



The John Fisher School

Collective Worship Policy

Responsible: Governors' SLAW Committee

Next Review Date: May 2024

“For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them” Matthew 18:20.

This policy has regard to the Catholic Diocese of Southwark’s ‘Diocesan Policy on Religious Education and Collective Worship’, February 2014. In addition, it aims to conform to the ‘School Standards and Framework Act 1998’.

School Mission Statement

The John Fisher School is a Catholic secondary school for boys of all abilities and all backgrounds. It exists to serve the educational needs of the Catholic community of Sutton, Croydon and neighbouring areas. As such, it will at all times seek, via opportunities for worship and prayer and via the teaching of its religious studies programme, to deepen and enrich the Catholic faith of all its Students. Further we seek to provide for these same Students access to real academic, sporting, musical and artistic excellence.

We believe as well that all aspects of the life of the school should be lived in a spirit of justice and charity and that Christian selflessness should be part of all our dealings with one another.

1 Rationale

The aim of the collective worship policy is to provide the opportunity for students to:

- ☐ worship God
- ☐ reflect on values that are based on Gospel Values
- ☐ develop a community spirit, a common ethos and shared values
- ☐ consider spiritual and moral issues
- ☐ respond to the worship offered.

As The John Fisher School is a Catholic school, all those parents/carers seeking entry for their children are required to agree to them taking part in assemblies, which follows the usual Christian traditions. The Education Act requires all schools to hold an Act of Worship (of an essentially Christian nature) every day.

2 Statutory Duty of School

The Headteacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging the daily collective worship, after consulting with the Governing Body. Daily collective worship will be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. The precise nature will depend on the ages and abilities of the students. Collective worship at The John Fisher School will be in accordance with the school's trust deed. The Trustees of the school are the Roman Catholic Diocese of Southwark.

3 Legal Requirements – all maintained schools.

- (i) All students have an entitlement to take part in an act of collective worship every school day which must be provided by the school.
- (ii) The majority of acts of collective worship over any given term should be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’. This means that collective worship should reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any one Christian denomination. In foundation or voluntary aided schools with a religious foundation, worship should be in line with the school’s trust deeds/articles of government.
- (iii) Parents/carers have the right to withdraw their child(ren) from the whole or part of collective worship and teachers have the right not to attend acts of collective worship. Students should not be withdrawn from collective worship in order to take part in other school activities. The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring compliance and for the health and safety of any withdrawn children on site. Since September 2007 it is possible for Post 16 students to withdraw themselves from acts of collective worship without reference to their parents/carers.

(iv) Collective worship can take place in separate school groupings and at any time during the school day. The separate school groupings need to be usual school groupings, for example, a class or a key stage or a year group.

(v) Collective worship should take place on school or church premises

(vi) Collective worship should be appropriate to the family backgrounds, ages and aptitudes of the students who attend and take part in it.

(vii) A distinction is made between an act of collective worship and an assembly.

(viii) Collective worship is part of the inspection process in VA schools under the Section 48 inspection requirements in relation to compliance with students' legal entitlement and the contribution it makes to school ethos and values and to students' personal development (including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development).

(ix) Collective worship, as with all curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities, should contribute to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Collective worship should be planned and delivered to objectives that contribute to a balanced and broadly based curriculum, although it is not counted as curriculum time.

4 Legal Requirements - Voluntary Aided or Foundation School with a Religious Foundation

(i) Worship in Catholic schools is primarily responsibility of the governing body, rather than the Headteacher, although the Headteacher will implement the Governor's policy.

(ii) The Governors have a particular responsibility to uphold the Catholic foundation of the school, which applies especially to worship in the school.

(iii) Daily collective worship must be provided for all registered school students on a daily basis, (unless they have been withdrawn by parental request or by sixth-formers themselves). It also means that it is illegal to withdraw any students from collective worship on any other grounds.

(iv) Parents/carers in Voluntary Aided (VA) and Foundation schools may request withdrawal from all or part of collective worship. This right must be explained in the school's prospectus. An entry such as the following may be deemed appropriate: 'Daily collective worship is provided for all registered students at this school. This is seen as an important part of the school day, particularly as we are a Church school. However, parents/carers do have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship. If you wish to exercise this right, please discuss it with the Headteacher.'

