shared values and virtues.
- Provide members of the school community the opportunity to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world by encountering the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and developing understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God.
- Provide members of the school community with the opportunity to respond to Christian language and symbolism
- Provide members of the school community with the opportunity to experience stillness and quiet
- Provide members of the school community with the opportunity to experience a variety of forms of prayer and meditation which might include, praise, seeking forgiveness, asking on behalf of self and others, quiet reflection
- To help pupils begin to understand the nature and purpose of worship
- Provide a foundation for a mature understanding and practice of worship in the future.
- Contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of each child
- Allow reflection and response to the fundamental questions of life and those things that are of eternal concern and value to human beings
- Foster and enable a concern for the needs of others, a recognition of the vulnerability of self and of others
- Celebrate and give thanks for the achievements within the school, local and international community and occasions of significance, including festivals.
- Promote community cohesion
- Give expression to, reaffirm and practise the values of the school community
- Support the social and emotional aspects of pupils' learning (SEAL)

## PROVISION

The rhythm of daily worship allows pupils and adults to step away from the target-driven culture of much of education, creating a space for an encounter with faith in God. It also provides the opportunity to reflect on larger questions of meaning and purpose.

All acts of Collective Worship are in accordance with the guidance issued in circular 1/94 which states that worship should be of a "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character". By broadly Christian in this school we mean that pupils will have the opportunity to explore:

- The Trinitarian nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- The nature of human beings as those made in the image of God, beloved children of God, part of his creation and destined for eternal life;
- Jesus as the Son of God who, through his life, death and resurrection, broke the power of evil and restored humanity's relationship with God;

- The central values of forgiveness, selfless love, redemption, goodness, compassion, charity and service;
- The Bible
- The place of scripture, tradition, and historical theological exploration as a source of knowledge about God and Jesus, and as a source of inspiration and guidance;
- Prayer, and its importance;
- The symbols of Christianity;
- The Church calendar and the cycle of the Church year.

Stories and other material from another faith may be used from time to time where these might effectively illustrate Christian values and support the development of respect for self and other people.

All acts of Collective Worship at St. George's School take into account the pupils' ages, aptitudes and backgrounds, and reflect and celebrate the Christian faith foundation of the school. We strive for inclusivity in our worship, and we only ever invite participation.

The school recognises that there is a difference between acts of collective worship and the assembly of pupils. On some occasions, assembly may precede or follow an act of Collective Worship. When this happens the transition from assembly to worship will be marked in some suitable way e.g. the lighting of a candle or reflecting on an image on the screen, moments of silence and reflection etc.

## **Inclusive, Invitational, and Inspiring**

**Inclusive:** Worship is collective in that it involves meeting, exploring, questioning, and responding to others and, for some, to God. In the Church school pupils, their families and other adults can expect to encounter worship that is inclusive of, and fully accessible to, all. Many pupils and staff at St George's will come from homes of different faith backgrounds as well as of no faith background. Moreover, many pupils will naturally be at different stages of their spiritual journey during their time in school. Pupils should be given the opportunity to think and ask questions. There should be space to consent, and dissent: to participate and to stand back; and to consider. It is an expectation that care will be taken to ensure that the language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith in all those participating, listening and watching.

Collective worship will not be 'done to' but will involve meaningful contributions from the whole school community, including pupils. It is recognised that pupils will bring their own experience to worship. Inclusion requires pupil involvement in planning, leading and the evaluation of worship. Although part of a national legislative framework, collective worship in the Church school grows out of the local context and out of pupils' experience, including their cultural backgrounds

**Invitational:** Parents, pupils and adults can expect to encounter worship that is consistently invitational. There should be no compulsion to 'do anything'. Rather, worship should provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. The metaphor of 'warm fires and open doors<sup>3</sup>' captures this idea. The warmth of the fire derives from the clarity and

authenticity of the Christian message at its heart. There is no value to an encounter with a watered down, lowest common denominator version of faith. Importantly the door is open, all are welcome to come in and sit as near or as far away from the fire as they feel comfortable. Pupils and adults should always only be invited to pray if they wish to do so and should be invited to pray in their own way. Prayer should always be accompanied by the option to reflect.

**Inspiring:** Pupils and adults can expect the worship they encounter at St George's to be inspirational. Worship should be formational and transformational: it should enable pupils and adults to ask big questions about who we are and why we do what we do. It should motivate pupils and adults into action, into thinking differently, and into reflecting on their and the wider community's behaviour and actions. As a result of inspirational collective worship, they should be inspired to become courageous advocates of causes. It should encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and/or philosophical convictions.

## **What we offer**

### **YEAR GROUP COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

These contain prayers, teaching and reflection. They are led by the senior management team, the RE department, the chaplain, and carefully selected and trusted members of the wider academy team. Pupils currently participate in these main acts of worship once a week

### **YEAR GROUP MORNING MEETING WORSHIP**

These contain prayers and teaching. Some do include hymns. These are led by the senior leader attached to the year group. Every Year group has 4 of these morning meeting worship sessions a week.

### **PRAYER**

The School Chapel has been recently been moved to the centre of the academy and blessed by Bishop Phillip, and is always available for prayer. The Chapel is always 'staffed' at lunchtime by one of our pastoral team. Pupils and staff are free to take advantage of this facility whenever they wish to. There are always opportunities for pupils and staff to make prayer requests. In addition to our Prayer Wall in the Chapel, there is a prayer box outside the Chapel. At the end of the day all lessons finish with a prayer.

