

**POLICY DOCUMENT No W12****DEBENHAM HIGH SCHOOL**

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy

**WORSHIP POLICY**

**Reviewed every two years, by the Headteacher**

**History of Document**

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# 1. Introduction

Before setting out the expectations of worship at Debenham High School we consider the purpose of church school.

This vision sets out the sort of education the Church of England advocates and seeks to enable. This vision was articulated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking at a conference for Church of England secondary school Headteachers in September 2016, commented on the present global context saying that those offering education to this and future generations need to make a contribution founded in hope. He said that “in the midst of economic, social and political challenges, we need a vision for what we think education is for.” This vision for education has been overwhelmingly welcomed by the House of Bishops and endorsed by the General Synod of the Church of England. It is a fresh articulation of the Church’s vision and is offered to renew our confidence in all that the church is seeking to do in education. This vision was set out formally in Autumn 2016.

We have sought have a wisdom that rings true not only with the wisdom of the Bible and the best in our Christian history but also with wise and experienced educational understanding and practice in twenty-first century England.

In the Church of England: There are four basic elements that run through the whole approach. Together they form an 'ecology' of the fullness of life, each in interplay with all the others.

## **Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills**

Good schools foster confidence, delight and discipline in seeking wisdom, knowledge, truth, understanding, know-how, and the skills needed to shape life well. They nurture academic habits and skills, emotional intelligence and creativity across the whole range of school subjects, including areas such as music, drama and the arts, information and other technologies, sustainable development, sport, and what one needs to understand and practise in order to be a good person, citizen, parent, employee, team or group member, or leader.

## **Educating for Hope and Aspiration**

In the drama of ongoing life, how we learn to approach the future is crucial. Good schools open up horizons of hope and aspiration and guide pupils into ways of fulfilling them. They also cope wisely with things and people going wrong. Bad experiences and behaviour, wrongdoing and evil need not have the last word. There are resources for healing, repair and renewal; repentance, forgiveness, truth and reconciliation are possible; and meaning, trust, generosity, compassion and hope are more fundamental than meaninglessness, suspicion, selfishness, hardheartedness and despair.

## **Educating for Community and living Well Together**

We are only persons with each other: our humanity is 'co- humanity', inextricably involved with others, utterly relational, both in our humanity and our shared life on a finite planet. If those others are of ultimate worth then we are each called to responsibility towards them

and to contribute responsibly to our communities. The good life is 'with and for others in just institutions' (Paul Ricoeur). So education needs to have a core focus on relationships and commitments, participation in communities and institutions and the qualities of character that enable people to flourish together.

### **Educating for Dignity and Respect**

Human dignity, the ultimate worth of each person, is central to good education. The basic principle of respect for the value of each person involves continual discernment, deliberation and action, and schools are one of the main places where this happens, and where the understanding and practices it requires are learned. This includes vigilant safeguarding. It is especially important that the equal worth of those with and without special educational needs and disabilities is recognized in practice. For the first time in history, there is now something approaching global agreement on the worth of each person through the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and its successor declarations, covenants and conventions, including that in 2006 on the rights of persons with disabilities. How that is worked out in each nation and each school is a massive task that calls on the inspiration and resources offered by each tradition of faith and belief.

Given those basics focusing on the pursuit of wisdom, knowledge and skills, on trust and hope in the good as more fundamental than the bad, on the centrality of relationships and community, and on the dignity of each person, there is endless scope for deeper thinking and further applications, improvisations and creativity. This is what we mean by life in all its fullness.

This Church of England approach to education will, we hope, find resonance more widely across the education sector, and also with other Christians, those of other faiths, and many who identify with no particular religion. It is offered partly as a stimulus to others to distil and share their wisdom, and is open to continuing discernment, critique, discussion and development. It is both deeply rooted in our Christian understanding and has also stood the test of experience in schools around the country.

## 2. The Organisation of Collective Worship

The responsibility for ensuring that collective worship is conducted each day rests with Governors after consultation with the Headteacher. Teachers have the right to withdraw from worship and parents/carers have the right to withdraw their children from worship.

The Education Reform Act (1988) requires all schools to provide a collective act of worship for all pupils. This can be at any time during the school day and maybe conducted in form or year groups or as a whole school assembly. Collective worship must be held on the school premises - any worship at St. Mary Magdalene's, for example, must be in addition to school-based worship.

