

St Mary's Catholic Primary School Prayer & Liturgy Policy

St Mary's Vision & Values statement

'Love one another, as I have loved you.' John 13:34

As Jesus taught us, we strive to love each other as an inclusive, Catholic community embracing all faiths, cultures and beliefs.

We support one another to achieve our goals; to persevere and value learning while discovering the gifts God has given to us.

We help each other use our God-given talents to serve God, each other, our community and the world, following Jesus' example.



Date of Policy: September 2025 **Approved by:** M&WB Committee **Date of next review:** July 2027

This policy is based upon the diocesan model and The Little Way Catholic Educational Trust Mission Prayer & Liturgy policies.

The Nature of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the community life at St Mary's School and reflects the liturgical tradition of the Church, with Christ at its heart. It is an essential part of our distinctive Catholic ethos.

It builds on and supports the life of the Domestic Church (the home), where parents are regarded as the first teachers of the Faith, forming their children in their understanding of God's love and prayer, in accordance with the Baptism of their children.

Legal Requirements

Education Reform Act 1988, as amended by the Education Act 1993

Subject to section 9 of this Act, all pupils in attendance at a maintained school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship.

As a Catholic community, we acknowledge the legal requirement that there must be a daily act of Liturgy and Prayer for all pupils. We understand that simply holding an assembly that includes a prayer, said either by the teacher or everyone present, does not fulfil this requirement. We also acknowledge that Prayer and Liturgy and assembly are distinct activities. They may sometimes form part of the same gathering, but the difference between the two will always be made clear. As part of this, we also take our duty of Safeguarding very seriously and we understand that personal prayer and reflection may subsequently lead to a disclosure which would activate our well-established Safeguarding procedures. The act of Prayer and Liturgy is not designated curriculum time under regulations and will not be subsumed under any part of the curriculum, including religious education. As a rule, acts of Prayer and Liturgy will take place on the school premises, or at Church.

Religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church. At all times the Trust is to serve as a witness to the Catholic Faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rights of Withdrawal

Parents/carers can choose to withdraw their child (up to the age of 16 years) from Acts of Prayer and Liturgy. However, given the importance of Collective Worship in a Catholic school, parents and prospective parents need to be made aware of the fact that it can never be confined to 'timetabled slots' but may take place in a variety of contexts other than those which are specifically structured. Parents should keep in mind the Trust's Mission Statement and each School's mission when choosing a Catholic school and the role that Collective Worship takes in the life of our schools.

Intent and Outcomes

We aim for all to know and love Christ and to open the vision and imagination of the school community to the wonders of living in God's world, and the responsibilities that follow. It is enshrined in the school's Mission Statement.

We have a holistic aim to educate the whole person (body, mind and soul) thus helping develop the unique gifts and talents of each individual within a broad and balanced curriculum and nurturing pupils' moral and spiritual development, so they may be equipped to live their Catholic life to the full, sharing in the mission of the Church.

Gospel values are at the heart of all we do and the schools strive to provide a welcoming and caring environment that values and works in close partnership with parents/carers, governors, staff, trustees and the wider community to this end.

The cycle and rhythm of the Church's year provides a basis for Prayer and Liturgy, and, throughout the year, each school comes together to celebrate important events in the Church and school calendars. Against this background, daily collective worship provides pupils with a rich variety of opportunities to explore, express and develop their own relationship with God within the context of a worshipping community.

