

St James' Prayer and Liturgy Policy

This policy has the School's values at its heart.

Faith in action,

Working together,

Walking in the footsteps of Christ

Our vision is to:

Share our love of God every day in all that we learn, do and say.

The Nature of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and liturgy in a Catholic school names and celebrates God's presence in our lives. It is concerned with giving glory, honour, praise and thanks to God. It is our loving response, in word and action, to God's invitation to enter into relationship, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

To ensure that the Lord Jesus Christ is at the centre of a Catholic school, prayer and liturgy must be at the heart of its community life. They are essential to the school's Catholic life and mission. Taking part in daily prayer and liturgy helps build community cohesion by creating a consistent structure around the core values and symbols of Christianity.

'The celebration of Catholic liturgies and prayers as an integral part of the learning and teaching should enable the school community to become reflective, experience the presence of God and should develop a mature spiritual life.' (Marcus Stock (2012), Christ at the Centre, Catholic Truth Society, 23.)

Legal Requirements

It is a legal requirement that all Catholic schools provide an act of daily collective worship (prayer and liturgy) for all pupils. Parents have a right to withdraw their children from prayer and liturgy.

The school's provision for prayer and liturgy will fulfil pupils' entitlement to experience the range of liturgical treasures of the Church, including a shared repertoire of prayers and liturgical music with which pupils in the school will be familiar.

Prayer and liturgy are not designated curriculum time. In the context of the Catholic school, this means that times of prayer and liturgy are not considered to be part of the allocation of curriculum time for Religious Education.

The Place of Prayer and Liturgy at St James'

Prayer and liturgy is an integral part of school life at St James' and central to the Catholic tradition. 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.

The Aims of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and liturgy St James' aims to provide opportunities for all pupils and staff to:

- Contemplate the mystery of God
- Reflect on spiritual and moral issues
- Explore personal beliefs
- Respond to and celebrate life
- Experience a sense of belonging and to develop community spirit
- Develop a common ethos and shared values
- Enrich religious experience
- Grow in liturgical understanding and development
- Pray using prayers which are part of the Catholic tradition
- Reinforce positive attitudes
- Participate fully
- Take time out 'to wonder at', 'to come to terms with' and 'to give worth to.'

Principles

All acts of prayer and liturgy at St James' will:

- Give glory and honour to God;
- Be a quality activity, fundamental to the life of the school and its Catholic character;
- Enable pupils to develop skills so that they can prepare, organise and lead prayer times;
- Give pupils positive liturgical experiences, appropriate to their age, aptitude and family backgrounds in order to prepare them for the liturgical life of the Church. Celebrations will be appropriate to the age and groupings of the children.

Definitions of Prayer and Liturgy

'Prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for God' [Catechism of the Catholic Church 2560]. At the heart of the Christian faith is the belief in a God who communicates with people. God calls every human person into a loving relationship and as with every relationship, our relationship with God can only grow through communication. Prayer is the way in which we engage in communication with God. Christians believe that prayer is essential to human fulfilment for it is only in God that we can discover ourselves, our meaning and our purpose. At St James', we foster and deepen the pupils' personal relationship with God our Father daily in prayer. We do this by helping pupils become aware of God's Presence in their lives and of His love for them by leading them to respond to Him in a manner suited to their age. This may be in one of the following ways:

Listening- being attentive to the voice of God in every moment of life.

Speaking- expressing our heart's deepest longings and desires to the One who knows and understands us better than we know and understand ourselves.

Reflecting- thinking about our relationship with God. Pondering on the actions of God in history and in the unfolding mystery of our lives.

Resting- simply being consciously in the presence of God, knowing that we are loved.

We aim to help pupils understand that prayer can have a variety of forms and styles and express different things. The Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC 2623 –2649] identifies the following forms of prayer:

Blessing and Adoration: Blesses God for the goodness which has been shown to humankind.

Petition: Asks for forgiveness and which calls for the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

Intercession: Consists in asking on behalf of another.

Thanksgiving: Acknowledges the gifts which God has given.

Praise: Praises God simply because God is.

Liturgy is the divine worship of the Church and includes the celebration of Mass, the celebration of the Sacraments or Daily Prayer of the Church. The celebration of the Eucharist is the source and summit of our faith, and so all other liturgies flow from and to the celebration of Mass. For schools, Liturgy is worship which incorporates elements of the rites and rituals, signs and symbols of the Church. All liturgies should be structured around four main parts: Gather, Listen, Respond and Go Forth.

- **Gathering** - how we come together, the setting, the environment (quiet/ reflective music, lighted candles, statues, sign of the cross) focus and examination of conscience etc);
- **Listen** – listen to a reading from the Scriptures (or another suitable source), explaining the word, time to reflect on this and prayers to fit into the theme;
- **Respond** - a ritual movement that everyone can join in that fits with the theme (gestures such as shaking hands, holding hands, lighting a candle, prayers, responses to prayers, etc);
- **Go Forth** - the sending out from the celebration, giving the children something to hold onto from the experience of the liturgy that they can take into their daily lives.

Planning, Content and Delivery of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and Liturgy are important aspects of our faith. Each day the children take part in prayer and liturgy, whether it is in small groups in class, in year groups or as a whole school. Praying together is part of the daily experience for all pupils and staff and enables all members of the school community to reflect, explore and deepen their faith.

