

COLLATON ST. MARY C.OF E. (V.A.) PRIMARY SCHOOL, PAIGNTON

SCHOOL POLICY ON WORSHIP

School Mission Statement

Our mission is:

- to develop every child's learning potential
- to respect children as individuals made in the image of God
- to lead children to experience the Christian way of life

Rationale:

The school policy on collective worship will set out a framework which will give children educationally valid worship experiences reflecting our role as an Anglican school, serving our community as well as worshipping families. These experiences will be entirely of a Christian nature.

Definition:

By 'worship' we mean the feeling of "something beyond oneself...which demands some kind of response." This response can be a 'generalised feeling of awe, that one has come into contact with a mystery which evokes wonder, a sense of eternity, a feeling of humble abasement ' and/or 'a sense of the absolute value of the great human qualities of integrity, courage, compassion, service and love'.

(based on Religious Education in the Diocese of London, 1988).

Responsibilities:

1. Governor: The Rev'd David Treby, Vicar.
2. Management: Philip Mantell, Head Teacher.
3. Major Acts of Worship: Jean Whitehead, R.E. subject leader, link with the Worship committee.
4. Music/Choir: Fiona Cutcliffe, Music subject leader

Purposes:

1. To nurture children in the Christian faith, in accordance with our trust deeds.
2. To help children appreciate worship as an element of human experience, both in formal and natural situations.
3. As a means of fostering the community and a sense of belonging, sharing and celebrating values which reflect the ethos of our school. This gives an expression to the common values which underpin the school's existence as a community.
4. To provide experiences which strengthen attitudes and dispositions in all pupils, so that those with a religious commitment may worship more adequately, and the uncommitted may develop a capacity at least to approach the 'threshold' of worship.
5. To provide occasions when those who have a degree of commitment can express it while, at the same time, enabling those whose commitment is less, or different, to learn something of what such an act of worship can mean to those who take an active part.

Guidelines:

1. Worship is part of the curriculum and needs to reflect what is being experienced in classrooms. It should be inclusive and appropriate to the ages and abilities of the children.
2. It is an educational activity and needs to be closely linked to the needs of the children, their interests and development, contributing to their spiritual and moral development.
3. A framework for worship has been developed within the needs of our Voluntary Aided School.
4. Worship includes participation of both staff, children and adults. All teachers are bound to present at an act of worship and all children should be present and not undertaking other activities.
5. It is part of a planned sequence of core terms produced intentions, which is circulated to all staff and on display in the staffroom.
6. Worship will involve the participation of visiting speakers and groups.
7. Before an act of worship, children enter the Hall listening to a piece of music, which has usually been discussed with them.
8. Worship, being distinct from assembly, involves taking children beyond the curriculum experiences. Staff must be clear about that element which is 'worship'.
9. There is a weekly timetable of whole school worship, class worship and key stage gatherings.
10. Children should gather in an orderly, quiet manner, creating a positive atmosphere.
11. Any notices or elements best described as "assembly" given should be brief and quite separate from the worship element.
12. A morning prayer will be said in each class, usually with the involvement of the children in the design of the prayers, or the use of a school based resource of prayers.
13. A lunch time grace will also be used.
14. Worship has its own budget within the School Budget Share that is available for new resources, training and directed needs in line with the action plan for the SIP plan.
15. There is a prayer cycle for every day of the month that is a vital way in which we can pray for all the members of the community we serve and which serve us. Its use is essential to our programme.
16. Each whole school worship activity should be subject to a simple evaluation. Evaluation forms are kept in a folder in the Hall for immediate use. This information is kept under review for management scrutiny and informs future planning and change.

What do we understand by the word 'worship'?

There are many different definitions of the word, and many confuse rather than help! We have used the definition set by the Diocese of London's 'Guidelines for Church Schools' as suggested by the Board of Education of our Diocese, as it seems to be the the best fit for our status and one which helps, rather than confuses.

'Worship is evoked in the first instance by a sense of something beyond oneself and the created world which demands some kind of response. The response will differ with different people depending on the beliefs and assumptions they bring to the experience'.

The Guidelines explain what is meant by this 'sense of something beyond oneself', as:

1. A generalised feeling of awe, that one has come into contact with a mystery which evokes wonder, a sense of eternity, a feeling of humble abasement.
2. A sense of the absolute value of the great human qualities of integrity, courage, compassion, service and love.

Either of these two can lead to a feeling that by experiencing them, you have come close to the origin and secret of the universe, which we call God. This response, which leads to praise and adoration, is what is really worship. What leads to this is the 'threshold of worship, not worship itself. It is our job as educators to decide if it is possible to move from the threshold of worship to worship itself.

In conclusion, the definition is made easy to understand if we use a variety of activities to deliver worship experiences, but realise that they won't necessarily deliver the experience itself, but that they contribute to a developing undertaking by an evolving awareness.

What do we as Christians believe?

How are these to be expressed in worship?

