St Mark's Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior School

Growing together; becoming all we are created to be

Policy for Collective Worship

LIVING OUR VISION

The **FACE** of St Mark's: **F**orgive, **A**spire, **C**ompassion, **E**ngage

*Our **aspiration** at St Mark's is that learning more about ourselves, others and our world is seen as a joy and a huge privilege.*
*We will seek to follow the example of Jesus in our own lives, deepening our relationships with one another and showing **compassion** and **forgiveness** in all that we do.*
*Our **engagement** with the local community and church will be strengthened and grow, leading to the mutual flourishing of all.*

Legal Framework

There must be a daily act of collective worship in all maintained schools for all pupils, other than those in a nursery class or a nursery school. This can take place at anytime 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 St Mark's C of E Junior School should be distinctly Christian and reflect Anglican traditions.

The Governing Body of the school 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.

School Statement on Collective Worship

In St Mark's, worship is central to the life of school and is the main platform for exploring the school's vision: ***Growing together, becoming all we are created to be*. We do this by:**

- **Fostering a sense of belonging to the family of God and also to St Mark's school community**: specifically through our understanding of the key verse for our Vision; ***'One body, many parts' 2 Cor 12.*** We are all part of one body, but we all have our unique part to play. St Mark's school community cannot exist in the same way, without every member playing their part.
- **Developing a sense of self-worth** and celebrate the gifts that each child and adult brings to the School Community
- **Encouraging respect, understanding and empathy towards other people's beliefs and practices:** as we learn and understand more about each other and the world we live in, we ***grow*** in our relationships and enable others to flourish in their uniqueness
- **Enabling the children to become familiar with the key stories in the Bible**, specifically those linked to our FACE Values, in order to ***grow*** in their appreciation for the relevance it has for today and that, for Christians, it is God's word
- **Providing opportunities for invitational reflection, participation, and enjoyment** where all present can be actively involved whilst also considering how they might respond to become even more of who they are created to be
- **Strengthen the School Community** by reaffirming the core Christian Values which underpin the School's Vision, Curriculum and Policies and, in response to our commitment to serve our local and global community, be prompted to take action through outward focussed events.

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 are very different and collective worship at St Mark's account of the varied circumstances of staff and pupils.

Children and families feed directly into St Mark's from Benhall Infant School, a non C of E school. The content and nature of 'Collective Worship' is a very different one in each school which means that this forms a very important part of our transition provision; we feel it is crucial that we ensure our acts of Collective Worship are fully invitational, where each child can participate with integrity.

In St Mark's the purpose of collective worship will be to lead people to a threshold where they can witness worship and join in, if they wish.

"Worship in (CofE) schools promotes theological and Religious Literacy and liberates participants to an imagining of a different order of justice, mercy and hope"[1]

Through Collective Worship, pupils are offered a space and a place for the telling of the Christian story. They are offered an understanding of worship through being invited to participate in or observe prayer, reading and reflection on the Bible, liturgy and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity. The significance of sacraments, including the Eucharist, are taught through Collective Worship and as part of the RE Curriculum and children are encouraged to reflect upon the impact of such sacraments on the lives of Christians today.

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 is given for celebration, both for the accomplishments of school members and to mark the seasonal festivals of the Christian (and other faiths[2]) calendar. Pupils will be offered time to be able to contemplate and develop spiritually.[3] Collective Worship in our school is invitational, inspirational and inclusive.

Aims and Guiding Principles
Collective worship in St Mark's aims to:

- Have a pivotal place in the life of the school.
- Support 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

[1] CEEO Vision statement "Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good" Autumn 2016

[2] Collective Worship in a CofE school must be in alignment with the religious foundation of the school (Christian), however there is a responsibility for schools in all contexts to mark, respond and learn from the festivals of other faiths. This may be designated as a separate act, not to be conflated with collective worship.

[3] "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God and to devote the will to the purpose of God". William Temple (1881-1894)

- 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.

- Provide an opportunity to understand the significance the Eucharist through an agreed service or experience (agreed with the local incumbent and the Diocese of Gloucester)

- 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 know Christian prayers, as well as a variety of prayers of thanksgiving before mealtimes 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.

