

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

Context and philosophy:

Porter Croft Church of England Primary Academy is a converter Academy which is rich in social, ethnic and cultural diversity. Families of all faiths are welcomed and a large proportion of them are Muslim. The Academy aims to serve its community by providing education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experiences it offers all its pupils. The Academy values and celebrates its diversity and aims to provide collective worship that is reflective of this.

Legal requirements:

Collective worship is a legal requirement of schools under the 1944 Education Act, affirmed in subsequent legislation (1988 and 1996). It is the responsibility of the head teacher and the governors to discharge this requirement. The law states:

- all pupils must attend every day unless withdrawn by their parents;
- it may take place at any time of day;
- it need not involve the whole school at once but can be for any existing group, eg classes or key stages;
- it must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, reflecting the broad traditions of Christian belief;
- it should [take account of] be appropriate to the 'family backgrounds of pupils and to their age and aptitude'. (1988 Education Act)

Purpose:

In 1994 a government circular was issued to clarify the law on collective worship. This is nonstatutory advice, intended to help schools meet the legal requirements. It stated that there should be opportunities for pupils to:

- worship God;
- consider spiritual and moral issues;
- explore their own beliefs;
- encourage participation and response; promote community / shared values; • reinforce positive attitudes.

Through collective worship at Porter Croft, we also intend to:

- develop respect and understanding of the self and of others;
- create a sense of belonging and connecting to the world;
- develop empathy and community with others;
- provide security within which pupils can share their values and beliefs;
- provide opportunities to question and reflect;
- promote discernment and support pupils in combating prejudice;

- encourage an appreciation of the intangible eg beauty, truth, love, goodness as well as for mystery, paradox, and ambiguity.

At Porter Croft Church of England Academy, collective worship is an opportunity to come together to share, reflect and explore personal beliefs, issues of identity, and questions of meaning and purpose. Each half term a new value is introduced and is explored in the acts of collective worship. In this way it makes an important contribution to promoting children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. It is also a vehicle for supporting inclusion as well as building community cohesion. This is achieved through:

- encouraging a sense of awe, wonder and enquiry;
- exploring moral values and how these impact on individuals;
- exploring key events that influence individuals, families, the Academy and the wider community;
- exploring emotions, feelings and beliefs;
- discussing cultural identity and helping children to appreciate [understanding] diverse cultures;
- actively promoting respect and tolerance.

In accordance with the law and the ethos of our Academy, the majority of acts of collective worship reflect the 'broad traditions of Christian belief'. This does not restrict the focus exclusively to Christianity, either in any one 'assembly' or over a week, a term or the year. Furthermore it is good practice to draw on material from a wide range of spiritual, religious and secular contexts and to use traditional songs and prayers in ways that do not undermine the integrity of children and their families. Our aim is that no child be withdrawn from collective worship.

Pupils will be encouraged to explore ideas arising from the stimulus material presented by staff and visitors and invited to reflect on them, from their own perspectives. There is never any intention to impose religious ideas or beliefs on pupils but often the material can raise issues and questions that are relevant to their lives, irrespective of their background.

There will always be a time of quiet when pupils are invited to reflect on the focus of the 'assembly', with an invitation to those children for whom it is appropriate to make their thoughts into a personal prayer. Sometimes words of traditional prayers are used to support that reflection but are grounded in the faith from which they come. The language used will always preserve the integrity both of the child and of the faith from which the prayer comes.

Words for worship might include

- 'Let's make this a quiet time for thinking our own thoughts or, if you want to, talking to God about...'
- 'Here are some words that people/Christians/Muslims use. If you know them you might like to join in...'
- 'Listen carefully to these words. Perhaps there is one word or idea that you would like to remember and take with you today; it may help you think about God if you want to...'

Pattern:

- Monday - whole school - led by the headteacher, whereby the theme for collective worship can be introduced, usually related to the value of the half-term.

- Tuesday - whole school – led by the deputy headteacher –pupils continue to explore the theme/value
- Wednesday – whole school –led by Christian clergy and regularly jointly led by a leader of the Islamic faith.
- Thursday – whole school – led by a class on a rota basis
- Friday - whole school with a focus on celebrating good learning and achievement parents are invited to attend.

Staff and governors at Porter Croft Church of England Primary Academy aim to provide collective worship that offers an inclusive opportunity to foster a sense of belonging for everyone associated with the Academy. For this reason, it is hoped all pupils will take part every day. However, if parents do not want their child to be included, they have the right to withdraw her or him from one or all acts of collective worship. Those wishing to do so are asked to discuss their reasons with the headteacher and to complete and sign a withdrawal form. No provision of alternative activities has been agreed.

Review date September 2015