(v) Teachers at The John Fisher School are expected to support the Catholic ethos of the school, which includes attendance at acts of collective worship.

(vi) It is expected that all teachers will attend daily collective worship with their students. This is one way for the school to show that worship is central to its life and is important for everyone, not just children. It also makes sense educationally for teachers to know what their students are experiencing in collective worship. The Governing Body should make this expectation clear to teachers when they apply to the school and should not allow teachers time out of worship on a regular basis but only in exceptional circumstances. (Teachers are allowed at least 10% out of curriculum time for planning, preparation and assessment. This should not be taken out of collective worship.)

(vii) Collective worship in Church schools may take place in a church building (not just on school premises).

5 Daily Act of Worship at The John Fisher School

The school bases its Daily Act of Worship on a Liturgical Calendar, which divides into themes for the terms and weeks.

Assemblies

At our school the weekly assembly is one of the most important aspects of the school curriculum. The assembly is when the school community, or part of it, usually a Year Group, meets together to perform a collective act of worship. Its potential to nurture a positive ethos that stresses Gospel values in action cannot be underestimated.

It aims to:

- ☒ To consider and celebrate the values of the Christian Gospels
- ☒ To explore social, moral and spiritual values
- ☒ To encourage an understanding of religious beliefs and practices
- ☒ To consider and celebrate the richness of Christianity, and of other faith traditions
- ☒ To develop a sense of community
- ☒ To affirm and develop the individual
- ☒ To offer opportunities for reflection, meditation and prayer
- ☒ To develop a sense of enquiry and to encourage a search for human meaning
- ☒ To foster a sense of joy, awe and wonder in creation
- ☒ To experience the sacred and to develop an awareness of the presence of God in others and in oneself
- ☒ To appreciate symbolism and ritual as aspects of worship
- ☒ To encourage an awareness of and a compassion for the needs of the world community.

An assembly should be a positive experience for both students and staff. It should not be used as an opportunity to admonish whole Year Groups or individual students. Our school chapel, is first and foremost a place of worship, prayer and reflection, and as such should be reserved for this purpose.

While the assembly is an opportunity to communicate various pieces school information to students, this should not form the basis of the assembly. It should never be the case that a prayer is 'tacked on' to the end of an assembly in order to fulfil the legal requirement.

Those organising assemblies should consider the creating an appropriate atmosphere in the assembly that is conducive to leading the Students in a reflective experience; encouraging students to sit in a relaxed and still manner; developing the ability to use the imagination; the person conducting the assembly using appropriate words and resources (e.g. music, images, etc) to stimulate the minds of the students; students developing the skills necessary to support positive behaviour.

At our school we encourage those leading assemblies to actively involve students, or other adults, in assemblies. The assembly should be planned in advance, just as all other curriculum experiences should be. Those leading assemblies should, when necessary, seek the advice and support of the school's chaplaincy team, especially where there is any concern regarding a specific aspect of the liturgical calendar themes.

Form Periods

On all other days, each Form Tutor is responsible for organising the 'act of worship' during tutor time. In order to help tutors in this task the liturgical theme for the week is included on the weekly staff bulletin. In addition, resources are available for teachers on the school's intranet.

In addition to daily collective worship, opportunities for collective worship exist at The John Fisher School through:

- Form Masses
- House Masses
- Feast Day and other special Masses
- Founder's Day Masses
- Weekly Benediction
- Monthly 'Epilogue'
- Retreat programme for all Students in Year 7 & 10
- Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Faith Club

7 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Spiritual Life and Ethos Committee (SLE) will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness.

The SLE Committee will have the same status as other groups and committees maintained to monitor and review aspects of school life. The SLE will be representative of all members of the John Fisher School Community - Governors, Chaplaincy team, Students, staff and parents. The Chair of the SLE Committee will report formally, on a termly basis, to the full Governing Body meeting.

The Headteacher in conjunction with the Head of Religious Education and other SLT members will undertake an annual review of its Section 48 SEF which informs the School Development Plan. Issues relating to collective worship will be included in this process.