



TOLWORTH GIRLS' SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM
COLLECTIVE ACT OF WORSHIP POLICY

Reviewed and approved by Curriculum & Standards committee: March 2016
Next Review: March 2020

In May 2013, the DfE published information for Academies and Free schools about providing religious education (RE) and collective worship.

The guidance is that - 'Each pupil must take part in a daily act of collective worship unless they have been withdrawn by their parents, or if in the sixth form they have decided to withdraw themselves. This applies to Academies with and without a religious designation.'

PRINCIPLES:

At Tolworth Girls' School & Sixth Form we believe that an act of daily collective worship is a challenging aim. It is, however, logistically impossible to get the whole school together on a daily basis, so we work in smaller units - in Key Stage groups of around 420 (KS4) 630 (KS3), in year groups of around 210 students, and in tutor groups of around 27.

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 the way we talk to one another and treat each other.

We value time for our students to develop a reflective approach to life, to think about faith, to experience a sense of their place in existence.

Some of our assemblies are explicit in this - exploring the nature of prayer, helping students to understand the relevance and importance of the Bible stories, giving time for reflection.

Families who send their children to this school are in the main 'nominally' Christian backgrounds. Some children are from practising Christian families. In addition, there are children who are from religions other than Christianity including Hindu, Muslim, Jewish etc. and some 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.

AIMS:

Through our approach to collective worship we aim to provide a caring and supportive environment for students to:

- Become increasingly aware of themselves as individuals and groups within the school and wider community
- Grow in understanding of the feelings of other people in everyday situations 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 is religious or not.

PRACTICE:

At Tolworth Girls' School & Sixth Form we combine our acts of worship with assembly, helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework. There is one assembly each week for each student in the school, sometimes with a second one to provide information on a particular topic.

The assemblies are led either by the Head of Year or by a member of the Senior Leadership team. There are other 'Special Assemblies' such as 'Remembrance Assembly' etc. that can be led by individuals or by departments. Students are encouraged to take an active part in both planning and leadership of assemblies at certain times of the year.

In tutor time, students are following their 'Pastoral programme' which does lead to reflection and discussion about the world in which we live.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- The Headteacher is responsible (under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998) for arranging the daily collective worship after consulting with the governing body
- The Heads of School (Senior Assistant Heads) are responsible for planning the calendar of themes and activities on a termly basis
- All tutors follow the Pastoral programme in tutor time
- All teaching staff are expected to attend assemblies unless they have formally withdrawn from them by putting their request in writing and meeting with the Headteacher
- Parents/Carers of a student have a 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/carer who wishes to exercise this right should consult the Headteacher

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON PLANNING AND CONDUCTING COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

In planning our assemblies, we choose from a range of content and stimuli, including:

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

SONG/MUSIC

Song/music is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and unifies and uplifts the school community. Music from a variety of cultures and types is used on occasions. Music should be selected carefully to match the theme.

PRAYER/REFLECTION

The use of prayer has led to a great deal of debate. We feel that, whilst prayer is a good way of enabling children to focus their thoughts, students should not be required to say or affirm prayers in which they do not believe.

Various forms of introduction to our prayers can be used to distance children, whilst giving 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/Hindu/Muslim prayer/poem/reading...' In this way we are able to use prayers 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 students to respond in a personal way if they so wish.