

St Barnabas  
and  
St Philip's  
Church of England  
Primary School

Spirituality, Collective worship and Class worship policy



**A POLICY FOR SPIRITUALITY, WORSHIP AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**  
**AT**  
**ST BARNABAS and ST PHILIP'S SCHOOL**

**Introduction**

This school is in general accord with the Diocesan policy on worship in voluntary schools. As an Anglican school we seek to reflect essential features of the rich tradition of Anglican practice.

We are a school which draws pupils from other denominations and from a variety of multi-faith backgrounds. We seek, in all our activities, to promote shared values and understanding. We believe that Christian love, humility, trust and reconciliation are of prime importance when meeting with people of all faiths.

**The Nature of Worship**

The word 'worship' is derived from the old Anglo-Saxon work 'weathscipe', which means honour. Worship in this sense could be described as an experience which is special and separate from everyday activities, in which reverence is paid to a divine power or Being, or to that which is beyond humanity. Worship in schools is necessarily going to be different from the worship offered by faith groups, where those present may be presumed to have some beliefs in common. It is for this reason that worship in schools is called 'collective' rather than 'corporate', since it must provide material to promote the spiritual development of people of all faiths or of none. Seen from this viewpoint, collective worship in schools seeks to set the individual within the context of the realm of the spiritual. It seeks to give expression to the living relationship between God and the worshipping community and between individuals within that community.

We believe that there is an integral partnership between the content and the conduct of school worship and the ethos of the whole school. We promote this by all staff setting standards as role models for the pupils, which are consistent with the Christian values we teach.

We believe in the importance of prayer in worship that is appropriate to pupils' understanding, and ideas and images that are suitable for their ages and backgrounds. However, we also believe that children can use prayers which are beyond their current understanding where the rhythm and beauty of language offer a pointer to something more to be revealed (eg 'The Lord's Prayer'). A selection of prayers that are sometimes used are included in Appendix 1).

**Entitlement**

There are legal requirements for worship in voluntary aided schools. The 1988 Education Act specifies that:

*"All pupils in attendance at a maintained school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship" unless "the parent.... requests that he or she may be wholly or partly excused from attendance at a religious worship in the school."*

Parents have a right to withdraw their children from daily acts of worship, although the school makes it clear to them in the school's prospectus that the act of worship is central to the life of the school. If however, parents finally decide to take this option for their children, we undertake to ensure that these pupils are adequately supervised, have something purposeful to do and are not made to feel isolated and 'different'.

**Implementation**

There is a daily Act of Worship which is Christian in nature.

We believe in the importance of staff in contributing to the development of a whole-school ethos to support the promotion of Christian values. Teaching staff and support staff regularly take responsibility for leading their own acts of class worship and whole school worship with support and advice available from the Headteacher.

Opportunities are given for pupils to reflect individually on spiritual issues and be followed and developed across the curriculum and throughout the life of the school.

As part of our Anglican heritage we:

- Observe key seasons within the cycle of the Anglican year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Pentecost;
- Focus each half term on one of the core values of Christian spirituality
- Celebrate a service in rotation once a term at St Barnabas & St Philip's churches;
- Offer a twice-yearly service of the Eucharist for Yrs 5-6
- Provide opportunities to discover the value of silence and meditation within the context of Christian worship.

We recognise and celebrate a diversity of approaches when conducting acts of worship both formal and informal and encourage pupil involvement where possible. We recognise the problems involved in conducting a whole-school act of worship for a group of pupils covering a wide range of development. Taking part in a whole-school act of worship encourages a sense of unity and identity among pupils and between pupils and staff. This incorporates a variety of class and whole-school acts of worship into the weekly cycle.

We expect that pupils will be present at acts of worship but the commitment of the school is to respect each individual's faith stance.

We affirm and celebrate pupil achievement and success once a week on one of the occasions when we meet together as a whole school.

Staff are provided with guidance notes to help them structure the time of class-based worship effectively (see Appendix 2). We provide written guidelines to visiting speakers to support them with this task and also a weekly outline of suggested themes coinciding with the core value being considered that half-term (see Appendix 3).

We believe that worship should be set in the context that appeals to the imagination. We promote an atmosphere in the hall or classroom that allows for a range of response that adds to the richness, variety, awe and wonder of the experience.

### **School Spirituality**

'At a time of educational change and challenge, the need to be unambiguous and explicit about the key characteristics of church schools becomes a priority.' (The Chadwick report, 3.2)

#### **1. Definition**

'That which is formed when a distinctive set of beliefs, reinforced and celebrated through a variety of activities and practices, gives rise to particular emotional responses.'

#### **Experiences**

"Authentic spirituality involves an *experience*, a spiritual and often emotional response which can include feelings of significance, reconciliation, awe, joy, peace, acceptance, and comfort. Where these responses derive from spiritual values and convictions, such experiences are often said to be 'transcendent' since they can be experienced even when outward circumstances might naturally lead to despair, rejection, bitterness and hate. In this way, these responses can help us deal with difficult situations involving death, loss, and disappointment. They can lead us to make choices that might seem counter-intuitive and even self-sacrificial.

## Beliefs

But what causes these experiences? Spirituality also involves a set of *beliefs* about ourselves and the world, which can both inspire the spiritual response and provide an interpretation of it. For the Christian, such beliefs come from the Scriptures, the creeds and traditions of the church. They include convictions about the nature of God; who we really are in relationship to Him, and our place in the greater scheme of things. By contemplating such beliefs we are drawn towards an understanding of life's deeper significance and meaning.