Implementation

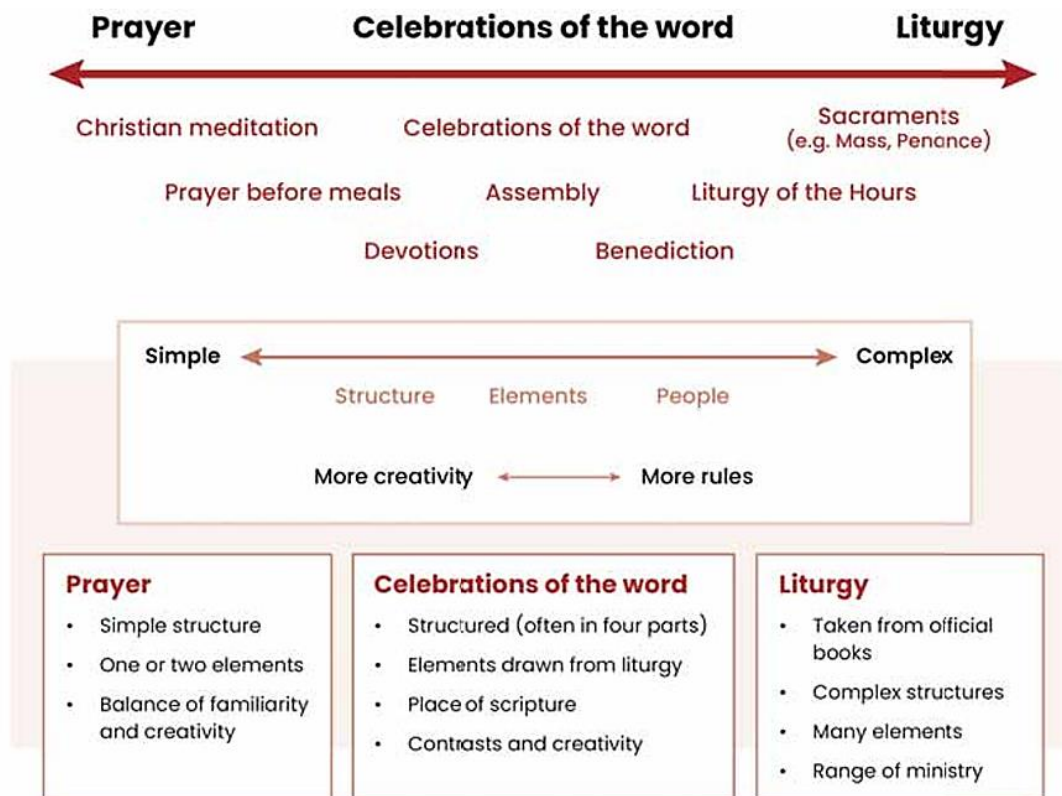
The place of Prayer and Liturgy in school

The act of Prayer and Liturgy is central to life at St Mary's and is an integral part of pupils' faith formation. It is a way of affirming the school's identity, our individuality and our communal belonging to the Body of Christ. It is our loving response in word and action to God's invitation to enter into a relationship with Him, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit. Through Prayer and Liturgy, we give glory, honour, praise and thanks to God.

- Worship is in addition to curriculum RE
- Our acts of worship follow the traditions of the Catholic Church
- Prayer and Liturgy times are clear in their liturgical focus and varied in their delivery
- Pupils help to plan and lead Prayer and Liturgy within their class
- An act of worship commences with the Sign of the Cross to gather the community together, provides a time for reflection and concludes with a sense of renewed and deepened relationship with God
- Pupils and staff have the opportunity to experience different forms of prayer, including formal, more traditional prayers of the Catholic Church, prayers common across each school said at agreed times of the school day, as well as spontaneous prayer, meditative prayer and time for contemplation
- Prayer time is quality time and participants are given the opportunity to take part in a meaningful way, in order to develop a real 'sense of prayer'
- Pupils are encouraged to understand why we say prayers and what the prayer is about
- Sharing worship with children is an opportunity to help each child to understand and take part in the adult worship of the Parish, but at their own level
- All worship is open to all faiths represented in our schools
- The celebration can address the emotions and feelings of the child's experience, reflect thanksgivings, special days or feast days. It gives the opportunity to reflect silently on the Word of God
- Children are given the opportunity to worship through song. We learn a range of traditional and modern hymns in regular singing practise
- Worship in our schools creates a real sense of belonging for all involved
- Every opportunity is taken to extend a warm and genuine welcome to priests, parents, parishioners and members of the local community to take part in each school's worship

How Collective Worship is Organised

The diagram below (taken from The Prayer and Liturgy Directory (2023)) shows how Collective Worship is explored in greater depth, under the terms 'Liturgy', 'Celebrations of the Word' and 'Prayer' which are terms more commonly used in a Catholic context.



