

Newbury Park Primary

Policy for Collective Worship

1. Introduction

At Newbury Park Primary we are proud to serve a culturally diverse community and believe that we can all achieve by learning together and from each other. We recognise that we serve children from a wide range of faith communities and that the diversity of faith and belief is a strength of the school. We believe that it is important that all children learn about and develop an understanding and respect for the faith and beliefs of others.

The school is required by law to hold a daily 'act of collective worship'. This is usually part of an assembly. We believe strongly that this 'act of worship' must be made accessible to pupils of all faiths and beliefs.

2. What is Collective Worship?

Collective worship is a time distinct from the rest of the school day, providing a focus for thought, inspiration and reflections of pupils (and staff) whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none. It is distinct from curriculum time, Religious Education and assemblies, but to ensure that collective worship is meaningful to pupils, it usually makes up a short part of an assembly or circle time that is in some way linked to the focus of the collective worship.

At the start of a typical session of collective worship, the leading member of staff presents on a topic. Then staff and children will spend a short period of time to quietly reflect about the topic. A candle, a picture, flowers, music or another stimulus is used to focus the thinking.

Collective worship occupies an important and unique place in the life of Newbury Park Primary School, providing an opportunity for members of the school community to pause from activity, to gather, to remind themselves of and to reflect upon the beliefs and values which bind the school community together. In this way we aim both to affirm and to protect the integrity of all members of the school community.

3. Aims of Collective Worship

For the school:

Collective worship contributes significantly to the ethos of Newbury Park Primary school and it is our aim that it is a time when the school community can:

- share common aims and values
- celebrate achievement and special times
- explore together the world in which we live
- develop a community spirit
- provide collective support at times of sadness or sorrow
- give all regular time and opportunity for reflection and to move from what is of immediate but passing concern, to broader and more lasting concerns of life

For the pupils:

We also intend that Collective Worship contributes to the development of the pupils as a 'whole' person by providing opportunities to:

- develop a sense of awe and wonder at the world around them
- consider spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues
- reflect on what it means to be human
- explore their own beliefs
- develop their own spirituality
- reinforce positive attitudes
- participate and respond

4. The Organisation of Collective Worship

There will be an opportunity for collective worship for all children each day.

Collective worship takes place in a variety of settings:

- Phase assemblies (e.g. Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, Years 5 and 6)
- House assemblies (with classes from Years 1 to 6)
- Class assemblies, circle time and class based acts of worship

Each term a timetable of assemblies is devised along with a schedule of assembly themes.

Resources are available for teachers leading assemblies in the PPA library and on the intranet.

5. Collective Worship and the Curriculum

Collective worship time is distinct from curriculum time. However, in our school, collective worship will at times feature aspects of the curriculum, which will enhance the experiences of pupils by reflecting on the work done in classes. At times, collective worship will enrich classwork through its consideration of subject matter from different perspectives.

6. Creating an Appropriate Setting For Worship

Wherever the collective worship takes place, staff will ensure that an appropriate atmosphere is created, pupils are being given the opportunity to reflect and think in depth and both pupils and teacher adopt an appropriate bearing towards the activity. To create an appropriate atmosphere for collective worship, it is helpful that a focal point is created. This can be done in many ways such as: displays on the theme, a lighted candle, pictures, sayings, religious text, thoughtful spoken response, artefacts to enhance a message, poems and music.

7. Using Prayers and Sacred Texts in Collective Worship

Staff must be sensitive to the nature of our school community and be particularly careful with how prayers and sacred texts are used. Prayer is personal and cannot be imposed on others (for example: it is not appropriate for children to be asked to say 'Amen' at the end of a prayer).

Prayers can be used in the following form:

- “And now, in a moment of stillness, I would like you to listen to the words of a well-known prayer that is very important to...(Christians/Muslims/Hindus etc.).”
- Prayers can be written by the children themselves if it is within their faith tradition. They can be introduced e.g. “I would like you to listen to a prayer written by...”.
- Prayers can be led by a member of staff e.g. “I would like you to listen to a prayer that is important to me as a Sikh/Buddhist/Jew etc.)”.

Many sacred texts have messages that could be used meaningfully with our pupils. However, caution should be used when utilising holy texts and due consideration must be given to the tradition that surrounds each one.

8. The parental right to withdraw pupils from collected worship

Parents may withdraw their children from the act of worship element within school assemblies or in class assemblies by writing to the Head Teacher. The “right to withdraw” a child from collected worship can be in whole or in part (e.g. particular times of the year or themes etc.).

We strive to be an “inclusive school” in which all pupils take part in the full experience of school life. To this end it is important that the school engages with parents prior to any decision to withdraw a pupil. Parents should receive an opportunity to enable them to understand the actual context, practice and intention of collective worship at Newbury Park.

Members of staff may withdraw from collective worship by writing to the Head Teacher.

9. Policy review

This policy was reviewed in March 2012.

Approved by governors July 2012.

Appendix A

Guidance for Staff - Assemblies

Staff leading assemblies are expected to ensure that they are properly prepared and that the assembly is properly presented. Staff should also note the following principles and practical considerations:

- Variety in presentation is important. Tools to aid delivery can include: video, PowerPoint presentations, drama (rehearsed or spontaneous), poetry, dance and religious or other artefacts. Stories can be told as well as read. Where appropriate, visitors can be invited in to lead or help with assemblies.
- Whilst parts of an assembly such as notices may sometimes have to be sacrificed due to the pressures of time, the collective worship is the one absolutely essential ingredient in every assembly and cannot be missed.
- Music can be an important part of assembly. Songs which have been properly rehearsed in singing assemblies or in class can be used in all assemblies. Music on entering and leaving assembly is a good means of creating atmosphere and music can also be used during collective worship time.
- High expectations of behaviour are expected throughout the assembly. For leadership, singing and house assemblies, this is made easier when class teachers bring their class into the hall promptly and in an orderly fashion, having walked into the hall quietly and calmly. It is the school's expectation that children will sit quietly and wait for the assembly to begin. This preliminary 'quiet space' is an important aspect of preparing for collective worship. Children who are unable to behave appropriately during an assembly can be moved to sit next to a member of staff and then sent, either directly after the assembly or at playtime, to apologise to the assembly leader, with further sanctions at her or his discretion.
- Good timing is essential, especially with the demands of the curriculum. Unless there are special circumstances, an entire class assembly should not exceed 15 minutes and a house or leadership assembly should not exceed 20 minutes. This clearly has an implication for all class teachers, since it is important to quietly and calmly lead each class into the hall for the start of a house or leadership assembly so that they can finish on time. It is also essential that the leader of the assembly is prepared to begin and finish on time.