

CAVERSHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL



Caversham Primary School Collective Worship Policy

November 2025

Review: November 2027

Caversham Primary School Primary School is a Rights Respecting School. School policies will respect the UN Convention on the rights of the child.

Article 13: Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive information of any kind as long as it is within the law.

Article 14: Every child has the right to think and believe what they want and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights of parents to give their children guidance about this right.

Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural Development

Collective Worship is one of the ways of providing for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These are defined as follows:

Spiritual Development

- how an individual acquires personal beliefs and values, the basis for personal and social behaviour

Moral Development

- knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to right and wrong

Social Development

- concerned with the skills and personal qualities necessary for individuals to live and function effectively in society

Cultural Development

- refers to pupils' increasing understanding and command of those beliefs, values, customs, knowledge and skills, which taken together, form the basis of identity and cohesion in societies and groups

Another way of developing these is through the school ethos and climate. Our school values are promoted through assemblies and through the curriculum

Caversham Primary School Values:

- Respect
- Co-operation
- Compassion
- Enthusiasm
- Determination

Legal Requirements

- All pupils must take part in a daily act of worship, apart from those withdrawn by parents.
- Reception classes are excluded from daily acts of worship

- Daily acts of worship can occur anytime during the school day, and there is no legally specified duration.
- Daily acts of worship can be held as a whole school, or within age groups, or within teaching groups
- Daily acts of worship must be on school premises. Any act of Collective Worship off premises must be in addition to statutory daily act of worship
- Daily acts of worship must be wholly or broadly of a Christian nature
- There must be time given for silent prayer or reflection during collective worship
- Daily acts of worship should encourage participation and response from children.
- Daily acts of worship should develop a community spirit as well as a shared ethos and values.
- Daily acts of worship should consider spiritual and moral issues and allow children to explore their own beliefs.

What is Collective Worship?

The government requires an act of Collective Worship for all registered pupils in maintained schools on a daily basis. The Department for Education's (DfE) 'Religious Education and Collective Worship Circular 1/94' states:

'Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs, to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and re-enforce positive attitudes.' Religious Education and Collective Worship Circular 1/94 (para 50)

'Worship' is not defined in the legislation and in the absence of any such definition it should be taken to have its natural and ordinary meaning. That is, it must in some sense reflect something special or separate from school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power. However, worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common. The legislation reflects this difference in referring to 'collective worship' rather than 'corporate worship'. Religious Education and Collective Worship Circular 1/94 (para 57)

The daily act of Collective Worship should be wholly or broadly of a Christian nature. In part, this means that Collective Worship should include 'some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of belief, and which accord a special status to Jesus' (Religious Education and Collective Worship Circular 1/94 (para 63).

For clarity, no act of Collective Worship need only contain Christian material. Further guidance given by the DfE states that 51% of school days each term need be broadly Christian in character. Collective Worship should be inclusive and not exclusive of our school community. As such, Collective Worship is intended that children of other faiths or who have non-religious backgrounds can take part, and to find Collective Worship to be an enriching experience. Collective Worship is not to presuppose any shared religious belief and does not seek to elicit uniform responses from individuals. It aims to be sensitive to the school's diverse community and to be meaningful for the community the school serves.

This policy therefore interprets worship as a group coming together to explore, question and respond to others and, for some, to God. Pupils are given the opportunity to think and ask questions, to participate or to stand back and consider their own beliefs.

Collective Worship is to be separate and distinct from assembly. Collective Worship can of course take place during assemblies though should be marked out as being a particular part of the school day where values and beliefs are valued and explored.

Guidance on Worship being of a Christian Character:

The majority of acts of Collective Worship should reflect Christian values while also being respectful and sensitive to the backgrounds and beliefs of all pupils. For example, a story about the life and teachings of Jesus may be shared, but it would be inappropriate to require all pupils to address Jesus directly in prayer.