Time Allocation

Throughout each school's week, specific time is allocated for Collective Worship. Child-led prayer is encouraged daily to develop our children as leaders of their own faith.

Prayer & Liturgy takes a variety of forms including Celebration of the Word with gospel or values/virtues focus; Class Celebrations of the Word; Hymn Practises and whole school Celebrations of Achievements. Appendix 1 shows how activities are scheduled, on a weekly basis.

In addition, liturgies are held in accordance with the liturgical calendar, taking account of important times in the Church's year and Holy Days of Obligation. Details of each school's liturgies can be found on their website.

Community and Participation

Through our various roles we aspire to have the common good at the heart of what we do, to support us to improve the wellbeing of people in our society and the wider world.

The role of the children is to be leaders of their own faith, where they listen and respond to the values and virtues that guide them, to work together to leave our earth better than they found it.

They hear the call to encourage each other and develop their connections with their community, becoming active participants that choose to act with Christ at the heart of all they do. Our children do this by:

- Understanding their school mission statement
- Preparing and leading reflections and prayer times
- Understanding and respecting other faiths
- Making links in the community, parish, Trust and universal church

The role of the staff is to guide and nurture the children's understanding of how God made us to build community cohesion, so all people can share and help each other in unity. It is also to share the belief that people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and wellbeing of all. In its simplest form, it is about articulating that we live together as a community in solidarity.

You shall love your neighbour as yourself

Matthew 22: 39

Each of the parishes that our schools serve are a Christian community that has faith, action and hope at the heart of it. With strong links to the clergy at the parishes we serve, we celebrate a common desire to change the world through the values and virtues presented in the teachings of Jesus. These parishes have the opportunity to take part in the prayer life of their link school, celebrations, retreats, masses and community inspired events. This community spirit is driven through our children's desire to change our world; choosing to work closely with others in solidarity.

"An authentic faith-which is never comfortable or completely personal-always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it," – Pope Francis

Visitors are welcomed into our Trust school families, whether this is in person or virtually. Visitors will experience how faith, hope and love is lived out within our settings. They will feel the calm and reflective atmosphere around each school from both the children and the staff. Members of each school work together to support the concept of community, where they welcome a variety of visitors whilst modelling the values and virtues taught to us by Christ. Visitors will experience a community working cohesively to connect to the world around them that extends wider than the parameters of the school, whilst keeping the rhythm of the church's year.

Spiritual Spaces

Prayer areas or spiritual spaces, such as, altars, prayer gardens or reflection rooms, can provide children and adults with an opportunity to develop skills of personal reflection and to explore prayer in an open, inclusive and safe environment. Children should be encouraged to use and if possible, contribute to these spaces, showing respect and an understanding of how these areas reflect the Catholic identity of the school.

All classes have prayer areas, linked to the liturgical calendar and containing spiritual artefacts and resources which aim to generate contemplation, provide inspiration and give a focal point for prayer. Prayer areas should be created by or with the children and should contain a candle, a cross, a Bible and a cloth reflecting the correct liturgical colour.

Impact

Children at St Mary's are developing a growing independence to pray through stillness. They understand the importance of spending time in God's presence, both individually and as a community, to deepen their faith and develop a relationship with God.

They use prayer and liturgy to strive every day to bear witness to Christ and 'be the change they want to see in the world today'. They demonstrate reverence, sing joyfully and respect the needs of others to pray. This nurtures the children to love themselves, love each other and love Jesus Christ.

Monitoring

At least once a year each school's provision of worship will be evaluated to consider whether it meets the needs of all pupils and whether pupils are making progress in acquiring skills and abilities in organising and leading worship. This evaluation is brought together in monitoring summaries as the year progresses and these feed into Headteacher's reports and self-evaluation statements.

