

West Coker Primary School



Religious Education Policy

**Approved by the Governing Body of West Coker
Primary School in May 2025**

Headteacher *Phil Hyland*

Chair of Governors *Helen James*

Our Core Christian Values of Respect, Hope, Community, Wisdom and Kindness run through everything we do and help ensure that our pupils flourish and leave our school as conscientious, well-equipped citizens of the future. Together, we seek to embed a supportive, thoughtful and considerate atmosphere throughout that allows everyone to thrive.

West Coker CofE VC Primary School

Policy for Collective Worship

Last updated: May 2025

In our school our Christian vision shapes all we do:

We aim for every child to flourish. Supported by our core values, children consider all that they say and do, grow in confidence, and value the contribution of others. Taking inspiration from Christian stories, we ensure we are inclusive of all, and value religious, social and cultural difference.

Policy Statement

In West Coker CofE VC Primary School worship is central to the life of school and is the main platform for exploring the school's vision. It is well planned and of high quality so that the whole school community is engaged on a journey of discovery, exploring the teachings of Jesus and the Bible.

For Christians in Church, worship is about honouring God and responding to the loving nature of God as revealed through the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A school is not a Church but is a collection of people who come from a variety of backgrounds for the purpose of education. The family backgrounds may be very different and collective workshop must take account of the varied circumstances of staff and pupils.

At West Coker CofE VC Primary School collective worship aims to be inspirational, invitational and inclusive and will lead people to a threshold where they can witness worship and join in, if they wish.

Through Collective Worship pupils will be offered a space and a place for the telling of the Christian story. They will be offered an understanding of worship through being invited to participate in or observe prayer, reading and reflection on the Bible, liturgy, sacrament and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity. Opportunities to reflect on the beauty, joy and pain of the world will be given. Pupils will be given time to consider their responsibilities to others and to grow in love and service. Time will be given for celebration, both for the accomplishments of school members and to mark the seasonal festivals of the Christian (and other faiths) calendar. Pupils will be offered time to be able to contemplate and develop spirituality.

Legal requirements

There must be a daily act of collective worship in all maintained schools for all pupils, other than those in a nursery class of a nursery school. This can take place at any time in the school day and in any groupings. Collective Worship in a Church of England School must be in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Church of England. In other words, the law on collective worship that applies in a community school, "that it should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character", is not relevant. Worship in West Coker School should be distinctively Christian and reflect Anglican traditions.

The governing body have the responsibility for ensuring that the school meets the requirements for worship detailed in the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist

Schools (SIAMS) Evaluation Document. They are also tasked with monitoring and evaluating the impact of worship on the school community in consultation with the headteacher.

The right to withdraw

In West Coker CofE VC Primary School there are significant numbers of children whose families are members of another faith, or who hold a non-religious world view. Part of the distinctively Christian nature of Church of England Schools is that they should be as hospitable and inclusive to all in the community they serve. As collective worship occupies such a central place in the life of the Church school, this should be made clear on induction, and it is hoped that parents will be making a specific choice of the school knowing that the distinctive ethos will determine a Christian tradition within collective worship.

The 1994 and 1998 Education Acts state that parents have the right to withdraw children from collective worship and suitable arrangements should be made to accommodate these children.

On occasions, a parent may make a request for their child to be withdrawn from Collective Worship. There is an expectation that parents wishing to request a withdrawal will meet with the headteacher to discuss their concerns and requirements. It may be helpful to establish:

- The elements of worship in which the parent would object the child taking part
- The other aspects of school life that are impacted by the Christian foundation of the school such as prayer and reflective areas
- The practical implications of withdrawal
- Whether the parents will require any advanced notice of such worship, and if so, how much

Where parents have withdrawn their children from collective worship and request religious worship according to their particular faith or denomination, the governors and headteacher will seek to respond positively to such request providing:

- Such arrangement can be made at no additional cost to the school
- That the alternative provision would be consistent with the overall purposes of the school curriculum as set out in the Education Acts.

If the parent asks that a pupil should be wholly or partly excused from attending any religious worship at the school, then the school must comply.

(This means that a parent may, for example, request their child does not take part in a carol service when otherwise the child takes part in daily collective worship).

Guiding Principles

Collective worship in West Coker CofE VC Primary School aims to:

- Have a pivotal place in the life of the school.
- Supports pupils and adults in their spiritual growth.

