

Policy Document**Collective Worship Policy****Purpose**

- To fulfil the national statutory requirements on collective worship for all state schools whilst promoting enlightened thinking and preventing marginalisation of any minority group
- To develop an understanding of various, world-wide religious and cultural views and practices
- To instil students with tolerance and respect
- To increase appreciation and respect for universal human values, which are echoed across the main religions and are roughly in-line with the principles of humanism.

Guidance

Under the Education Act 1996, all maintained schools must provide daily collective worship for all registered pupils. In May 2013, the DfE published information for academies and free schools about providing religious education (RE) and collective worship. The section on daily collective worship says:

- An academy's funding agreement is drafted to mirror the requirements for acts of collective worship in maintained schools.
- Each pupil must take part in a daily act of collective worship unless they have been withdrawn by their parents, or if in the sixth form they have decided to withdraw themselves.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.

The DfE's guidance on collective worship explains that collective worship in schools without a designated religious character will be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian nature", however this should not be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.

Principles

The religious demographics of the UK, informed by the Census of 2011, reveal that 59.3% (a decrease from 71.7% in 2001) of the UK align themselves with the Christian faith, 25.1% (an increase from 14.8% in 2001) with having no religious belief, 4.8% with Islam, 1.5% with Hinduism and less than 1% identifying with Sikhism, Buddhism and Judaism.

It is for this reason that Stanchester Academy's priorities for collective worship are:

- inclusion in a culturally diverse society
- education of the principles and practices of the main belief and non-belief systems listed above as this understanding is essential for tolerance
- a celebration of the values that unite members of all religious and non-religious communities, especially those which underpin Fundamental British Values (see FBV policy).

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- an insistence that no world-view should take precedent over any other as this the prerequisite for respect
- all students should be provided with unbiased and balanced viewpoints and should be challenged to question their own preconceptions, consider alternative arguments and positions of others

Due to these priorities it has been decided that collective worship at Stanchester Academy must be informed by 'liberal human values' rather than 'broadly Christian values'. These values are:

- A commitment to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems
- A belief that education, enlightenment, scientific discovery and technology can contribute to the betterment of human life
- A belief in an open and pluralistic society and that democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities
- A belief in the arts of negotiation and compromise as a means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding
- A commitment to securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance
- A belief that it is our duty as citizens of Great British society to help others more vulnerable than ourselves
- A dedication to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, and strive to work together for the common good of humanity.
- We want to protect and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species.
- We believe in enjoying life here and now and in developing our creative talents to their fullest.
- We believe in the cultivation of moral excellence.
- We believe in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, responsibility. Humanist ethics is amenable to critical, rational guidance. There are normative standards that we discover together. Moral principles are tested by their consequences.
- We are deeply concerned with the moral education of our children. We want to nourish reason and compassion.
- We are citizens of the universe and are excited by discoveries still to be made in the cosmos.
- We are sceptical of untested claims to knowledge, and we are open to novel ideas and seek new departures in our thinking.
- We affirm humanism as a realistic alternative to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence and as a source of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in the service to others.
- We believe in optimism rather than pessimism, hope rather than despair, learning in the place of dogma, truth instead of ignorance, joy rather than guilt or sin, tolerance in the place of fear, love instead of hatred, compassion over selfishness, beauty instead of ugliness, and reason rather than blind faith or irrationality.
- We believe in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings

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We have chosen these elements because we believe they are essential values for positive, lawful, active and empowered citizens residing within an integrated, harmonious and liberal society.

Collective worship at Stanchester also takes place through weekly themes. The weekly themes for assembly are published in the school handbook at the start of each Academic year. Collective worship takes place through reflection upon these themes through weekly assemblies and daily guidance time sessions.

Opportunities exist throughout the curriculum for individual reflection time. The Citizenship and RE programmes of study, along with the Citizenship Days provide very regular opportunity for this.

Parents' right to withdraw their child

Parents can request that their child be totally or partially withdrawn from collective worship. Reasons for removing their child do not need to be given. It remains the school's responsibility to make appropriate alternative arrangements to supervise a child withdrawn in accordance with DfE guidance.

Monitoring and Review

The Governing Body will monitor the fulfilment of the national statutory requirements through its Leadership and Management Committee. The policy will be assessed annually both in terms of its implementation and effectiveness.

In reviewing the policy the Governing Body will take in to account views expressed by parents, students and staff.