

St John's Highbury Vale CE Primary School



'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me' Philippians 4:13

Collective Worship Policy

**Ratified: Autumn 2026
Review Date: Autumn 2029**

At the heart of our school vision is a desire for an authentic and life-giving relationship with ourselves, one another, our world, and with God. We believe that it is through Christ who gives us the strength, all can achieve within a learning environment where every child is valued as a unique individual created in the image of God, and where teaching and learning is of consistently high standard.

STJHV Statement of Intent

St John's Highbury Vale in Islington is committed to providing a nurturing and inspiring environment where every child is empowered to reach their full potential. Grounded in our Christian ethos and guided by our values, we strive to create a vibrant and dynamic educational experience that prepares our pupils to lead fulfilling lives and contribute positively to society.

1. VISION

St John's Highbury Vale Church of England Primary School vision for education:

'At the heart of our school vision is a desire for an authentic and life-giving relationship with ourselves, one another, our world, and with God. We believe that it is through Christ who gives us the strength, all can achieve within a learning environment where every child is valued as a unique individual created in the image of God, and where teaching and learning is of a consistently high standard.'

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

This policy describes how collective worship inspires our school community to grow and deepen a life-giving relationship with God, while being invitational, inclusive and respectful towards members of our community who are of other faiths or of no faith.

2. THE THEOLOGY OF OUR VISION

Our vision is rooted in Philippians 4:13. Paul wrote these words from prison, and in the verses before them he explains that he has learned to be content in every situation, whether in plenty or in need (Philippians 4:11–12). The verse is therefore not a promise that we can achieve anything we want by our own effort. It is a statement of trust: whatever our circumstances, Christ gives us the strength to face them, to persevere and to keep growing.

This shapes how we understand achievement. Our children arrive with very different starting points and experiences, and many join or leave us partway through their primary years. We want every child to know that their worth does not depend on their circumstances, and that strength, hope and resilience are gifts offered to all.

Our vision also draws on the belief that every person is created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). This is why every child is valued as a unique individual, and why dignity and respect for all sit at the heart of our community. The 'life-giving relationship' described in our vision reflects Jesus' promise of life in all its fullness (John 10:10), which also underpins the Church of England's vision for education.

Collective worship is where this vision is most clearly expressed and explored. Through worship, pupils and adults encounter the story of God's faithfulness, reflect on what it means to be strengthened by Christ, and consider how our six values of Friendship, Respect, Wisdom, Forgiveness, Love and Courage are lived out each day.

3. INTRODUCTION

In Church of England schools, collective worship is more than a daily 'awe and wonder' moment. It is the heartbeat of the school and is offered as part of a wider opportunity for pupils and adults to encounter faith by engaging in conversations about God, both as individuals and together. We want pupils to leave school with a rich experience and understanding of Christianity, and we are committed to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way that enhances their lives.

Collective worship is a sacred and significant time in each school day, when we gather together as a whole school family. It strengthens the Christian identity of our school and reaffirms our Christian vision and values.

4. AIMS OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Through collective worship we aim to:

- offer all pupils and adults the opportunity, without compulsion, to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection;
- enable pupils and adults to appreciate that Christians worship in different ways, including music, silence, story, prayer and reflection, and through the varied liturgical traditions of Anglican worship and festivals;
- explore the school's Christian vision, its theological roots, and how it underpins our shared values;
- help pupils and adults appreciate the relevance of faith in today's world by encountering the teachings of Jesus and the Bible, and by developing an understanding of the Christian belief in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- give pupils the opportunity to contribute positively to worship through involvement in planning, leading and evaluating it;
- teach pupils how to worship, giving them the language of worship and experience of a wide variety of forms of worship;
- enable pupils to explore their own beliefs and better understand the views and beliefs of others;
- contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- build community within and beyond the school; and
- celebrate gifts, talents, achievements and significant occasions, including festivals.

5. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

St John's Highbury Vale is a Voluntary Aided Church of England primary school. The legal requirements for collective worship are set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (section 70 and Schedule 20). In summary:

- all pupils will take part in a daily act of collective worship, unless they have been withdrawn by their parents or careers
- in a Voluntary Aided school, the Governing Body, after consultation with the headteacher, is responsible for the arrangements for collective worship;
- worship must be in accordance with the school's Trust Deed and consistent with the beliefs and practices of the Church of England; and
- parents have the right to withdraw their child from all or part of collective worship (section 71). Section 12 of this policy explains how this works at our school.

