

**Collective Worship
Policy
(2014)**

PRINCIPLES:

At Highgate Wood School we recognise that it is a legal requirement that all registered school age students 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 students”.

Families who send their children to this school are from a range of faith backgrounds, including Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, and some are from non-religious backgrounds. We recognise that the backgrounds that our children come from need to be considered when asking them to worship and it is therefore not the practice of this school to seek to preach to or convert children. The faith backgrounds of our staff, our students and their families are respected at all times.

Highgate Wood School believes that our collective worship practice supports 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, are considered to be largely common to all faiths from spiritual, moral, social and cultural perspectives. Our values are reflected in the 4Cs – commitment, courtesy, collaboration and cooperation. We value times in the school day for students to develop a reflective approach to life and their ability to express their reflections in an appropriate manner.

AIMS:

Through our collective worship we aim to provide a caring and supportive environment for our 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 every day 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 a 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

PRACTICE:

At Highgate Wood School we combine our acts of worship with assembly, thus helping to ensure that worship takes place within a broad educational framework.

There are house team assemblies each week. In addition form tutors lead their tutor groups through a range of activities, readings and reflections during tutor time on the remaining mornings each week.

Members of the school's Senior Leadership Team, Heads of House, Deputy Heads of House or Form Tutors may lead the House Team assemblies each week. Students are encouraged to take an active part in both planning and leading assemblies. Assemblies are sometimes discussed at School Council meetings and students are invited to submit ideas and get other children involved.

The school year has been divided into weekly themes, which encompass religious festivals, known national or international events, and aspects taken from the school calendar.

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.
- A member of the SLT is responsible for planning the calendar of themes on a termly basis. There is an opportunity for Heads of House to contribute to the themes addressed.
- All Form Tutors follow the Highgate Wood programme in tutor time.
- All Teaching Staff are required to attend assemblies unless they have formally withdrawn from them by putting their request in writing and meeting with the Headteacher.
- Parents 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 who wishes to exercise this right should consult the Headteacher.
- The Education and Inspection Act 2006 makes provision for students in post-16 education to exercise the right to withdraw themselves from the daily act of collective worship, but not from assembly.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Governor's Curriculum Committee review this policy on an annual basis.

Compliance with the policy is monitored by Heads of House in line with Learning and

Teaching Reviews and the programme is reviewed every term by Heads of House.

APPENDIX 1

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE ON PLANNING AND CONDUCTING COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

In planning our assemblies, we choose from a range of methods, including:

- Student 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 an appropriate atmosphere which can unify and uplift the school community. Music from a variety of cultures is used. Music should be selected carefully to match the theme.

PRAYER/REFLECTION

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.