



# Merrydale Infant Collective Worship Policy

Chair's signature ... *Mrs Elizabeth Surtees*

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Date agreed by the Governing Body

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Merrydale Infant School is a community school. Worship is therefore an important part of the school day as it gives us the opportunity to come together as a community.

At Merrydale Infant School we recognise that Collective Worship is an important occasion to provide opportunities for our students Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development.

## Aims

It is our aim at Merrydale Infant School that worship should:

- Contribute to the spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of each child.
- Support the Social and Emotional development of our pupils through making use of the SEAL programme.
- Offer expression to, and reaffirm and practise the values and ethos of our school.
- Allow reflection and response to the fundamental questions of life and those things that are of eternal interest and value to people.
- Celebrate and give thanks for the achievements within the school, local and international community and on occasions of significance. We offer a particular emphasis on the festivals of our main faith groups.
- Foster and enable a concern for the needs of others which includes our community in Leicester as well as the wider community of the UK and beyond.
- Provide members of the school community with the opportunity to praise and reach out to their gods or God or neither, as appropriate.
- Provide members of the school community with the opportunity to experience stillness, calm and reflection.
- Provide members of the school community with the opportunity to respond to Religious/Spiritual customs and symbolism
- Provide members of the school community with the opportunity to experience a variety of forms of prayer, celebration, remembrance and meditation. These might include praise, seeking forgiveness, asking on behalf of self and others or quiet reflection.
- To help students to begin to understand the nature and purpose of worship. • Provide a foundation for a mature understanding and practice of worship in the future.

### Legal Status of Collective Worship

The Education Act 1996: Religious worship legislation explains that the provision of Collective Worship applies to all pupils who are registered at a maintained school and are of statutory school age. It is therefore a requirement that 'all pupils in attendance at a maintained school shall on each day take part in an act of Collective Worship who are of statutory school age'. It is likely, therefore, that some older children in a reception class will come under the requirement for daily collective worship, whereas other, younger children will not. It is up to schools how they arrange this.' "RE is non-statutory at nursery level but teachers may choose to incorporate RE materials into children's activities

if they choose to." The RE curriculum is taught "in accordance with the local agreed syllabus."

*Statutory Section: Legal Requirements*

*All maintained schools in England must provide Religious Education (RE) for all registered pupils, including those in the sixth form and reception classes, unless withdrawn by their parents.<sup>3</sup> This requirement does not apply to:*

- children below compulsory school age in nursery schools or classes*
- any person aged nineteen or above for whom further education is being provided at school*
- any person over compulsory school age who is receiving part-time education.*

*Separate legislative provision for RE in maintained special schools requires them to ensure that RE provision is made for pupils, as far as practicable, in terms of the special educational needs of the pupils.*

*[Regulations 5A, Education, Regulations 20014].*

We seek to do our best to keep the spirit of this legislation, providing as many high quality acts of worship as is practically possible. We welcome our Foundation Stage children to our Collective Worship as soon as it is appropriate considering their young age. To provide students with variety in their experiences, acts of worship may take the form of a whole school act of worship or separate acts of worship for students in different year groups or key stages. Collective Worship may be held at any time during the school day but it is usually later in the afternoon.

The responsibility for arranging school worship rests with the Head Teacher. The DfE's guidance on collective worship, linked to legislation, explains that collective worship in schools without a designated religious character will be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature.

However,

collective worship should not be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination."

Collective worship can include one or more of the following elements:

- A celebration of the major festivals of Christianity and of other faiths
- Topical matters from the news or the locality
- Literature with implicit or explicit religious teaching
- An appreciation of the natural world and human activity
- The use of music to support the aims of Collective Worship

- The use of appropriate artefacts and focal points, such as paintings, a diva lamp, flowers etc to support the aims of Collective Worship

Acts of Collective Worship at Merrydale Infant School take into account our pupil's ages, understanding and community.

#### Rights of Withdrawal

At Merrydale Infant School we seek to be an inclusive community, however we respect the right of parents to withdraw their children for Collective Worship.

Parents can request that their child be totally or partially withdrawn from collective worship. The DfE explains:

Parents have the right to withdraw their child from the daily act of collective worship and sixth-formers can decide for themselves whether or not to attend, without giving a reason for doing so. Schools must comply with this wish and must ensure a duty of care for pupils who are withdrawn from collective worship.

#### Managing requests from parents for withdrawal

The DfE's guidance on collective worship explains:

A school continues to be responsible for the supervision of any child withdrawn by its parent from RE, unless the child is lawfully receiving RE elsewhere.

To avoid misunderstandings, the headteacher may find it helpful to establish with any parent wanting to exercise the right of withdrawal:

- The religious issues about which the parent would object to his or her child being taught
- The practical implications of withdrawal
- Whether the parent will require any advanced notice of such RE and, if so, how much

The British Humanist Association (BHA), which lobbies against the mandatory provision of collective worship in schools, suggests that schools keep the assembly and collective worship elements distinct and separate. This will allow time for pupils (and teachers) to leave the room when worship takes place.

Merrydale Infant school expects that withdrawal will only be made following parental discussion with the Head Teacher, followed by written confirmation of withdrawal.

The school will put in place a system of suitable supervision for pupils withdrawn from Acts of Collective Worship.

### **Staff Withdrawal**

All staff, including the head teacher, have the right of withdrawal from the Act of Collective Worship, but the head teacher, should he wish to exercise this right, maintains statutory accountability for Acts of Collective Worship at Merrydale Infant School.

This right of withdrawal doesn't extend to assemblies, only acts of Collective Worship.

Each half term there is a theme for Collective Worship based on SEAL/Values for Life etc. Those leading worship that week relate their worship to this theme. The themes chosen are broad enough to allow all those leading worship to approach the theme from their own perspective. This will mean that by the end of the theme our pupils will have had the opportunity to reflect on the theme from a variety of viewpoints. Alternatively class teachers may develop their worship from themes and events that occur on the curriculum during the week. This pattern is flexible and on occasions it is recognised that teachers may feel that they need to respond to local or national events.

### **Resources**

Resources for worship are usually used by staff / visitors for their own needs to conduct the worship. School has some books with stories which may be used.