DfE Circular 1/94 remains the government's guidance on collective worship. The DfE has announced that it will update this guidance, and this policy will be reviewed when new guidance is published.

Collective worship is inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 through the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS).

6. PLANNING OF WORSHIP

The daily act of Christian worship is central to our Christian ethos and makes an important contribution to the spiritual flourishing of the whole school community. Worship is planned by the collective worship leader in consultation with staff, the clergy of our linked parishes, pupils and governors.

Worship may take place at any time of the school day and in any regular school grouping, for example as a whole school or as separate EYFS/KS1 and KS2 groups. We plan systematically, using long-term and short-term plans that follow the Church's liturgical calendar and our school values, so that worship has continuity and coherence. Staff and clergy know the themes well in advance.

We use the following resources to support our planning:

- the LDBS Primary School Collective Worship Planning Resources;
- the Church of England's national guidance, *Collective Worship in Church of England Schools: Inclusive, Invitational, Inspiring*;
- the Church of England's *Valuing All God's Children* guidance; and
- our school vision, values and the Bible references in Appendix B.

We recognise that people engage with worship in different ways, so our planning includes a range of creative approaches such as music, silence, symbolism, drama, story and the use of technology. In line with Church of England guidance, our worship is:

- **Inclusive** – Our acts of worship recognise that pupils and staff come from homes of many faiths and of no faith, so worship is fully accessible to all. Those leading worship take care to use language that does not assume the faith of those taking part.
- **Invitational** – There is no compulsion to take part. Worship offers the opportunity to engage, while allowing those of other faiths and of no faith to be present with integrity. Pupils and adults are invited to pray only if they wish to.
- **Inspiring** – By asking big questions about who we are and how we live, worship motivates pupils and adults to reflect and to act, both in school and in the wider community.

Our worship is based on the teachings of the Bible and the traditions of the Christian Church. Where appropriate, we also mark festivals of other faiths represented in our school and wider community, so that pupils understand and respect the beliefs of others.

7. PATTERN OF WORSHIP

Collective worship takes place every day and follows a four-part pattern:

- **Gather** – we welcome the community with music and the lighting of our special candle;
- **Engage** – we share a Bible reading or story, followed by an activity that helps pupils engage with its message;
- **Respond** – pupils are given the opportunity to discuss, share, reflect, pray or sing;

- **Send** – we restate the message of the worship and ask pupils to think about how it will affect their day, learning and behaviour. We close with a final prayer or our vision verse, music, and blowing out the candle.

Our school is served by three parish churches of different traditions: Christ Church, Highbury Grove; St Thomas', St Thomas' Road; and St Augustine's, Highbury New Park. Their clergy are a valued part of school life. They lead collective worship weekly on a rotational basis, offer pastoral support to pupils, staff and families, and help us reflect the different traditions of the Church. We celebrate the Church's year through special services for significant festivals, held in school and at each of the three churches.

Across the year, collective worship includes:

- Bible-based worship linked to our vision, values and the liturgical calendar, including clergy-led worship;
- explicit teaching of our vision and values, connected to pupils' experiences in and beyond school;
- 'Open the Book' worship led by members of Christ Church;
- worship through singing and music, led by our music staff;
- worship linked to global themes and events, and to learning in RE and RSHE;
- termly class worship, where each class leads worship and shares its learning with the school and parents; and
- celebration worship, which recognises pupils' achievements in and outside school, including attendance, and reflects our belief that every child is valued.

8. PUPIL LEADERSHIP

Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in worship, for example by reading, writing and leading prayers, helping to plan and lead class worship, and contributing to the evaluation of worship through pupil voice. As pupils grow in confidence, they are given increasing responsibility for leading worship themselves.

9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body is responsible for the arrangements for collective worship, after consultation with the headteacher, and for ensuring that they meet legal requirements and reflect the school's Trust Deed and Christian vision.

The headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day organisation of collective worship, for responding to requests for withdrawal, and for keeping a record of pupils who have been withdrawn.

The collective worship leader is responsible for long-term planning, leading worship, supporting staff and pupils who plan and lead worship, and monitoring and evaluating the quality and impact of worship across the school.

10. VISITORS LEADING WORSHIP

All visitors who lead worship must follow the school's Visitors Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026). Before leading

worship, visitors discuss the content with the collective worship leader or a member of the senior leadership team so that its suitability can be checked, including our duties under the Prevent duty. Visitors are never left alone with pupils, as supervision remains the responsibility of school staff.

The collective worship leader and senior leaders make sure that visitors are properly briefed about the school, its context and its vision. Visitors are referred to the LDBS guidance for those leading worship in schools.

11. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pupils, parents and adults in school are entitled to be led in worship by people who understand the nature of collective worship in a Church school. Staff and clergy who lead worship have access to regular training, including training provided by the LDBS.

12. PARENTS AND CARERS

We value our partnership with parents and carers. Parents are warmly welcome to attend worship on Friday afternoons, which builds community and shows home and school working together in support of the children.

Collective worship is central to our identity as a Church of England school, and we hope that all pupils will take part. Because our worship is invitational and inclusive, pupils of all faiths and none can be present with integrity: no one is ever required to pray or to profess a faith they do not hold.

Parents have a legal right to withdraw their child from all or part of collective worship, and the school will respect this.

Parents who wish to withdraw their child can simply let the headteacher or the school office know, in whatever way is easiest for them; a written request is not required. The headteacher keeps a record of all pupils who have been withdrawn. Pupils who are withdrawn will be supervised and given a suitable alternative activity. They will not be treated any less favourably, and the school will ensure they are included fully in all other aspects of school life. With their parents' agreement, they may still join parts of an assembly that are not an act of worship, such as notices or the celebration of achievements.

13. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

We regularly evaluate our collective worship and the impact it has on pupils and adults. Monitoring is carried out by the collective worship leader, school leaders and governors, both formally and informally. Everyone who leads worship is asked to reflect on how they can develop their practice.

We seek the views of pupils, parents, staff and visitors through pupil voice meetings, surveys and conversations, and use this feedback to develop the spiritual life of the school.

Foundation governors and the collective worship leader observe and evaluate worship at least once a year and report to the full Governing Body. Our evaluation is guided by the SIAMS question: how is daily collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually?

14. RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be read alongside the Religious Education Policy, the RSHE Policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the Visitors Policy, the Equality Statement and Objectives 2026–2029, and the Behaviour and Relationships Policy.

15. REVIEW

This policy is reviewed by the collective worship leader in consultation with the headteacher and is approved by the Governing Body every three years, or sooner if legislation or national guidance changes.

APPENDIX A: CHECKLIST FOR LEADING COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

This checklist also applies to class, celebration and music worship, adapted as appropriate.

Before worship

- Plan and prepare the worship well in advance, linked to one of our six values and including a Bible reference (see Appendix B for suggestions; others may be used where more appropriate).
- Prepare any visual aids or artefacts that will help pupils understand ideas they may find hard to imagine or may not have experienced.

Gather

- Play music as pupils enter the hall quietly and respectfully.
- Display a focus question on the interactive whiteboard to help pupils begin thinking about the theme.
- Light the candle and say the school prayer together.

Engage

- Share the Bible reading or story and the main teaching, linked to the school value.

Respond

- Begin the reflection with 'I wonder...' to draw out the key theme, pausing to give pupils time to think.
- Invite pupils to watch the candle for 15 to 20 seconds in silence.
- Introduce prayer with "Now let's get ready to pray". This allows everyone to put their hands together or simply bow their head as an act of respect, bearing in mind the different faiths represented in our school.

Send

- Restate the message and ask pupils how it might shape their day.
- Say together, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'.
- Blow out the candle.
- Sing together, choosing a song linked to the theme where possible, and dismiss pupils to music or singing.

APPENDIX B: OUR VALUES AND BIBLE LINKS

These suggested references support worship linked to each of our six values. Those leading worship may use other passages where more appropriate.

Value	Bible references and stories
Friendship	John 15:12–15; Proverbs 17:17; David and Jonathan (1 Samuel 18–20)
Respect	1 Peter 2:17; Genesis 1:27; Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10)
Wisdom	James 1:5; Proverbs 2:6; Solomon asks for wisdom (1 Kings 3:5–14)
Forgiveness	Colossians 3:13; Matthew 18:21–22; the Lost Son (Luke 15:11–32)
Love	1 Corinthians 13:4–7; John 13:34; the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37)
Courage	Joshua 1:9; Philippians 4:13; Daniel in the lions' den (Daniel 6)