



Collective Worship Policy

Date adopted	July 2021	Owner	Every Child Spiritual Team
Last reviewed	July 2024	Review cycle	Three Years

Collective worship at St Martin's Schools is a developing and dynamic feature of daily life, which grows from our local context. It has three main intentions: to be truly inclusive, to be invitational and to be inspiring. It takes place at the conclusion of timetabled key stage, year group or class gatherings, known in our schools as 'assemblies', as well as through the opportunities created by Prayer Leaders to pray and / or show gratitude both before lunch and at the end of the school day. In addition, pupils and staff are invited to celebrate key Christian festivals through collective worship in our local Parish Church, [St Martin of Tours](#), just before Christmas and Easter. The incumbent at St Martin's Church also leads special assemblies linked to the church practices and rituals, the liturgical year and our Christian foundation.

Inclusive

Assemblies and collective worship are designed to serve every member of our school community, whatever their background. This is rooted in the Christian teaching of unconditional love and service:

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves." (Romans 12:10)

Whilst drawing upon Christian teachings, making use of symbolism embraced by the Anglican tradition and welcoming visits from both the clergy at St Martin's Church and [Spinnaker](#), our assemblies and collective worship do not assume the faith of any person present and are fully accessible to all. At their most basic level, assemblies and collective worship are an opportunity to come together to reflect on our inclusive Christian values, to celebrate the unique contributions each of us makes to school life and to express gratitude for time shared. Some pupils and staff may enjoy this as an opportunity to further their relationship with God; others may enjoy this simply as an opportunity to be together.

Invitational

Assemblies and collective worship at St Martin's are an invitation into a safe and peaceful space in which all can question, reflect and grow. The Church of England likens this invitation to the hospitality of a 'warm welcome': the door is opened and the fire is lit; pupils and adults may sit as close to or as far away from the hearth as they are comfortable. Collective worship is not something which is 'done' to those present; there is space for dissent as well as consent and there is no compulsion. Those leading are expected to take care to ensure that language used avoids any assumption of faith. Assemblies and collective worship are a respectful celebration of our rich diversity.

Inspiring

We believe that assemblies and collective worship should empower pupils and adults to grapple with big questions about identity, meaning, purpose and morality. Dynamic encounters with topical issues, explored through the lenses of both religious and non-religious worldviews, nurture our spiritual growth. Assemblies and collective worship help us to increase our understanding of Christianity, to develop personal beliefs and / or philosophies and translate these into positive, communal actions. It also helps develop virtues such as resilience, determination and creativity, which develop character and support academic progress. In this way, assemblies and collective worship are at the heart of our mission to 'help each other experience the fullness of life'.

Format

Assemblies at St Martin's are typically structured around five, key elements:

1. An opportunity to **PAUSE** and take a mental break from the busy day.
2. An opportunity to **PONDER** a question, encouraging wonder, empathy or enquiry drawn from a prompt that could be a story, song or current affairs.
3. An opportunity to contemplate the Christian **PERSPECTIVE**, presented as something for consideration rather than as a 'truth' for acceptance; examples from alternative perspectives may be presented.
4. An opportunity for **PRAISE** – a song, which may reflect Anglican expressions of belief or reference God and/or Jesus.
5. An opportunity for **PRAYER** or quiet, personal reflection – whichever is most comfortable.

Responsibilities

The normal expectation within our church schools is for all pupils and teaching staff to view daily assemblies and collective worship as an important part of their own wellbeing and spiritual development. The schools will endeavour to timetable teaching and learning so that all pupils and teaching staff can participate.

The staff on the Every Child Spiritual Team are expected to

- develop assemblies and collective worship within the Anglican tradition
- consider what is most appropriate for the spiritual life of our community
- ensure that worship leaders - including clergy and outside agencies - have regular training in inclusive practice through the diocesan education team
- support, encourage and resource pupil prayer leaders

Teaching staff are normally expected to facilitate assemblies and collective worship, by

- encouraging their class Prayer Leaders to help plan, lead and evaluate class-based assemblies and collective worship
- volunteering to plan and lead year group and / or key stage assembly and collective worship each half term

Three pupil Prayer Leaders per class are selected over the course of the year from those pupils who feel drawn to help others get more from quiet times of reflection. Their knowledge, understanding and skills are developed through regular meetings with a designated member of staff, who is trained in this area.

Prayer Space and Reflective Areas

Each classroom has a reflective area which pupils are encouraged to use to support their spiritual growth. As appropriate to each key stage, this will contain:

- The St Martin's Schools' prayer
- A class prayer book, which pupils are invited to add to
- A class book of 'Awe and Wonder', recording and celebrating experiences which contributed to a sense of being part of something greater
- A class 'Prayer Bear', modelling quiet, respectful behaviours (Early Years, Key Stage 1 and year 3)
- A holding cross (Key Stage 2)

Our permanent 'Prayer Space', situated off the library, welcomes any pupil and staff member who wishes to spend a quiet moment in meditation, reflection or calm. Resources are always available to support the expression of emotions, thoughts and intentions. This area is deliberately free of imagery so that is comfortable for those of all faiths and none.

Assurance

St Martin's Schools are committed to offering high quality assemblies and collective worship and staff and governors take seriously the need to structure, plan, evaluate, participate and collaborate so that quality is assured. Pupils, staff, visitors and governors are involved in evaluation.

Right to withdraw

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from assemblies and collective worship. If considering doing so, however, they should understand that we intend assemblies and collective worship to be meaningful and relevant for all children and staff: for those with a faith background and those with none. Our schools exert no pressure on children to become worshipping Christians, or to participate actively in any activity that will compromise their own family worldview. It should also be understood that, as a Church of England School, our schools' values and ethos are inclusively Christian, and so withdrawing a child from assemblies and collective worship will not prevent discussion of these ideas and themes. Should a parent / carer still wish to exercise their right to withdraw, they are invited to discuss this with their child's class teacher in the first instance, before submitting a letter for the attention of the Executive Leadership Team. The decision to withdraw a child will be logged by the child's class teacher, so that parental preferences are clear. This decision will be revisited in a discussion with the class teacher towards the end of each academic year, so that parents / carers understand what their child will miss and what they will be doing for the duration of the withdrawal. When communicating their preferences, parents / carers should be clear which of the following they wish their child to be withdrawn from:

1. All assemblies, in their entirety
2. The invitation for prayer / personal reflection at the end of assemblies
3. The opportunity for prayer / expression of gratitude before lunch
4. The opportunity for prayer / personal reflection at the end of the day
5. Assemblies and collective worship led by clergy from St Martin's Church, including the exploration of Holy Communion
6. Assemblies and collective worship led by Spinnaker
7. Songs sung as part of assembly which reflect Anglican beliefs
8. Songs rehearsed for assembly, during weekly key stage hymn practice
9. The Christmas and Easter service at St Martin's Church
10. The rehearsal and performance of songs exploring the story of the Nativity, at Christmas