

St. Berteline's Church of England Primary School

Worship Policy

As St Berteline's is a Church of England Aided School, the worship is of a clearly Christian nature. We recognise that we cannot make anyone worship because it is an attitude of heart focussed on God; however, as a school we can lead people to the threshold of worship by providing a setting where they may worship God if they so wish.

At St Berteline's Church of England Primary School we always seek to reflect in our worship the Christian foundation of the school and its care for all who work here. Children are helped to understand the meaning of Christian worship and we hope that believers will be able to join in and that others of no faith will reach the 'threshold of worship'.

Every effort is made by the school to involve all children in a daily act of collective worship regardless of their culture or religion. The parents' legal right to withdraw their child from acts of worship is made clear when they initially visit school prior to application. If there are any children whose parents exercise their right to withdraw them from worship, alternative activities will be provided in consultation with the children's parents. This does not mean that the children will be in any way exempt from the Christian ethos of the school which underpins the whole of our school life.

Aims and Objectives

Our central aims of collective worship are to:

Enable children and staff to explore and celebrate the differences and diversity found in the variety of forms of worship in the Anglican Christian tradition.

Lead the school community to the 'threshold of worship' in order for them to make an informed choice about their own involvement and to consider their own personal relationship with Jesus.

Seek to deepen and widen the experience of those of 'faith' and encourage those of 'no faith' so that they begin to feel for themselves something of what it means to worship.

Use celebration, silence, stilling, reflection, contemplation, meditation, prayer, song, symbols and imagery as vehicles for worship and spiritual growth.

Provide opportunities for the whole school community to address God directly through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit through acknowledging his presence, reflecting upon his character and giving Him praise and honour.

Use a vocabulary of worship that encourages the whole school community to attend, participate and lead worship.

Encourage all present to explore their own beliefs and understanding of God, within a Christian framework by learning more about the Christian faith and encountering Christ through worship.

Raise awareness through reflection of the ultimate questions of life relating to matters of faith.

Reaffirm, strengthen and practise key Christian values (eg love, peace, compassion, forgiveness, self giving) and celebrate each unique individual member of the school community as made in the image of God.

Nurture and encourage respect and care for God's created world by promoting a positive attitude to environmental issues locally, nationally and globally.

Seek to provide opportunities for spiritual, social and moral development that is characterised by feelings such as awe, wonder, being uplifted, elation, appreciation, gratitude, respect and reverence.

Develop a sense of community within the school, the locality (eg local church) and foster the sense of being part of a wider community through the celebration of achievements, festivals and special occasions.

Foster a concern for the needs of others.

In summary within our daily act of collective worship, we aim to

- provide an opportunity for children to worship God;
- celebrate all that is good and beautiful and express thankfulness for the joy of being alive;
- provide opportunities for children to share what is meaningful and significant to them, including the darker side of life;
- ensure that the experiences provided are relevant to the age, aptitude and family background of the children;
- give time for silent reflection and exploration of inner space;
- illustrate forms of worship that others have found helpful in their spiritual development eg silent contemplation, dance, singing;
- provide a rich variety of forms of expression eg art, drama, music, story and give children the opportunity to experience these at their own level rather than teachers imposing their own interpretations;
- provide an environment that is conducive to worship, which is professionally co-ordinated and properly resourced;
- always invite, never coerce, remembering that children will be at different stages of spiritual development and that they should feel able to respond and participate at their own level.

Monitoring

Monitoring and evaluation are part of a whole school cycle of self review and this will be achieved over time by asking all stakeholders to reflect on school worship. As a school we hope to never become complacent and always endeavour to improve our practice.

Monitoring of collective worship will involve the following:

- informal observations; checking that practice matches policy
- observing children's attentiveness and levels of engagement
- conducting occasional formal observations of collective worship and providing feedback
- seeking feedback from children, staff, parents, governors, incumbent and visitors (usually via questionnaires)
- observing the extent of the collective worship's influence on children's attitudes and behaviour throughout the school
- holding regular discussions with colleagues at staff meetings
- holding regular discussions with incumbent
- gathering written comments from colleagues on the weekly worship planning sheet
- gathering written comments in our 'Reflections on Worship Book' (from all stakeholders)

Evaluation

The information gathered via one or more of the strategies above will be analysed carefully in order to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the collective worship. The Worship Leader, the Head teacher and Foundation Governors, including the incumbent, will be the main evaluators. Formal evaluation of our Collective Worship Action Plan will take place annually and a new RE and Worship Action Plan will be devised as part of the School Development Plan.

Review

The Head teacher, Governors and staff will regularly review this policy. A worship and planning record sheet is kept weekly to ensure that acts of worship are generally compatible with the requirements of the policy and to inform our learning and planning for further developments. These will regularly include any formal and informal evaluations of acts of collective worship which will assist monitoring, future planning and delivery. Visitors outside the school community, who are regularly involved in acts of worship, are provided with a copy of the Collective Worship Policy as well as a copy of the Code of Practice for Collective Worship at St Bert's.

Responsibilities

It is the ultimate responsibility of the head and governing body of the school to ensure a daily act of worship takes place. At St Berteline's Church of England Primary School the responsibility to coordinate the acts of worship is delegated to the RE and Worship Leader. He/she plans themes, invites and liaises with visiting speakers and keeps a record of the content of each act of collective worship.

Conclusion

At St Berteline's Church of England Primary School, collective worship is highly valued and every effort is made to ensure that all children and staff take an active part in a high quality daily act of collective worship. Worship may contain many elements but at St Bert's we seek to specifically ensure that the act of collective worship is a learning experience as well as a spiritual encounter.

The daily act of worship plays an important role in the overall development of our children. It is pivotal to each working day in school. It provides an opportunity to revisit our school Mission Statement on a regular basis and to identify a way of working and living with each other which will hopefully influence our children beyond childhood into their adult years.