



# **Robert Clack School of Science**

## **Collective Worship Policy 2017 – 2018**



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### **Collective Worship**

#### **Rationale:**

Through collective worship in schools students should be given the opportunity to:

- Explore universal values such as courage, compassion, justice and peace
- Explore universal experiences such as awe, mystery, transience, suffering, grief, forgiveness, love and joy
- Learn about the insights, beliefs and practices of fellow pupils, staff and members of the wider community
- Foster a regard for the pursuit of truth based on reason and evidence

#### **Legal Requirements:**

1. DFES Circular 1/94 contains the current requirement for a daily act of collective worship, the majority of which should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character that is "reflecting" the "broad traditions of Christian belief" without being denominationally biased (cf Education Reform Act 1988). However, Head Teachers must take into account the pupils' ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds.
2. This must be provided for all registered pupils of compulsory school age or above. The term 'registered pupils' includes those in the sixth form but not pupils in nursery schools or classes.
3. The act of collective worship can take place at any time during the school day and with any grouping of pupils the school wishes to use (though not faith groupings).
4. Parents in all schools have a legal right to withdraw their children wholly or partly from collective worship. Any such request must be complied with.
5. The Education and Inspection Act 2006 makes provision for pupils in post-16 education to exercise the right to withdraw themselves from the daily act of collective worship.
6. Teachers, including Head Teachers, have a contractual duty to attend assembly but they have the right to withdraw from collective worship and cannot be discriminated against for doing so.

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8. If a school believes that the Christian character clause is inappropriate for the whole school or certain pupils within it, application can be made to the Local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) for a determination order to have the clause lifted or modified.
9. In a County school it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher, in consultation with the governors, to see that these arrangements are carried out.

### **School Context:**

Robert Clack School serves a community where a variety of faiths are represented. Families who send their child are those of practicing member of the vast majority of the six major world religions, in addition we also have students who have no faith or are non-practicing of their faith. We recognise that in asking our children to take part in collective worship, we need to consider the variety of faiths, cultural traditions and backgrounds from which our pupils come and it is therefore not the practice of this school to preach to or convert pupils to a particular religious tradition. The faith background (including those of no faith) of both the pupils and the staff is valued and respected at all times. It is our objective that all participants will derive benefit from the collective worship, which takes place within the School.

### **What is Worship?**

Whilst there is a legal requirement for schools to conduct a 'daily act of collective worship'. (The 1988 Education Act and subsequent Acts), none of this legislation actually defines what is meant by the term Collective Worship. We agree with the view of SACRE that schools need to clearly differentiate between corporate worship and collective worship.

Corporate worship takes place within a faith community context e.g. in churches, gurdwaras, mosques, synagogues, temples and so on. Corporate worship implies a community with a shared set of beliefs and values. For most faith communities worship is concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power. Few schools can expect that all their members will subscribe to a set of beliefs, which enable the entire school community as such to constitute a worshipping community.

In organising school collective worship at Robert Clack School, we recognise that the school community is a collection of people. Thus, acts of collective worship in the school must be sensitive to the collective character of our individual school and to be inclusive the term must be interpreted by our school in a way, which is meaningful to the range of communities we serve. Our school community includes people from a variety of cultural and faith, and non-faith backgrounds.

Therefore, the term "collective" when used in relation to worship in our school refers to the gathering together of a group or groups of pupils and staff for worship; it does not in any way suggest an act of worship which involves a group of pupils and staff meeting to subscribe to any particular faith or denomination of a faith.

Collective worship at Robert Clack School does not pre-suppose shared beliefs, and does not seek uniform responses from pupils. Collective worship caters for a

diversity of beliefs and points of view, allowing individuals to respond as individuals.

A broad definition which has been referred to as 'worth-ship', might encompass what is offered in a spirit of admiration, celebration and respect to 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 thus defined draws on literature, music, drama, art and other sources of inspiration. It can provide a focus for thought, inspiration and reflection for pupils (and staff) whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none. For example assemblies about figures such as Desmond Tutu, Mother Teresa, Muhammad Ali and Aung Sun Su Kyi.

### **Worship of a Broadly Christian Character:**

Legislation indicates that the majority of acts of collective worship must be of a 'broadly Christian character', and those that are must reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief without being denominationally biased. The interpretation of this aspect of the law in paragraphs 60-63 of DFE Circular 1/94 presents particular problems of application for Robert Clack School. Sensitivity to the faith background of pupils is enshrined in the law requiring Head Teachers to have regard to family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes.

In order to achieve an act of worship, which meets legal requirements as well as educational principles, we will concentrate on those characteristics, which are shared by faiths as well as those, which are specific to Christianity. This is enabled through out links with both St Mary's Church and The Bethel Church, who often deliver assemblies at the Upper and Lower School sites.

### **Practice:**

- Weekly assemblies with common citizenship themes. Leaders of the Learning Community can choose to deliver their assemblies in the following way:
  - Pupil contribution
  - Stories/readings
  - Dance/Drama
  - Prayer/reflective thinking (Christmas assembly with Rev Julie from St Mary's)
  - Songs/Hymns/Music
  - Sacred/Secular Readings
  - Visual aids/focal points
  - Dialogue
  
- Links with both St Mary's Church and The Bethel Church
- Good links with local religious organisations
- Allow students to encounter and respond to religion
- Awareness of the religious beliefs of members of the school and local community
- Develop knowledge, understanding and respect of the beliefs, practices and values of the six major world religions

- Collective awareness of the major religious festivals in a number of faiths
- Accommodate students who wish to observe religious rites
- Accommodate variations in the school uniform for religious observance (school colour hijab)