



## Prayer and Liturgy Policy

Reviewed: January 2025

Review by: Spring 2027



### Statement of Intent

***Our mission is to educate the young people entrusted to our care in the Catholic, Christian way that ensures that each one is valued and cared for and achieves the best of which they are capable.***

The school aims to fulfil its mission in a number of ways: through the curriculum, through the pastoral system and through the many enrichment activities offered to pupils. In addition to this we seek to build up the community of St Mary's as an embodiment of the Catholic Church present in the pupils, staff, parents, governors and the wider parish communities who gather in a variety of ways and are Christ's body present in this school. One of the key ways in which we gather is for worship. Through our Prayer and Liturgy, we pray that St Mary's School will become a truly Catholic and Christian community with Christ at its centre.

### 1. Legal Requirements

In this school, as with any Voluntary Aided School, responsibility for arranging Prayer and Liturgy rests with the Governing Body after consultation with the Headteacher. In accordance with the 1988 Education Act, the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and DfE (1994) 'Religious Education and Prayer and Liturgy'. Prayer and Liturgy at St Mary's Catholic High

School provides opportunities for pupils and staff to come together as a community through daily prayer in the classroom, through participation in weekly assemblies and through other liturgical celebrations including Mass. Furthermore, through Prayer and Liturgy we are able to encourage pupils and staff to reinforce positive attitudes they may have within their community. We also highlight and try to change negative attitudes within our society to encourage a common ethos and shared values amongst all.

**Liturgy:** Liturgy literally means ‘work of the people’ and points to the fact that something else is going on beyond prayer. It is the formalising of worship at the heart of which is symbol and action.

**Prayer:** One of the early fathers of the Church described prayer as “the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or requesting of good things from God.” These words of St John Damascene, now found in the catechism of the Catholic Church 2559, illustrate why in this Catholic school we begin each session with a prayer.

**Therefore, Prayer and Liturgy:** Is our loving response, in word and action, to God’s invitation to enter into a relationship with God, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

This policy will be implemented alongside the following school policies:

- RSE Policy
- Guest Speaker Policy

## 2. Definition of Prayer and Liturgy

For the purpose of this policy, “**Prayer and Liturgy**” is an act, which is additional to, and separate from, ordinary school activities. Prayer and Liturgy is a time when individuals come together, and reverence or veneration is paid to a divine being or power.

To “**take part**” in Prayer and Liturgy implies more than a passive attendance, such that it should have the ability to elicit responses from pupils even though they may not feel able to actively identify in the act of worship on a particular occasion.

## 3. The place of Prayer and Liturgy in the Life of our School

We endorse the belief that Prayer and Liturgy takes into account the religious and educational needs of all who share in it:

- Those who form part of the worshipping community in Church;
- Those for whom school may be their first and only experience of Church;
- Those from other Christian traditions, or none;
- Those from other faith backgrounds.

It will be an educational activity or experience to which all can contribute and from which all can gain. Worship in this school is more than just a legal requirement. It is an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition.

#### 4. Implementation

All acts of worship should:

- **Give glory and praise to God**
- **Be structured to ensure a quality experience for all participants**
- **Be kept to the point**
- **Be clear in their liturgical focus and varied in their delivery**

The school aims to promote rich and meaningful experiences of Prayer and Liturgy that are appropriate to pupils' needs, ages and interests by:

- Presenting displays that promote and enhance spiritual ideas and thoughts.
- Encouraging pupils to reflect and contemplate on their thoughts, feelings and beliefs.
- Using artefacts, secular stories, resources, music, art, drama and where appropriate, guest speakers to engage pupils' interest.
- Involving pupils in different experiences of worship, e.g. silence, prayer, meditation and Lectio Divina, shared or written prayers.

The school will take into account pupils of different ages and abilities when delivering the Prayer and Liturgy programme.

The school will arrange for learning mentors / TA's to assist pupils with SEND if the need arises.

Inspection of Prayer and Liturgy will be arranged with the following religious authority:

- Liverpool Archdiocese

#### 5. The aims of Prayer and Liturgy

We believe that Prayer and Liturgy in our school community will provide a variety of opportunities to deepen our relationships with God and develop the following:

- To contemplate the mystery of God;
- To unite our worshipping Eucharistic community;
- To develop the necessary skills of....

**Reverence** **Contemplation** **Reflection** **Interpretation** **Empathy** **Meditation**  
...which enable our relationship with God to be deepened.

Full participation in our faith will allow us:

- To grow in spiritual, moral, cultural and liturgical understanding;
- To grow in understanding of our living faith tradition;
- To develop a sense of awe, wonder and inspiration in the person of Christ;
- To examine and reflect upon our own individual faith journeys;
- To develop the skills of prayer.

## 6. Prayer and Liturgy Provision

**Assembly once a week for each Year group from 08.45 – 09.00:** This is always a time of prayer and worship and includes a hymn and Gospel reading as well as vocalised prayers led by the Assembly lead or visitor. This time of prayer always begins with ‘the sign of the cross’. The school chaplain, Head of Catholic Ethos and RE Curriculum Leader devise a termly rota which involves a variety of people in delivering the Prayer and Liturgy, including Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteachers, Learning Managers, Form Tutors and pupils. It will include priests at key times, especially Advent and Lent and other ministers of religion as appropriate and other visitors. The themes follow the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church in England and Wales and other appropriate celebrations e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day and Remembrance Day.

**Form Prayer, on a daily basis, is usually led by the Form Tutor, or supported by a pupil:** Support for this is given through a weekly Prayer and Liturgy sheet containing suggested prayers and dedicated reflections supported by a PowerPoint resource, provided by the Chaplain. All forms have an Ethos Ambassador to support the prayer and charity life of each form. This time is crucial as it is the main time of daily reflection which pupils are entitled to. It should be of a reasonable amount of time in the 15-minute Form period but 5 minutes as a minimum.

- **Whole school times of prayer and celebration. These include:** The annual Advent and Lent Masses at St Mary’s Church, Ash Wednesday, special occasions, annual prize-giving celebrations, Year 7 Welcome Mass, Year 11 Leavers’ Mass.
- **The Eucharist:** offered to pupils and staff on a voluntary basis, monthly on a Wednesday morning in the school chapel.
- **The Sacrament of Reconciliation:** celebrated with pupils during Advent and Lent.
- **Prayer opportunities:** offered each week in the school chapel and focus on different themes according to the calendar.
- **Advent and Holy Week liturgy:** take place as extended assemblies often with the support of Animate.
- **Staff briefing:** begins with a prayer; every fifth week there is a dedicated ‘spiritual briefing’ liturgy during the Friday briefing time.

- **Catholic Spiritual Inset:** takes place for all staff to dedicate the 'new year' to God through prayer, meditation and workshops with particular focus on Catholic life.
- **Staff meetings and staff training events:** begin with a prayer.
- **Residential & Retreats:** Many staff are involved in the delivery of this and this includes times of prayer, Reconciliation and Mass. Mini-retreats are offered in-house to small groups from primary Schools.

## Format of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and Liturgy in our school may follow the pattern or variation of the pattern detailed as follows:

**Gathering:** how we come together, the setting and environment (quiet/ reflective music, lighted candles, statues, sign of the cross, focus and examination of conscience etc.)

**Word:** a reading from the Scriptures, exploring the Word, time to reflect on this and prayers to fit into the theme

**Action:** a ritual movement that everyone can join in with that fits with the theme (gestures such as 'sign of peace', shaking hands, holding hands, lighting a candle, prayers, responses to prayers, etc.)

**Mission:** the sending out from the celebration, giving the children something to hold onto/reflect upon from the experience of the liturgy that they can take into their daily lives.

The Chaplain will be available to support staff in the life of prayer and spirituality. In addition to this, the Chaplain provides a more detailed sheet of guidance for Form prayers and support is available from the Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Head of Catholic Ethos and Curriculum Leader for Religious Education.

## 7. Provision for Prayer and Liturgy on School Visits

**On Residential Visits:** On the Year 8 Pilgrimage (usually to Liverpool), at Ampleforth/Castlerigg with Year 10 and on the Lourdes Pilgrimage, Mass is celebrated with the entire group, involving staff and pupils in the preparation.

**Eucharistic Minister training:** There is a rolling programme for pupils and staff to train as Eucharistic Ministers. This is provided by Animate Youth Ministries.

**Sacramental Preparation:** There is a rolling programme designed by the Chaplain to prepare students and staff to receive the Sacraments.

It is important for consistency of provision and to emphasise the importance of prayer, that when pupils take part in school trips, prayer takes place.

When a trip takes place during the school day/week then pupils will have opportunity to pray in the morning (as they would in Form) and in the afternoon. On a residential trip the latter prayers could be a night prayer at the end of the day. These could take place on the coach,

on the street, in a hotel/conference room. The Chaplain will be available to staff taking trips in providing suitable resources for use when away. The desired outcome is that this is a normal aspect of school life and therefore a normal aspect of a school trip.

When the trip includes a weekend visit where pupils will not have the possibility of attending Sunday Mass before or after the trip, then, where possible, provision will be made for pupils to take part in a Mass. To avoid complications this will be the whole group (allowing for withdrawal at parental request cf. below). The ideal to aspire to is that this forms part of the routine of planning such a trip, much in the same way that risk assessments and safety procedures have to be in place. The experience of celebrating Mass together is a great blessing and in foreign countries a cultural as well as religious experience.

## **8. Right of Withdrawal**

The Governors respect their rights of parents to withdraw their child from those components of Prayer and Liturgy above and beyond that which is:

- Required by law
- An integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition.