



St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
Diocesan Multi Academy Trust

Policy for Collective Worship in the Diocesan MAT

Date Approved and Minuted	MAT Board	16 July 2026
Date of Next Review	MAT Board	July 2029

Policy for Collective Worship in the Diocesan MAT

A MAT vision for Collective Worship

“First of all, my child, worship and adore God, think of Him magnificently.”

- William Law

As a Church academy trust, we hold to a vision that worship is primarily an opportunity to encounter and meet with God. During this time, who God is can be experienced, affirmed and celebrated.

This time is an opportunity for all to learn, worship and grow in their understanding of God and of themselves. It is not simply a statutory duty.

In our schools, we want to see Collective Worship enable pupils and staff to gather together to respond to the presence, power and peace of God through prayer, reflection, singing, celebrating and sharing feelings.

Worship should enable participants to develop an understanding of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We recognise that not all staff or children have a Christian faith. We welcome everyone to Collective Worship and offer it as a shared space for reflection and spiritual growth where our communities grow together in love and respect.

Policy pointers: The following paragraphs indicate the expectations for Collective Worship in the Trust's schools. It is for each school to take these expectations and personalise them into their own clear policy statement. The Headteacher of each school and its Local Governing Body (LGB) are responsible for its implementation and review.

1. Aims and Purpose

Collective worship is seen as more than a daily 'awe and wonder' moment. 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, both as individuals and together. In line with the Church of England's Vision for Education (2016), pupils should leave our schools with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way that enhances their lives. Collective worship in our schools includes prayer, reading, reflecting on the Bible, liturgy, and experience of the musical and other imaginative riches of Christianity. Through this approach, we seek to meet the needs of all, wherever they may be on their journey of faith and belief.

Within our provision of Christian Worship, we try to meet the following aims, as defined by the Education Reform Act 1988:

- Provide an opportunity for the children to worship God.
- Enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues.
- Enable children to explore their own beliefs.
- Encourage participation and response.
- Develop in children a sense of community spirit.
- Promote a common ethos with shared values and reinforce positive attitudes.

2. Legal Requirements

All MAT schools must take note of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Section 70 and Schedule 20) which requires that:

1. All registered pupils (apart from those whose parents exercise the right to withdrawal – see section 4) must on each school day take part in an act of Collective Worship.
2. The daily act of Collective Worship should be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Trust Deeds of the school and the ethos statement in the Articles of Association, and should be consistent with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England.
3. All acts of Collective Worship in Church schools must be Christian in character. Pupils can be grouped in various ways for worship such as the whole school, year groups, tutor groups, classes, or other combinations.
4. Acts of worship must be appropriate for the pupils in that they should take account of the pupils' age, aptitude and family backgrounds.
5. The daily act of Collective Worship will normally take place on the school premises but all schools may hold their Act of Collective Worship elsewhere (e.g. the local Parish Church) on special occasions.
6. Responsibility for the arrangement of Collective Worship in a Church of England school rests with the Local Governing Body in consultation with the Headteacher. MAT Appointed (Foundation) Governors have a special role in ensuring the Collective Worship is linked to the Trust Deeds.
7. The Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure all arrangements for Collective Worship are secured.

3. Anglican Faith and Practice

In addition to the above, we provide acts of Collective Worship that reflect the faith and practice of the Church of England as a part of the heritage of our schools. We use the following indicators:

BIBLICAL- the Bible is used to encounter the teachings of Jesus and as a sourcebook for inspiration and learning. Pupils are made familiar with the Lord's Prayer, psalms and other verses of scripture.

LITURGICAL - aspects of Anglican liturgy, such as greetings, are used to create a framework for worship; pupils are also introduced to a variety of well-known prayers – many of which express central beliefs of Christians throughout the ages.