Recording

Collective Worship is recorded through displays, collections of pupils' contributions, prayers, reflections, photographs, videos etc. Class-led Celebrations of the Word are recorded on a planning template which is used in our Trust schools and helps to guide the worship against a shared theme.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Weekly liturgy schedule

Appendix 2: Information on Prayer

Appendix 3: The Little Way Catholic Educational Trust Prayer and Skills Progression

Appendix 4: The Little Way Catholic Educational Trust Monitoring Forms

Appendix 1:

Weekly Prayer & Liturgy Schedule

Day	Activity
Monday	Worship assembly (whole -school) • <i>Led by the Collective Worship Leader & Headteacher</i> • <i>Singing or hymns & prayers.</i> • <i>Opportunities for prayer & reflection</i> Class Celebration of the Word (<i>Plan & prepare week 1 / Deliver week 2</i>) <u>Days vary by class</u> • <i>An opportunity to respond to the Gospel of the week</i> • <i>Opportunities for daily class and child-led prayer</i>
Tuesday	Celebrations of the Word – Gospel / Values and Virtues (Juniors) • <i>Led by the Headteacher or Deputy Head Teacher & Chaplaincy Team</i> • <i>Opportunities for daily class and child-led prayer</i>
Wednesday	Class Celebrations of the Word (Mark 10 Mission videos) • <i>Mark 10 Mission (Juniors)</i> https://www.themark10mission.co.uk/the-mark-10-mission • <i>Little Liturgies (Infants)</i> https://www.themark10mission.co.uk/the-little-liturgies
Thursday	Celebrations of the Word – Gospel / Values and Virtues (Infants) • <i>Led by the Headteacher or Infant Team Leader & Chaplaincy Team</i> Class liturgy / Class masses (annual timetable) • <i>Led by the parish priest and supported by Collective Worship Leader</i>
Friday	Celebration Assembly • <i>Led by the headteacher</i> • <i>Reflecting Catholic Social Teaching principles and the school's Values</i> • <i>Recognising the special and unique skills demonstrated by children both inside and outside of school.</i>

Appendix 2: Information on Prayer

Why is Prayer necessary?

Prayer is the foundation of Christian Life. Prayer is communication or communion with God. Through prayer we are drawn deeper into the life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself taught us the need for prayer. In Gethsemane as He prepared Himself for the climax of His life, Jesus received the strength He needed in prayer to His Father, "Abba Father Take this cup away from me but let it be as you not I, would have it". At moments of His public ministry when those in need were pressing around Him, Jesus went off to a lonely place and prayed there.

What is Prayer?

We can pray anywhere and at any time. The first step is to place ourselves, as we are, in the presence of God. The second step in prayer is to pray. This means speaking to the Lord, asking Him for our needs and thanking Him for the many gifts He has given to us. This leads to praise and adoration. The third step is to be silent so the Lord Himself can guide the direction of our hearts.

How do we Pray?

The best prayers are those that come from the heart. There are times however, when we find it almost "impossible" to pray: and then we need prayer books and the prayers we have learned by heart. Our children should have the opportunity to find out about and respond in a variety of ways to Jesus' example and teaching with regard to prayer. They should be encouraged to explore the different forms of prayer, and to be helped to grow in appreciation of the importance of prayer in sustaining a living relationship with God. Children's experience of prayer and worship in school, which for some of our children will be the only prayer experiences they will receive, will have a deep impact on their spiritual development as Christians, and a love of their Catholic heritage which they can take into their adult life. Their lives of Prayer Worship must be continually developed and fostered.

In prayer we become aware of God's presence with us and his love for us. We listen to Him in order to discover His will for us and to express to Him our gratitude, praise, love and adoration.

We can foster the children's life of prayer by helping them become aware of God's presence in their lives and His love for them and by leading them to respond to Him in a manner appropriate to their age.

Children learn to pray chiefly by sharing in the faith and prayer of adult Christians, especially parents, priests and teachers. Therefore, we believe that we should go a step beyond teaching them prayers, we should pray with them in their presence.

We should encourage them to pray by themselves, especially in the morning and at night. There are many ways of helping the children to meet God Our Father in prayer:

- **Prayers of Silence**

To help the children participate in a prayerful silence, we can use various ways of focussing their minds on prayer. We can ask them to concentrate on an object, a picture, a lighted candle, some quiet background music or by giving them guidance about what to think: "Let's think about".

