



St. Thomas More

Prayer and Liturgy Policy



Approved by :	LAC Governors
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Prayer & Liturgy Policy

1. Introduction

Purpose and Vision

Prayer and liturgy are central to the life of our Catholic school community. We believe that as Jesus taught, prayer is the raising of the heart and mind to God, and liturgy is our public worship of God in the Catholic tradition. This policy sets out how we live out that belief in our school life, in line with the national Prayer and Liturgy Directory.

We seek to enable every member of the community — pupils, staff, governors, families — to participate meaningfully in prayer and liturgy, thereby supporting their spiritual growth and formation in faith.

Context

Our school is a Catholic school in the Diocese of Northampton. We operate within the broader Church, educational and societal contexts:

- We uphold the teachings, traditions and liturgical norms of the Church.
- We acknowledge the particular mission of Catholic schools to witness to Christ in education, worship and community.
- We recognise that our school community is diverse, and liturgies and prayer life must be accessible, respectful and inclusive.

Statement of requirement

It is a legal requirement that there is a daily 'act of worship' offered for all pupils. This can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single 'act of worship' for all pupils, or separate 'acts of worship' in school groups. Holding an assembly that includes a prayer, said either by the teacher or everyone present, does not fulfil this requirement. Prayer, liturgical prayer and assembly are distinct activities which can contribute to this.

The 'act of worship' is not designated curriculum time under regulations and will not be subsumed under any part of the curriculum, including religious education. Responsibility for arranging prayer and liturgy lies with the Governing Body after consultation with the Head Teacher.

Parents have a right to withdraw their child from 'Collective Worship'. However, given the importance of prayer and liturgy in a Catholic school, parents and prospective parents will 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, within Come and See RE curriculum.

2. Aims

Firstly as a member of the Our Lady Immaculate Academy Trust our primary aim is to fulfil the mission statement in the Trust Prayer and Liturgy Policy:

As a family of schools, inspired by Our Lady Immaculate, we flourish, we love, and we aspire to be who God has called us to be.

Our Vision:

Rooted in the teaching of our Holy Church and expressed in the Gospels as a MAT we look to Mary Immaculate as the perfect inspiration. With Christ at our centre:

1 We strive to be beacons of faith and excellence in Catholic Education. We strive to take children from where they are at so that they have the courage to respond to what God is calling them to be.

John 10 1-10 "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full."

2 We seek to provide schools of hospitality and welcome so that partnerships are strong and faithful with parents and our communities. We seek to develop global citizens who are able to become stewards of God's creation.

"Education is an act of hope that from the present looks to the future" Pope Francis

3 We commit to tending to the needs of the whole child with care and diligence so that whatever the starting point our children can achieve standards of excellence in all settings through academic rigour with strong and caring staff who know them individually.

Isaiah 43.1 "I have called you by your name you are mine."

4 We encourage the spirit of individuality among our schools within the structures of the MAT, where communities are vibrant, diverse welcoming and compassionate to all.

Acts of the Apostles 10.34 "The truth I have come to realise is that God does not have favourites"

5 We expect a leadership of service and kindness as a hallmark of all our schools. Providing opportunities for growth in leadership is vital at all levels.

John 13: 14 "I your Lord and teacher have just washed your feet. You then should wash each other's feet"

Our aims for prayer and liturgy in this school are to:

1. Foster an environment in which prayer and liturgy are valued as essential to our Catholic life and identity.
2. Enable pupils and staff to become confident, reflective and active participants in prayer and liturgy.
3. Provide a variety of liturgical and prayer experiences that meet the needs of our community and express the fullness of Catholic tradition (including Word, sacrament, silence, symbol, song).
4. Support the formation of the whole person (spiritual, moral, intellectual, social), recognising that liturgy is formative.
5. Ensure that liturgy and prayer reflect the liturgical seasons, the calendar of the Church, and link to the curriculum, ethos and life of the school.
6. Encourage reflection and action: the “mystagogical” dimension — helping participants to live out what they celebrate.
7. Monitor, evaluate and develop our liturgical life to ensure continuous improvement.

3. Roles & Responsibilities

Governing Body

- Ensure there is a clear policy for prayer and liturgy in line with diocesan/national guidance.
- Provide strategic oversight, monitoring and review of the policy and its implementation.
- Ensure resources (time, staff formation, liturgical materials) are allocated.

Head Teacher and Assistant Head Teacher for Catholic Life

- Ensure the policy is implemented on a day-to-day basis.
- Work with staff and the Chaplain to plan, monitor and evaluate prayer and liturgy.
- Ensure that staff feel supported and formed in this area.

School Chaplain

- Lead the planning, coordination and oversight of the prayer and liturgical life of the school.
- Work collaboratively with other staff, pupils, clergy and parish as appropriate.
- Form and support liturgical ministries (pupils and staff).
- Maintain liaison with local parish, clergy and the diocese.
- Monitor and evaluate the provision.

Staff

- Model positive participation in prayer and liturgy (body language, responses, posture)

- Support pupils in preparation and reflection before and after liturgies.
- Contribute to the development of liturgical experiences that are age-appropriate, meaningful and inclusive.
- When staff hold the role of a form tutor they should lead prayer every day and celebration of the word with their forms on Thursdays (or other day if this is their assembly day).

