



WALTHAMSTOW HALL
SEVENOAKS

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY (PRAYERS) **Includes Early Years Foundation Stage**

Aims

Walthamstow Hall was formed for the purpose of educating the daughters of missionaries. Collective worship, therefore, forms an essential part of school life and is one of the ways in which girls' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is delivered.

In accordance with the values of the school collective worship, 'Prayers' are of a broadly Christian character. It includes all pupils unless they have been withdrawn by their parents. Collective worship provides the opportunity for pupils to:

- give expression to, reaffirm and practise the values of the school community
- strengthen and support the school community and individual members
- provide an experience which promotes the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils
- introduce children to the concept of worship and give them an appreciation of the Christian heritage of the school and of this country
- provide an opportunity for personal and shared reflection and response to fundamental questions of life and those things which are of concern and value to human beings
- foster a respect for self and engender a concern for the needs and opinions of others
- celebrate and give thanks for achievements within the school, local and international community and occasions of significance, including religious festivals
- actively participate through Form Prayers, House Prayers and other occasions such as Comic Relief.

Overall, therefore, our assemblies/'prayers' aim to be:

- inclusive in nature
- broadly educational in content
- specifically, spiritual, moral, social and cultural in content.
- promoting the strength of British Values
- promoting the ethos of the school and the value of resilience against extremism.

In accordance with the November 2007 government regulations, we also aim to provide community cohesion, i.e. to work towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the work place, in schools and in the wider community.

The term 'community' has a number of dimensions including the school community, the community within which the school is located, the UK community and the global community.

Through being **inclusive** our assemblies:

- recognise and celebrate diversity of cultures, life styles and religions, although the majority of the Acts of Collective Worship are Christian in character
- have an atmosphere in which everyone feels valued and safe
- are suitable for every pupil unless withdrawn from collective worship by her parents
- focus on issues and experiences which are relevant to the girls
- include active participation by pupils and members of the local community. Every form tutor group takes a whole school assembly at least once a year. Visiting speakers include representatives from charities and churches, governors and community police.

Through being **educational** our assemblies:

- reflect the aims of the school and foster a sense of shared values
- are valuable learning experiences
- provide an opportunity to celebrate academic, social, personal, musical and sporting achievements of the girls
- provide an opportunity to learn how to behave in a large social gathering

Through being **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural** in content our assemblies:

- celebrate special days such as *Jeans for Genes Day*, Mothers' Day, World Book Day, UNICEF, as well as giving special thought to any major disasters in the world
- provide girls with time to think in an atmosphere of peace and quiet, including well-ordered arrival and departure
- provide the girls with an opportunity to contemplate the spiritual dimension of their life through music, images, words and prayer
- have a sense of occasion

Roles and Responsibilities

The Headmistress

The Headmistress will ensure that:

- a regular act of collective worship is provided
- alternative provision is made for pupils whose parents request that they do not attend Prayers
- the Governing Body is kept informed about the broad nature and arrangements for Prayers as appropriate.

Staff

All staff are expected to:

- attend Prayers whenever possible and make an active contribution
- support their tutor groups in the planning and delivery of their form prayers.

Current Practice

Senior School:

At the Senior School there are three 'whole school' Prayers per week, held at the start of the school day (08:45 – 9:00). On Mondays and Wednesdays the Headmistress usually leads Prayers. Fridays are normally reserved for Form and House Prayers. Outside guest speakers may also be invited to lead Prayers on occasion. On one or two occasions per term, Prayers time is spent practising hymns which may not be familiar to all members of the community.

Our acts of collective worship generally begin with a hymn and end with a prayer, although this is not compulsory. The theme is a matter of personal choice for those who lead them, but the content is expected to be moral, thoughtful and spiritually worthwhile. Recognising that not all pupils or staff are Christians, there is no absolute requirement for them to join in with hymns or prayers if they do not wish to do so. All pupils are expected to show respect for the faiths and opinions of others. When the act of collective worship is concluded, for example, by the saying of a prayer, there will be reports on matches from Sports Captains, the awarding of certificates and the announcement of notices.

Junior School:

Whole school assembly takes place in the Hall on Monday, Tuesday and Friday every week at 8:45 am. On Wednesday morning pupils have a 'Form Time' followed by PHSEE with their Form Teacher and on Thursday morning a Hymn Practice is taken by the Head of Music. The Head of Junior School plans and prepares the weekly themes and resources for assemblies. She leads assembly on Monday and Friday. Miss Ferro regularly visits the Junior School to take assembly on a Tuesday. The main part of Friday assemblies may be led by a form or a visiting speaker.

All pupils from Reception to Year 6 attend assemblies. Girls in Nursery may be brought in for 'special' assemblies throughout the year. Parents have the right to withdraw their daughter from collective worship if they wish.

All staff are expected to attend assembly unless permission to be excused has been given by the Head or Deputy Head. Staff on duty at 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. may choose not to attend assembly for preparation time.

Music is played as girls enter and leave the Hall.

Girls enter the Hall quietly and sit down. When the whole school is assembled on Tuesday the Deputy Head asks everyone to stand as the Headmistress enters.

Each act of worship will usually begin with a hymn and end with a prayer. The main content of the assembly may be a story, talk, demonstration, play etc..

Form assemblies should be ten to fifteen minutes in length. The theme, which should give food for thought and be morally and spiritually worthwhile, is the choice of the teacher and pupils involved. Parents are invited to watch form assemblies.

Following the act of worship the assembly will conclude with notices from staff, prefects, House Captains or Games Captains.

In keeping with our aim to celebrate success and achievement certificates, medals, Merit badges, House Cups and other trophies are awarded and House points totals announced on a Monday.

Withdrawal

The lack of requests to withdraw pupils from collective worship over the past five years would tend to support the view that the form and content of assemblies are sufficiently sensitive to the different beliefs of our pupils and staff that they are meeting our desire that they should be genuinely inclusive. However, parents are made aware of their right to withdraw their child from the daily act of collective worship through the Terms and Conditions which accompany the offer of a place.

Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed regularly by the Headmistress in conjunction with the Governing Body.

This policy has regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Walthamstow Hall policies are approved, ratified and reviewed regularly by the Governing Body in the light of statutory requirements.

Reviewed June 2018
Next Review Date Feb 2020

Signed:Date:

Mrs J Adams
Chair of Governors