Ways for teachers to incorporate a Christian character into Collective Worship could include:

- A prayer that a Christian might say which can be listened to and reflected upon. (This approach can be used when discussing other religions during Collective Worship).
- Sharing about major Church festivals
- A song or hymn that a Christian might sing which can be listened to and reflected upon.
- Reaffirm the school communities worth and togetherness by exploring shared humanity.
- Worship with themes such as kindness, forgiveness, and charity.
- A story from the Bible about the life of Jesus and his teachings to Christians.
- Share a line from the Bible and reflect on what Jesus might have meant by it.

Key features of Collective Worship

Collective Worship should:

- be made presented as a planned and distinct part of the day
- be respectful of pupil and staff integrity

- be an educational experience
- be relevant to the needs of pupils
- encourage pupil participation
- foster a thought provoking atmosphere allowing for spiritual reflection and response
- foster a sense of community
- Create an atmosphere, e.g. using:
 - music
 - visual aid to focus
 - darkness
 - candle or light (candles are to be virtual or a digital image and not physical candles used).

Types of collective Worship

There are three ways of carrying out Collective Worship, by class, by year group, or by whole school. Collective Worship by class may take the form of circle time, and this can be used to explore a theme from Christianity or other faith, curriculum planning (RE for example), or an issue that has arisen from the classroom.

Circle time

- a circle is a symbolic way of showing equality
- create an atmosphere (see above)
- children should form the circle quietly, and settle quickly and calmly in order to maintain the atmosphere
- may start and end with a game, such as pass the squeeze, up down up, or pass the smile
- make sure that everyone is comfortable in the circle
- give everyone the chance to speak and include 'thinking time' - children who don't want to contribute can say 'pass', but make sure you go back to give them a second chance, they may just have needed a chance to think of a contribution
- include support staff when appropriate
- younger children can pass an object (eg a teddy) to show whose turn it is to speak
- expect that everyone will listen to others and respect their views - lead by example and value all contributions
- have a time for reflection, or 'thinking time' before the final game

Circle times can also be used to teach PSHE, British Values and Rights Respecting Schools.

Key Stage or Whole School Assemblies

- Key Stage assemblies are led by any member of the SLT or teaching team
- Whole school assemblies are led by a member of SLT or teaching team

- Assemblies should be held in an area that is big enough to house all children comfortably, eg hall or a classroom with furniture moved back
- If furniture has to be moved, this should be done in a quiet and unobtrusive manner by adults, this should be completed before children enter the area
- Staff create an atmosphere before children enter area - see above
- Children should walk into the area in a quiet, calm manner, in order to get a 'feel' of the atmosphere
- Wherever possible, assemblies will have a visual focus for the children
- Assemblies may include a story with a message -which is made explicit during a discussion afterwards
- They may also feature a story about a real-life person who has set a good example for others - ensure that children are able to make the connection between them and their own lives - what can they learn from them?
- Assemblies must have a time for reflection, or 'thinking time'
- Children should leave assembly in a quiet, orderly manner, accompanied by music

Exemptions from collective worship

Parents have the right to have their children excused from worship in any state-funded school. Parents who wish to withdraw need to put this in writing to the Headteacher. This written notice can be put in writing to the Co-Headteachers at any time.

Leaders of school assemblies should keep the secular and worship elements distinct and separate, and allow time for pupils (and teachers) to leave the room when worship takes place if they so wish. As such, any child who has been withdrawn from Collective Worship will be able to leave the hall or classroom at this time.

Teachers should be able to receive advice related to their specific situations from teaching unions. Teachers' rights and obligations are broadly as follows:

- *In community schools* teachers cannot be required to attend or lead collective worship, but do not have a right to withdraw from the non-worship part of assembly (a reasonable requirement because of the need to supervise pupils)
- teachers cannot be required to teach RE unless their contract shows they have been explicitly employed to teach it;
- teachers cannot be disadvantaged in their employment because of their religious opinions or the fact that they do not attend religious worship;
- Under the *School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document*, teachers are required to undertake their professional duties under the reasonable direction of the head teacher.

Most pupils do not have the right to opt themselves out of collective worship. Only pupils in sixth form education or over the age of compulsory school age may withdraw themselves from collective worship.