

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL



Prayer and Liturgy Policy

1. Context

- 1.1 St Mary's Catholic School is in the Trusteeship of the St Francis of Assisi Catholic Academy Trust in the Diocese of Westminster. Our school leaders and governors are entrusted by the Bishop with the ministry of school leadership and will always act in recognition of the love of Christ for all members of our school community and one another.
- 1.2 We share a vocation for the common good in our world and we are committed to working together as a family. All our policies and procedures are formed to enable all members of our St Mary family to be safe and cherished, feel happy and fulfilled and be treated with fairness and equity in a positive environment founded on mutual respect and shared values.
- 1.3 All our teaching and learning at St Mary's is rooted in the love of God, shaped by our Christian values and underpinned by our concern for the common good and the wellbeing of all. This search for social justice is rooted in respect for the dignity of every human person.
- 1.4 This policy is part of the foundation that enables everyone to **aspire to become all that God has created us to be**. The founding sisters of St Mary of Nemur and their guiding principles form our foundations.

"An education in the fullness of humanity should be the defining feature of Catholic Schools".
Pope Francis

2. Our Aims

- 2.1 To seek to enable students and staff to experience the presence of the living God who, in Jesus Christ, reveals his transforming love and truth.
- 2.2 To encourage spiritual development and understanding of the faith handed down to us by the church.
- 2.3 To put Jesus Christ at the centre of all that we do because then we are enabled to redirect our focus of life towards an understanding of the world in which we live that is geared towards the promotion of human dignity and the common good.
- 2.4 At St Mary's Catholic School our Catholic education 'is about forming the human person, equipping him or her to live life to the full' (Pope Benedict XVI). We strive to enable our students

to develop a religious, spiritual and moral conscience alongside their academic life so that this experience and understanding continually interrelates to deepen their learning and enhance their future achievements and success.

3 Our objectives:

- 3.1 To create an environment in which students can develop as they mature in understanding their faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ, in such a way as to help them find purpose and meaning in their lives.
- 3.2 Prayer is a gift from God and is central to the life of the Christian. We seek to facilitate the growth of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by ensuring that prayer remains central to the life of the school and forms an integral part of each day for every student.

“The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him”. (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2560)

- 3.3 To provide engaging and meaningful forms of prayer and worship, giving students positive liturgical experiences, appropriate to their age. With the aim of students and staff leading prayer to develop and enhance the spiritual life of all.
- 3.4 To ensure that all forms of collective worship support the spiritual and religious aspect of students' development, informing and interrelating with their understanding of Catholic Social Teaching which is embedded across our academic curriculum.
- 3.5 To involve and encourage all staff and students to become active participants in our prayer and liturgy, in ways which use their skills, talents, experiences and interests.
- 3.6 To provide regular opportunities to enable students and staff to engage in the sacramental life of the church.

4. How do we achieve our objectives?

4.1 Regular Prayer times

- 4.1.1 Daily prayer and spiritual reflection will take place during morning registration, led either by the teacher and/or student(s) (*See appendix 1*). **Every Morning students will pray with their form teacher and then use the additional resource to support the prayer. Every half term every student will create a new prayer intention card which will be displayed in the form room so that students take ownership of their prayer, praying for a different intention each day. Students and staff planners also have a collection of traditional prayers that can be used to aid prayers.**
- 4.1.2 **Every day at 12pm the school stops to pray the Angelus – This prayer also changes to suit the Liturgical Calendar. For example, the Rosary during October and Regina Caeli during Easter.**
- 4.1.3 **The Theme of the Week and Examen will use scripture for that week which is based around the liturgical calendar. The Theme of the Week will ask students to discuss the weekly Gospel and the Examen gets them to reflect on their week.**
- 4.1.4 Various forms of prayer take place in the Chapel in conjunction with the liturgical year; **Student**

morning prayer takes place on a Wednesday and is led by students who use the liturgical calendar while planning. For example, praying The Rosary in October.

