



Collective Worship Policy

This Policy is the responsibility of the Deputy Head Pastoral to review and update biennially in liaison with the Senior Deputy Head and Head of Religious Studies.

Aims

This Collective Worship Policy aims to:

- Express the School's values, educational philosophy and theological understandings in relation to worship in a school context;
- Describe the purpose and distinctive provision of collective worship at MSJ;
- Identify the approaches employed in the delivery of collective worship and the criteria for evaluating its effectiveness and success;
- Highlight how appropriate collective worship may contribute to the spiritual, moral, social, cultural and intellectual development of pupils.

Values and Collective Worship

At MSJ 'the immeasurable' is valued. The development of spirituality is a vital aspect in the life and work of the community. The pupils and staff are encouraged to explore a sense of otherness and to appreciate experiences of awe and wonder in their lives. One of the primary objectives is to encourage the pupils to become the best versions of themselves by combining purposeful, committed activism with the capacity for deep thought, inner stillness and reflection.

MSJ has a Christian ethos and this provides the context for a rich variety of worship styles and learning opportunities. MSJ is a passionately inclusive school with families from a range of faith backgrounds. Some pupils are from practising Christian families, and there are pupils who are from religions other than Christianity. Some are from non-religious backgrounds. Acts of worship are "*wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character*" (Education Reform Act 1988, part 1, chapter 1, section 7 (1)), but it is not the practice of the School to proselytise in any way. Assemblies and services must be *appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils* (Education Reform Act 1988, part 1, chapter 1, section 7(5)). Pupils from other religious traditions and cultural backgrounds will know that they belong, and their insights and contributions are appreciated and valued.

The use of religious readings and prayers is encouraged in worship, although pupils are not required to say or affirm prayers in which they do not believe. Introductions to readings and prayers give the pupils the opportunity to participate if they so desire, e.g., 'And now in a moment of stillness, listen to the words of a well-known Christian/Muslim/Hindu prayer or poem or reading...'

Aims of Collective Worship

The collective worship at MSJ underpins, reflects and strengthens the School's ethos. Care for each individual pupil fosters an emphasis on their holistic spiritual, moral, social, cultural and intellectual development. Collective worship reflects this by providing a context for pupils to:

- Participate in the experience of worship;
- Respond, without coercion, to religious or spiritual stimuli;
- Be open to a sense of the numinous and the transcendent;

- Deepen their sense of wonder about the world around them;
- Reflect upon dimensions of human life – the wonderful, beautiful, joyful, heroic, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn;
- Understand the way in which humankind has expressed the deepest spiritual feelings, through the creative and expressive arts, scientific discovery, religious practice and philanthropic endeavours;
- Grow in empathetic understanding of the feelings of other people;
- Explore the language which people use to express profound beliefs;
- Reflect on personal, community, national and global values;
- Develop a sense of corporate belonging and community spirit.

Patterns of Worship

- There are sensitively-devised, choral services at some of the key points in the Christian year – Harvest, Remembrance, Advent, Christmas and Easter;
- On Sundays, there are opportunities for Boarders to attend services of worship outside school. Parents and staff are always welcome at formal school church services;
- Pupils actively participate in the acts of worship through music, reading and drama;
- School assemblies provide the opportunity for reflection on a wide range of contemporary religious, moral, social and spiritual issues;
- Academic Departments, members of staff and visiting speakers lead these assemblies;
- Hymn Practice gives opportunity for communal singing.

Additional Activities

- Exploration of the Christian Faith through informal discussion and Bible study within Christian Union and Philosophy and Film allowing for those of all faiths and none;
- Optional Holy Communion in the Chapel for pupils and staff each term;
- The opportunity to be prepared for Confirmation at a local church.

Pupils of other Faiths are encouraged to continue to express their religious convictions both within the School community and also in their own places of worship in Malvern and beyond.

Details of Faith communities and places of worship are signposted on the board outside the Chapel. With a written parental request to the Head, pupils who observe faiths other than Christianity may choose not to attend formal acts of Christian worship in church buildings, e.g. Great Malvern Priory. When required, the Deputy Head Pastoral supports pupils in liaising with Houses and the Catering Department to make appropriate arrangements for the observance of key religious festivals. If pupils wish to undergo religious rites of passage, for instance Confirmation, the Deputy Head Pastoral will liaise with the leaders of the appropriate faith community and the pupil's parents to enable this to happen. The Deputy Head Pastoral also alerts teaching staff to any relevant issues relating to pupils of other Faiths. The Chapel is a multifaith space with provision for silent prayer with wash facilities nearby.

In the sad event of there being external or internal crises, the Head and Deputy Head Pastoral will respond with appropriate presence, support, prayer and liturgical provision. External crises might include Royal/celebrity deaths, terrorist attacks and significant natural disasters. Internal crises might typically concern accidents on school excursions, the untimely death of a pupil or the death of a member of staff. Books of condolence etc., will be available in the Chapel, and the Deputy Head Pastoral will work with others to facilitate appropriate funeral and memorial services.

The Assembly Team meets regularly to discuss and plan the themes for collective worship in the term ahead. It is the task of the Deputy Head Pastoral to work with the Senior Deputy Head and the Head in the provision of appropriate, relevant and stimulating acts of collective worship.

The Assembly Team consists of the Senior Deputy Head, Deputy Head Pastoral, Stage Manager, Expressive Arts Administrator and the Director of Music.

Approaches employed in Collective Worship

A variety of approaches will be used in collective worship within School assemblies and in other services. The intention is to engage with religious, spiritual, moral and cultural themes through words, images, artefacts, music, dance, drama and silence. Wide participation of pupils and staff is encouraged.

Methods include:

- Reflective addresses
- PowerPoint presentations
- Hymns/songs/live and recorded music
- Sacred and secular stories
- Drama sketches
- Dance
- Poetry
- Artefacts/focal points
- Monologues and Dialogues
- Creative silence
- Prayers/reflections/meditations
- Visitors and guest speakers

Evaluation

Collective worship will be informally evaluated using the following criteria:

- Involvement, enjoyment, attention and reaction of pupils;
- An atmosphere which matches the theme;
- A sense of occasion and good order;
- The growth of respect and tolerance within the School community;
- Staff and pupil affirmation;
- Contribution to individual and community well-being;
- A place in the overall aims and objectives of the School.

To be read in conjunction with the MSJ SMSC document.

Authorised by

Board of Governors of Malvern St James Girls' School

Signature



Date

2 December 2024

Effective date of the Policy

2 December 2024

Review date

Autumn Term 2026