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St Thomas More Catholic Primary School and Nursery

Prayer & Liturgy Policy (Collective Worship)

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Prayer & Liturgy in a Catholic School

Definition of terms

Prayer, celebrations of the word, and liturgy form a continuum with silent meditation at one end and a celebration of Mass on a Solemnity of the Church (e.g., Ascension of the Lord) at the other. There are areas of overlap between the categories.

Prayer

Prayer has been traditionally described as 'lifting up of the hearts and minds to God', which means it involves our whole person – our head as well as our heart. This definition expresses a fundamental understanding that God is concerned and interested about what goes on in our lives; is due our expression of thanksgiving and gratitude; and responds to us when we express our needs. This basic dynamic of recognition, thanksgiving, and intercession forms the core of all prayer and liturgy. It is wholly appropriate that communal prayer forms an essential dimension of life in a Catholic school. Staff and pupils are invited to recognise God's action in their lives and the life of the school, and in response to express together their needs and those of the whole human family, and to offer thanks for all that is good. Communal prayer takes place, for example, at the beginning or end of the school day, in the classroom, or at a staff meeting.

Such prayer times will have a clear, simple structure. Texts used may include familiar prayers as well as prayers written for the occasion, but there is also scope for spontaneous prayers, for example, intercessions. Long-standing Catholic devotions, such as the Angelus or the Stations of the Cross during Lent, can also be suitable. Giving space for appropriate silence forms part of the 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.

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.

Common Prayers to be Known
Traditional prayers are taught progressively and embedded across the school. Teachers should refer to and use the **Common Prayers to be Known PowerPoint** provided by the diocese which outlines the progression of prayers for school.

Celebration of the Word
As the time allotted to prayer lengthens and the number of people involved grows, there is a corresponding need for more formal structures. The term ‘celebrations of the word’ is used in this Directory for celebrations which are created for the school community and not directly taken from the liturgical books of the Church. These celebrations will take many forms, but the common element is the proclamation of scripture. These include assemblies, carol services, and other gatherings of all or part of the school community for special times and occasions. They may draw upon elements of the liturgy, such as its texts, symbols, and gestures, which help to reinforce their Catholic nature, but the various elements may be used with greater creative freedom than in the liturgy itself.

Liturgy
The most familiar forms of the liturgy celebrated in school are the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The liturgical books, such as the Roman Missal and the Lectionary, set out the structure to be followed, the words to be spoken, the gestures to be performed, and the symbols to be used when celebrating a liturgy.



Rationale

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School and Nursery 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, responsibility for arranging Collective Worship rests with the Governing Body after consultation with the head teacher.

Governing Boards follow the guidance set out in the CES Guidance on the right of withdrawal from religious education and/or collective worship and seek appropriate advice from the Diocese in the event that a parent exercises the right of withdrawal, in line with Diocesan Protocol 16.4. This will enable the Diocese to keep a central record of all such requests.

Should parents request that their child is withdrawn from Religious Education and/or collective worship, the Head Teacher will invite parents who have concerns to come and discuss the matter.

Children who are withdrawn from prayer, liturgy, or collective worship in class will be expected to attend church with their peers. This is due to safeguarding and supervision requirements. While they will not take part in the worship itself, they will be expected to remain respectful throughout.

Governing Boards must ensure that headteachers record all right to withdraw requests and the reasons for those requests, (if parents are prepared to provide reasons), and include details in their termly reports, in line with Diocesan Protocol 16.5.

The Place of Prayer and Liturgy in the Life of Our School

We endorse the belief that Prayer and Liturgy take 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 Prayer and Liturgy

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

- 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 Prayer and Liturgy

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.

To achieve 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.

Daily

The Liturgy of the Hours (aka The Divine Office) comes from the early Christian Church and in school we follow this pattern in our daily rhythm of prayer:

- Prayer at the start and end of the day
- Grace before and after meals
- Prayer at the end of the day

Staff Prayer A time for staff to pray together; this as an opportunity for all staff members to take it in turn to prepare prayer. There should always be prayer at every staff meeting.

Weekly

Monday: Whole school 'Gospel' **Celebration of the Word:** 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 two weeks prior to a Whole School Mass and on other Tuesdays

Wednesday: ·Class-based Celebration of the Word: This is a time for prayer within the classroom which develops the Gospel theme, explores a Gospel value/virtue, a celebration/commemoration from the Liturgical Year, a national event or links with work in RE. This should be more than a recitation of the morning/evening prayers and scripture must be the central focus of these celebrations.

Class-based Celebration of the Word should provide opportunities for pupil-prepared prayer and preparation. Once per term, parents are invited to take part in Class-based Celebration of the Word gatherings.

Thursday: Parish Masses for children in Key Stage 2 held at St Thomas More Church. Two classes attend Parish Mass every fortnight.

Friday: A Celebration assembly is held on Friday mornings. This begins and ends with the whole school coming together in prayer. A hymn linked to the liturgical year, season or Catholic Social Teaching focus is 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. Two certificates of achievement are awarded per class. These certificates link to the school Values system.

