

Great Horwood Church of England School

Collective Worship Policy



This policy was reviewed 6 February 2026

Date of next review: February 2029

Signed: *Stuart Bayliss*

(Chair of Governors)

GREAT HORWOOD CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

DAILY COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

Our Vision

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

John 15:5

Our ethos:

At Great Horwood Church of England School, the academic, emotional and spiritual well-being of the children are at the heart of all that we do; where everyone is valued. We are a safe, welcoming school within the heart of the village community that aims to provide all our children and adults with the learning opportunities to flourish, be healthy, grow in resilience and realise their full potential; being fully equipped and prepared for a successful future.

Inspired by Christian faith and rooted in the teachings, values and spirituality of the Church of England we embrace our core values of love, perseverance and respect where all individuals learn to value themselves and others.

We are committed to setting high standards of achievement within a caring and nurturing learning environment. We aim to provide opportunities for children to develop a curiosity of learning, a thirst for knowledge through play, and an exploration of the world around them.

This policy is written to reflect and support our School's Christian Vision and Values.

Introduction

Great Horwood School was built in 1861 to serve the needs of the local community. The village and school have grown since then and the community has become more diverse with pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds. The Collective Worship at the school considers this diversity whilst reflecting the school's Christian ethos, its Trust Deed, and has considered guidance offered by the Diocese of Oxford.

Collective worship reflects our school vision and core values of 'Love, Perseverance and Respect' which are central to the life and ethos of the school. We aim to demonstrate these core values in everything that we do and in our daily lives.

The collective worship policy at Great Horwood Church of England School pays due regard to statutory requirements and has taken account of the guidance offered by the board of trustees of ODBST

Collective worship is a valued and valuable part of school life and is taken seriously, because it shapes our approach to others and to what we do in school.

Aims of collective worship

Collective worship in Great Horwood Church of England School aims to provide the opportunity for pupils and staff to:

- Explore the school's vision and how it underpins our shared values and virtues.
- Worship will reflect on moral values such as compassion, gratitude, justice, humility, forgiveness and reconciliation; and develop virtues such as resilience, determination and creativity that develop character and contribute to academic progress.
- Help pupils and adults to appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world by encountering the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and developing understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God.

- Offer the opportunity 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, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- Enable pupils to develop skills through engaging in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice.
- Celebrate together e.g. festivals, school values, individual achievements.
- Build a sense of community/foster corporate identity.
- Feel safe and affirmed in doing any of the above.

Statutory requirements

Through its funding agreement with the DfE, Collective Worship must

- take place for every pupil not withdrawn by their parents every day.
- be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character.
- take account of the ages, aptitudes, and family backgrounds of the pupils.
- take place on the school premises, except on occasions, with agreement of governors.

Therefore, at Great Horwood School our collective worship reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any Christian denomination. Not every act of collective worship must comply with this; just the majority so we can include material from other religions and non-religious world views.

Collective Worship and the Curriculum

Collective worship time is distinct from curriculum time given to any subject including religious education. However, at Great Horwood School, we aim to enable collective worship and aspects of children's classroom learning to be mutually supportive.

Collective worship provides opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in line with school policy. To achieve this it addresses a wide variety of themes and topics, uses diverse stimuli and resources and provides pupils with opportunities to 'respond' at their own level.

The Management of Collective Worship

The Head teacher is responsible for the provision of collective worship, supported by and after consultation with the governing body. The following arrangements exist to co-ordinate, monitor and evaluate collective worship:

- The headteacher or delegated teacher draws up a rota for leading collective worship and themes for each week.
- The headteacher or delegated governor, teacher observes at least 6 acts of collective worship (from a range of formats) per term to ensure that they comply with school policy and the law.

- Teacher, pupil and, where appropriate, parental views are collected annually to evaluate the quality and impact of collective worship and to identify ways in which it might be improved.

The Organisation of Collective Worship

Collective worship takes place in a variety of groupings in the school hall, classroom, outside or at St James church. Acts of worship usually last for approximately 15 minutes, although it is recognized that this time will be shortened or lengthened when it is appropriate.

Day	Time	Class/whole school/Key stage	Lead adult
Monday	9.00am	Whole School	Head teacher or senior teacher
Tuesday	9.00am	Singing Praise Worship	Staff member
Wednesday	9.00am	Key Stage Worship, either in school or at St James church	Reverend Steve Staff Member
Thursday	9.00am	Whole School Worship Celebration Assembly	Head teacher or senior teacher
Friday	9.00am	Whole School	Head teacher or senior teacher

Leadership

Every member of the school staff, pupils and occasional visitors will be involved in leading acts of worship at some point in the school year. Visitors who regularly lead worship at Great Horwood School are Reverend Stephen and Bridge Builder from Milton Keynes. Staff will also invite a range of groups or individuals to lead assemblies to enrich the curriculum, these include NSPCC, Water Aid, and Medical Detection dogs (local to GHS),

Planning Acts of Collective Worship

The majority of worship must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, meaning it should reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief. It can contain non-Christian elements or on occasions contain no Christian elements, provided that throughout each term, the majority of the worship complies with the broad traditions of Christian belief.

