

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY



St. James' Church of England Primary Academy

Approved By: Local Governing Body

Date: January 2026

Next Review Date: January 2028



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

All our policies are written with the objective of continuously improving our school in our aim of realising St. James' vision, which is to create a community that reaches their full potential:

"He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."

Matthew 13: 31-32

We believe a small act of kindness and an act of faith can have a huge impact on another's life.

Our Governors, leaders and staff uphold the vision of

'We grow together, through God we are Giving, Loving and are Honest'

At St. James' we believe that through God we grow and therefore we understand worship to be a special act or occasion whose purpose is to show reverence to God. Collective worship involves all members of the school coming together and participating in an assembly. We expect everyone to take an active part in the assembly. Our worship is the beating heart of our school life.

In line with the 1988 Education Reform Act, which states that worship should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character', we normally base our worship on the teachings of Christ using the Bible and the traditions of the Christian vision. However, we conduct our worship in a manner that is sensitive to the faiths and beliefs of all members of the school.

Each act of worship is book ended with the same responses and includes time for prayer/reflection.

Our weekly schedule is as follows:

Day	Worship	Reasoning
Monday	Whole school led by Headteacher or member of SLT	Provides more chance for a whole school worship and focusses on the week's theme and our vision and values.
Tuesday	Class worship	Acts as a 'response' session to the theme of worship for the week, a chance to develop spirituality and experience worship in a different style. It also allows engaging with worship at a more age specific level.
Wednesday	Vicar-led at Church or school	For the school community to experience vicar-led worship and visit our local Church.
Thursday	Roots and Fruits worship led by class teacher to whole school	To explore spiritual values like compassion and explore how to take this into our local community.
Friday	Whole school celebration led by Headteacher or class teachers	Provides an important opportunity to celebrate how the pupils of St. James' have grown in the week, with the school values being the core of the celebration.

While most acts of worship in our school are Christian, we also hold assemblies that reflect the traditions of other religions that are represented in the school and the wider community.

Our Christian Values

Our collective worship strengthens and supports the Christian identity of our school and reaffirms our vision and associated values:

Loving, Giving and Honesty

It also celebrates the central role that each pupil and adult have to play in our community.

Each adult and pupil will experience worship that is truly welcoming, inclusive and exemplifying the principles of Christian hospitality.

Collective worship therefore will be:

- **Inclusive** – our acts of worship recognise that pupils and staff come from homes of different faith backgrounds as well as no faith backgrounds, so it will be inclusive of and fully accessible to all. Care will be taken to ensure that language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith of those participating, listening or watching.
- **Invitational** – in our acts of worship, there is no compulsion to 'do anything'. Rather worship will 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. Pupils and adults will only be invited to pray and sing if they wish to do so.
- **Inspiring** – By asking and discussing big questions about who we are and what we do in worship, we hope to motivate pupils and adults into action. There will be opportunities to think, reflect and ponder on their and the wider community's behaviour and actions.

Aims and Objectives of our Worship

- Affirms some value of ultimate worth which, for some, will be God;
- Is educational and spiritually enhancing whilst promoting our Christian values;
- Celebrate in songs, hymns, prayer, readings and other ways.
- Includes a time for prayer;
- Fosters a sense of fellowship by bringing children together;
- Offers children the opportunity to worship and creates an atmosphere in which those who wish to worship can do so;
- Encourages a reflective approach to life and gives time for thinking and reflecting;
- Increases sensitivity so that pupils are more aware of the search for meaning in the face of life's mysteries and problems. Also recognises the importance of experiences, personal values and respect for the belief of others;
- Introduces children to aspects of religious worship and faith in an open and honest atmosphere;
- Encourages children to recognise the place of the Christian faith in the life of people, particularly in the context of a church school; and
- Worship facilitates spiritual growth, enabling children to become true to themselves and to others.