Organisation

We gather together for whole school Collective Worship times four times per week. Once a week each class has a time of Class Worship where children explore the value in focus in depth, in an age appropriate way.

The content and nature of each Collective Worship varies so that at the end of each week a balanced approach and view to Worship is achieved. Collective Worship usually takes place from 10.30a.m. – 10.50a.m. each day.

Collective Worship Prayer (used in daily acts of Collective Worship, led by members of FACE Committee)
We light this candle to remember:
God the Father *who created the earth and is powerful, wise and loving*
We remember ***God the Son****, Jesus,*
who came to earth to show us the best way to live and how to forgive. He brings peace, healing and hope.
We remember ***God the Holy Spirit*** *who came as a gift as God's power in us to remind us that we are never alone.*

All members of teaching staff attend each act of Worship, as far as is possible.

The usual pattern of Worship for St Mark's each week is as follows:

Monday	Whole school Worship – by Open the Book from St Mark's /Youth for Christ Team
Tuesday	Whole School Worship – led by Mrs Fitch / local vicar
Wednesday	Whole School Worship led by Mrs Fitch / Mr Edwards
Thursday	Class Worship – led by teachers & FACE Committee
Friday	Whole School Celebration Worship led by Mrs Fitch / SLT

We celebrate children's academic and personal success, referring to how our vision and values have been out into action, as well as British Values

The children also lead and take part in Services at St Mark's Church. During the Autumn Term they will be part of a Harvest Festival and Christmas Service. In the Spring Term they will lead the Easter Service and during the Summer term they will attend the Leavers Service – this takes place at school. Y6 will attend the Leaver's Service at Gloucester Cathedral each year. St Mark's school community also benefits from two Experience Journeys provided by members of St Mark's Church that enables the children to ask big questions and dig deeper in their understanding of key festivals.

Planning

Themes for Worship are taken from a range of resources including Roots and Fruits, Values for Life, iSingPop and Picture News for Church School. Each value is covered over one term, approximately 5 weeks.

- Each act of Worship gives an opportunity for children to experience an inviting welcome, to learn and talk together, to reflect and consider how they might respond / be transformed as a result of their time in worship.
- Whole School Worship takes place in the School Hall. A table is set up with a cross and three candles to represent the Holy Trinity. The worship table also has a sculpture that represents community and remind us that we are part of our school, local, national and global community.
- A montage of symbols of our 4 core FACE Values is a focus point above our worship table. These show how the Bible stories underpin each of the values. It is referred to, almost every day, as we continue to explore and unpack the significance of these Bible Stories in every day life.
- The children enter and leave Collective Worship with a song in focus and are invited to sing together.
- Each Collective Worship begins with a prayer written
- Each half term, a team on our FACE Committee leads a whole school Collective Worship and a Class Worship.
- Each term, one Year Group leads a themed assembly that includes a time of prayer and reflection at the end. Parents attend this.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Members of the FACE committee regularly evaluate Collective Worship and reflections are discussed at our FACE committee meetings with a view to adapt and refine our practice. Examples of these are kept for reference.

Participation in Collective Worship is encouraged yet always invitational; opportunities are consistently built in to ensure this.

When Governors visit the School they will attend Whole School Worship and report on its impact, also on VALUES across the Curriculum.

As part of our evaluation, questionnaires are given to children to assess the impact and enjoyment of Collective Worship.

The Right of Withdrawal from Collective Worship

The 1944 and1988 Education Acts state that parents have the right to withdraw children from collective worship and suitable arrangements should be made to accommodate these children.

In St Mark's 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 is 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.

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 to the child taking part
- The practical implications of withdrawal
- Whether the parent 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 head teacher will seek to respond positively to such requests providing:

- Such arrangements 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.)*

Development and Sharing of 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.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the Diocesan Collective Worship Guidance Document.

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 with the wider community
- We also ensure that information about collective worship is included in the school transition information and on the school website.

Approval/review by governing body: Ethos Committee

Date of next review: Autumn Term 2027