

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Oxford Road Kidlington OX5 1EA



The
Pope Francis Catholic
Multi Academy Company

Headteacher: Mrs Julieann Exley



Tel: 01865 373 674

Email: office@stthomas-more.org.uk

Website: www.st-thomas-more.oxon.sch.uk

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Collective Worship Policy

Author / Reviewed by Headteacher & SLT

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Providing outstanding education for our children with 'The Joy of the Gospel' at its heart

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School Collective Worship Policy

Introduction:

We believe that Christian worship in a Catholic school 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.

Worship in a Catholic School is central to its character and fundamental to promoting a sound basis for Christianity to flourish. It is the responsibility of each member of staff to provide quality opportunities for worship so that all our children can participate effectively.

Our community is made up of children from committed Catholic homes, nominal Catholic homes, from families which belong to other Christian Churches, other faiths or from families adhering to no particular religious denomination. This is important to consider when planning any activities throughout school life.

Definitions:

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

St John Damascene described prayer as "the raising of one's mind and heart to God or requesting of good things from God. " These words, found in the catechism, illustrate why in this Catholic school we begin and end each session with a prayer.

Collective Worship

Collective worship is our loving response, in word and action, to God's invitation to enter into a relationship with Godself, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and witness of the Holy Spirit.

Rationale:

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School is a Catholic community of faith with the main task of providing our children with appreciation of the religious and spiritual dimensions of life. In a Catholic school religious collective worship must -

- a) contribute to the children's spiritual development and realisation of God's place in their lives;
- b) be child-centred to be effective;
- c) transmit Christian culture;
- d) contribute to social awareness within themselves and as part of a community.

Legal Requirements:

Collective worship is a legal daily requirement which is distinct from curriculum time. For Catholic schools this requirement is made explicit within the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Birmingham which states:

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

In this school, as with any Voluntary Aided School, responsibility for arranging Collective Worship rests with the Governing Body after consultation with the head teacher.

Withdrawal Rights of Parents:

Statutorily, parents have the right of withdrawal from Collective Worship. Should this right be exercised, the Head Teacher would invite parents who have concerns to come and discuss the matter.

The Place of Collective Worship in the Life of Our School:

We endorse the belief that Collective Worship 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

The Aims of Collective Worship:

We believe that Collective Worship in our school aims to provide opportunity for all pupils and staff:

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- To contemplate something of the mystery of God
- To reflect on spiritual and moral issues including Catholic Social Teaching
- To explore their own beliefs
- To respond to and celebrate life
- To experience a sense of belonging and develop community spirit
- To develop a common ethos and shared values
- To enrich religious experience
- To grow in liturgical understanding and development
- To reinforce prayers that are part of the Catholic tradition
- To reinforce positive attitudes
- To participate fully in worship with their peers
- To take time out to 'wonder at', to come to terms with' and 'to give worth to'

Principles of Collective Worship:

All acts of Worship in this school will:

- Give glory and honour to God
- Be a quality activity fundamental to the life of the school and its Catholic character
- Give children positive liturgical experiences appropriate to their age, aptitude and family backgrounds in order to prepare them for the liturgical life of the Church.

In order to do this, celebrations will:

- Be kept small wherever possible or appropriate to personalise the experience
- Be short and appropriately paced
- Be simple, including a range of experiences offered in a variety of groupings and in a variety of settings.

Collective Worship is organised as follows:

Monday: Whole school 'Gospel' liturgy/assembly. Based on the Sunday Gospel and led by the head teacher or member of SLT. All staff will be in attendance for this worship. Once per short term a Virtues assembly replaces this, led by either the RE coordinator or a member of the SLT.

Tuesday: Hymn Practice in the 2 weeks prior to a Whole School Mass, on other Tuesdays Daily Prayer with resources provided by TenTen.

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Wednesday: Class prayer service, generally based upon themes of the Liturgical Year, although flexibility is allowed to consider special events, feast days, links to units of work etc. Wednesday prayer services to parents are held once a long term. Class prayer services should be a combination of teacher and child led collective worship. In Key stage 2 children should be planning and leading the worship on a regular basis.

Thursday: Whole School Masses, unless for a Holyday of Obligation, are generally held on a Thursday at 9.30 in the Parish Church. These are held at the start and end of terms, for Ash Wednesday, our school Feast Day and all term time Holydays of Obligation. Key Stage 2 classes individually host a class Mass on a rota basis, so once a month each. In KS1 and in KS2, on weeks where the class is not attending Mass, there is a phase assembly. Thursday assemblies are generally based on Growth Mindset, 12 Baskets, TenTen, CAFOD or SEAL resources.

Friday: A celebration assembly is held on Friday afternoon. This begins and ends with the whole school coming together in prayer. A hymn is often sung. At these assemblies, children can bring in and celebrate with the school the achievements they have made outside of school e.g. music, dance, choir and sport, additional study etc. 2 certificates of achievement are awarded per class, these certificates link to the school Values system.

Planning for Worship:

Collective Worship in this school is planned following a structure with reference to the Church's seasons, the weekly Mass Readings, our Gospel Virtues, significant dates and the curriculum.

Scripture will be the focus for all acts of worship.

It will relate to the school community in the light of the school's aims and mission.

There will be flexibility to respond to changing situations within the school and the wider community.

We will aim to teach children the skills to enable them to prepare, organise and lead worship. Teachers and children will use applicable planning grids for Mass and Prayer Services whenever necessary.