In line with the requirements of the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools (SIAMS) schedule, we aim to ensure that Collective worship:

- Offers the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection whether they are engaged in learning in school or at home.
- Enables all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican/Methodist worship, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- Helps pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world, to encounter the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and to develop their understanding of the Christian belief in the Trinitarian nature of God and its language.
- Enables pupils as well as adults to engage in the planning, leading and evaluation of Collective

worship in ways that lead to improving practice. Leaders of worship including clergy have access to regular training.

- Encourages local Church community partnerships to support the school effectively in developing its provision for collective worship.

Implementation

Collective worship is planned by a variety of stakeholders including staff, pupils, the incumbent of our local church and external visitors in consultation with the collective worship leader. This act of worship can take place at any time of the school day and in any regular school grouping e.g. whole school, key stage or class. Our school plans systematically and cohesively using the Rochester Diocesan Collective Worship Planning, which is adapted and changed to meet the needs of our community. This ensures that there is a shared understanding of the long and short term planning of worship and this enables continuity.

We are mindful of the variation in personal spiritual styles and provide a range of creative opportunities to enable all to engage in the acts of worship. These include music, silence, drama and use of IT.

Our worship consists of four stages:

- **Gather** – we welcome the community, for example with music, liturgy and the lighting of a candle.
- **Engage** – we share, for example, a Bible reading, followed by an activity to engage pupils with the Christian message.
- **Respond** – pupils, for example, discuss, share, reflect, pray or sing.
- **Send** – we share, for example, the message of the worship again and ask pupils to think about how that will affect their day/learning/behaviour. We close with liturgy, final prayer, music and the blowing out of our special candle.

Expectations of Pupils

At St. James', there is an expectation that all pupils will be involved within worship on a regular basis. This may be opportunities planned ahead of time, for example classes supporting worship or unplanned through questioning, asking for volunteers or simply responding to moments of spontaneity.

Pupils are invited to evaluate and reflect on the impact of acts of worship they have joined with. Their voice is integral to improving the structure, content and in shaping future plans for worship.

Visitors Leading Worship

Visitors to St. James' are asked to read and comply with our External Visitors and Visiting Speakers Policy and Safeguarding Policy. This includes discussing the content of any worship with a member of SLT in order to ascertain its suitability for the school community.

Visitors are never left alone with children as the supervision of pupils remains the responsibility of school staff. They will be supported and monitored as part of the ongoing evaluation process of worship.

Self-Assessment and Inspection

Our school regularly evaluates all acts of collective worship and the impact they have on the school and our wider community. This involves monitoring by school leaders, staff, pupils and governors in order to grow and develop.

Monitoring can and does take many different forms. It includes Governor visits consisting of observations and conversations with pupils and staff, staff meeting discussions and 'live' feedback from those in attendance of worship.

Our worship lead also meets regularly (at least termly) with our vicar, providing an opportunity to discuss, review and plan worship as necessary.

The impact that this monitoring has is ensuring worship is delivered in a way that is engaging and meaningful for all and that we can make the necessary improvements and adjustments so it meets the needs of our community.

We also welcome the contributions of parents and pupils, which are reviewed and considered on a regular basis. These are shared with staff and during Full Governing Body Meetings and play an integral part in developing the spiritual growth of the school.

The impact of collective worship is independently inspected by law under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (SIAMS).

Right of Withdrawal

Worship is regarded as a special time where we gather as a school family. Reflecting our ethos as a Church of England school, collective worship is an inclusive opportunity for those of all faiths and of none to be present with integrity.

Any parent can request permission for their child to be excused from religious worship and the school will make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the child during that part of the worship. Parents and carers do not have to explain or give reasons for their request. This right of withdrawal complies with the 1944 Education Act and was restated in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

The Headteacher keeps a record of all children who have been withdrawn from collective worship.

Teachers also have the right to withdraw from leading and taking part in worship.

Following discussions with the Headteacher, any desire to formally withdraw children from worship must be done via a letter to the Headteacher.