**Marwood School Collective Worship Policy**

**Policy Approved by FGB Meeting 25th November 2015**

Legal Requirements

•The Education Reform Act (1988) requires schools to provide a daily act of worship for all registered pupils.

•Nursery schools and classes are exempt from the requirement.

•Headteachers in county schools must consult the governors, but are themselves responsible for arranging acts of worship and ensuring that they take place, even if on grounds of conscience, they absent themselves.

•Parents have the right to withdraw their children from acts of worship.

•Teachers, including headteachers, have the same right of withdrawal.

•Acts of worship must be "wholly or mainly of a broad Christian nature" and "not to be distinctive of any denomination" and must not be evangelistic in their content or delivery (ERA Section 7.1)

•They should make a contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

•In providing acts of collective worship the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the children should be taken into consideration.

•County schools must not hold the daily act of worship off school premises. However, events of a non-denominational character may be held in a local church in addition to daily worship in schools.

•Worship

" Worship has to do with worth and worthiness. It is recognising, affirming and celebrating that which is worthy of honour and respect -ideals and the highest achievements of which humanity is capable, matters of truth, goodness and beauty, an appreciation of the world, a recognition of the interdependence of human beings, a

response to the plight of those in need.

The word "worship" has at least two meanings:

a) adoration offered by believers to the Supreme Being:

b) " the' concerns, concepts, principles, conduct worthy of celebration as examples of

the highest achievements of the human spirit.

Schools should provide opportunities for both".(R.E.-Devon Curriculum Advisory

Team)

A daily act of worship forms part of each day's structure. It can be arranged to take

place at any time of the day and may happen in class, year groups, key stages or whole school assembly time. Unless withdrawn through parental choice all children will be present at times of collective worship. (A list of suitable themes for use

throughout the year is in each teacher's planning folder}

At Marwood children will not be required to participate in activities which are contrary to their family's beliefs.

We attempt to achieve a real sense of purpose by sensitively trying to "evoke those senses and feelings from which it might be said that worship most naturally arises".

These might include:

-a sense of awe and wonder,

-a sense of beauty,

-a sense of sympathy and pity,

-a sense of perspective; smallness in the face of greatness; grandness in the face of smallness,

-a sense of justice and injustice,

-a sense of shared loss,

-a sense of gratitude and appreciation,

-a feeling of shared sadness, joy; a feeling of being "moved" and the need to take action,

-a sense of inner peace,

-a sense of right and wrong,

-a feeling of pride and achievement,

-a sense of stillness in the midst of a busy and changing existence,

-a sense of community.

(developed from: Bill Gent "School Worship, Perspectives and Practices)

At Marwood collective worship is seen as directly contributing to our R.E. curriculum and the spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils. In order to achieve the above, our acts of worship are conducted within an educational context. It therefore follows that, any form of evangelism (an attempt to persuade the participants to adopt a particular religious belief) is inappropriate. Our daily acts of worship are based upon the mutual respect for the integrity of all those involved in it and for the literature and artefacts being drawn upon.

**Good Practice**

Acts of collective worship at Marwood:

• are conducted within an educational context;

• exploit any cross-curricular opportunities that arise

• recognise the wide variety of backgrounds from which pupils come

• are "inclusive" (ie allow for every child, who may not have any religious belief, to be included and fully involved in a meaningful manner)

• encourage the active participation of pupils and other members of the school community

• are part of a curriculum programme which has been appropriately planned

• take place, whenever possible, in an inspiring atmosphere

• employ a rich variety of methods of delivery, media, format and participation

• include visiting speakers and groups from the local and broader community.

• it should be emphasised, however, that ALL who are invited to lead acts of collective worship should have the opportunity to read the school's policy and are fully aware of those aspects of the law concerning evangelism.

"Collective Worship is a whole school issue. A balanced, planned programme will reflect the life and work of the school and local community. The programme will contain themes which during the course of the year are likely to centre around;

\* Religious festivals and special days

\* Annual events and anniversaries

\* Aspects of the school curriculum

\* Developments from classroom activities

\* Published assembly books and other literature

In order to prevent too many restrictions the full plan should leave room for the more topical and spontaneous acts of worship(for example exploring current affairs and responding to events in the life of the school)". (R.E.-Devon Curriculum Advisory

Team)

Review

This policy will be reviewed and evaluated in line with the school's policy review programme. The core-team is responsible for reporting to the governors' curriculum committee about the quality of its implementation.

**Guidance for Those Taking Acts of Worship**

1. Avoid tying religious faith with the children's behaviour too tightly. Of course there is a close connection between faith and action but faith should never be used to manipulate. Children rightly resent such attempts. Religious faith should be seen as something that changes both the child's and the adult's behaviour. Religious faith should not be used to bolster school rules.

Example: Good Christians do not run in the corridor or drop litter.

2. Do not put people in a comer. Both adults and children need to feel that their identity is protected. Use a non-offensive phrase such as 'Christians believe" or 'Jesus said'. Do not say;

'You should...' or 'We all...'. The use of non-offensive phrases allows people emotionally to opt in or out of an assembly. It allows people to decide their attitude to an assembly and either identify with the faith being explored or explore that faith from a greater distance. With very young children there is obviously a difficulty of understanding such phrases, but even so safeguards need building in.

3. Do speak to their world. Even in the short space of an assembly the rule of starting where the children are and finishing where they are not still applies. Start from the known to lead children to the unknown. Move from the familiar to the unfamiliar.

Example: A simple transformer or the use of the dressing-up box can start a child thinking about changes'. You can then lead them on to thinking about changing on the inside.

4. Don't make comments about other faiths, agnostics or atheists.

5. Don't go into highly controversial areas. Assembly is not the place for controversy. No one can disagree with you if you are taking the assembly and others might feel you are abusing your platform.

6. Don't be denominational in an act of worship. It is better for the children if Christians share theiragreements rather than dwell on their differences.

7. Be aware of the dangers of raising areas of pastoral concern unless you have been specifically asked to do so and are prepared to follow them up. Such areas need careful preparation and follow-up by all the staff. Subjects such as war, death, divorce and similar matters are generally better dealt with in a pastoral situation.

8. Don't make casual allusions that are not followed up. Asides confuse children. Stick very strictly to the subject and do not deviate from it.

9. Assemblies are generally short and children understand things better if they come in small parcels. Choose one small area and deal with it rather than a range over a large subject.

10. Do not make children pray, instead ask them to listen while you pray or read a prayer. An acceptable formula might be something like this:

'I am going to pray ( or read a Christian prayer ). I would like you to keep very still, close your eyes and listen carefully to the words. Those of you who wish can Join in with the Amen ( I agree) at the end.'

In this way the children are not joining in Christian prayers against their will, but they are listening respectfully and possibly thinking about the prayer.

11. If you use hymns and songs, concentrate on the act of sharing and enjoying together as a school community.