- **Spontaneous prayer**

Once we have begun it is often difficult to stop children praying spontaneously. The children may not be able to express their thoughts accurately at first, and they may initially be shy or embarrassed. Many of their prayers may be prayers of petition for a sick parent, grandparent or friend. We try to encourage them to pray not only for what they want, but also to pray that things will turn out as God knows best. We also encourage the children to express thanksgiving, love and praise to God the Father in their spontaneous prayer.

- **Praying through gesture or action**

We encourage children to make even the simplest gestures thoughtfully so that the gesture or action is a prayer in itself. Gestures that the children will be taught as they move through the school will include: making the Sign of the Cross, joining their hands, offering the sign of peace, bowing their heads at the name of Jesus, genuflection, hand gestures, processions etc.

- **Formal /Traditional Prayers**

As the children move through school they will be taught and introduced to the commonly used prayers of the Church so that they are able to join in and participate in parish celebrations. The introduction of many of the responses of the Holy Mass, are incorporated into their classroom and assembly prayer and worship celebrations. Our aim is to help the children to develop a reverence and a positive attitude to praying.

- **Praying through Music and Song**

Listening to reflective music can create an atmosphere conducive to prayer and reflection. The singing of hymns can be so joyful. "Singing hymns is praying twice". Reflective music and singing are both used during prayer and worship sessions

The Little Way Catholic Educational Trust Prayer and Skills Progression

Age Phase	EYFS	5-7 (Key Stage 1)		7-9 (Lower Key Stage 2)		9-11 (Upper Key Stage 2)	
Formal Oral Prayers	Sign of the Cross Hail Mary Our Father School Prayer	Sign of the Cross Glory Be Hail Mary Our Father School Prayer LWCET Prayer		Sign of the Cross Hail Mary Our Father Glory Be Eternal Rest Act of Contrition Come, Holy Spirit Angel of God Come, Holy Spirit School Prayer LWCET Prayer		Sign of the Cross Hail Mary Our Father Glory Be Eternal Rest Act of Contrition Come, Holy Spirit Angel of God Come, Holy Spirit School Prayer LWCET Prayer Apostles Creed Nicene Creed Magnificat	
Liturgical Prayers	Simple responses e.g. and with your spirit, peace be with you, Amen	Simple responses Bidding prayer responses Responses to short litanies e.g. pray for us	Mass responses including Eucharistic acclamation Bidding prayer responses Responses to short litanies e.g. pray for us	Mass responses including Eucharistic acclamation Bidding prayer responses Responses to short litanies e.g. pray for us Take part in Mass readings	All Mass prayers and responses including Eucharistic acclamations Renewal of Baptismal promises Take part in Mass readings	All Mass prayers and responses including Eucharistic acclamations Renewal of Baptismal promises Take part in Mass readings	All Mass prayers and responses including Eucharistic acclamations Renewal of Baptismal promises Take part in Mass readings
Gesture/ Action	Sign of Cross Sign of Peace Greeting Join hands together Hold hands Lift hands up Fold hands across chest for blessing at communion			Greeting Join hands together Hold hands Lift hands up Genuflection Bow Use holy water Take part in offertory procession Fold hands across chest for blessing at communion Sign forehead, lips and heart to greet the Gospel			

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Year	EYFS	1	2	3	4	5	6
Informal Prayer	Graces before meals Simple prayers e.g. thanksgiving	Graces before meals Simple prayers e.g. thanksgiving	Graces before meals Simple prayers e.g. thanksgiving	As for KS1 and... Bidding prayers	As for KS1 and... Bidding prayers	As for KS1 and... Bidding prayers	As for KS1 and... Bidding prayers
Silence/ Reflection	Take part in simple still exercises	Take part in guided meditation	Take part in guided meditation	Take part in guided meditation	Take part in guided meditation	Take part in guided meditation	Take part in guided meditation
Independent skills of prayer and worship	Be able to understand the reasons for a focal point to aid prayer. Choose with support an appropriate coloured cloth and artefact	Be able to independently choose artefacts and cloths for focal areas. Contribute a prayer of their choice independently when asked	Be able to compile an appropriate focal area on a given theme Choose a hymn and contribute prayers independently	Be able to plan and deliver a simple liturgy for their peers choosing an appropriate scripture story, hymn/song Create focal area on a specific theme Simply say what worked well and what could have been better in their prayer and liturgy	Be able to plan and deliver a liturgy for their peers that incorporates meaning and links to questions of faith Start to evaluate the quality of prayer and liturgy they have planned	Be able to plan and deliver a liturgy for another class/parents that identifies links with scripture and their faith. Begin to contribute to focal/prayer areas around the school Start to evaluate the quality of prayer and liturgy they have planned	Be able to plan and deliver a range of liturgies for arrange of audiences that engages all participants in a thought-provoking manner. Take responsibility for focal/prayer areas around the school. Thereby contributing to the chaplaincy of the school Evaluate the quality of prayer and liturgy they have planned and say what improvements are needed

