

Collective Worship at The Mill Academy

Introduction

The Mill Academy is committed to offering high quality collective worship. We recognise and value collective worship as central to fostering a sense of community and to expressing the school's key drivers of Being Creative, Being Resilient and Being World Wise.

Collective Worship aims to promote spiritual, moral and cultural development for all our children at The Mill Academy.

In practice this means that structure, planning, evaluation, participation, collaboration, and inspection of worship are all taken seriously by the school and by St Mary's Academy Trust.

It is the unique heartbeat of the school and is offered as part of a wider opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter faith by engaging in conversations about God, ethical and moral issues, both as individuals and together.

All children and members of staff are invited to join together for Collective Worship. At The Mill Academy, Collective Worship takes many forms throughout the week. Our children may experience visitors in school, whole school worship, celebration of achievements, singing worship and child led worship.

Collective Worship at The Mill Academy

Inclusive, Invitational, and Inspiring

Inclusive

Worship is collective in that it involves meeting, exploring, questioning, and responding to others and, for some, to God. Many pupils and staff at The Mill Academy will come from homes of different faith backgrounds as well as of no faith background. Moreover, many pupils will naturally be at different stages of their spiritual journey during their time in school. Pupils will be given the opportunity to think and ask questions.

There is a space to consent, and dissent: to participate and to stand back; and to consider.

It is an expectation that care will be taken to ensure that the language used by those facilitating worship avoids assuming faith in all those participating, listening and watching.

Collective worship should not be 'done to' but will involve meaningful contributions from the whole school community, including pupils.

It is recognised that pupils will bring their own experience to worship. Inclusion requires pupil involvement in planning, leading and the evaluation of worship.

Although part of a national legislative framework, collective worship at The Mill Academy grows out of the local context and out of pupils' experience, including their cultural backgrounds.

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Invitational

Parents, pupils and adults can expect to encounter worship that is consistently invitational. There should be no compulsion to 'do anything'. Rather, worship should provide the opportunity to engage whilst allowing the freedom of those of different faiths and those who profess no religious faith to be present and to engage with integrity. Pupils and adults should always only be invited to pray if they wish to do so and should be invited to pray in their own way. Prayer should always be accompanied by the option to reflect. Music and liturgies used in worship should reflect the best of traditional and modern Anglican worship, it should connect with the theme and explore the sacred to educate and engage. Music will be used to reflect the diverse worship experience of the wider Christian community.

Inspiring

Pupils and adults can expect the worship they encounter in school to be inspirational. Worship should be formational and transformational: it should enable pupils and adults to ask big questions about who we are and why we do what we do. It should motivate pupils and adults into action, into thinking differently, and into reflecting on their and the wider community's behaviour and actions. As a result of inspirational collective worship, they should be inspired to become courageous advocates of causes. It should encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs and/or philosophical convictions. There will always be those who are uncomfortable to enter through this open door of worship in our schools and so the Church of England recognises the right of withdrawal from collective worship for those parents or pupils who wish to exercise this option.

Where parents have withdrawn their children from collective worship and request religious worship according to a particular faith or denomination, the governors and head teacher will seek to respond positively to such requests providing:

- such arrangements can be made at no additional cost to the school
- that the alternative provision would be consistent with the overall purposes of the school curriculum as set out in the Education Acts (see, for example, Part 6 of the Education Act 2002, and Circular 1/94)

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Liturgy

Our Collective Worship ambassadors will invite the children from each class to attend Collective Worship.

Each class will bring a candle to represent the coming together of the school and community.

Children will enter Collective Worship to some music.

The candle will be placed on the Inspirational table at the front and when all classes and candles are present, Collective Worship will begin (see Collective Worship overview for themes and big questions.)

At the end of Collective Worship, we ask children to get their hands ready for reflection.

Each classroom has a 'Reflection' area where the big questions of the week are displayed. At the end of every day, the adults in class will ask the children the big question, some of these answers will be displayed in their Reflection area.

The school also has a 'Spirituality' scrap book where evidence from the big questions are collected.

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The Legal Position

- Current law requires all state-funded schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to hold daily acts of 'Collective Worship'. In England and Wales in schools with no formal religious character, this worship must be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'.
- Collective Worship is a central part of the distinctive character of Church schools, however, it is still subject to legal requirements.
- All registered pupils (apart from those whose parents exercise the right to withdrawal or pupils themselves if over the age of 18) must on "each school day take part in an act of Collective Worship."
- Pupils can be grouped in various ways: as a whole school, according to age, or in groups (or a combination of groups) used by the school at other times. Pupils cannot be put into specific groups just for Collective Worship.
- The daily act of Collective Worship will normally take place on the school premises. Schools are, however, permitted to hold their acts of Collective Worship elsewhere, (e.g. the local parish church) on special occasions.
- The provisions of the 1988 Education Act concerning 'determination' (section 12) and 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (section 7) do not apply to schools with a religious character.
- Responsibility for the oversight of Collective Worship rests with the governors in consultation with the headteacher. Foundation governors have a particular responsibility to ensure that the character or foundation of the school is reflected in Collective Worship.
- Collective Worship is not designated curriculum time under law and should not be subsumed under any part of the curriculum. The act of Collective Worship must be distinctive and identifiable if it is to meet the legal requirements.
- Collective Worship time should not be used as 'intervention time' as this would result in pupils not receiving their legal entitlement to worship provision.

Spirituality at The Mill Academy

Big Questions

At The Mill Academy, we encourage all our children and staff to think about the world round them by asking questions relating to what they see, hear and experience.

Open ended questions have no right or wrong answers, but help broaden thinking processes and also develop speech and language skills.

Each week, our Big Questions will be posted on our social media platforms, in the classrooms and on our weekly newsletter. Please discuss these at home with your children too.

Spirituality enables children to ask Big Questions about our local and global community. Our key drivers of Be Resilient, Be Creative and Be World Wise empower the children to be the best they can be.