

“Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, “Move from here to there”, and it will move.
Nothing will be impossible for you.”
Matthew Chapter 17, Verse 20



Collective Worship Policy

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Introduction

Our Academy vision is “Living Well Together with Dignity, Faith and Hope”. We aspire to take dignified decisions and afford dignity to all members of our community, regardless of background or circumstance. Our position as a Voluntary Aided Church Academy means that the Christian faith has a central role in all of our actions and decisions. We strive for excellence in all that we do, enabling our student to transform their lives and to hope for happy and successful futures.

At All Saints Academy, we have our Christian faith at the heart of our community, with respect, acceptance of different views and Christian morals promoted throughout lessons and extra-curricular activities. Christian teachings have a prominent place in our daily work with weekly prayers, assemblies, and religious services given a high profile. Our Vision, ‘Living Well Together with Dignity, Faith and Hope,’ informs all strategic planning and the spiritual life of the Academy. While our assemblies cover a broad range of faiths, our collective worship is Christian.

Collective Worship Policy Legal Framework

There must be a daily act of collective worship for all students which takes account of their age and aptitude (Education Reform Acts 1988 and 1996). Parents have the right to withdraw students from collective worship and suitable arrangements should be made to accommodate these students. Sixth formers have the right to withdraw themselves from collective worship. As a church sponsored, Voluntary Aided Church of England Academy, however, worship is central to the life and work of the Academy and is regarded as a very important part of student’s entitlement to a broad and balanced education.

Policy Aims

Through collective worship for the day in our Academy we aim to:

- reflect our vision of “Living Well Together with Dignity, Faith and Hope”
- provide an experience of worship that will allow students to respond to the rich heritage of Christian reflection that underpins our culture
- expose students to Christian language and symbolism and the cycle of the church year
- foster awareness of prayer and support familiarity with some well-known Christian prayers, for example, the Lord’s Prayer
- strengthen and support the Academy community giving expression to and reaffirming the Christian values of the Academy
- celebrate the gifts that each student brings to the Academy community, recognising the uniqueness of each individual made in the image of God and supporting them in developing dignity
- encourage students to reflect on the deeper questions that life poses and to respond with maturity to the wonder and mystery of the world, exploring our faith
- foster a concern for others within the Academy and wider world
- foster an appreciation of the created world and an awareness of our responsibility for it.

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As well as our daily act of collective worship, the Academy will seek to offer further and optional Christian acts of worship on a regular basis e.g. through prayers led by local clergy at Christingle or through our Remembrance Service.

Implementation

There is a clear protocol for Collective Worship at All Saints Academy and all students meet on a daily basis either with their form tutor, Head of Year, Head of House or SLT as worship leader. There is a clear set of expectations for consistency of Collective Worship which are followed by all. Collective worship, whether in assembly or class or tutor time, will:

- have a clear Christian message
- be inclusive towards the whole community, staff and students
- include a variety of elements at different times
- involve the students in devising and leading resources
- have a dedicated focus which signifies what is being reflected upon
- provide a dedicated opportunity for students to reflect/respond to the input

In achieving a meaningful act of worship it is important to distinguish between worship and ritual. Rituals are means of enabling worship and include:

- stories and readings
- songs, hymns and music
- dance and drama
- prayer, meditations
- creative silence
- sacred/secular readings
- artefacts and natural materials
- students' contributions

The Academy will be aware of the timings of religious festivals and any specific requirements relating to them and will explore these through our assemblies and SMSC/PSHCE programme.

As part of our collective worship students will regularly have the opportunity to be quiet and reflect on what has been shared. Students and/or adults will lead the reflection or prayer element and will encourage an ambience of quiet, calm and mutual respect. Those who do not wish to participate will be expected to remain quiet and respectful, giving due regard to the legal entitlement of those who do wish to take part.

Acts of Worship are planned using the four headings of “gathering”, “engaging”, “responding” and “sending” and all Acts of Worship will include:-

- a clear Christian message
- a dedicated visual focus – a lit candle, a vase of flowers, an artefact/picture that reflects something of the theme or projected slides
- a clear plan to lead the students into a period of reflection – input, questions, relevance to age/key stage
- a dedicated opportunity for the students to offer a response to the input, a prayer related to the input or an opportunity for silent reflection.

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- where there is a prayer, students need to be encouraged to listen, be still and reflective and, if they wish to make the prayer their own, to join in the ‘Amen’ response.

As part of our inclusive approach to Collective Worship, where students may be of all faiths and none, we do not feel it is appropriate to:-

- make the students repeat a prayer if they do not wish
- make the students join their hands if they do not wish
- make the students say ‘Amen’ if they do not wish
- *always* have prayers: the Christian ethos of Collective Worship is also present in guided reflection, silence or discussion

As a community based around a vision of “Living Well Together in Dignity, Faith and Hope”, we do, however, expect students to:-

- be respectful
- act in an appropriate manner
- have the daily opportunity for a sense of togetherness which engenders a sense of belonging
- have an understanding that the worship is not done for students but is an experience for all who attend

In addition, we expect staff to:-

- lead worship in the agreed manner, where applicable
- respond to collective worship in an appropriate manner
- develop links with faith groups and, at times, welcome them to lead assemblies and collective worship in the agreed format for the Academy

The Right to Withdraw

Parents/carers have a right to withdraw their children from Collective Worship. If a parent/carer asks for their child to be wholly or partly excused from attending any collective worship at the Academy, the Academy must comply unless the request is withdrawn.

The Academy remains responsible for the supervision of any student withdrawn from collective worship, unless the student is lawfully taking part in collective worship elsewhere.

Parents/carers are not required to explain their reasons for seeking withdrawal. The Principal may wish to clarify with any parent wanting to withdraw:

- The religious issues about which the parent would object their child being taught
- The practical implications of withdrawal.
- The circumstances in which it would be reasonable to accommodate parents/carers wishes.
- If a parent/carer will require any advanced notice of such issue in the future and if so, how much.
- The right of withdrawal was established in the Education Act 1944, re-enacted in the Education Reform Acts of 1988 and 1996.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Governing Body has delegated to the Principal the responsibility for reviewing the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. The Governing Body will approve all major changes to this policy. The policy will be promoted and published throughout the Academy.

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Ongoing evaluation of this policy will inform Academy self-evaluation prior to SIAMS inspections.

Related Academy Policies:

- Religious Studies Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Personal Social Health Education & Citizenship Policy
- Race Equality Policy