

**Edwinstree Middle School**  
A Voluntary Controlled Church of England School

# **Collective Worship Policy**



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## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP IN COMMUNITY and FOUNDATION SCHOOLS (without a religious character) (Note 1)**

Edwinstree believes that Collective worship is the belief and resolve to ensure that **our faith supports each individual at Edwinstree to flourish and challenges us, to live life in all its fullness**. Our Christian ethos and the value we place on the development of the whole child; spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually is reflected throughout our worship. We absolutely value this special time in the school day for the space it gives children to develop their relationship with God and or their understanding of the big questions in life. Our Christian values of **trust, creation, reverence, wisdom, humility, service, friendship, thankfulness, endurance, compassion, peace, forgiveness, justice and hope**. We take time to follow the Christian calendar for the year and explore the themes within in it.

### **BACKGROUND TO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AT OUR SCHOOL**

It is a legal requirement that all registered school age students take part in an act of worship each day. These acts of worship are “wholly and of a broadly Christian Character. They must also be “appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the students”.

Families who send their children to this school are *in the main ‘nominally’ Christian or predominantly from non-religious backgrounds with a small minority of other faith backgrounds, including Hindu, Muslim, Jewish etc. Some children are from practising Christian families, in addition, there are children who are from religions other than Christianity and 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 student 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. All parents and teachers currently support and value the importance of collective worship and there is no with-drawal as of May 2017.

### **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 students and staff whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none. In this way collective worship is inclusive not exclusive.

### **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.

### **VALUES AND AIMS**

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 and relationship with God in traditionally religious ways or any other appropriate manner.

Through our collective worship we aim to provide a compassionate and supporting environment for children to:

- Become increasingly aware and confident of themselves as individuals and groups within the school and wider community. Encompassing our values of **Koinoinia, humility, trust, compassion and peace.**
- Grow in understanding of the feelings of other people in everyday situations and beliefs. Developing our ideas of **thankfulness, friendship, humility, compassion, and service.**
- Explore the language which people use to express their feeling. Celebrating and creating **trust, reverence and wisdom.**
- Deepen their sense of wonder about the world around them and exploring our values of **creation, and hope.**
- Grow in confidence when making a presentation to the group or whole school, supporting them to live life to the full and to flourish and be challenged and develop our value of **endurance!**
- Respond freely to religious and/or spiritual stimulus with **reverence and wisdom.**
- Acknowledge diversity and affirm each person’s life stance, whether it is religious or not. Creating a sense of **peace** and understanding our value of **justice.**

Worship both reflects and nurtures our ethos to that our faith supports each individual at Edwinstree to flourish and challenges us, to live life in all its fullness. It encompasses all

aspects of school life and all areas of the curriculum so that every member of staff and every student may feel involved. In particular school worship at Edwinstree develops our abilities to celebrate our individual journeys whilst belonging to a community. We believe this 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 students to:

- Show interest in, and a concern for, members of the school community developing their **compassion, humility, reverence** and **Koinonia**.
- Celebrate special occasions together with reverence and wisdom following the Christian calendar.
- Show concern for the daily happenings in school life, the local community and the wider world in our understanding of **Koinonia** and in developing a **trust** in one and other.
- Share appreciation of worthwhile projects undertaken by groups within the school with particular reference to **service** and **endurance**.
- Explore and review the variety of values, attitudes, standards, manifested in religions and society with particular reference to our Christian values.
- Reflect upon dimensions of human life – the wonderful, beautiful, joyful, heroic, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn....; giving examples of **justice, hope, reverence, forgiveness** and **peace**.
- 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. Exploring our themes of **humility, creation**, and **thankfulness**.

## PLANNING

*In this school we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework. The whole school meets together on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. On Monday for years 6 – 8 students are in tutor groups reflecting on the theme of the half term or the values expressed through this theme. Year 5 complete this on Thursday. On Thursday year 6 – 8 year teams meet to explore the themes and values for the half term. Year 5 complete this in tutor group. Collective worship takes place between 2.50pm and 3.20pm each day and we value greatly the bringing together of the school at the end of the day to consider and reflect. On Friday we practice our hymns for the term – both modern and traditional which again reflect the theme of the half term and the values. Our calendar follows the Church of England festivals and celebrations as well as other religious festivals or national and*

*known international events. Please see an example of our half termly calendar identifying the themes, values and hymns.*

*A senior member of staff usually leads the usually leads the whole school worship, with a rota of other staff leading worship on other days. Students are encouraged to take an active part in both planning and leadership through year group assemblies and in the summer term each tutor group presents a whole school assembly. This year they are based on an exploration of the Christian themes we are considering within Edwinstree.*

We believe that creating the right atmosphere is crucial to the quality of the worship. Therefore, the time is never over-dominated by school administration or moralising. We plan an explorative approach to our Collective worships making sure that we model how to enquire and personally reflect/ worship.

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

- Student's 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

**SUCCESS CRITERIA**

At this school evaluate our acts of worship against some of the following:

- Involvement, enjoyment, attention, reaction of students – awe, wonder, **wisdom** and **reference**.
- The growth of respect and tolerance within the school community – a **thankfulness** and understanding of **forgiveness**.
- Positive response to shared experience – which students are thankful for.
- An atmosphere which matches the theme – generates **humility** and **thankfulness, trust** and **peace**.

- A contribution to individual and community sense of well-being – a feeling and understanding of **Koinonia**.
- A sense of occasion – and learning with **reverence** and **wisdom**.
- Good order – and **reverence**
- Affirmation from all stake holders. – **Koinonia, service** and **friendship**.
- A sense of challenge – an ability to **endure** and **trust**
- A place in the overall plan of the school – a place to learn and consider, to flourish as an individual within the community. To pause to be **thankful**, at **peace**, **forgive** and to be **humble**
- Enrichment of students' experience - a place of **reference** and **peace**.

### **Music and song**

We value the sense of friendship and Koinonia that singing together brings us at Edwinstree. Music and song is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and unifies and uplifts the school community. We use music to set our entrance and exits from Collective Worship and we work hard to align all our music to the theme, and or value of the half term. We have a bank of music from which to draw, taken from a variety of cultures and types.

Our Friday Collective Worship brings us together to sing as a school, and is something that is now highly prized by staff and many students. Parents are invited to engage in these sessions. Singing practice takes place during planned music lessons and on our Friday session. We take time to reflect on the meaning of what we are singing and its value.

### **Prayer**

We feel that prayer is a good way of enabling children to focus their thoughts. Nevertheless, students 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 distances children, but gives them the opportunity to participate if they so desire; e.g., 'This is your opportunity to listen to the words of my prayer and think about what they might mean, or say your own prayer to your God in your head'.

### **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 half term. We receive at least two visits a half term from our Parish reverend, who explores the current half term theme. For example, this half term he supported us to consider creation and took on the challenge of exploring 'Can you be a Scientist and a Christian?'