

**Mount Grace School**  
*Committed to Excellence*

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Collective Worship</b>	<b>Responsibility of</b>	<b>Ann Lawrence</b>
<b>Date of Ratification</b>	<b>Autumn Term 2010</b>	<b>Date of Review</b>	<b>Autumn Term 2012</b>

## **BACKGROUND TO COLLECTIVE WORSHIP AT OUR SCHOOL**

It is a legal requirement that all registered school age pupils take part in an act of worship each day. These acts of worship must be “wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character” for the majority of the time. They must also be “appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils”.

Families who send their children to Mount Grace are in the main ‘nominally’ Christian. We do have some children from practising Christian families. In addition there are children who are from religions other than Christianity and many from non-religious backgrounds. We recognise that in asking our children to worship, we have to consider the background that our children come from and it is therefore not the practice of this school to preach to or convert the children. The faith background of both the staff and the child’s family is respected at all times.

The Head Teacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging collective worship after consulting with the governing body. Parents have the right to withdraw their children from collective worship. If a parent asks for their child to be wholly or partly excused from attending collective worship at the school the school must comply unless the request is withdrawn. Any parent who wishes to exercise this right should consult the Head Teacher. Teachers may also withdraw from collective worship.

## **SOME DEFINITIONS**

### **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP**

Worship from within a faith tradition has a very specific definition. A school community is not a worshipping community and the law recognises this by requiring “collective” not “corporate” worship. Broadly, worship in school is more appropriately referred to as worth-ship. This might encompass what is offered in a spirit of admiration, celebration and respect to God and/or people of excellence, worthy of honour and by extension to concepts, principles and conduct which are worthy of celebration as examples of the highest achievements of the human spirit. These elements form the main elements of worship at Mount Grace.

Worship defined in this way draws on literature, music, art, drama, citizenship and other sources of inspiration and reflection for pupils and staff whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of many faiths or none. In this way collective worship is inclusive not exclusive.

## **PRAYER**

We recognise that prayer is a way of enabling children to focus their thoughts. Nevertheless, pupils should not be required to say or affirm prayers in which they do not believe. We use forms of introductions to ‘prayer’ which distances children but give them 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 prayer...’ or to reflect. In this way we are able to use prayers and teachings from many different traditions.

It is not always necessary to have a prayer and the use of regular moments of silence and reflection provides opportunities for some pupils to respond in a personal way if they so wish.

## **WORSHIP OF A BROADLY CHRISTIAN CHARACTER**

The law requires the majority of acts of worship must be of a “broadly Christian character”, and those that are must reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief without being denominational.

If we are to be inclusive in our worship in this school, taking the family backgrounds of the children into consideration, then, when according a special status to Jesus Christ, all pupils, whatever their beliefs, need to be respected. It is therefore appropriate in this school to tell stories of the life of Jesus, but inappropriate for all children to be required to address Him in prayer.

Many of the characteristics of Christianity are shared by all the faiths. We concentrate on these and on those values enshrined under the heading ‘human rights’.

## **VALUES AND AIMS**

We believe at this school that collective worship both supports and strengthens what we aim to do in every aspect of school life. Our caring ethos, and the value which we place on the development of the whole child; spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually is reflected in our worship. We value this special time in the school day for the space it gives children to develop a reflective approach to life and the ability to express their reflections in traditionally religious ways or any other appropriate manner.

Through our collective worship we aim to provide a caring and supporting environment for children to:

- Become increasingly aware of themselves as individuals and groups within the school and wider community
- Grow in understanding of the feelings of the other people in every day situation and beliefs
- Explore the language which people use to express their feelings
- Deepen their sense of wonder about the world around them
- Grow in confidence when making a presentation to the group or whole school
- Respond freely to religious and/or spiritual stimulus
- Acknowledge diversity and affirm each person’s life stance, whether it be religious or not

Worship both reflects and nurtures the ethos of the whole school. It encompasses all aspects of school life and all areas of the curriculum so that every member of staff and every pupil may feel

involved. In particular school worship here develops the feeling of belonging to a community which is essential for personal development and spiritual growth.

## **OBJECTIVES**

We see school worship as an educational opportunity with clear objectives. We use this time to encourage pupils to:

- Show interest in, and a concern for, members of the school community
- Celebrate special occasions together
- Show concern for the daily happenings in school life, the local community, the wider world
- Share appreciation of worthwhile projects undertaken by groups within the school
- Explore and review the variety of values, attitudes, standards, manifested in religions and society
- Reflect upon dimensions of human life – the wonderful, beautiful, joyful, heroic, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn....;
- Reflect on the way in which humankind has expressed the deepest spiritual feelings, through the creative and expressive arts, scientific discovery, religious practice, service to God and other people.

## **Practice**

At Mount Grace we combine acts of worship in assemblies, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework. There are two weekly joint year group assemblies for all year groups Y 7-11 and one for Y12/13. The year group assembly is led by the Heads of Learning and the 'school' assemblies by members of SLT. Any member of staff or student is welcome to lead or take part in assemblies as long as the policy is followed. There is the facility to have additional year assemblies to address issues relevant to only one year group. Students and form groups are encouraged to develop and deliver assemblies. There are 'House' celebration assembly weeks built into the annual programme.

Assemblies follow agreed themes which encompass religious festivals, known national or international events, aspects taken from the school calendar and themes from the CRS curriculum.

We believe that creating the right atmosphere is crucial to the quality of the worship. Therefore, the time is not over-dominated by school administration or moralising. We plan the time so that there is a variety in content and methods, allowing opportunity for quiet personal reflection/worship.

All teaching staff are expected to attend their form / year / House assemblies unless they have formally withdrawn from them by putting their request in writing, meeting with the Headteacher and securing his agreement.

The Education and Inspection Act of 2006 makes provision for students in post 16 education to withdraw themselves from acts of collective worship but not from assemblies

**We choose from a range of methods, including:**

- Pupil's contributions
- Sacred and secular stories/readings
- Dance/drama
- Prayer/meditation/songs/hymns/music
- Artefacts/natural materials
- Visual aids/focal points
- Dialogue/creative silence
- Visitors

### **SUCCESS CRITERIA**

At Mount Grace we evaluate our acts of worship against some of the following:

- Involvement, enjoyment, attention, reaction of pupils
- The growth of respect and tolerance within the school community
- Positive response to shared experience
- An atmosphere which matches the theme
- A contribution to individual and community sense of well being
- A sense of occasion
- Good order
- Staff / visitor affirmation
- A sense of challenge
- A place in the overall plan of the school
- Enrichment of pupil's experience

### **VISITORS**

We enjoy the fresh approach which visitors can bring to our school worship, but we require them to adhere to our values. All visitors are issued with this policy and, unless otherwise agreed, will fit into the theme for the week.

**Dissemination:** this policy is on the Public drive of the school's intranet and on the web site.

**Review:** the Pupil Achievement Committee will review the policy every 2 years.