### **YEAR COMMUNIONS**

Each year group has two year-Communion in the Chapel. These are led by our Chaplain. These mark a combination of key moments in pupils' school lives and key times in the Church's year: Year 7 have a Communion service to mark the beginning of their time at St. George's' and one at Lent. Year 8 have an Advent and a Pentecost Communion. Year 9 have a Christmas Communion and a Communion to help them as they choose their options. Year 10 begin their GCSEs with a Communion to mark that transition, as well as an Easter Communion. Year 11 have a Communion at pre-public exam time, and their Valedictory Communion at the end of year 11. All Communion

are tied to the Church's calendar. Pupils lead the prayers and read the lessons and begin the service with some opening words to set the context of each service.

### **PROVISION FOR STAFF**

Every day begins with staff prayers for all in our staff room immediately before duty starts at 8:15am. These are led by our Chaplain and are invitational to all members of the academy community.

### **SPIRITUALITY WEEK**

This takes place throughout the school year and are linked to current themes as indicated on the calendar.

## **WORSHIP AND THE LAW**

Collective worship in community schools is grounded in the historical past and enshrined in educational law to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. In Church schools the requirement instead to reflect the Anglican status of the school as expressed in its trust deed liberates those leading collective worship to build on the rich, lived diversity of Anglican tradition and identity. In the same way as worship in churches is aspirational, constantly evolving and being re-imagined there is an expectation of a continuous, dynamic reimagining of what collective worship means in the Church school.

The 1988 Education Reform Act requires that "all pupils in attendance at a maintained school shall on each day take part in an act of Collective Worship". The Academy seeks to fulfill this obligation by delivering high quality acts of Collective Worship in accordance with the school's Trust Deed and reflecting the Anglican status of the school. Also, in addition to daily school worship, special services take place in the school and local churches during the course of the academic year, with the Eucharist being celebrated on a regular basis.

To provide pupils with variety in their experience of worship, acts of worship may take the form of a whole school act of worship for all pupils or separate acts of worship for pupils in different age groups or school groups; different media are used; guests may be invited to lead worship and / or address the congregation. Collective Worship may be held at any time during the school day and in different places round the school building and grounds.

The responsibility for arranging school worship in our school rests with the Governors who, after consultation with the Head Teacher, have appointed a Chaplain with responsibility for coordinating Collective Worship.

## **RIGHTS OF WITHDRAWAL**

Parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from collective acts of worship. However, the core reason why the school was established was for the very purpose of providing Christian teaching and explicitly Christian acts of worship. Given the character of the school, the Governors expect all parents and guardians to respect the Christian ethos of our Church School. The National Society Staff contract specifically states that no member of staff should do anything that can be deemed to work against the Christian ethos of the school.

## **PLANNING, RECORDING AND EVALUATION**

Collective Worship will be planned, delivered, resourced, monitored and evaluated throughout the year. The content and methodology of Collective Worship should be varied and there should be evidence of this in planning. Furthermore, the Academy seeks to involve pupils in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of worship and has structures in place to see this happens.

Themes of the week are published and distributed at the start of the new academic year and a reminder is included in the weekly notices sheet. It is expected that those leading worship that week will relate their worship to this theme. Themes are chosen by the Chaplain in collaboration with the Spirituality Prefects, Christian Ethos Team and members of staff. The themes chosen are also drawn from the National Society's website.

We endeavor to make themes broad enough to allow all those leading worship to approach the theme from their own perspective. This will mean by the end of the week that pupils will have had the opportunity to reflect on the theme from a variety of viewpoints. This pattern is flexible and on occasions it is recognised that worship leaders may feel that they need to respond to local or national events.

## **RESOURCES**

The school provides each form with resources sourced by the Chaplain to support, encourage and inspire student led acts of Collective Worship. Resources for worship are freely available to staff; all are disseminated by the School's intranet, and sign-posted via email, some are located within individual classrooms and others are kept by the Chaplain in her office. There is an annual audit of resources at the start of the new academic year where new items are introduced and missing items replaced. The school has an allocated budget to update and develop these resources.

## **DEVELOPING STAFF EXPERTISE AND KNOWLEDGE**

Parents, pupils and adults are entitled to be led in worship by those who have a secure understanding of the nature of collective worship in a Church school context and by those who are professional in their approach to working with pupils and adults from all faiths and none. Therefore, it is our priority to build up the expertise of staff, pupils and other adults in facilitating collective worship in Church schools. To do this we ensure the following.



- Our Chaplain has access to regular training, primarily through local diocesan education teams.
- Pupil worship leaders are supported, encouraged and resourced to contribute meaningful acts of worship.
- Worship leaders have access to high quality and current resources.
- The governing body should have robust systems in place to monitor the impact of worship effectively; this monitoring will include and meaningfully involve pupil voice. Those facilitating worship should have the opportunity to receive feedback and hear the outcome of evaluation.
- Those from outside agencies and church groups invited into the school to facilitate worship should be trained and properly briefed about the school, its pupil context and the school's vision.
- There Chaplain and Headteacher are responsible for collective worship with responsibility for ensuring that appropriate policy and practice are in place and publicly available.