EUCCHARISTIC – we introduce children to the central act of Anglican worship, either in RE or through our own school celebration with the local priest

SEASONAL - we observe the cycle of the Anglican year including celebrations of the major Christian festivals

SYMBOLIC – we use Christian symbols as a focus for reflection

ECUMENICAL – we work with other local Christian denominations

DIVERSE – we provide opportunities to discover the variety of worship in Anglican churches e.g. through work with our link diocese of Kagera, through valuing both meditation and silence, dance, prayer, reflection, story, quiet songs and louder expressions of praise, etc

In each school, we seek to provide a worship space which is attractive and well prepared with thought given to colour, space, seating, ambience and music.

We foster links with the local parish Church, involving clergy in leading / joining us for collective worship and providing coherence with worship in church.

We aim to visit the parish church at least four times per year as part of the Christian calendar and to offer the occasional opportunity for all children to experience worship in the wider church e.g. at the cathedral or on a Sunday morning.

We aim for our Collective Worship to be creative and to inspire pupils into action.

4. Rights and Responsibilities

As established by the 1944 Act and reinforced in this policy, parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from Collective Worship. They do not need to provide a reason for the request. If a parent is considering withdrawing their child from Collective Worship they should make contact with the Headteacher in writing.

However, it is hoped that no one will feel the need to exercise this right. Should such a situation arise, appropriate arrangements would be made in keeping with the requirements of the Act. This includes the school continuing to be responsible for the supervision of any child withdrawn by its parent from Collective Worship. We will seek advice from the Diocesan Schools' Adviser with regard to further legal requirements and the management of withdrawal.

5. Inclusive, Invitational, and Inspiring

Worship involves meeting, exploring, questioning, and responding to others and, for some, to God. Pupils, their families, and other adults can expect to encounter worship that is inclusive of, and fully accessible to, all. Many pupils will naturally be at various stages of their spiritual journey during their time in school. Pupils are given the opportunity to think and ask questions. There is space to consent and dissent: to participate and to stand back; and to consider. Care is 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.

Parents, pupils, and adults can expect to encounter worship that is consistently invitational. There is no compulsion to do anything. The metaphor of 'warm fires and open doors' captures this idea. The warmth of the fire derives from the clarity and authenticity of the Christian message at its heart. All are welcome to come and sit as near or as far away from the fire as they feel comfortable. Pupils and adults are invited to pray if they wish to and can also choose to reflect.

Pupils and adults can expect the worship they encounter to be inspirational, formational and transformational: enabling pupils and adults to ask big questions about who we are and why we do what we do. We aim for our Collective Worship to reflect God's kingdom, to be creative and to inspire 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, it should encourage them to think searchingly about their faith, beliefs, and/or philosophical convictions and inspire them to become courageous advocates of causes.

In our schools, Collective Worship has the following aims and objectives:

- An opportunity to explore the school's vision and how it underpins shared values.
- Help pupils and adults to encounter the teachings of Jesus and the Bible and develop understanding of the Christian belief in the trinitarian nature of God.
- Offer the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship, and reflection.
- Enable all pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in diverse ways, for example using music, silence, story, prayer, reflection, as well as through the varied liturgical and other traditions of Anglican worship, festivals and, where appropriate, the Eucharist.
- Enable pupils to develop skills through engaging in the planning, leading and evaluation of collective worship in ways that lead to improving practice.

Collective worship in Church schools reflects the Anglican status of the school as expressed in its trust deed. We foster links with the local parish Church, involving clergy and providing coherence with worship in church. Throughout the year, we aim to visit the parish church regularly for worship and we also offer the opportunity for all children to experience worship in the wider church.

The Church of England sees itself as part of a global church and promotes ecumenism. In all our schools, we work to promote links with other local churches and Christian organisations and welcome their clergy and leaders as contributors to acts of Collective Worship.

We recognise that some of our pupils and families belong to Anglican churches, some worship regularly at churches of other Christian denominations, while others come from different faith backgrounds or none. We endeavour to provide a setting in which no-one's integrity is compromised, where everyone finds something positive for themselves, and there is no pressure to participate inappropriately or to believe.