## Practices

A third essential component of spirituality is spiritual *practice*. An intellectual consideration of our beliefs does not automatically evoke a spiritual response. As a result various disciplines and activities help us access the spiritual response. Activities such as singing, meditating, praying, allowing scripture to 'speak' to us and corporate activities of worship all play a role in moving us from the head to the heart. For it is in the heart that we find the most powerful effects of spirituality, shaping our responses to life and our world.

With this in mind, St Barnabas and St Philips School demonstrates its commitment to an explicitly Christian Spirituality through:

- a. an *awareness* of Christianity's core values and convictions.
- b. providing appropriate *opportunities and activities* for pupils to experience the virtues arising from them.
- c. A positive celebration and affirmation of these virtues within relationships, curriculum and corporate worship

## 2. Spirituality as a set of Values

Describing spirituality primarily as a set of experiences should not be taken to mean that it is simply a passive response. Christian values and virtues are disciplines that form a vital part of Christian spirituality and are often practiced before they are experienced. A distinctively Christian spirituality, while pervading all areas of school life, will especially inform our attitudes to:

- Friendship
- Endurance
- Hope
- Humility
- Creation
- Peace
- Compassion
- Reverence
- Thankfulness
- Justice/Integrity
- Trust
- Service
- Love

Taken on their own, these values are not necessarily unique to Christianity, but taken as a whole, and informed by the scriptures and Christian tradition, they form the basis of a distinctively Christian world-view. These values are not merely passive beliefs, they necessarily describe attitudes and actions that are to be nurtured and practiced as a distinctive set of Christian 'virtues'. For example...

**a. Integrity**

The word 'integrity' has its roots in words meaning 'whole' or 'complete'. It is related to the word 'entire'. It is about truthfulness, honesty and a reliable consistency in a person's values, intentions and actions. To act with integrity means doing the right thing, even when that involves loss to myself. It means recognizing motives, and refusing to act out of prejudice, intolerance, anger or pride. It is about confronting injustice in appropriate ways in our communities and our wider world.

**b. Courage**

In the Bible, the word 'courage' seems to occur most in phrases where a person 'takes courage'. Often the story tells of people facing something that seems to be pushing them beyond their own resources and then God reminds them of the support and strength that is available. Courage seems to be much more closely linked to trust than to self-reliance. It was shown by Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Paul and, most of all, by Jesus. It was very hard for them to do what was required, but the strength came from a trust that it was God's will and so they would know his strength and support.

**c. Humility**

Humility has a central place in Christ's teaching. It is contrasted with pride, where people ascribe to themselves the honour and glory which is God's alone. Humility acknowledges that God is God and that we should live in trusting dependence upon Him. The Christian message insists that it is through identifying with Christ's humble service and sacrifice that we rediscover that other truth about ourselves – that we are sons and daughters of God and made in God's image. As Mary sings in the Magnificat: He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble (Luke 1:52).

**d. Service**

Words relating to 'servant' and 'service' are central in Christian theology. Some of the most important prophecies in Isaiah speak of the coming of the 'Servant of the Lord' and his role as a 'suffering servant.' That is why Jesus said that he 'came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' Jesus washed the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper – an example to be followed.

The parable of the Good Samaritan also shows we should serve those in need whoever they are. Such service is not offered to gain some advantage for ourselves. 'Going the extra mile' involves sacrifice, putting ourselves out for someone else's benefit. It also means that we cannot serve other masters as well – such as money.

**e. Forgiveness**

God's forgiveness of sin is one of the core messages of the cross. Jesus requires us to 'forgive others as we ourselves have been forgiven', as enshrined in The Lord's Prayer. Historically, the choice to forgive and bear the pain caused by others has given rise to some remarkable stories and is one of the key qualities distinguishing Christianity from other religions.

**3. Spirituality as an Environment**

How is the environment of St Barnabas and St Philips School affected by the School's spirituality?

- Because God is a Loving God, it will include the way people feel cared for
- Because God makes each person with care and delight, it will include a celebration of the uniqueness of each person and their relationship with God.
- Because God is omnipresent, it will include fostering an atmosphere that there is something wonderful and mysterious about everyone.
- Because God creates each person with a purpose, it will be about helping each pupil to discover their unique task.
- Because God is a forgiving God, it will be about the way we practice forgiveness and reconciliation in our relationships.
- Because God is a God of integrity and justice, it will be about the way we handle conflict, disagreement, failure and disappointment

#### **4. Evidence of Spirituality Embodied in School Life**

What might pupils primarily be expected to practice as well as experience in a school whose spirituality is shaped primarily by the convictions and values of the Christian faith?

##### **a. Activities**

- i. An *awareness* of Christianity's core values and convictions. This will be evidenced in:
  - Conversations with pupils who will be able to articulate its key themes
  - Appropriate displays involving with key subject words and biblically illustrated themes
  - Visits to places of worship
- ii. Appropriate *opportunities and activities* for pupils to experience the Christian virtues arising from them. This could include:
  - Debate and discussion
  - Learning walks
  - Photography and Video
  - Expressive arts
- iii. Positive celebration and affirmation of these virtues. This will include:
  - Corporate worship; praying, singing, considering key bible texts
  - Pupil feedback in class, school council, assemblies etc. on their experiences

##### **b. Interactions**

- i. Evidenced by stories of pupils experiences within the school concerning reconciliation; love for another, integrity, courage, humility and service etc.
- ii. The way disciplinary matters are handled by staff

##### **c. Environment**

- i. How the school atmosphere and environment is perceived by pupils, staff, parents, governors through appropriate feedback.