Every day of the week will include an act of collective worship or reflection. An assembly for the entire school shall be held at termly. It is considered that the act of collective worship may take place in smaller or larger groups and that a variety of these give suitable freedom to reflection in a range of forms. Occasionally it may be necessary to cancel assembly or to reschedule it to a different time. Such occasions are to be kept to the minimum. Members of the local clergy are regularly invited to the school to lead assemblies. The local parish incumbent and youth worker of The Forge Church lead assemblies each half-term.

The general pattern for Assembly is (days vary for different year groups):

- Weekly            Year assembly
- Weekly            Leadership team/Guest speaker assembly
- Fortnightly      In the news reflection /debate in tutor groups
- Fortnightly      School quiz
- Weekly            Thought for the week (published in log books)

Themes for each week will be published at the beginning of term along with an Assembly Schedule. It will not be obligatory for those taking Assembly to follow the prescribed theme, but staff, and guests, will be asked, where possible, to consider the theme to ensure coverage of Christian teachings. A brief record of all assemblies is kept by the Headteacher. Along with the Senior Leadership Team, governors will be actively involved in the review of the impact of collective worship on the whole school community.

Opportunities will be taken for acts of collective worship at St Mary Magdalene's Church. These will include: Christmas Carol Service (during the day for pupils and staff and an evening service for friends and families) and a Remembrance service.

### **3. The Aims of Collective Worship**

We aim to:-

- provide an opportunity for those who so wish, to worship God;
- offer a spiritual dimension to their lives and relationships;
- help them develop shared values - honesty, respect, tolerance, self-discipline, forgiveness;
- give pupils experience of being active members of a caring community which conveys the broad Christian ethos of the school;
- develop an awareness of, and a concern for, the needs of others;
- provide an opportunity for thanksgiving and to enjoy the unity which derives from sharing friendship, acceptance, joys, hopes and fears etc;
- celebrate the success and achievements of individuals, the school and the local community.

### **4. The Setting for Worship**

An appropriate atmosphere needs to be created to ensure that Assembly is a meaningful and reverent occasion. Members of the Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Year will oversee the pupils' arrival in to Assemblies and ensure that pupils' behaviour is appropriate. Students are not expected to enter assembly in silence. Music or images may be used as students enter, to create atmosphere and mood or to allow them to consider the purpose of the Assembly.

The Hall is set out by the caretaker before school. Seats are arranged for staff and a table with flowers, candle or a crucifix or some other point of focus placed centrally.

## 5. The Character of Worship

Assemblies are planned to ensure that a variety of experiences are provided. These will include:

- Prayers;
- the telling or reading of appropriate stories;
- the telling or reading of Bible accounts;
- drama;
- dance;
- mime;
- music both to listen to and to participate in;
- extracts from film/videos and other media;
- guest speakers from different religious traditions;
- school values;
- current social issues;
- current global issues;
- morality.

Pupils will be able to reflect in silence and/or pray silently or aloud. In significant services students will sing hymns. Pupils will not be compelled to pray.

## 6. The Use of Visitors

The Headteacher will be responsible for approving, or rejecting as unsuitable, any visitor who may lead or take part in Collective Worship. Visitors should be made aware of the school policy regarding Collective Worship.

Where possible visitors should be encouraged to attend an Assembly before they plan and lead an Assembly of their own. Though visitors will be told, in advance, the theme being pursued in that week, they will have the option to select a suitable subject of their own.

The Headteacher, for planning and reference purposes, will keep a record of those leading assemblies.

## 7. Resources and Planning

A number of books have been bought which may be useful in planning for Assembly. These are kept by the Headteacher who will be pleased to share resources.

The Headteacher assumes responsibility for Collective Worship in the school but others have significant roles.

- Mr Yaroslaw will advise on religious content;
- Rev Susan Bates will deliver one assembly each half-term and advise on acts of collective worship;
- Mr Matt Levett will deliver one assembly each half-term and support the school in the development of its Christian ethos, such as through the Advent Prayspace week;
- Bishop Martin Seeley (Chair of the Board of Trustees of Debenham High School) will deliver an assembly annually;
- Bishop Mike Harrison will deliver an assembly at least annually.

## **8. Supporting Collective Worship within School**

Along with these specific events, opportunities are provided within school to worship and reflect through the following:

- Prayspace at Advent through dedicated lesson time and open access at lunchtime;
- Staff/Parents/Governors prayer/communion;
- Whole school assemblies, including Easter service;
- Parents' Prayer morning;
- Christian Union – Soul;
- Visit to St Mary's as part of Introduction to RE;
- Remembrance service;
- Dedicated space for private worship/reflection at St Mary Magdalene's Church in Debenham;
- Chaplaincy visits by Rev Susan Bates on a fortnightly basis, building relationship and offering pastoral support to students and staff.