- Be the central vehicle by which the school's vision is unpacked and explored so that the whole school community is challenged and engaged with the teachings of Jesus and the Bible.
- Provide an experience of worship that will offer opportunities for those present to observe and/or respond to the presence, power and peace of God as understood by Christians. This will always be invitational, offering an opportunity to take part whilst allowing the freedom for those of other faiths and none to be present with integrity.
- Support pupils in the development of their understanding of the Trinitarian nature of God in Christian belief.
- Provide a variety of different opportunities for reflection, understanding of diverse liturgical traditions, participation, challenge and enjoyment where all present can be actively involved and develop their own spirituality whilst contributing to the communal journey.
- Help children to become familiar with Christian language and symbolism and the cycle of the Church year so that they are offered a pattern of meanings and a framework into which they can begin to integrate experience.
- Explore a variety of ways of praying, giving children the opportunity to form their own prayers using multi-sensory foci and introduce them to some well known Christian prayers, as well as a variety of prayers of thanksgiving before mealtime and home time.
- Offer opportunities to all children and staff to develop their skills in planning, leading and evaluating the impact of school worship with the support and shared engagement of the local church community. Pupils will be at the centre of this process taking on increasingly independent roles in planning and leading worship.
- Ensure that materials and themes for worship are carefully selected to make sure pupils understand the work of Christians and the church locally, nationally and globally and how this reflects the teachings of the Bible and the example of Jesus.

Development of the policy and links to other policies and documentation

This policy was developed from the Diocesan Model Policy, adapted in consultation with the school's Ethos Committee before being approved by teaching staff and finally the full Governing Body.

We ensure that the principles for collective worship are reflected and applied in our policies and practice including those that are concerned with:

- Pupils' personal development and wellbeing
- SMSC and PSHE
- Staff recruitment, retention and professional development
- Care, guidance and support
- Behaviour, discipline and exclusions
- Working in partnership with parents, carers and guardians
- Working within the wider community

We also ensure that information about collective worship is included in the school prospectus and/or on the school website.

How Collective Worship is organised

The organisation of Collective Worship should be listed here under the headings:

Leadership

- Daily worship is led by the headteacher or other member of teaching staff,
- Pupils involvement is encouraged through the answering of questions or by responding to times of reflection.
- Older pupils are encouraged to contribute to themes for prayer and by the reading of those prayers in collective worship.
- A monthly service in the church is led by the vicar and the ministry team.
- Support and guidance are given to visitors leading worship through an information leaflet produced by the Diocese and through conversation with school staff. This policy is also shared with all visiting

Planning

- The act of daily worship is planned by the member of staff that delivers that day's worship.
- The school and Wellbeing Council will lead assemblies throughout the year that support the work they are doing.
- Collective worship follows the Fruits and Shoots scheme to ensure that Christian calendar is followed. Significant Christian dates such as Easter and Christmas are celebrated at West Coker Church with a strong emphasis on their importance.
- The school's Christian values of the school are identified, expressed and celebrated through most acts of collective worship. For example, school rewards reflect them and draw on their impact on pupil behaviour and attitudes and bible stories are shared with children reflecting on how the values are represented in the stories they hear.
- A pattern for worship which reflects Anglican tradition is used in collective worship, with services following the Window, Mirror, Door format:
 - **Windows**
Giving children opportunities to become *aware* of the world in new ways; to **wonder** about life's 'Wows' (things that are amazing and unexplainable as to why they evoke such a response) and 'Ows' (things that upset us and cause us to be uncertain). In this children are learning *about* life in all its fullness.
 - **Mirrors**
Giving children opportunities to *reflect* on their experiences; to **meditate** And **reflect** on life's big questions and to consider some possible answers. In this they are learning *from* life by exploring their own insights and perspectives and those of others.
 - **Doors**
Giving children opportunity to *respond* to all of this; to **do** something creative as a means of expressing, applying and further developing their thoughts and convictions. In this they are learning to *live* by putting into action what they are coming to believe and value.

Services will always involve the sharing of a hymn and a prayer

- Materials used will including websites, artefacts, stories, drama scripts, artwork, music, songs, film clips, and the focal points of a candle and a cross will be present at all worships.
- Opportunities are provided for children and adults to explore faith in today's world. These include:

Nature Exploration:

- Spending time in nature can foster a sense of wonder and awe, prompting children to reflect on the beauty and mystery of the world around them, fostering a connection to the divine.

Faith-Based Resources:

- Utilizing apps, storybooks, and other resources designed to engage children's minds and hearts with faith-based content can be a valuable tool for nurturing their spiritual development.

Open Dialogue:

- Creating spaces for children to ask questions and express their doubts can help them to develop a deeper understanding of their faith

Spiritual Practices:

- Engaging in practices like reading the Bible, praying, meditating, and journaling can deepen one's personal relationship with faith.

Community Service:

- Volunteering time and resources to serve others can be a powerful way to express faith and make a tangible difference in the world.

- The Trinitarian nature of God is explored through RE lessons and is reinforced in Collective Worship with the presence of 3 candles. Children are reminded of the importance of this through questioning.
- Spiritual growth through prayer, stillness and reflection is nurtured by engaging with a variety of following practices. Not all of them all of the time, but a changing diet to ensure freshness of feeling and experience.

Prayer and Reflection:

- Dedicated Time- specific times for prayer, either individually or collectively, encourage quiet contemplation and connection with something larger than oneself.
- Reflection in Lessons- Religious education (RE) and other subjects include opportunities reflection on the day's learning, personal experiences, or stories, fostering a deeper understanding and connection with the material.
- Collective Worship- daily or weekly collective worship services incorporate prayer, song, and reflection, providing a space for spiritual growth and community.

