



## **Saint Polycarp's Catholic Primary School**

### **Prayer and Liturgy Policy**

#### **Mission Statement:**

**'Here in the Saint Polycarp's family, we follow in the footsteps of Jesus by playing, praying, loving and learning together.'**

## **1. The context of this prayer and liturgy policy**

‘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.)

## **2. Statement of requirement**

The law requires all maintained Catholic schools to provide an act of daily collective worship (prayer and liturgy) for all pupils, including those in the sixth form (Section 70, 1988 Education Act) that is in accordance with the rites, practices, disciplines, and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, schedule 20; Instrument of Government, clause 2). Academies in England are required by their funding agreement and Articles of Association to comply with similar requirements (The Mainstream Academy and Free School: Supplemental Funding Agreement, December 2020; Model Articles for Catholic Academies, February 2019). The law requires all maintained schools to recognise and respect that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children up to the age of 16 from prayer and liturgy (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, s.71(1A)).

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.

## **3. Responsibility**

### **(a) Governance**

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(s) who is responsible for prayer and liturgy in the school (the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator)
- the prayer and liturgy policy is updated regularly and shared with all stakeholders
- there is a budget for prayer and liturgy that reflects its centrality to the life of a Catholic school.

### **(b) Headteacher**

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(s) 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.

### **(c) Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator**

Those responsible for prayer and liturgy 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 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
- there is daily planned prayer for all pupils, appropriate to age and ability, as outlined in the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*
- 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 back into planning for future liturgies
- monitoring of prayer and liturgy is reported to the Headteacher and governing body to support whole-school development and the Catholic life of the school
- there is collaboration with local clergy and parishes
- liaison with the Diocesan Education Service and others is maintained to ensure they keep updated with best practice.

## **4. Overview of prayer and liturgy provision**

Worship in this school is an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition. It is an experience to which all can contribute and from which all can gain. Collective Worship can take various forms, all of which attempt to help children understand the elements of liturgy, which include gathering, listening to the Word, responding and going forth reflectively and prepares them to share in the liturgical life of the Church. To encourage 'community', children and adults participate within school Masses and Collective Worship. Parents are encouraged to attend all Masses. These may be festive as well as prayerful and are occasions for sharing positive feelings for each other. Pupils are introduced to a variety of experiences of worship:

- Celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist in whole school/KS2 Mass in church.
- Reconciliation services (during Advent and Lent for KS2).
- Celebrations that reflect thanksgiving, special days, feast days (throughout the year for the whole school) including but not limited to Remembrance Day, celebrating the harvest and a Marian celebration.
- An opportunity to reflect silently on the word of God (whole school Collective Worship, liturgies within the classroom, Masses and in prayer areas around the school as well as our outdoor spiritual area).

- An opportunity for spontaneous and formal prayer (whole school Collective Worship, liturgies within the classroom, Masses and in prayer areas around the school as well as our outdoor spiritual area).
- Making full use of music, song, art and drama (whole school Collective Worship, liturgies within the classroom, Masses and in prayer areas around the school as well as our outdoor spiritual area).

### **Collective Worship:**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Celebration of the Word led by Headteacher for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 respectively	Phase Collective Worship led by each class on a rota.	Collective Worship through Song led by Music Teacher for Years 4-6	Collective Worship through Song led by Music Teacher for Years 1-3	Whole School Collective Worship led by Headteacher
		Class Collective Worship led by Class Teacher for Years 1-3	Class Collective Worship led by Class Teacher for Years 4-6	

The theme of the Monday Whole school Collective Worship is based on the Sunday Gospel. Themes for Friday Collective Worship are based on the Church's Liturgical Year and other school events and celebrations. The themes of the year group Collective Worship are identified on the Annual Plan of Provision prepared by the Prayer and Liturgy Co-ordinator. Children are enabled to plan the Collective Worship and play a central part in its delivery.

During Collective Worship through Song sessions and prayers are said before the children sing hymns of praise. In addition, teachers hold Collective Worship in their classroom. For Key Stage 1, the Gospel reading is linked to the previous Sunday's Gospel, whilst for Key Stage 2 the Gospel reading is the Gospel reading of the day.

### **Masses:**

Celebration of the Eucharist takes place at St. Joan of Arc's Catholic Church. Whole School Masses are celebrated at the beginning and end of every school year, at Christmas and Easter and on Feast days. Year 3 children plan and attend a special Mass to celebrate their First Holy Communion. They invite Year 2 to attend with them and parents are welcome. Key Stage 2 children take it in turn to plan these Masses. Children are involved in the planning process and parents are welcome.

