

*The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. Isaiah 32:17*

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



## **Collective Worship Policy**

When we walk with God we explore wisdom and ask questions what are the important things in life and what makes a good and godly person? When we flourish we have the confidence to listen, and understand others. Flourishing helps us to find peace of mind. Through Collective worship we support students to spiritually flourish.

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Edwinstree is committed to offering a high-quality collective worship. We recognise the importance of Collective Worship in fostering a sense of community and in its expression of our vision that **our faith supports each individual at Edwinstree to flourish and challenges us, to live life in all its fullness**. We want pupils to leave the school with a rich experience of Christianity and we are committed to Collective worship where students encounter the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Christian faith and a practice that enhances and enriches their lives.

It is the heartbeat of our school and should be seen as the special time in the school day where there is the space to develop their relationship with God and or their understanding of the big questions in life and spirituality. **This year and next we are working hard to offer students the opportunity to use this time for stillness and calm alongside reflection, as we recognise post COVID that this is often missing in their families lives.**

During Collective Worship we take time to explore the Christian values of **trust, creation, reverence, wisdom, humility, service, friendship, thankfulness, endurance, compassion, peace, forgiveness, justice and hope**. We explore how biblical text and stories can help us to understand these values and what meanings we can take from them into our lives. We take time to follow the Christian calendar for the year and explore the themes, stories and theology within in it.

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

Collective worship in schools is grounded in the historical past and enshrined in education al law to be “wholly and of a broadly Christian Character. They must also be “appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the students”.

In Church schools the requirement instead to reflect the Anglican status of the school as expressed in our trust deed allows us to build on a rich, lived diversity of Anglican tradition and identity. In the same way as worship in churches is aspirational, constantly evolving and being reimagined there is an expectation that our collective worship is a continuous and dynamic reimagining of what collective worship means to us.

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 Muslim etc.*

We recognise that our worship is **inclusive** and invitational. Worship involves meeting in a calm and reflective space, exploring spirituality and questioning and responding to others and for some to God. In our school our community can expect to encounter worship that is inclusive of and fully accessible to all. As well as different faith or no faith backgrounds all of our community are at different stages of their spiritual journey. All are given the opportunity to question and we provide space for consent, dissent, to participate or to stand back and to consider. It is our expectation that care will be taken to ensure that the language of consent used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith in all those participating.

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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-drawl as of July 2024

## **Collective worship**

**Invitational:** Our community can expect to encounter worship that is consistently invitational. There is no compulsion. It provides an opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those with alternate faiths or none to engage with integrity. The metaphor of the “warm fires and open doors” helps us to understand that the warmth of the fire is the clarity and authenticity of the Christian message. All are welcome to come in and sit as near or as far from the fire as they feel comfortable. Pupils and adults are always invited to pray or reflect.

**Inspiring:** Worship at its best should be formational and transformational: and enable pupils and adults to ask big questions about who we are, why we do what we do? It should motivate pupils and adults to think differently, and into reflecting on their and their wider communities’ behaviour and actions. It should encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and or philosophical convictions and empower them to become courageous advocates.

## **VALUES AND AIMS**

We aspire to provide a collective worship that is Inclusive, invitational and Inspiring our Collective will to :

- Explore our school vision and how that underpins and creates shared values and virtues. Within collective worship we reflect on the values and virtues of **trust, creation, reverence, wisdom, humility, service, friendship, thankfulness, endurance, compassion, peace, forgiveness, justice and hope, in order to support the development of their character, respect and dignity.**
- Help our community to appreciate the relevance of faith in today’s world by encountering the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and developing an understanding of the Christian belief in the Trinitarian nature of God.
- Offer the opportunity without compulsion to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection.
- Enable all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection as well as through the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican worship, festival and where appropriate the Eucharist.
- Enable pupils to develop skills through engaging and planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice.

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## **Provision**

Collective worship creates a space for an encounter with faith in God. It also provides the opportunity to reflect on larger questions of our lives meaning and purpose. Pupils and adults can expect that the school's collective worship practices will provide a shared set of symbols, signs, words and actions which give the community a language upon which it can draw, in times of joy and grief. These symbols and words help us to foster a sense of fellowship and cohesion within the school community. Whether in times of crisis or celebration, from 2.45pm, this time set aside in the school day provides staff and pupils with the opportunity to gather and support one another as a community. Pupils and adults will encounter the practice of regular prayer and worship as a normal part of the life of the school. These activities will help provide a rhythm and stillness as a pattern of community life. Parents, pupils and adults can expect that worship in a Church school will follow a recognisable structure that will help focus worship on one idea. We use our Diocese GERR model to support our planning, to gather Engage, respond and reflect. This helps to give organisation and clarity to the unfolding of that idea, as well as helping the leader to ensure that worship is age-appropriate and moves away from making it a performance art. It will be something that pupils and adults may want to share and discuss with others in school, in the community and at home.

Developing staff expertise and knowledge: Confidence through professionalism 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 a priority to build up the expertise of staff, pupils, clergy and other adults in facilitating collective worship in Church schools.

## **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 **reverence**. This means our COWOs are not silent. We recognise that a response from a child means they are engaged and interested.
- 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**.

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- 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 **reverence** and **peace**.

### **Music and song**

Our music and liturgies used in worship reflect the best of traditional and modern Anglican worship, they aim to connect with the theme and explore the sacred to educate and engage. Music is used to reflect the diverse experience of the wider Christian community. We take time to consider carefully what is appropriate and any one given time for the spiritual life of the community.

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.

### **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 and or supports our community to reflect on the Christian calendar and the significant events and what meaning they have in our lives today. We grateful to have the support of the charity Brave Trust to support our Collective Worship.