The content of all acts of collective worship is considered carefully to ensure relevance and suitability

for the ages, aptitudes and backgrounds of all pupils, as well as the balance between Christianity and other faiths.

Termly planning sheets, list themes, special occasions, and events, but there is flexibility to allow the inclusion of current and topical issues.

Visitors are welcome to lead collective worship from time to time and are given guidance on our worship policy. Leaders from faiths within the area help us to increase the pupils' awareness, promote respect and raise the esteem of the pupils who belong to these faiths.

The Act of Collective Worship

We use a variety of styles, active and interactive methods and a range of resources in our acts of collective worship. Leaders make decisions about these elements according to what is most appropriate to the content, the ages, aptitudes and the backgrounds of the pupils.

Where prayer is included in our acts of worship it is introduced with a form of words that invites but does not coerce pupils to participate. Our prayers are addressed to 'God' rather than Jesus as this is inclusive of the beliefs of our non-Christian religious pupils. We hope that pupils who prefer not to pray will use these moments to reflect on the important messages shared in our worship.

Collective worship should not be confused with assembly. Collective worship is distinct from assembly which can be a gathering for a wide variety of reasons for example, pupils gathered together to share announcements and notices. Using a variety of strategies e.g. music, silence etc. we indicate clearly to all present when worship begins and ends.

Withdrawal

Our policy sets out clearly our aspiration that collective worship will be a valuable and valued experience for all members of our school community whatever their backgrounds and beliefs. It is invitational and reflective in nature and never coercive or indoctrinatory.

Parents have a right to withdraw their children from all or any acts of worship, staff are also free to withdraw from involvement in this aspect of school life. We request that those who wish to exercise this right inform the Head Teacher in writing so that school records are accurate. Requests for withdrawal should be granted without delay. The 'religious grounds' do not have to be justified and explained by the parents. Should children be withdrawn, the school must provide adequate supervision to ensure their safety. Children should not be withdrawn from Collective Worship for other purposes, e.g. reading, music lessons, to do so is to break the law. We also appreciate opportunities to speak with parents and staff who have concerns about collective worship, always keen to develop our understanding of sensitivities and to overcome difficulties where possible. Those pupils who are withdrawn from worship are cared for by a member of the school's staff; parents may

provide suitable activities for children so withdrawn.

Appendix A:

Great Horwood Liturgical Format for Worship

Meaningful worship happens where children are active participants, not passive spectators and this includes being involved in the planning, delivery and evaluation. In this way, the act of collective worship becomes their own, rather than something that is 'done to them'.

- Lighting of candle prayer and welcome:

You *May the peace of the Lord be always with you*

All *And also with you*

You *Let us bless the Lord*

All *Thanks be to God*

- Main content based on Bible and value: e.g. story, play
- Prayer related to Bible story and theme (including child's prayer)
- Hymn linked to above
- School prayers and Lord's Prayer
- Close of worship, extinguish candle:

You *Go in peace to love and serve the Lord*

All *In the name of Christ Amen.*

- Pupils should be made aware and regularly reminded of the purpose of collective worship and expected behavior showing respect for those of faith or no faith.
- Hymns or songs sung in singing worship should be 2/3 of a Christian nature. Occasionally other songs which demonstrate a Christian value may be included in hymn practice. This should represent 1/3 of the worship and should be checked with the Worship Leader before being used. The prayer for singing worship should be learnt by the pupils:

Great Horwood School Prayer:

Dear God, Thank you for our wonderful school and the education it provides. Help us to grow our fruit and strengthen our branches by showing **love**, demonstrating **respect** and **persevering** in all we seek to accomplish. Guide and protect us as we connect with ourselves, others and the world, enabling us to flourish. **Amen**

Singing Worship Prayer:

**O Lord, Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts,
and what we believe in our hearts we may show forth in our lives.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Grace:

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

Appendix B: Suggestions for Worship

Think of the total time available (usually 15 mins) include time for

- Thinking
- Sharing
- Listening (good opportunity for relevant music/poetry/stories)
- Stillness and quiet

Use the focus of the small candle so that the children will come to recognise and respect this as a time when they are taking part in an Act of Worship. You may also want to supplement this focus with :

- a vase of flowers
- a piece of sculpture
- a large shell/natural object
- a cross

Think about how we use silence as a stilling activity and a thought process. This may be a focused way to conclude your Act of Worship

Keep the Act of worship simple and focused. Use some of the following –vary according to the children and theme:

- A short bible passage
- A story /poem/piece of literature
- A picture/postcard/OHP
- A prayer –class prayer or other
- A hymn/song
- A natural object depending on the season
- A personal account
- Music to begin or end
- Silence
- Thought for the day

Invite the children to discuss the content of the worship

These ideas may also provide a framework for the children to organise their own Acts of Worship- this is something we should try to encourage the children to do. It is a good opportunity for developing Speaking and Listening activities. It provides a wide range of opportunities for SMSC development.

