



WALTHAMSTOW HALL  
SEVENOAKS

## **COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY** **(PRAYERS/ASSEMBLY)**

### **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 pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is delivered and developed.

In accordance with the values of the School collective worship, 'Prayers/Assemblies' are of a broadly Christian character. They include all pupils unless they have been withdrawn by their parents.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 pupils 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, House or Year Group presentations and other occasions such as Remembrance, Comic Relief and Children in Need.

Overall, therefore, our Assemblies/'Prayers' aim to be:

- Inclusive in nature.
- Broadly educational in content.
- Specifically, spiritual, moral, social or 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 Education Regulations No.1860, 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, lifestyles 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 their parents.
- Focus on issues and experiences which are relevant to the pupils.
- Include active participation by pupils and members of the local community. Every Form/Year 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 pupils.
- 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/weeks such as *Jeans for Genes* Day, World Book Day, Children's Mental Health Week, Anti-bullying week, International Women's Day as well as giving special thought to any major disasters in the world.
- Provide pupils with time to think in an atmosphere of peace and quiet, including well-ordered arrival and departure.
- Provide the pupils 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/Assembly.

- The Governing Body is kept informed about the broad nature and arrangements for Prayers/Assembly as appropriate.

## **Staff**

All staff are expected to:

- Attend Prayers/Assembly whenever possible and make an active contribution.
- Support their Form groups in the planning and delivery of their Form/Year group Prayers/Assembly.

## **Current Practice**

\*With the different restrictions in place due to Covid-19, larger gatherings or acts of collective worship are limited to year group 'bubbles' when pupils are in School. During lockdown, Assemblies are recorded and delivered via Firefly.

### **Senior School:**

At the Senior School there are two 'whole School' Prayers per week, held on Monday and Friday afternoon after lunch (Period 7 from 2.05pm – 2.40pm). Prayers/Assemblies are currently delivered virtually via Firefly or Teams. These Prayers are 'directed' by the Headmistress. 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 - but due to restrictions, this is not the case currently.

Our acts of collective worship generally begin with a hymn and end with a prayer/reflection, 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 and to those of no faith. 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 Tuesdays and Fridays every week. On Thursday morning, a Hymn Practice is taken by The Head of Instrumental Music and Performance. The Headmistress regularly visits the Junior School to take Assembly for a Year Group on a Tuesday. The main part of Friday Assemblies may be led by Subject Leaders, a Year Group or a visiting speaker.

All pupils from Early Years 2 to Year 6 attend Assemblies. Pupils in Early Years 1 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 Headmistress.

Music is played as pupils enter and leave the Hall. Pupils enter the Hall quietly and sit down.

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.

Year Group Assemblies are usually about fifteen to twenty 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.

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 Tuesday – currently done virtually.

#### 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 Feb 2021  
Next Review Date Feb 2022

Signed: .....Date: .....

Mrs J Adams  
Chairman of the Governing Body