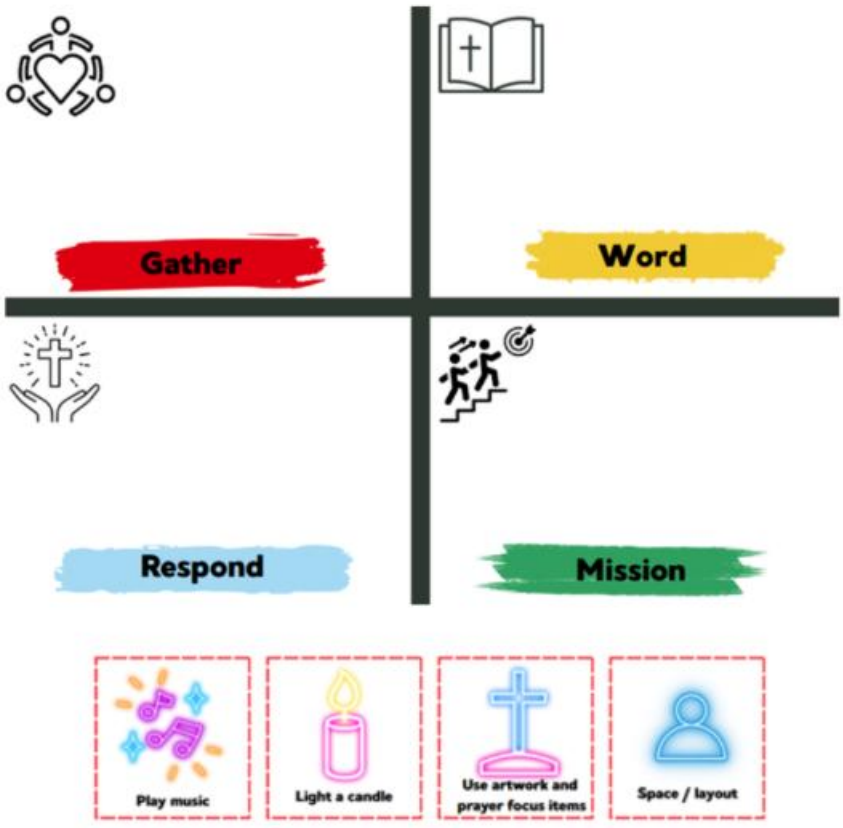
Termly

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/Phase Celebration of the Word: During each term, a gathering with pupils of a similar age takes place. This might focus upon developing the Gospel theme, a celebration/commemoration from the Liturgical Year, the exploration of a Gospel value/virtue, a national event. Scripture will always be the central focus of these celebrations. Led by teachers, with the involvement of pupils within the key stage/phase it gives an opportunity for staff to offer personal witness.

Pupil-prepared prayer

Pupils are given the opportunity to work with teachers, and each other to prepare experiences of Prayer and Liturgy. They are also involved in evaluating the quality of the Prayer and Liturgy that they have planned. All teachers and pupils use the Pupil-Prepared planning board to plan a Celebration of the Word.



The Structure of Celebration of the Word
In every act of communal Prayer and Liturgy a four-fold structure is observed. The structure is based upon the principals of Gather, Word, Respond, Mission.

Gather
In our coming together for Prayer and Liturgy we acknowledge the presence of Christ with us in our act of gathering. 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.

Word
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.

Respond
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.
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.

Mission

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.

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 June each year.
- Over the Course of the Academic Year (Based on the Liturgical Year)

Annual Plan of Provision (APOP)

In the Annual Plan of Provision (APOP), the aims and objectives of the school's prayer and liturgy policy are translated into itemised provisions for the whole school year. It is the responsibility of the named Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator (PLC) to complete the APOP.

The APOP should include:

- reflection and action on the monitoring and evaluation of the previous year
- the number and timing of Masses to be celebrated during the year
- provision for holydays of obligation
- opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- other services relating to key dates in the school calendar
- engagement with Church initiatives (such as the Year of Mercy)
- music repertoire planning
- formation for liturgical ministries
- developing a strategy for improving a particular aspect of the liturgical life of the school
- forward planning

Monitoring and Evaluation

Responsibility for this area of school life lies with a number of people: the Headteacher as the leader of the Catholic Life and Mission of the school (Headteacher refers to the first person in charge); the Governors as the ones legally bound to ensure that the prayer life of the school meets the requirements of the Trust Deed and Articles of Association; the named Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator to whom the day to day leadership and management of prayer has been delegated. Each half term, one of each type of provision of liturgy, pupil-prepared prayer, staff prepared prayer and voluntary prayer (staff or pupils) should be monitored.
All monitoring is regarded as formal. Use of the term 'informal monitoring' should be avoided as this leads to ambiguity. Monitoring of prayer and liturgy may be planned or spontaneous. Any practice that is identified and subsequently actioned in order to bring about improvement should be recorded and later reviewed to evaluate the impact. The findings of prayer and liturgy must be reported as robustly as Catholic Life and Mission and RE to the governing board and should be recorded periodically in the Headteacher's report. When devising monitoring routines, leaders should give close regard to current CSI framework requirements.

This policy is monitored by the Headteacher and RE lead and is evaluated and reviewed by the whole Governing Body every two years. Governors 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. Other recommended Catholic websites that are a useful resource for worship planning including CAFOD, The Mark 10 Mission, OneLife Music 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.

Related Policies -
SEN
KCSiE
Behaviour
Teaching & Learning
RE
RHE