Appendix 4: Monitoring Forms

Prayer Life In The Classroom Audit Staff and Governors

Date:

Class

Content	Response
Who prepares the prayer table in your class?	
Who leads prayer in your class?	
What helps you to pray? What items do you for prayer in class?	
What examples could you share about prayer in class?	
Are there any ways you could improve prayer in your class?	
Why is the reflection area important? Why do we have one?	
How do we know what season of the liturgical year it is?	

Additional Comments:

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Prayer & Liturgy Policy

Celebrations of the Word Pupil Voice

Staff and Governors

Date:

Class:

Content	Response
What is your opinion of Celebrations of the Word?	
Which Celebrations of the Word are the most enjoyable?	
What makes Celebrations of the Word interesting?	
Why do we have Celebrations of the Word altogether?	
What could we do to improve Celebrations of the Word?	
Who leads the Celebrations of the Word?	
How do we know what season of the liturgical year it is?	
Are you involved? How? Why?	

Additional Comments:

St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Prayer & Liturgy Policy
Staff and Governors

Reflection Area Learning Walk

Date:

Class:

Content	Yes or no	Other information
Does the fabric on the reflection area reflect the liturgical season?		
Pictures		
Scripture		
Crucifix		
Candle		
Prayers		
Keys words/ SC / questions		
How can children interact with their reflection area? (‘Living’ display the children interact with.)		
What do you like about the reflection area?		
How could the reflection area be improved?		

Additional Comments:

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Prayer & Liturgy Policy

Classroom Reflection Area & Spiritual Space Pupil Conferencing

Staff and Governors

Completed by:

Date:

Key questions	Comments
Tell me about your classroom Reflection Area. (Ask the Chaplaincy reps)	
How do children use your reflection area during the day?	
What prayers do you enjoy saying during class prayers?	
What sorts of prayers are in your class prayer book?	
Why have you got different coloured cloths on your Reflection Area?	
Who is in charge of the display?	
What is the school mission statement? Tell me what these words mean.	
Tell me about our Gospel Celebrations of the Word.	

Additional Comments:

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Celebrations of the Word **Staff and Governors**

Date:

Theme:

Observer:

To be carried out alongside pupil conferencing of Celebrations of the Word

Content	Response
How is the Celebrations of the Word received by the children?	
What is the attitude of the children towards Celebrations of the Word?	
Is Celebrations of the Word approached by all in a respectful way? (Are children invited to pray, rather than expected to? Are children respectful if they choose not to pray?)	
Is Celebrations of the Word engaging? How? Please include stimulus examples.	
What is the message/concept for the children to learn from?	
How do the children enter and leave Celebrations of the Word? Do children engage even though in class?	
How is prayer time reflective?	
Are children involved? How?	

Additional Comments:

Celebrations of the Word **Observation by Children**

Date:

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Led by:

Theme:

Observers:

Content	Response
How do the children enter the hall? (E.g. Are they respectful? Are they quiet?)	
How are people showing respect and reverence?	
Is Celebrations of the Word engaging and enjoyable? How?	
What is the message for the children to learn?	
How do the children show they understand what they are hearing?	
How is prayer time reflective?	
Are children involved? How?	
How do you think this Gospel Celebrations of the Word could be improved?	

Additional Comments: