



Archdiocese of
Birmingham

St Thomas More

Catholic Academy

S⁺ Thomas More
Catholic Academy
FAITH | EXCELLENCE | RESPECT

Prayer and Liturgy Policy

(Collective Worship)

Date of Policy:	November 2022
Member of Staff Responsible:	Mr P Shufflebotham
SLT: Headteacher:	Mark Rayner
Chair of the Academy Representatives: Nominated Academy Representative:	Rob Fello
Date of Policy Review:	November 2024

Publish:

Internal

The Education Reform Act 1988 requires that schools and colleges provide a daily act of collective worship, which is broadly Christian in character for all its students. The mission of our Academy is to provide a first-class Catholic Education. Part of this process is the provision we make for collective worship. 'Collective Worship' is a term used in legislation in this country but is not a phrase we use readily in a Catholic context. 'Prayer' and 'Liturgy' are terms more commonly used in our context and are explored in greater depth in the guidelines.

St Thomas More Catholic Academy Mission Statement

Christ is at the heart of our community, where everyone is known and loved.

In fulfilling our mission we are a school of prayer. We live as a community of love, peace and reconciliation, valuing everyone's dignity as a child of God to promote and celebrate the growth and achievement of the whole person.

The Nature of Collective Worship

We believe that Christian worship 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.

Legal Requirements

We acknowledge the legal requirement that there must be a daily act of worship for all students.¹ (This can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single act of worship for all students, or separate acts of worship in school groups.) We understand that simply holding an assembly that includes a prayer, said either by the teacher or everyone present, does not fulfil this requirement. We also acknowledge that collective worship and assembly are distinct activities. They may sometimes form part of the same gathering, but the difference between the two will always be made clear.

The act of worship is not designated curriculum time under regulations and will not be subsumed under any part of the curriculum, including religious education.

As a rule, acts of worship will take place on the school premises. However, the governing body has the discretion to allow acts of worship to be held elsewhere e.g. church, "on a special occasion".

¹ Parents have a right to withdraw their child from Collective Worship. However, given the importance of Collective Worship in a Catholic school, parents and prospective parents need to be made aware of the fact that it can never be confined to 'timetabled slots' but may take place in a variety of contexts other than those which are specifically structured.

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

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.

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.

The Aims of Collective Worship

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

- To contemplate something of the mystery of God
- To reflect on spiritual and moral issues
- 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 which are part of the Catholic tradition
- To reinforce positive attitudes
- To participate fully
- To take time out 'to wonder at', 'to come to terms with' and 'to give worth to.'

PRINCIPLES

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.²

In order to do this, celebrations will:

- be appropriate to help to personalise the experience;
- include a range of experiences offered in a variety of groupings and in a variety of settings.

How is Collective Worship Organised?

Prayer and collective worship must at all times be Catholic and take place on a daily basis. Prayer is central to our daily lives and every day begins in prayer, be that in act of worship or at the beginning of morning mission time. Where possible prayer is student led. Students should come to know and experience as many forms and expressions of prayer as is possible, this includes thanksgiving, blessing, adoration, intercession and petition.

All form rooms must have a prayer board. Prayer boards must display the following posters; The Catholic Student Profile (virtues poster), House Saint poster of the Saint the form is named after, Faith in Action poster, student prayers and the Traditional Catholic Prayer poster. The prayer board should be used as an interactive board and a source of prayer and reflection during form time.

Prayer boards and classrooms spaces must be treated with respect. The care and attention given to the quality of the space reflects the dignity of each person and contributes positively to their formation.

Acts of Worship are identified in the Act of Worship and Prayer rota. Acts of Worship are based on the gospel from the previous Sunday. They take the format of gather, listen and respond and go forth.

Where Year 7 Acts of Worship are calendared these follow the same format and are student led. Students should prepare and lead this Act of Worship with the support of their form tutor and the chaplaincy team.

The Act of Worship and Prayer rota contains the member of staff leading briefing prayer, the form group leading 15 minutes of faith, the staff member leading AOW, the year group attending, the gospel from Sunday and the liturgical colour for the season.

15 Minutes of faith takes place every week as part of the morning mission programme. Form groups who are identified to complete to 15 minutes of faith for the week should prepare this in

² Directory for Masses with Children, paragraph 9.

advance. This must be developed by students in conjunction with the lay chaplain and follow the format of gather, listen and respond and go forth with explicit reference and discussion around The Catholic Student Profile (Catholic virtues).

Each meeting should begin with a prayer (staff, dept. meetings, middle leader meeting etc.). For example, department meetings should begin with the department prayer.

Placing our faith in action involves charitable work and fundraising, living out the virtues, prayer, attending retreats and going on pilgrimage. This is rooted in Catholic Social Teachings. These are dignity, solidarity, the common good, the option for the poor, peace, care for creation and the dignity of work and participation.

As a school we have chosen to work with selected charities on a local (Stoke On Trent Food Bank and Alice Charity), national (Father Hudson's Care) and international (CAFOD) level. We focus our fundraising around these charities only as well as raising funds for the diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes. Any charity fundraising must go through chaplaincy.

Charity fundraising boxes are allocated to form groups and are particularly used for the collection of goods during Advent and Lent. At these times form tutors are responsible for co-ordinating student fundraising within form groups.

Retreat opportunities are given throughout the year for staff and students. This academic year the staff retreat is calendared for 31st October. There will also be staff retreat opportunities during Advent and Lent. All staff are invited to support with the delivery of the retreat programme.

The Mass is central to the practice of the Catholic faith. As a school community we are blessed to have the support of our priest chaplain Father David Newell. Father David celebrates weekly Mass every Friday in the chapel as well as calendared House Masses. We also have liturgies where we come together to worship God at key points in the liturgical year.

Our lay chaplain delivers a range of chaplaincy activities before school, during lunch time and after school (Wednesday). Staff prayer takes place in the chapel every Tuesday morning at 8:30. The chaplaincy activities can be found on the weekly bulletin.

RSHE is delivered through PSHE weeks as well as the RE curriculum to ensure that it meets statutory and diocesan requirements, being firmly rooted in the teaching of the Church and celebrating the holistic view of the human person.

Prayers are said at start of the day during form time as part of the Morning Mission programme and within Acts of Worship. Form teachers can use a variety of resources including prayer boxes, class prayer books and prayer displays. There is a prayer space in all form rooms.

The Fifteen Minutes of Faith programme will provide students and form tutors both a resource to use once a week, and the opportunity to produce a prayer session for use by the rest of the school, giving opportunity for peer-to-peer ministry. This includes intercessory, traditional and contemporary prayer.

There are many opportunities for prayer in the Chapel, which is a beautiful space at the heart of our school. In addition, a break and lunchtime programme is in place for students in the Savio Centre and Chapel. This includes Rosary, Lightfever and Spirituality Life Lunch club.

This includes key information relating to Mass and the Church's liturgical year. These are in addition to the prayers included in staff planners and student Catholic Life diaries, daily prayer resources and the prayer selector that is provided. CPD and sharing of good practice is carried out to all staff to disseminate information and demonstrate different examples of prayer and worship and share useful websites and stimuli to encourage discussion or reflection.

The Planning, Content and Delivery of Collective Worship

Collective Worship is planned:

- following a structure with reference to the Church's liturgical seasons, significant dates and the curriculum. Scripture will be the focus in most acts of worship

- involving consultation with appropriate parties and reference to school aims and policies
- with flexibility to respond to changing situations within the school and the wider community
- to develop in students, skills that enable them to prepare, organise and lead worship in a meaningful and purposeful way.

Recording

Collective Worship is recorded:

- on an act of worship and prayer calendar to keep records of themes, leaders, student groupings and resources
- through displays, collections of students' contributions, prayers, reflections, photographs, videos etc.

Monitoring and Evaluation

At least once a year the school's provision of worship will be evaluated to consider whether it meets the needs of all students and whether students are making progress in acquiring skills and abilities in organising and leading worship.

- Student voice
- 15 minutes of Faith
- Link governor visit

Eucharist

Eucharistic celebrations in school will highlight a special occasion where all houses take part in a House Mass throughout the year to celebrate their form saint. The same general principles will apply to planning a Eucharistic celebration as other acts of school worship, therefore opportunities for children to participate will be maximised. For all significant dates in the Churches calendar and Holy Days of obligation students and families are invited to attend mass at our local parish church.

The Co-ordinator for Collective Worship

Mrs A Bradbury – Person in Charge of Catholic Life and Mission (PICCL)
Mr P Shufflebotham (Maternity Cover)

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Collective Worship Co-ordinator and is evaluated and reviewed by the whole school staff and governors every two years. The Foundation/LGB Governors in particular will play a most important role. Will involve:

- Link Governor visit / report
- Sub committee meetings to share updates / opportunity for challenge

Appendix 1

The Role of the Co-ordinator for Collective Worship

- Formulating a written policy for Collective Worship
- Ensuring that there is a development plan for Collective Worship which may at times form part of the school development plan
- Ensuring that Collective Worship is appropriate to the age, aptitudes and family backgrounds of students
- Ensuring that Collective Worship takes account of the religious and educational needs of all who share in it and is rooted in the principles of the 'Directory for Masses with Children'
- Organising themes for Worship
- Assisting the governors and headteacher to carry out their legal responsibilities with regard to Collective Worship

Planning, recording, monitoring and evaluating

- Maintaining and developing effective procedures and documentation
- Observing, on occasions, an Act of Collective Worship
- Informing the headteacher of standards and developments in Collective Worship

COMMUNICATION

- Communicating to members of the school community the significance and content of Acts of Collective Worship
- Reporting to and consulting with the governors and headteacher regarding matters of concern and development
- Acting as consultant to colleagues
- Encouraging positive attitudes towards Collective Worship
- Informing newly appointed colleagues of school policy regarding Collective Worship
- Communicating with parents, governors and the parish community
- Liaison with the school chaplain
- Liaison with the Diocesan RE Advisor

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT / ONGOING FORMATION

- Leading and organising in service training and ongoing formation for Collective Worship
- Attending appropriate in-service courses and reporting back
- Keeping up to date by personal reading

RESOURCES

- Evaluating existing resources

- Developing the resources available for Collective Worship including visual aids, artefacts, drapes, music, visitors, leaders, new and relevant books, posters etc.
- Budgeting efficiently
- Catholic Life Meetings – Headteacher, Deputy, RE Lead
- Training for Maternity cover for both the Lay Chaplain (Prudence) & PICCL Mr P Shufflebotham

Purpose

Through daily prayer we aim to create a community with a Catholic Life and Mission, with the Gospel Values at the centre of all that we do. This fosters a love of God and love for one another. We want each member of our community to be known and loved.

Through our worship we aim:

- To place the Gospel and Gospel values at the centre of all that we do, both in and out of school
- To celebrate the sacraments
- To learn the traditions of our Church and liturgical calendar
- To learn about St Thomas More, as well as our Form Saints and celebrate their life and work
- To raise the sights of the college to God
- To celebrate our achievements gained by God's grace
- To thank God for our lives and to share our worries
- To add meaning to our daily lives
- To provide opportunities for personal reflection and meditation
- To include all members of our school community in acts of worship

Guidelines

Prayers are said at start of the day during form time as part of the Morning Mission programme and within Acts of Worship. Form teachers can use a variety of resources including prayer boxes, class prayer books and prayer displays. There is a prayer space in all form rooms.

The Fifteen Minutes of Faith programme will provide students and form tutors both a resource to use once a week, and the opportunity to produce a prayer session for use by the rest of the school, giving opportunity for peer-to-peer ministry. This includes intercessory, traditional and contemporary prayer.

There are many opportunities for prayer in the Chapel, which is a beautiful space at the heart of our school. In addition, a break and lunchtime programme is in place for students in the Savio Centre and Chapel. This includes Rosary, Lightfever and Spirituality Life Lunch club.

The Chaplaincy team provide booklets from the Bible Society as guidance for staff and students. This includes key information relating to Mass and the Church's liturgical year. These are in addition to the prayers included in staff planners and student Catholic Life diaries, daily prayer resources and the prayer selector that is provided. CPD and sharing of good practice is carried out to all staff to disseminate information and demonstrate different examples of prayer and worship and share useful websites and stimuli to encourage discussion or reflection.

Acts of Worship are held each week for individual year groups. These will normally be led by Head teacher, Deputy, Assistant Heads and Heads of Year, along with other staff. Individual year group assemblies are scheduled once a fortnight.