Once each term, the children will attend parish Mass. Most year groups are buddied up allowing older children the opportunity be responsible for assisting a younger year group. These Masses will be communicated to the parents via the year group newsletters who are welcome to join. In addition to Masses, the parish priest provides Spiritual Journey sessions, to allow children time to reflect on their spiritual lives.

## Prayer:

Children are encouraged to look at prayer as a conversation with God in which we must also be silent to listen to what He wishes to communicate to us. They are made aware of the many ways in which God makes himself known: through creation, other people, the Sacraments and through his Word. We aim to help children go beyond seeing prayer as a petition, and help them to explore the prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, praise and repentance.

Throughout the day there are opportunities for short times of prayer. These often mark the time of day and the rhythm of the school timetable. Prayer takes place in all classrooms at the start and end of each day, before mealtimes as well as spontaneously, for intercessions, as an example. The Catholic Church has a rich history and tradition of devotions. Many are associated with times. During the months of October and May, children are invited to pray the Rosary or other Marian devotions such as processions.

Amongst staff, prayer is nurtured at the start of staff meetings. All teaching and support staff worship with the children. Each class has a focal area, which is significant to the current RED theme, to help the children reflect prayerfully. These are interactive and the children are encouraged to take responsibility for/decorate these areas with artefacts, statues, flowers, and cloths (appropriate to Liturgical colours). Each class focal area has a Bible, candle, crucifix and class prayer diary. Children are encouraged to use this area to pray for their own intentions.

An additional focal area is set up in the Pope Francis Hall, which is used as a quiet area as well as a focal area for prayer during Collective Worship. There is also a focal area in the school reading corridor that appropriately marks the changing liturgical seasons. This area focuses on the Sacred Heart. Outside Year 1 classrooms there is a prayer area focussing on Our Lady and outside on the playground, there is a spiritual area which is used for collective or individual prayer. The Prayer and Liturgy co-ordinator is responsible for managing these focus areas but all staff and children are able to contribute ideas to them. Children are encouraged to use these areas to pray for their own intentions. Formal prayers are said at the beginning and end of each day and before and after lunch. Spontaneous prayers and reflections are given equal place throughout the school day and during RE lessons. There is a focal point in the school entrance with a display indicating seasons throughout the Church's Liturgical year. Mass and Collective Worship timetables are displayed here for parent and visitor information.

## 5. Our school context

### Catholicity of teachers and pupils

According to the Census data from June 2024, 58.33% of staff are Catholic and 68.97% of pupils are Catholic. The breakdown of other faiths in the pupils of the school is as below:

	Catholic	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other	No religion	Refused	Not Known
School	68.97%	9.31%	0.24%	0.00%	0.24%	2.86%	0.00%	0.48%	16.47%	0.00%	1.43%
Diocese	55.40%	23.81%	0.19%	1.33%	0.07%	1.84%	0.20%	1.77%	10.19%	0.70%	0.88%
National	52.34%	21.78%	0.23%	1.40%	0.04%	5.27%	0.51%	1.96%	13.58%	1.15%	1.74%

**Mass:**

The celebration of mass is central to the life of the school community. Preparation for the celebration of the Mass is done in collaboration with the Prayer and Liturgy Co-ordinator, Class Teachers and with the priest celebrant. All staff are invited to attend and participate in whole school masses, including in the celebration of the Sacrament of the Eucharist if they have celebrated the Sacrament of their First Holy Communion, in prayers and music, listening to the word of God and sharing in the postures and gestures of the liturgical assembly. Those who have not received their First Holy Communion are invited to cross one or both arms across their chests and receive a blessing. For those of other faiths, respectful and internal participation is encouraged, so that what is being celebrated may engage with their own faith.

**Celebration of the Word Assemblies:**

These assemblies are held in two separate gatherings—one for Key Stage 1 and one for Key Stage 2—to ensure that the content and experience are age-appropriate and spiritually meaningful for all pupils.

The Celebration of the Word is led by the headteacher and follows the structure of a Liturgy of the Word, centred on the proclamation of scripture and a reflective response. It is a time of invitation and encounter, providing all children with the opportunity to hear and respond to the Word of God in a way that is prayerful and relevant to their daily lives.

Each celebration includes:

- A greeting and welcome,
- A reading from Sacred Scripture,
- A time of reflection and response,
- A mission or call to action, encouraging children to “go forth” and live out the message of the Gospel in their words, actions, and relationships during the week ahead.

Children are encouraged to listen deeply and to respond thoughtfully, whether through prayer, silence, gesture, or spoken reflection. As in the Mass or other formal liturgical celebrations, gestures and postures (such as standing for the Gospel, sitting in silence, or making the Sign of the Cross) are observed to foster a sense of reverence and respect for the presence of God in the Word.