1. Belief in God as Creator
God is the fount, the maker and sustainer of everything. Therefore, the universe is intrinsically good.
 - worship must encourage a sense of awe and wonder, and foster a respect for the world and its peoples.
2. Belief in Jesus
We believe that Jesus was both human and divine. His birth, death and resurrection are the core of our understanding of the strength and power of God's love for creation.
 - worship will encompass the major Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter. The liturgical cycle of the Christian year provides opportunities for reflecting on the importance of Jesus' life and the life of the Church. The gospel stories give insights into Christian teaching, both spiritual and moral.
3. Belief in the Holy Spirit
The Holy Spirit sustains and gives energy to both the corporate life of the Church and to individual Christians. The power of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of Christians is outpouring of God's love for creation. This lies at the heart of the Christian's experience of renewal, reconciliation, trust and forgiveness.
 - worship will include stories about people and groups who have acknowledged the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. These can be local people or very famous, nationally or internationally known. The

Church's commitment to the poor and underprivileged is viewed as the Holy Spirit in action and an outward and visible sign of our mission.

4. Belief in the Trinity

God as Three Persons is a distinctive belief in Christianity. There is One God, but Three Persons.

- worship will emphasise the distinctiveness of Christianity by, for example, often ending prayers with a statement of Trinitarian belief. This is a very difficult concept but by using prayers which use it, its' importance can be reinforced.

5. The Bible

The Bible has unique authority, as God's Word for Christians. Its use is central in Christian worship and life.

- in worship there are two approaches, which may run in tandem. Firstly, using drama and story within it, as a means of deeper understanding and reflection of issues relevant to human concerns. Secondly, an analysis of how Christians use the Bible for study, personal insight and public reading and reflection. In the Anglican Communion, we follow a liturgical calendar in which particular passages are read at certain times of the year.

(based on "Open The Door", Oxford Diocese/National Society 1994)

Elements of an Anglican worship programme

1. Examples of a well developed Christian liturgical worship.
2. Other forms of Christian worship based on the children's needs, development, interests and understanding.
3. Experience of a variety of forms of worship.
4. Teaching about the form of worship, as preparation and follow up to the act of worship.
5. Experiences which enable all pupils to know the motivations behind worship and so bring them to the 'threshold of worship'.
6. Respect for the freedom of all pupils to decide whether or not they wish or can go beyond that threshold.
7. The Bible should be used as a source for inspiration and learning.
8. Time should be spent reflecting upon Christian symbols and how they are used in worship.
9. The cycle of the Anglican year will be followed, as a framework for worship.
10. Children will grow to understand the regularity and set order to Anglican worship i.e. Eucharist and other main forms of worship and locally decided forms e.g. welcoming or leavers services.
11. Using collects as a focus for small group worship.
12. Exploring the possibility of collecting prayers, hymns and psalms which support the worship framework.

13. Knowing and understanding traditional prayers and responses, which Christians have used for generations to express their beliefs.
14. Give the children opportunities to discover the value of meditation and silence within Christian worship.
15. To plan for members of other churches to lead worship, thus reflecting the movement to ecumenism.
16. By forging close links to the Parish Church and to the community, a bond of unity will be created. Members of the community will be invited to lead worship.

Practical issues arising from the above

1. We need to observe the daily act of worship, in a balance of educationally appropriate group sizes.
2. The type and frequency of liturgical worship must be suitable to the age and development of the children.
3. All worship must be flexible and unstereotyped.
4. Worship needs to be - planned
and
integrated: with the ethos and life of the school and
where appropriate with the RE programme.
5. We must support and provide for all pupils, irrespective of ability, disability, age, sex, religious affiliation (or none).
6. There needs to be a clear distinction between an Assembly and an act of worship. Assembling as a unit is very worthwhile, for moral points, sharing events, giving notices etc., but worship must be clearly distinctive and separate.
7. We must not compromise children's integrity in any of worship by forcing them to believe; we must explain and justify our statements only if we hold them sincerely.
8. We must be careful not to misrepresent other faiths by either falsely unifying different religions or by making them culturally specific. Generalising can be offensive to other faiths and it can be a trap to produce non divisive, multicultural acts of worship.
9. Staff need to be very positive when leading acts of worship. Negative messages are picked up by children and consequently affect conditions for worship.
10. By clearly distinguishing between assembly and worship, we can avoid trivialising the spiritual element. For example, to suggest that God is on the side of our school rules or that He cares for the success of sports team is trivialising the spiritual.
11. Responses to the meaning of worship involve a diversity i.e.
 - awareness of
 - appreciation of
 - respect for
 - preference for
 - commitment to
 - devotion to
 - adoration of

Our worship needs to be designed to allow pupils to respond to these seven areas, in ways appropriate for them. It should not compel nor expect only one type of response.