Pupils

- Are encouraged and enabled to lead, plan and evaluate prayer and liturgy where appropriate (age- and developmentally-appropriate).
- Are invited to engage in personal and communal prayer, and to explore what it means to belong to the liturgical assembly of the Church.

Clergy

- The school seeks to maintain a constructive relationship with the local parish/clergy.
- Clergy may support liturgies (e.g., Mass, Reconciliation) and provide sacramental links.
- Clergy are to be aware of the school's policy and practices and support the consistent liturgical approach.

4. Types of Prayer & Liturgy

We provide a rich and varied liturgical life, including:

- **Daily/weekly classroom prayer** – short gatherings at the start of the day, reflections, seasonal focus.
- **Whole-school liturgies** – assemblies with a strong prayer/liturgical dimension, e.g., beginning of term, end of term, feast days.
- **Celebration of the Word** – opportunities to gather around scripture, songs, prayers and shared reflection (particularly in form times on Wed/Thur)
- **Mass** – when appropriate, celebrated in school or in parish, in line with diocesan norms for Catholic schools.
- **Sacramental liturgies** – for example, Reconciliation services, Adoration, Benediction, subject to availability of clergy and space.
- **Liturgical devotions and prayer services** – e.g., Stations of the Cross, Rosary services.
- **Personal/quiet prayer opportunities** – allowing pupils and staff to engage in individual or small-group prayer, meditation, silent reflection.
- **Cross-curricular links** – prayer and liturgy rooted in the broader curriculum, ethos, mission of the school (e.g., justice, service, reflection).

Further details of these can be found in our Annual Plan of Provision

5. Planning, Preparation & Evaluation

Planning

- Prayer and liturgy is planned following a structure with reference to the Church's seasons, and significant dates e.g. CAFOD Family Fast Day, Remembrance day.
- Parish and parents are invited to participate in some celebrations.
- A variety of prayer styles will be used appropriate to the age of the children and the occasion.
- The frequency and planning of prayer and worship opportunities will be co-ordinated by the Assistant Headteacher for Catholic Life and the Chaplain and will include a daily "act of worship".
- The APOP ensures clear planning across the year.

Preparation

- Ensure liturgies are well prepared: scripture, music, symbol, space, ministers, and logistics.
- We adapt liturgies to context while respecting liturgical norms: know what can be adapted and what cannot.
- Symbols: ensure authenticity (symbol is genuinely meaningful), clarity (not too many competing symbols), intent (engage senses).
- Music: choose repertoire appropriate to the liturgy, age of participants, avoid secular music in Mass unless clearly appropriate; prioritise liturgical texts.

Evaluation & Monitoring

- The Assistant Headteacher and school Chaplain, alongside the Catholic Life team will monitor the implementation of the policy and the quality of prayer and liturgy provision.
- Evaluation should consider participation, quality of planning/preparation, reflection and action (mystagogy), links with curriculum and school life.
- Feedback may be sought from pupils, staff, clergy and others.
- Records of liturgical planning and review should be kept and inform forward plans.
- Annual review of policy and practice, with report to governors/trustees.

6. Inclusion & Diversity

We are a very diverse faith community, with a falling percentage of Catholics. This is taken into account when we are preparing prayer and liturgy.

- All members of the school community should feel welcome in prayer and liturgy, regardless of their faith background or none.
- While our liturgies are Catholic in character, opportunities can be provided for pupils of other faiths and none to contribute in roles that are appropriate and respectful (e.g., welcoming, preparing the space), but no pupil is required to write Trinitarian prayers or engage in practices beyond their belief.
- Adaptations (e.g., language, accessible texts, use of technology) may be made for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, while respecting liturgical integrity.

- Cultural diversity of the community is reflected in music, symbols and prayers, where appropriate.

7. Resources, Environment & Budget

- The school has an allocated budget for liturgical materials (vestments, candles, vessels, music resources, audio-visual equipment) and maintain them appropriately.
- The prayer room will be maintained to support ongoing prayer life.
- Staff formation and professional development in liturgy will be provided (e.g., through diocesan courses, local parish support).
- Linkages with parish/school of music/chaplaincy should be developed for shared resources and expertise.

8. Links with Curriculum, Ethos & Parish

- Prayer and liturgy are part of the “heartbeat” of the school — they contribute significantly to the Catholic ethos and the moral/spiritual formation of pupils.
- The school works in partnership with the local parish and clergy to align liturgical practice, share events, and deepen community links (e.g., parish Masses, sacramental preparation).
- The liturgical calendar of the Church (seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time, feasts of saints) is reflected in school life.

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required. The review will involve the governing body/trustees, senior leadership team, Chaplain, staff and pupil representatives.

10. Summary Statement

We commit ourselves to a prayerful, liturgical school life rooted in the Catholic tradition, respectful of our diverse community, and enlivened by participation, reflection and action. Through consistent implementation of this policy we seek to draw closer to Christ, to form disciples, and to glorify God in all we do.