6. Planning

Planning for Collective Worship must be led by the Headteacher but may be delegated to an appropriate member of staff. Responsibility may not be delegated. The Headteacher must ensure that leaders and visiting speakers receive copies of the plans. Individuals and groups are responsible for using the plans as a basis for developing their own plans for individual acts of worship.

Christian values are explored through story, song, prayer, and reflection. Throughout the year, we meet to celebrate and mark certain seasons in the Church calendar, such as Lent and Advent and saints' days. Other notable events in the school year, such as the start and end of the academic year, may be marked by formal acts of Collective Worship.

Pupils and adults will encounter the practice of regular prayer and worship as a normal part of the life of the school. These activities will help provide a rhythm and stillness as a pattern of community life. Our preferred approach for individual acts of worship is to follow the pattern of **GATHER, ENGAGE, RESPOND, SEND** – this approach offers a pattern which both staff and children can use and is useful for evaluation as well.

7. Organisation and Resources

In each school the act of worship is organised across the week differently but an act of Collective Worship is always held daily which may involve the whole school or smaller class or key stage groups meeting together.

Where collective worship forms part of an assembly e.g. an awards assembly, each school will ensure there is a clear distinction between the two elements of gathering.

Each school should describe how Collective Worship is organised in their own school in terms of leaders, timings, visitors, layout of the hall, etc. and the daily act of Collective Worship. How children participate in worship should be clear.

In each school aspects of Collective worship should be discussed regularly in a staff meeting and by the school council or a team of children, designated as Collective Worship leaders.

Each school should have a budget for Collective Worship which is distinct from the budget for Religious Education.

Good assembly books, access to websites and child-friendly Bibles should all be available. Good quality music and access to a live musician where possible should be seen as important and worth pursuing.

9. Contribution to Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

SMSC development is fostered across the whole curriculum and acts of Collective Worship provide a multitude of opportunities in this area. For example, children will be encouraged to reflect on and celebrate the deeper meanings of life, consider their own behaviour and recognise the need for love and forgiveness, appreciate the contributions of others and respond to their needs, value their own culture and the cultures of others. Contributions to SMSC made by acts of worship may be considered by Ofsted.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation / SIAMS Inspection

Responsibility for the arrangement of Collective Worship in a Church of England school rests with the governing body in consultation with the Headteacher. MAT Appointed (Foundation) Governors have a special role in ensuring the Collective Worship links to the Trust Deeds. The Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure all arrangements for Collective Worship are secured.

The Headteacher, Collective Worship co-ordinator, pupils and the governing body routinely monitor acts of Collective Worship. Staff regularly discuss aspects of Collective Worship. There is also a group of pupils within school who are responsible for helping with planning, monitoring and evaluating Collective Worship. Questionnaires for staff and pupils are useful indicators and used annually to help monitor the impact of Collective Worship. Monitoring should lead to the improvement of practice.

SIAMS inspectors explore the ways in which Collective Worship is an expression of the school's Christian vision and to what extent it is inclusive, invitational and inspiring. Staff should have opportunity to discuss the requirements of the SIAMS inspection and use its criteria as one way of moving CW forward in their individual school.

11. Inclusion

In line with the Equalities Act 2010, we are committed to equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, cultural background, ability, religion, physical or sensory disability or any other protected characteristic. We therefore aim to make Collective Worship accessible to all and accommodate ourselves to individual needs as appropriate e.g. taking account of different learning styles and using multi-sensory approaches.

7. Developing expertise and knowledge

Parents, pupils, and adults are entitled to be led in worship by those who have a secure understanding of the nature of Collective Worship in a Church school context and by those who are professional in their approach to working with pupils and adults from all faiths and none.

Therefore, it is a priority to build up the expertise of staff, pupils, clergy, and other adults in facilitating collective worship in our schools.