12. There are certain activities associated with worship. A traditional pattern of prayer, hymn and reading needs to be broadened to include:
 - reflection on the meaning and purpose of life
 - pondering ultimate questions
 - developing a sense of transcendence
 - responding to a challenge
 - experimental exploration of a religious idea
 - celebration of learning about religion
 - learning from the experience of others

Practicalities

1. The scheme for worship themes is the responsibility of the Headteacher, in consultation with staff but relates to the key issues noted above. A programme for each term is produced noting themes, leaders and resources. There is a balance of types of input, and children are encouraged to participate in sharing and reflecting on learning and experiences, and achievements.
2. Planning is built around the two year cycle devised by the Diocese of Exeter.
3. The use of music is twofold
 - as a welcoming activity and focus for the children on entering the room. A weekly piece of music is introduced and explained at a music focused assembly on a Monday.
 - songs which reflect or support each theme. There is a wide resource of music, both traditional and more modern available and the choice of songs/hymns is planned by Mrs Cutcliffe and Mrs Whitehead.

4. Church services

The church is used for Eucharists at least once per half term for Key Stage 2 children and for special occasions for the whole school. It is also used for the major festivals: Easter, Christmas, All Saints tide, Ash Wednesday and Ascension Day.

Children participate fully in these services, designing and leading them. For Eucharistic services, children can prepare and lead prayers and intercessions, share in the symbolic elements and usually receive a blessing.

As a result of Confirmation classes, confirmed children will take part in the Eucharist with us.

5. Our pattern of worship is:

Monday	2.55 pm	Musical assembly new songs: introduced, explained and learned weekly music: introduced and explained
Tuesday	2.55 pm	All school 1
Wednesday	2.55 pm	Key Stage:Years 3 - 6 Worship led by David Treby.
Thursday	2.55 pm	All school 2, with parents and governors welcomed.
Friday	2.55 pm	Key Stage 1

Key Stage 2
Celebration and Reflection.

6. Normal classroom practice should be carried over into worship so that techniques, familiar to the children in the classroom can be used, and the children encouraged to take part.
7. A variety of methods can be used to deliver acts of worship in the ways mentioned above, e.g.
 - drama
 - storytelling
 - games
 - art
 - storywriting - research, creative
 - songs - singing games
 - dance
 - mime
 - poetry
 - questions and answers
 - literature
 - AVA
 - video
 - cooking
 - demonstration

Other issues related to worship in Church Schools

1. Music

Singing can transform worship if the choice is appropriate in style and content. It can help to create various moods, from celebration to reflection. It can bond a community.

In being appropriate, songs will reflect the themes chosen, which will be easily identifiable with the children. There needs to be a balance of traditional and contemporary songs which will be sung in a variety of ways, including unisons, rounds, action songs, responses and those needing percussion or clapping.

Some songs can be used to encourage reflection in a quiet way, others may be enhanced by having a dance routine added to them.
2. Prayer

Prayer is an important part of worship. The method and words used in prayer are crucial. Clumsy or out of date language is not acceptable.

Prayer:

 - summarising the moral or part of a story, i.e. words or theme message, making it more poignant than a previously compressed one
 - involve the children in writing their own to convey ideas relevant to them, and thereby begin to understand the structure of prayers
 - can involve periods of stillness, of silence and meditation. Children need quiet, calm and space for their own inner life, so that they can attempt to come to terms with their experiences, difficulties or problems. Children do need to be trained in this, as it involves sitting properly, be aware of their breathing, to relax and shut out all

extraneous interruptions. They can become more self aware in a atmosphere which is calm, an unusual experience in a very noisy world!

- some traditional, well known prayers should be used, especially the Lord's Prayer which needs careful teaching and explaining. Other well known prayers such as Ignatious Loyola or St. Francis similarly ought to be used.
- key reasons for and types of prayer will be introduced, and children will experience thanksgiving and intercessional types
- both visual and musical prayers can also bring variety and understanding

The Eucharist Service

We feel that it is important for our children to experience the Eucharist from an early age as a sharing of the Christian family in a central act. However, the following factors are important in making it also an educational experience.

- the priest can help prepare the children by introducing and explaining the parts of the church used, viz. altar, vestments, pulpit, elements, chalice, cyborium, etc.
- readings and intercessions need to be easily understood and relevant. The liturgical language must also be appropriate. A review took place in 2000 and as a result, a school based Eucharistic service was published.

Resources

The termly plans highlight the key themes, concepts and resources to support them. There is a box of recommended books and materials to resource the Diocesan based scheme. It is kept in the Head's office. We have also published worship booklets for Daily worship, All Saints Day and other acts of worship, as appropriate.

Timetabling

Examples of several terms work are included to illustrate the organised pattern of worship. The long term planning relates to the Diocese of Exeter plans and each term there is a review of the cycle and a termly plan produced that reflects current issues. This is often in conjunction with the National Society resources.

<u>Date of implementation:</u>	January 2001
<u>Date of review:</u>	January 2003 Curriculum Committee - March 2003.
<u>Date of next review:</u>	January 2006.