A variety of opportunities to plan, lead and participate in prayer and liturgy are provided at St James'. These include taking part and leading individual prayer, traditional prayers, spontaneous prayer, group prayer in both formal and informal styles and settings such as The Holy Club, and through the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the centre of worship for the Catholic community.

Prayer and liturgy are planned following a structure with reference to the Church's liturgical seasons of Advent, Lent, Christmastide and Easter. They are also centred around Feast Days, Holy Days of Obligations, significant dates throughout the year such as CAFOD Family Fast Day and through The Way, The Truth and The Life RE curriculum.

Opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Adoration also take place for pupils in the seasons of Advent and Lent. During the months of May and October, pupils take part in a Rosary Club reflecting on the mysteries of the Rosary.

Prayer encourages us to remember that God is at the centre of our lives, at the beginning and end of our day and in the decisions that we make. Therefore, the pupils and staff of St James' have opportunities to say prayers throughout the day. This includes prayers said at the beginning of the day, at lunchtime and at the end of the day.

Each class has a prayer focal area within their room which may include a display, collection of artefacts, a bible and candle etc. This is where pupils can focus during times of class prayer or private reflection throughout the day.

Pupils are invited to write individual prayers in the St James' Prayer Books. They can also lead prayers in groups, and classes and have quiet reflection opportunities in the KS2 Peace Garden. These experiences enable pupils to value and participate in voluntary acts of prayer.

Prayers are also shared at staff meetings, governor meetings and parent gatherings. Pupils have opportunities to write prayer intentions which are also shared with the school community.

Responsibilities for Prayer and Liturgy

The Governors as guardians of the Catholic school's life and mission, have a responsibility to ensure that:

- Prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the Prayer and Liturgy Directory.
- There is a named person who is responsible for prayer and liturgy in the school.
- The prayer and liturgy policy is updated regularly and shared with all stakeholders.
- That there is a budget for prayer and liturgy that reflects its centrality to the life of a Catholic school.

The Headteacher, as the spiritual leader of the school as a Catholic community, ensures that:

- Prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the Prayer and Liturgy Directory.
- They work in partnership with the leader for prayer and liturgy.
- Those responsible for prayer and liturgy in the school have been given appropriate training and formation to ensure that all guidance is followed and adhered to.
- There are suitable resources for prayer and liturgy in the school.

The Prayer and Liturgy Co-ordinator ensures that:

- Prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the Prayer and Liturgy Directory.
- There is an annual plan of provision for prayer and liturgy across the school year which identifies liturgical seasons and key celebrations, as well as opportunities for the celebration of the Sacraments.
- Pupils are supported in their liturgical formation to take an active role in the planning, preparation and delivery of prayer and liturgy according to their age and capacity and in a manner which facilitates their progressive participation.
- Resources to support the planning of prayer and liturgy are appropriate and readily available to staff and pupils.
- Induction on prayer and liturgy takes place for new members of staff as required.
- Staff have access to effective training and formation opportunities.
- Monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy take place regularly and feed backs into planning for future liturgies.
- Monitoring of prayer and liturgy is reported to the Headteacher to support whole-school development and the Catholic life of the school.
- There is collaboration with local clergy and parishes.

- Liaison with the Diocesan Advisory Service and others is maintained to ensure they keep updated with best practice.

Resourcing

Prayer and liturgy are central to the school’s understanding of itself as a Catholic school, and this is reflected in the annual budget allocation and available resources, including staff time, chaplaincy provision, and dedicated spaces for prayer and liturgy. The Catholic character of the school is reflected in religious artefacts and images on display throughout the building. Dedicated spaces for prayer and liturgy will be furnished and maintained as such and updated to reflect the Church’s liturgical season.

Training and formation

All new staff will be supported during induction and beyond, so that they fully understand the responsibility they carry within their individual role for leading prayer and liturgy in the school. Any individual training needs will be identified and addressed through training and formation. There will also be regular opportunities for whole-staff professional development, so that all staff understand the importance of prayer and liturgy and relevant staff are well supported to lead as required.

Monitoring and Evaluating

This policy is to be monitored by the RE Subject Leader and evaluated and reviewed by the whole school staff every three years. We will use a series of factors to evaluate our provision of prayer and liturgy such as:

- How prayer and liturgy is resourced in terms of materials and visual aids and are they appropriate?
- The opportunities for pupils to plan and lead quality prayer and liturgy celebrations;
- The involvement, enjoyment, attention and reaction of the pupils in ensuring prayer and liturgy have a clear purpose, message and direction.

By monitoring and evaluating this policy we aim to ensure that prayer and liturgy experienced within the school is a relevant, meaningful and positive contribution to the religious, spiritual and moral development of all members of the school community. This policy will be updated in line with any new developments in the school and/or any new government guidance. All staff are expected to follow the policy and are responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of practice across the school.

This policy was last reviewed in autumn 2023 and it will next be reviewed in autumn 2026.

This statement of policy was approved by the Governing Body at their meeting on: -

Date: _____

Signed:

_____ (Chairperson)

_____ (Head teacher)