- 4.1.5 Weekly staff briefings and other whole school staff gatherings will always begin in prayer. Every **Monday morning all staff meet in the chapel to pray and reflect on the week ahead. Every member of SLT and middle leaders will lead the morning prayer on rotation.**
- 4.1.6 **Voluntary staff morning prayer takes place on Friday mornings before school and is run by the staff chaplaincy team drawing on a wide range of different types of prayer, including praise and worship, Lectio Divina, Intercession and spontaneous prayer.**
- 4.1.7 Wherever possible and where logistics allow, we begin our wider events and meetings with our school prayer, asking for the intercession of St Mary, to which all those attending are invited to join in.
- 4.1.8 Students and staff, although welcome at any time, are invited to attend the chapel to pray together in times of bereavement or other occasions of need.
- 4.1.9 Senior leaders, lead prayers with students before exams.

4.2 Assemblies

- 4.2.1 All students will have a fortnightly year group Assembly or SLT Assembly in the school hall or Hume theatre. These assemblies have spiritual/moral content, supplementing the daily prayer. **Each assembly starts or ends in prayer and uses a Gospel reading that links with the theme. There is a detailed rota of themes that follow the liturgical calendar.**

4.3 Celebration of Masses

- 4.3.1 **KS3 classes take part in mass at 9.30am public service at St. Joseph's and the English Martyrs on rotation.**
- 4.3.2 **Year group Masses take place during the academic year at year group retreat or pilgrimages. Students attend masses for their House Feast Day and the School Feast Day on the 8th December (Immaculate Conception of Mary)**
- 4.3.3 **Every Monday at lunchtime there is a voluntary mass in the chapel that everyone is welcome to attend. There are also options for voluntary masses during the year when we have a visiting priest or religious.**
- 4.3.4 Specifically, a Welcome Mass at the start of Year 7 and a Leavers Mass at the end of year 11 and 13 are important occasions organised between pupils, Heads of Year, the Senior Leadership team and RE staff to ensure a memorable experience for those who are both joining and leaving us.

Although children from other Christian denominations and other faiths cannot receive Communion at the Masses, the school has always wished to involve them as fully as possible in all our liturgical services. All children are therefore encouraged to come forward during Communion to receive a blessing from the priest or Eucharistic Minister.

4.4 Other Liturgies and services

- 4.4.1 **Throughout the year students will be invited to attend a liturgy in the chapel that links with the liturgical calendar. For example, start of the year form group liturgy, memorial liturgy, and Stations of the cross during Lent. All liturgies are planned by the student chaplaincy team.**

4.4.2 Whole school Liturgies take place during Advent and Lent (including Ash Wednesday), highlighting their importance as a time of preparation, a time of reflection of the past term but looking forward to the future (Christmas and Easter).

4.4.3 St Mary's has developed a tradition of holding services as required to mark significant life events e.g. the retirement of long-serving members of staff, memorial services for members of the community who have died. The school considers the bringing together of people in prayer and worship at these significant life moments an important part of its mission and always seeks to respond to these occasions of joy and sorrow

4.4.4 The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to students during key points of the year (Advent and Lent).

4.5 Retreats

4.5.1 Retreat opportunities are offered for students, across the year groups.

4.5.2 **Year 7, 8, 10 and Sixth Form attend year group retreat days looking at different themes and attending mass together. While Year 11 has the option of a residential retreat.**

4.5.3 **Year 9 attend a year group pilgrimage to either Aylesford Priory or Walsingham at the end of the summer term.**

4.6 School Chaplaincy Support

4.6.1 The staff Chaplaincy team supports in the organisation of staff morning prayer and also organise the chaplaincy after school club which gives students a space to explore their faith.

4.6.2 **The Staff Chaplaincy team is made up of staff who assist in the planning of prayer activities and retreats. The Staff Chaplaincy team is also supported by the Deanery Priests and the Parish Priest from Stansted and other visiting Priests that are available who assist in acts of worship when required, for example our Mass schedule and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.**

4.6.3 Students are trained by the Chaplaincy team in different areas and ministries, such as Altar Serving, preparing prayers or as Readers, depending on their gifts and experience of service.