Prayer

Is as simple and honest, as liturgical, and responsive as you want it to be. The range of resources is enormous but it's worth remembering that possibly the best resource is the children themselves when they freely write/offer their prayers in their own words.

Singing/music

There are many resources available. Kevin Mayhew (www.kevinmayhew.org.uk) is one of the top publishers of resources of music books and CDs. New songs written every year that are appropriate for collective worship. It is important never to get trapped into relying on the old ones from yesterday or deciding that all the old songs are part of the past and not relevant to the present day in school worship. Out of the ark (www.outoftheark.co.uk) music and Redhead Music (www.redheadmusic.co.uk) are both popular resources with schools – go to their websites for songs for Easter or Harvest or everyday assemblies and music for all occasions. They also publish other songwriters for both KS1 and KS2, offering rich material to facilitate excellent musical worship.

Although musicians in the school are of great value in supporting worship, there are obvious benefits to using CDs: they can be used in any room or corner in which you may find yourself whether it be the computer area, classroom carpet corner or the hall with the whole school and, of course they can be available simultaneously for different groups gathered in different parts of the school for worship. Using actions and repetitive action routines, often choreographed by pupils themselves, allows everyone, even those who cannot read the words or speak English, to join in and have fun.

Story telling

Schools are good at selecting stories from a wide range of sources, including religious texts, to use in collective worship. It is important to remember that stories specifically from religious traditions are used within faith communities not just to teach moral messages but to communicate something of beliefs about God. When used in inclusive collective worship, their origin should be made clear and that they are sharing the perspective of a particular religious group. That doesn't devalue their use because children and adults who do not share the particular religious faith can still find something of value in a good story. The Bible, for example, can be a rich resource for collective worship.

There are so many different children's or youth versions of the Bible appropriate for use in collective worship for all different ages. The Street Bible by Rob Lacey is an example which brings the Bible alive with prose that conveys the meaning with an approach that will resonate with children who want to be surprised by the Bible making such sense and impact rather than old language and irrelevance to life. The Bible offers stories of adventure, journey, poetry or songs of lament, creation, friendship, parables and miracles, fights and famines.

Art:

Art, religious paintings and pictures offer a rich resource for collective worship, particularly with the ease of access we enjoy through the internet. There is an example of a school which used the painting of I stand at the door and knock to great effect to get children to ponder what it was they would allow into their lives and what it was they would keep out and to which the door would be kept shut. This

was a secondary school act of collective worship and it resonated with so many of them as they later discussed what it was that they needed to allow in and keep out.

Visitors

Visitors provide information on causes and organisations, personal testimony and interview opportunities. They can be an enriching source of ideas. It is wise to brief them carefully and share the school understanding of collective worship. Some visitors might lead an act of worship; others will contribute to worship which is being led by someone else.

Stillness/Silence

There are few, if any, moments in which complete stillness can descend on a school community without a test or exam being in progress. In collective worship silence and stillness create powerful moments for thinking and listening. 'Drop thy still dews of quietness till all our strivings cease' is a truth to be experienced by the whole school community as they face the usual busy, urgent, rolling programme of learning and achieving. The gift of silence is a gift that can be learnt and practiced in any school and collective worship. It is best learnt when it is not the predictable pattern of every assembly but skillfully used with symbols such as light or water or candle flames and a guided intention of how to use the time of stillness.

Celebrations/Remembrances

Collective worship provides opportunities to celebrate the key festivals that are part of the cyclical yearly pattern of worship. Harvest, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Eid, Diwali, Vaisakhi or Passover – celebrations are all important, and so much of living faith is about celebration and fun. Collective worship must represent the fun as well as the stillness and reflection.

Ritual but not habitual:

The best collective worship is where there are repetitive symbols, songs or signs that single out the time of collective worship as a special recognisable time for the school community but it should never become so repetitive that it becomes predictable and boring. There is a necessary tension between predictability and creativity, between safeness and adventure during the times that the school sets aside for collective worship each day.

Other activities can legitimately be called worship. Amongst these are:

- reflection on the meaning of life
- pondering ultimate questions
- developing a sense of transcendence
- responding to a challenge
- learning from the experience of others