Stillness and Mindfulness:

- Mindfulness Practices- mindfulness practices, such as breathing exercises, help students develop awareness of their thoughts, feelings, and surroundings, fostering a sense of calm and inner peace.

- Quiet Time- Providing opportunities for quiet time and stillness, whether through designated spaces or specific activities, help students develop a sense of inner peace and reflection.

Nurturing a Sense of Meaning:

- Big Questions- RE and other subjects encourage students to explore challenging questions about life's meaning and purpose, beliefs about God or ultimate reality, and ethical issues, fostering critical thinking and spiritual exploration.
- Personal Journeys- We can support students' personal spiritual journeys by providing opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs, experiences, and values, as well as to learn about the beliefs and practices of others.
- Community and Connection- Fostering a sense of community and belonging within the school, where students feel valued and supported, contributes to their spiritual well-being and sense of purpose.

Organisation

Collective Worship is organised to take account of:

- The different groupings of worship, including whole school/key stage/class worship.
- The different settings and places for worship; how the worship space is made special; and how the atmosphere for worship is created using:
 - The liturgical colours of the seasons of the Church Year,
 - Christian signals and symbols, candles, music, a focal point,
 - Ritual and liturgical responses,
 - How the children are seated,
 - An outdoor area e.g. spiritual garden, the local church.
- Collective Worship is held daily at 1pm on Monday to Thursday and at 8:50am on Fridays (to allow parents to join us). Services at the Church are held monthly at 2:45pm, or 2:30pm for significant Christian events.

Roles and responsibilities

- The Governing Body
 - Ensure compliance with statutory requirements for collective worship.
 - Support the ethos of the school, particularly if it is a faith-based institution.
 - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and inclusivity of collective worship.
 - Approve the policy and ensure it aligns with the school's vision and values.
 - Engage with stakeholders to reflect the community's diversity and beliefs.
- The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
 - Lead the implementation of the collective worship policy.
 - Ensure daily worship is provided and is inclusive, meaningful, and reflective.
 - Promote a positive ethos that reflects the school's values and spiritual development.
 - Coordinate with clergy and external partners to enrich worship experiences.
 - Train and support staff in delivering collective worship confidently and appropriately.
- Clergy and Church Partners
 - Contribute to planning and leading worship in line with the school's faith tradition.

- Offer pastoral support and spiritual guidance to the school community.
- Foster links between the school and local faith communities.
- Encourage pupil participation and understanding of religious practices and values.
- Teaching and Support Staff
 - Model respectful behavior during worship and encourage pupil engagement.
 - Support the delivery of collective worship, whether leading or assisting.
 - Create a calm and reflective atmosphere conducive to worship.
 - Encourage inclusivity and respect for diverse beliefs and backgrounds.
 - Provide feedback to SLT on the impact and reception of worship sessions.
- Pupils
 - Participate respectfully and thoughtfully in collective worship.
 - Contribute ideas and sometimes lead aspects of worship.
 - Reflect on values and spiritual themes presented.
 - Respect the beliefs of others and engage in a spirit of community.
- Parents and Carers
 - Support the school's ethos and collective worship policy.
 - Engage with opportunities to attend or contribute to worship events.
 - Communicate respectfully if they wish to withdraw their child from worship.
 - Encourage discussions at home about values and spiritual development.
- Visitors
 - Respect the school's values and collective worship practices.
 - Contribute positively when invited to lead or participate.
 - Follow safeguarding procedures and school protocols.
 - Enhance the experience by sharing diverse perspectives or expertise

Staff development and training

We ensure that all staff, including support staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

Monitoring and evaluation

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation should be identified here – e.g.

- Pupil Voice
 - Small group conversations to explore pupils' understanding and engagement.
- Pupil worship teams
 - Planning and leading worship, then reflecting on the experience.
- Observations and Reflections
 - Visits by senior leaders to observe worship and assess consistency with the policy.
- Link governor visits
 - Governors with responsibility for RE or worship attend and report back.
- Parental Feedback
 - Gather views on the value and inclusivity of worship.
- Church and community partner input
 - Reflections from clergy or visitors who lead or attend worship.
- Review and Evaluation

- A formal evaluation of the collective worship policy and its implementation.
- Action planning
 - Use findings to inform improvements and future planning.
- Inclusion audits
 - Ensure worship is accessible and meaningful for all pupils, regardless of background or belief.

Disseminating the policy

We ensure that this policy is known to all staff and governors, parents and carers and, as appropriate, to all pupils. This policy is available on our school website.

Other useful documents

(Can be found on the Diocesan website)

- Guidance for visitors leading Collective Worship, including a code of conduct,
- Example Visitors Leaflet about Collective Worship,
- Collective Worship Planning Proformas,
- Evaluation and Monitoring – Ideas and Systems,
- Suggested resources for Collective Worship,
- Spirituality – What is it?

Date of last review

Headteacher signed

Chair of Governors signed