These celebrations are invitational and inclusive, designed to support the spiritual development of all pupils, regardless of faith background and to build a sense of unity and shared purpose rooted in the teachings of Christ.

**Class Prayer:**

Prayer is a central part of daily life in our school and forms the foundation of our relationship with God. Throughout the school day, children are provided with regular opportunities to pause, reflect, and pray, helping to shape the spiritual rhythm of the day and fostering a culture of faith and stillness.

Short times of prayer take place in all classrooms at key moments in the school day:

- At the start and end of the day,

- Before meals,
- Spontaneously, such as during moments of thanksgiving, intercession, or reflection on classroom events or global issues.

These moments of prayer are child-centred and inclusive, encouraging pupils to grow in faith and understanding, and to respond to the needs of the world around them.

In line with the liturgical calendar, we also observe key devotions of the Catholic Church. During the months of October and May, children are invited to pray the Rosary in small groups and we hold a Marian celebration to honour Our Lady and reflect on her example of faith and discipleship.

### **Other sacraments and liturgies:**

As a Catholic school, we are committed to providing a rich and varied programme of prayer and liturgy that reflects the liturgical life of the Church and supports the spiritual development of all members of our school community.

In addition to our regular schedule of collective worship and celebration of the Eucharist, we offer a range of opportunities for our children to encounter Christ through other liturgies and celebrations throughout the year.

During Advent and Lent, children in Key Stage 2 who are baptised Catholics are invited to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation, with the support of our parish priest and in collaboration with the local parish.

Our school also marks key moments in the liturgical and seasonal calendar through whole school or phase-based liturgies, including but not limited to:

- A Harvest Liturgy, celebrating creation and encouraging gratitude and giving.
- A Remembrance Service, honouring those who have died in war and conflict.
- A Christmas Liturgy in addition to a Christmas Mass, allowing children to reflect on the Nativity story through scripture, music and prayer.
- An Easter Liturgy in addition to our Easter Mass, focusing on the Resurrection of Christ.
- Liturgies and activities to celebrate our Patron Saint feast days, deepening pupils' understanding of their spiritual heritage.
- A Marian Celebration in the month of May, recognising Mary's special role in the life of the Church.
- During Holy Week, should it fall within term time, all children participate in a whole-school liturgy for Ash Wednesday, marking the beginning of Lent with reflection and prayer.

We recognise and value the diverse faith backgrounds of our pupils and families. All children, regardless of faith background, are invited to participate in these liturgical celebrations in an inclusive and respectful manner. However, participation in the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist is reserved for children who have been baptised in the Catholic faith and have received the appropriate sacramental preparation.

## **Music:**

In accordance with Section 6.2 of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory, music is a vital part of the prayer and liturgical life of our school. Music is not merely an accompaniment to worship but a form of prayer that helps the school community to participate more fully in the liturgy, lifting hearts and minds to God and expressing the joy and reverence of our faith.

Our school is proud to be part of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton School Singing Programme, which brings specialist musical expertise into the school through periodic lessons led by diocesan singing directors. This partnership supports high-quality sacred music provision and helps to nurture both musical and spiritual growth in our pupils.

We hold weekly choir rehearsals and the school choir plays a central role in the celebration of Mass and other major liturgical events. They lead the singing, model participation and contribute to the prayerful atmosphere of each celebration.

All pupils, including those not in the choir, are actively involved in the musical life of the school. Weekly hymn practice sessions provide an opportunity for the whole school to prepare for upcoming liturgical celebrations, learn new music and understand the meaning behind what we sing. Music lessons also contribute to the development of pupils' musical skills and their appreciation of sacred music.

The Celebration Hymnal at St. Joan of Arc's Catholic Church is used to ensure that the repertoire is appropriate to the liturgical season and suitable for the age and understanding of the children. Music is carefully selected to reflect the liturgical themes and structure of each celebration, supporting key parts of the liturgy such as the gathering, Gospel acclamation, offertory, communion and sending forth. A variety of musical styles is used, including traditional hymns, contemporary worship songs, and simple chant in line with the Church's liturgical guidance.

Through this musical participation, children grow in their understanding of the role of music in worship and develop a deeper connection to the spiritual life of the Church.

## **6. 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. Staff training and formation costs will be funded separately to ensure that all staff are able to fulfil their responsibility to contribute to the prayer and liturgical life of the school.

## **7. 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 the opportunity for whole-staff professional development at least once a year, so that all staff understand the importance of prayer and liturgy and relevant staff are well supported to lead as required.



## **8. Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy will take place regularly, and at least annually, and involve all key stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, clergy and governors. Areas for development will be identified and issues raised will be actioned and evidenced as appropriate.

## **9. Review**

The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of policy review conducted by the governors.