All houses take part in a House Mass throughout the year to celebrate their form saint. These are as follows:

- **St Rose of Lima**
- **St John Bosco**
- **Blessed Dominic Barberi**
- **St Vincent De Paul**
- **St Maximillian Kolbe**
- **St Teresa of Calcutta**
- **Thérèse of Lisieux**

Reflections are written by the students following this collective worship and collated in the school's Catholic Life and Mission folder.

Students also attend Mass on Holy days of Obligation and all students in school participate in the end of Year Mass at St Gregory's Catholic Church. Services are held for Lent, Advent and Reconciliation. A community Liturgy during Lent takes place every year. This has included performances of Born for This at St Gregory's Catholic Church, as well as performances of the Stations of the Cross. This has been led by staff at St Thomas More but has included students from across the Multi Academy of Schools.

A schedule of Acts of Worship is published termly and includes the Gospel reading from the previous Sunday to encourage specific links to be made to these values. A rota for Fifteen Minutes of Faith is also produced and shared with staff, which includes key themes linking to feast days and other liturgical dates. This is to assist staff and students when forms prepare the weekly programme. The weekly Fifteen Minutes of Faith is then quality assured by the PICCL and Lay Chaplain and disseminated to all staff.

At appropriate times in the year special liturgies will celebrate the involvement of the children in their charitable acts within the community, as well as retreat days with the students from the MAC Primary schools from Years 4-6. Our Youth Chaplaincy Team (YCT) and Sixth Form Spiritual Director lead prayer and liturgy throughout these days, as well as assist with the overall facilitation and planning and collaboration with the R.E Department, PICCL and Lay Chaplain.

Collective worship should:

- Be given appropriate status and provide a sense of occasion different from the other activities of the college
- Foster a thought-provoking atmosphere allowing for spiritual reflection
- Be inclusive rather than divisive
- Be relevant to the needs of the students
- Encourage student participation
- Foster a sense of community and shared values
- Enable students to practise certain skills such as sitting still and listening, saying or singing words together

A record of Acts of Worship are kept to share as good practice and they are be evaluated through the Youth Chaplaincy Team, Lay Chaplain and PICCL. Student voice is collated from the YCT at least every term relating to Collective Worship in school.

Acts of Worship begin and end with the sign of the cross. Notices may be given at the end of the Act of Worship.

Themes for Act of Worship and 15 Minutes of Faith promote the school values of Faith, Excellence and Respect, which are implicit in the Catholic Virtues:

- Attentive and Discerning
- Learned and Wise
- Loving and Compassionate
- Truthful and Eloquent
- Hopeful and Faith-filled
- Intentional and Prophetic
- Grateful and Generous
- Active and Curious

A staff Spirituality week is in place during Advent and Lent. In this time staff have the opportunity to take part in a range of activities and collective worship.

As aforementioned, the academic year concludes with the celebration of Mass at St Gregory's Catholic Church.

All members of staff are expected to fully support, implement and enable this school policy.

Appendix 2

Guidelines for Planning Acts of Worship

What Constitutes an Act of Worship?

An Act of Worship should be a spiritual experience, where the possibility for the students to encounter something of God is offered. This will be centred on the Gospel from the previous Sunday as well as reflecting the liturgical year.

Some essential religious objects and symbols should be visible within form worship and collective worship in the Hall. These may include The Bible, a candle, cross, icon, PowerPoint, music, a clip or image as a stimulus or similar.

In order to facilitate these moments of reflection, all notices from staff should be given prior to the Act of Worship, so that the students leave the hall with the key spiritual messages that permeated the worship.

Consideration must be given to the place of **Gathering, Word, Action and Mission** in an Act of Worship.

Holding an act of worship that contains just a prayer does not fulfil the legal or spiritual requirement. Worship at St Thomas More is simply not just a legal requirement, but an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition. It is fully underpinned by the Mission Statement.

A Suggested Structure:

- A PowerPoint with a key quotation or image for the students to focus in as they enter the Hall reverently
- All Acts of Worship must begin with the sign of the cross and a prayer
- The central and focal point of the Act of Worship should be the reading of the Gospel
- Key themes and values should be selected from the reading and explained
- Connections made be relevant to the students and their lives
- Use of a film clip, another image, reading, etc. to be used as appropriate stimuli
- Final prayer
- Always end with the sign of the cross