



St Mary's C of E (VA) Primary School

Working together
in an inclusive Christian environment
to allow every pupil to shine brighter and brighter.

St Mary's is an inclusive school where we believe that all people are of equal value, irrespective of their ethnicity, culture, religion, gender, ability or sexual identity. We recognise and respect differences.

Collective Worship Policy

This policy is GDPR compliant.

Date of issue: February 2026

Last reviewed/adopted: February 2026 (FGB)

Next review date: Spring 2028

Signed: _____

Date: _____

St Mary's Collective Worship Policy -Draft

Our Christian Vision

St Mary's Church of England School was founded as a Christian charity to educate children of the parish, particularly those from poorer and working families, in accordance with the principles of the Church of England. Our founding trust deed states that the school should always be conducted in union with the Church of England and in furtherance of Christian education, rooted in care for others, stewardship, service and community. This commitment is further reflected in the Christian ethos statement set out in the school's Instrument of Governance, which guides the values, vision, and practice of the school today.

"Shining Brighter and Brighter" — Proverbs 4:18

Our school vision, "**Shining Brighter and Brighter**," reflects the message of Proverbs 4:18: *"The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day."* This chapter encourages everyone to seek wisdom, make good choices and follow the path of light rather than darkness.

As we learn and grow in knowledge, character and kindness, our lives shine more brightly, inspiring others and making our whole community stronger. Each child is encouraged to connect our vision to their own personal story and interpretation, recognising how their unique experiences and gifts help them to "shine brighter and brighter" and share that light with others.

Our vision today continues our founding Christian legacy. At St Mary's we seek to enable every child and adult to flourish as a unique person, created and loved by God, growing in wisdom, hope and compassion. Collective Worship is central to this vision: it is a daily opportunity to encounter God, explore meaning, build character and strengthen our community, helping every member of our school to grow in the light of Christ and to shine more brightly in the world.

Policy Statement

As a Church of England school, worship is an affirmation and celebration of our Christian ethos where children have the opportunity to learn, worship and grow in their understanding of God and of themselves. Worship in our school is not simply a statutory duty; it is the heartbeat of our school life – a time to gather together, reaffirm our vision and values, and celebrate the central role that each pupil and adult has to play in our community.

Our acts of collective worship reflect the variety of traditions found in the Church of England and follow the Christian liturgical year. The daily Christian act of worship is central to our ethos and is supported by all staff and governors. It makes an important contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the whole school community.

Aims of Collective Worship

In line with legislation, our Christian foundation, and the National Society for Education's guidance (2021), Collective Worship at St Mary's aims to:

- Provide opportunities for children and adults to worship God and grow spiritually through prayer, reflection, stillness, and other forms of worship.
- Explore the school's Christian vision and how it underpins shared values and virtues, reflecting on moral values such as compassion, gratitude, justice, humility, forgiveness, and reconciliation, and developing virtues such as resilience, determination, and creativity that contribute to character development and learning.
- Help children and adults understand the relevance of faith in today's world by encountering the teachings of Jesus and the Bible, and by developing an understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God.
- Encourage children and adults to explore and reflect on their own beliefs in a supportive and inclusive environment.
- Develop a sense of community and belonging, recognising the importance of shared Christian values and fostering a common ethos.
- Enable all children and adults to appreciate the diversity of Christian worship, including music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, liturgical traditions, festivals, and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- Provide opportunities for children and adults to engage in the planning, leading, and evaluation of Collective Worship, developing skills and contributing to the ongoing improvement of worship practice.

Legal Requirements

We comply with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which requires that:

- All registered pupils take part in a daily act of Collective Worship, unless withdrawn by parents
- Worship is conducted in accordance with the school's Trust Deed and Church of England character
- All acts of worship are Christian in character
- Worship is appropriate to pupils' age, aptitude and background
- Worship normally takes place on the school site, but may also occur in church on special occasions
- Responsibility rests with the Governing Body in consultation with the Headteacher

Principles of Collective Worship

Collective Worship at St Mary's is:

- **Inclusive:** Worship is accessible to all, recognising that children and adults come from a variety of faith and non-faith backgrounds. Language and actions never assume belief, and everyone is respected.
- **Invitational:** No one is forced to pray or sing. All are invited to join in as they feel comfortable, with integrity and freedom.
- **Inspiring:** Worship encourages reflection on life's big questions and motivates positive action in school and beyond.

Spiritual Styles

We recognise that people connect with God and reflect spiritually in different ways. Our Collective Worship draws on a range of spiritual styles, including:

- **Word-based:** Bible stories, teaching and explanation
- **Symbolic:** candles, crosses, colours of the church year, visual focus
- **Quiet and reflective:** silence, stillness, guided reflection
- **Creative:** music, singing, art, drama, storytelling
- **Active and social:** discussion, response activities, acts of service

This variety ensures that every child can encounter worship in ways that speak to their own spiritual style.

Implementation

Christian Foundation

We use the Bible as a source of inspiration and learning. Children become familiar with well-known Christian prayers such as the Lord's Prayer. Worship follows the Christian year and celebrates major festivals such as Harvest, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and Trinity.

We use an Anglican pattern for worship, for example:

- Gather
- Engage
- Reflect
- Respond
- Send

Worship Space

We aim to provide a worship space that is calm, welcoming and meaningful, with appropriate use of colour, music, symbols and artefacts.