4.6.4 The school chapel is open before and after school, at break and lunch times as published. Students are able to drop in as they wish. The Senior Lead and Assistant Headteacher are available in school at specific times to give advice, information and support as needed to both students and staff.

5 Participation of Students and Staff

5.1 We fully respect the beliefs and traditions of students and staff of other denominations and faiths and will endeavour to facilitate any specific practices required of their faith during the school day in a way which respects their custom, where this is important to them. As we live out Catholic social teaching and the teachings of Jesus, we believe every person has dignity and we make them feel welcome in our school.

5.2 As a Catholic School we share some common values with other denominations and faiths, such as dignity of the human person, stewardship of creation, helping the poor and vulnerable, peace and justice and we actively encourage all students and staff to participate in any such activities which unite us as a community.

- 5.3 As a Catholic School we expect all staff to uphold the values and beliefs of Catholic teachings in their engagements and discussions with students, and where there is difficulty, to use the direction of the School Chaplaincy team for support.
- 5.4 All staff and students are expected to attend all forms of collective worship and actively participate, unless their own faith background prevents this. In such instances we expect staff/students to be present, but without taking part, and to be respectful to the faith of the school which they have chosen to join, or parents/guardians have chosen for them.

6. Roles & Responsibilities

6.1 The Governing body:

- Ensures the Catholic ethos of the school is maintained to a high level
- Maintains an overview of the various forms of collective worship in the school by attending events from time to time and by meeting on a regular basis with the leadership team.
- Reviews the performance of the school against section 48 and the areas identified for development.
- Governors monitor and visit the school regularly to triangulate (via direct observation) what they hear from leaders and what they read in reports and survey results.

6.2 The Leadership team:

- Maintains the Catholic ethos so that it permeates across all aspects of the curriculum
- Ensures staff have access to appropriate support, guidance & training through Inset days and staff training.
- **Leads and models effective prayer and worship**
- Oversees the planning and organisation of the activities required to fulfil Section 48

- Liaises with relevant staff to support the further development of collective worship where appropriate.
- Monitors and set targets each year for further development as required of Section 48.
- Updates the governing body on progress towards requirements of Section 48

6.3 **The Assistant Headteacher responsible for Catholic Life**

- Works with staff and students to plan and provide appropriate resources for all forms of liturgy and collective worship as well as the general Catholic life of the school
- Liaises with local clergy to arrange for the sacraments to be celebrated in school and for any other relevant involvement.
- Maintains the upkeep of the school chapel
- Provides support to students to enable them to develop leadership skills in the various aspects of collective worship.
- Liaises with outside agencies and the Diocese for updates and opportunities which will support the Gospel values of the school.
- Arrange other opportunities both inside and outside of school, for staff and students to gain experiences that help to develop their faith and put faith into action.
- Monitors the quality of Tutor Prayers, Collective Worship, and Examen via direct observation and feedback/evaluation from students.

6.4 **Heads of Year**

- Ensure that tutor time prayers are being said regularly by their tutor teams as directed by the Leadership team.
- Lead **and model** prayers in assembly
- Encourage students to engage with the Catholic life of the school
- Monitor tutor prayers, and collective worship in assembly to make sure they take place in line with our prayer and liturgy policy.

6.5 **Teaching and support staff:**

- Organise daily morning prayers in tutor times
- Accompany and supervise tutor groups throughout collective worship.
- Encourage students to join in prayer and liturgy
- **Stop and pray at 12pm in line with the prayer and liturgy policy**
- All tutors support students in writing and leading prayers.

6.6 **All staff**

- Engage in and support the Catholic ethos of the school
- Conduct themselves in a Christian manner
- Lead by example by participating in Collective worship within the school

APPENDIX 1

Organisation of Tutor Group Worship

The organisation of Tutor Group worship is arranged by the Form Tutors. It may either be led by the Form Tutor themselves or by the students, either individually or in groups on a rota basis with guidance from the Form Tutor.

The Format of Tutor group prayers will be consistent throughout the school. Every tutor group will recite their house saint's prayer praying for a specific intention written on the form board. These prayers will be written with guidance and based on the liturgical calendar.

On Friday Tutors then use the resources provided to support students through the Examen.