The Structure of Prayer and Liturgy:

In every act of communal Prayer and Liturgy a four-fold structure is to be observed. The structure is based upon the principals of gathering together, listening, responding and going forth.

Gathering together:

In our coming together for Prayer and Liturgy we acknowledge the presence of Christ with us in our act of gathering together. Our time of prayer is not simply personal, based upon our individual relationship with God, but it is also communal, for our life of faith is shaped through the faith we share in the community of the Church, Music, song, lighting of candles, use of incense, procession, blessing with holy water can all contribute towards helping the community enter into a time of Prayer together.

Consideration should be given to seating and posture for prayer and Liturgy so that the community has an awareness that it has gathered together to pray.

The use of the focal point connected to the seasons of the Church's year and the appropriate feast day will be helpful in support of the gathering together to pray.

Listening:

Our time of Prayer and Liturgy is about deepening our relationship with God and with one another.

In every act of communal Prayer and Liturgy God's Word should be proclaimed. In class prayer time, assemblies and other non-Eucharistic liturgies, consideration should be given to using scripture readings outlined in the Morning and Evening Prayer of the Church or from the Mass of the day or a reading closely associated with the current liturgical season, feast day or memorial.

The reader should always clearly announce where the reading comes from and should use the appropriate liturgical conclusion to which the assembly makes the appropriate response. If the gospel is proclaimed it should be accompanied by the action of making the sign of the cross on the forehead, lips and heart.

Responding

In our responding to God's presence in our gathering together and listening to the Word of God, we use a variety of forms of prayer. These include praise, thanks, intercession and contrition.

Responding should include some time for personal reflection and silence. Providing opportunities for groups of students to learn simple listening and breathing skills will be good in helping them to enter into meditative and reflective prayer.

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The use of appropriate background music and a symbolic focus is also beneficial to reflective prayer.

The use of symbols, actions and other gestures including song and where appropriate, liturgical dance is encouraged to emphasise the response that we make in prayer to the action and presence of God in our lives.

Going Forth:

This is 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. They may be asked to write a reflection, take part in an activity or simply do something that will spread the word of God.

Prayer:

We will continue to foster and deepen the children's personal relationship with God our Father daily in prayer. We do this by helping them 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:

- Prayer of silence
- Spontaneous prayer
- Praying through gesture or action
- Formal prayer including the traditional prayers of the Church.

Prayer will not be confined to an act of worship. Each and every day, school prayers are said at the start and end of the day. Grace before and after meals are other daily prayers.

Children are encouraged to pray at any other time of the day. 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.

Eucharist:

Eucharist celebrations form a very important part in our Collective Worship strategy. Opportunities for children to participate are maximised and parents and other members of the school and Parish communities are encouraged to attend.

The celebrations will take the following forms:

- Whole school Masses
- Class and parish Masses and Liturgies
- KS2 classes celebrating Mass in school once a month.
- Children in Year 3 receive the Sacrament of First Holy Communion in **May** each year.

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Monitoring and Evaluation:

This policy is monitored by the collective worship co-ordinator and is evaluated and reviewed by the whole school staff every two years. Governors should review reports on the prayer life of the school on a termly basis. This should form part of the head teacher's report to governors.

The following will be monitored:

- Time set aside for collective worship.
- Whether the observed practice is consistent with agreed policy.
- Whether collective worship is resourced in terms of materials, visual aids etc.
- Staff development on collective worship and its impact.
- Prayer focus/prayer table and its effectiveness in drawing pupils into prayer.
- The impact on pupils and members of the school community.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop the necessary skills to access worship and prayer.

Role of the Coordinator:

The co-ordinator will be responsible for:

- Formulating a written policy.
- Ensuring there is a development plan for collective worship.
- Ensuring that collective worship is appropriate to the age, aptitudes and family backgrounds of pupils.
- Ensuring that collective worship takes account of the religious and educational needs of all who share in it and is rooted in the Catholic teachings.
- Organising themes for worship.
- Assisting the governors and head teacher in carrying out their legal responsibilities with regard to collective worship.
- Any other duty the headteacher, School Governors, and School Chaplain deem necessary to aid the spiritual development of the children.

Resources:

There are a variety of resources available for planning Collective Worship. All teachers have a Log on and subscription to TenTen, a Diocesan approved provider of high-quality collective worship resources, including Monday Gospel assemblies linked to the Sunday Gospel, and Daily Prayer Services linked to the liturgical year.

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A published Daily Prayer Service Book is also available and is stored in the photocopying office.

Other recommended Catholic websites that are a useful resource for worship planning including CAFOD, Fr Hudson's and Mission Together.

Communication:

This policy will be communicated to:

- All members of the school community
- The Parish priest
- New members of staff (and will form part of their induction).
- New parents, to promote positive attitudes towards collective worship.

Conclusion:

Worship is not something separate from the rest of our school life. It reflects the way in which our pupils contribute and take responsibility for standards of behaviour, shared values, the quality of the school environment and also affirms the worth of the individual. We aim that the children in our care begin to realise that God is a source of infinite love and that he is active in the world and in our lives. Also, to realise that by praying together as a community, God's love is reflected in all of us and most importantly, in school life which will provide the atmosphere and opportunity to promote dialogue with Him. Opportunities will be presented to all our children to be involved in school prayer life in various forms to further their spiritual growth.