Parish Links

We foster strong links with St Mary's Church. The Rector and members of the parish are involved in leading regular worship.

The school holds worship and special celebrations including Harvest, Christmas and Easter in St Mary's church throughout the year.

Connections with Other Christians and Faiths

As part of the global Church, we welcome links with other Christian traditions and organisations. We have strong links with Northchurch Baptist Church.

We also respect and celebrate the diversity of faith and belief in our community. We endeavour to provide a setting in which the integrity of those present is not compromised, where everyone finds something positive for themselves and there is no pressure to participate inappropriately or to believe.

Rights and Responsibilities

As a school we recognise that a partnership with parents/carers is essential to help pupils flourish. Worship is regarded as special time in our school day where we gather as a school family. Reflecting our ethos as a Church of England school, collective worship is an inclusive opportunity for those of all faiths and worldviews to be present with integrity.

We respect the legal right of parents to withdraw their child/children from acts of collective worship. However, in view of the Christian ethos of our school, we hope that all pupils will participate in collective worship, and that anyone wishing to withdraw their child will discuss this with the headteacher before making their decision. Following these discussions, any desire to formally withdraw pupils from worship must be done via a letter to the Headteacher.

Planning

Collective Worship is planned by the Headteacher and Collective Worship Lead in consultation with staff and clergy. Long-term plans follow the Christian year and reflect the school's vision and values. Short-term planning is undertaken by those leading worship. *See Appendix 1*

Organisation

- Collective Worship takes place daily
- It may be whole-school, key stage, class or group worship
- Worship is clearly distinguished from general assembly
- Staff, pupils, clergy and visitors may lead worship
- Parents welcome to attend worship at least half-termly

We expect worship to be conducted in a respectful and dignified way, supported by music, symbols and visual focus.

EYFS

Nursery and Reception will attend whole-school Collective Worship at least once a week and will take part in daily class acts of worship. These include prayers, sharing Bible stories, and reflections on what they are grateful for.

Year 1

At the start of Year 1, children attend Collective Worship at least twice a week during the first term, gradually increasing to full daily participation as they become confident and settled in whole-school worship. This phased approach ensures that all children experience worship in a meaningful and developmentally appropriate way, supporting their spiritual growth and sense of belonging. In line with statutory requirements and our Christian ethos, daily Collective Worship will be available to all pupils once they are settled.

Resources

A separate budget supports Collective Worship. Resources include books, artefacts, music, digital materials and training opportunities for staff.

CPD and Training

Parents, pupils and adults in school are entitled to be led in Christian worship by those who have a secure understanding of the nature of collective worship in a church school context. Therefore, all those leading worship have access to regular, expert led training (for example, from the Diocese) on collective worship, spirituality, and spiritual development and apply this learning.

In addition, school leaders and governors access expert training (for example, from the Diocese) on effective ways to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of collective worship.

Contribution to SMSC

Collective Worship supports spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by encouraging:

- Reflection on meaning and purpose
- Forgiveness and reconciliation
- Respect for others
- Celebration of culture and diversity
- Responsibility and service
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Monitoring and Evaluation

Our school regularly evaluates our acts of collective worship and the impact they have on pupils and adults within the school community with aim of leading to improvement. This involves monitoring by school leaders and governors and takes place both informally and formally as well as by listening to pupil voice, and this is reported to the whole governing body. Everyone who leads worship is asked to evaluate, reflecting on how they can improve and develop their practice. These processes plays an essential part in developing the spiritual growth of our school community. The impact of collective worship is independently inspected by law under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (SIAMS).

Inclusion

Collective Worship is accessible to all, regardless of background, ability or need. We make thoughtful adjustments to ensure that every child can participate with dignity and respect.

For some children, daily attendance at whole-school Collective Worship may not always be manageable. In these cases, we work sensitively to adapt provision so that they can access worship in ways that are appropriate to their needs. All children are warmly welcomed at Collective Worship, and our aim is to support them towards regular participation over time. This journey is personalised, with staff working closely to ensure that each child is included as fully as possible.

Implementation of Policy

The Headteacher, as Collective Worship Coordinator, is responsible for this policy. All staff share responsibility for its delivery.

Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

Links to Other Policies

- Spirituality Policy
- RE Policy
- Relationship and Behaviour Policy

Appendix 1

The weekly collective worship schedule is as follows:

Monday	Gospel Focus: Aligned to the Gospel Reading at Sunday Service at St Mary's (usually lead by Head Teacher)
Tuesday	Further exploration of the Gospel: Aligned to the Gospel Reading at Sunday Service at St Mary's (usually lead by church leaders from St Mary's or Northchurch Baptist Church)
Wednesday	Value/Big Question: Exploring termly Value or Big Question through bible stories (usually led by Head Teacher and/or Collective Worship Team)
Thursday	Reflection and Shared Prayers - children offer prayer intentions and lead personal prayer
Friday	Singing Worship Children sing and respond to a range of hymns linked to the values, seasons and Church calendar

NB: On occasions when assemblies are held, such as celebration, music, drama or awareness-day assemblies, a shared act of worship—such as reflection and shared prayer—will take place beforehand.

The distinction between worship and assembly is clearly marked by the lighting and extinguishing of the candle.