

**St. Mary's Catholic Primary School,
Wednesbury**



**Collective Worship
Policy**

Date of issue: May 2019

Review: September 2022

This policy is underpinned by the school's mission statement:

'Our community, growing and learning together with Christ'.

Aim:

Our aim is to nurture and develop in all children a sense of prayer as a meaningful and desirable facet of our relationship with God.

Objectives:

- To develop community spirit and to promote a common ethos and shared values.
- To enable children to reflect upon and celebrate the word of God.
- To enable children to see prayer as a natural expression of their developing relationship with God.
- To encourage spontaneous prayer as a means of communicating.
- To know the formal prayers of the Church and to be able to recite them collectively.
- To give opportunities for silent reflection and to develop in children a sense of stillness leading to meditation.

The place of collective worship in the whole school policy:

The act of Collective Worship is central to the life of the school. It is a way of affirming our individuality and our communal belonging to the Body of Christ.

At St. Mary's, each day begins and ends with a short prayer. Graces are said at the end of the morning and the start of afternoon sessions. The main purpose of our school assemblies is to bring the school community or part of the school community together in worship and prayer. Within each assembly there is always an opportunity for Prayer and Worship, and involves the children taking part in a variety of prayer experiences.

Further celebrations include:

- Mass in church at the beginning and end of each school term
- Mass in the school hall on Thursday mornings with members of the parish community
- Family Masses on Sundays throughout the year
- Children join the parish community for the celebration of Mass on special feasts and Holy days
- Child-led prayer services
- Harvest Festival service
- Remembrance assemblies

- KS2 Carol Service
- KS1 Christmas show
- Foundation Stage Nativity
- Stars and Crowns service/mass for Epiphany
- Candlemas celebration
- Holy Week liturgies
- Stations of the Cross
- May Procession
- Special Assemblies to welcome particular individuals to school.

| <u>Whole School Collective Worship</u> | | | |
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| Day | Place | Leader | Focus |
| Monday | Hall | SLT | Two assemblies – EYFS & KS1, KS2 The teachings of the Gospel. |
| Tuesday | Hall | Class Teachers/ children | Oremus – two classes come together in the hall to learn prayers pertinent to their year groups and to understand the uses and meanings of these prayers. |
| Wednesday | Hall | Class teachers on a rota basis | Wednesday Word. Two assemblies – EYFS & KS1, KS2 Based on the forthcoming Sunday Gospel. |
| Thursday | Hall | Fr. Paul | Two classes attend mass on a rota basis. |
| Thursday | Classroom | Children | In class prayer service planned by the children (for classes that are not at mass). |
| Thursday | Hall | Ms. Logan | KS2 Hymn Practice. |
| Friday | Hall | Mr Linford | Present and Praise assembly (celebrating the children’s achievements). |
| Friday | Hall | Ms. Logan | KS1 Hymn Practice. |

Parents and parishioners are invited to participate in our acts of Collective Worship through the school newsletter, the parish bulletin and personal letters from the children and teacher.

Teaching

Although most acts of worship are initiated by the teacher, the children have opportunities for discussion, contribution and participation according to their ages and abilities. The person leading the worship values all contributions.

When children plan their own liturgies at KS2, the pupils are given initial guidance from the teacher and then allowed to plan and lead the worship. In KS1, the teacher invites children to select elements for use in their liturgy.

All children's contributions are valued and children receive assistance, if necessary, when planning their liturgies.

Assessment

No formal assessments are made of collective worship.

We complete planning sheets for Masses and services. These are evaluated and reflected upon to ensure we are continually improving the children's worship experiences. Children are also encouraged to complete a Mass Reflection sheet after attending Mass which is then placed in the back of their R.E. books.

Prayer

Why is prayer necessary?

Prayer is the foundation of Christian Life. Prayer is communication or communion with God. Through prayers, we are drawn deeper into the life of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus himself taught us the need for prayer. In Gethsemane as He prepared Himself for the climax of His life, Jesus received the strength He needed in prayer to His Father, "Abba Father Take this cup away from me, but let it be as you not I, would have it." At moments of His public ministry when those in need were pressing around Him, Jesus went off to a lonely place and prayed there.

What is prayer?

We can pray anywhere and at any time. The first step is to place ourselves, as we are, in the presence of God. The second step in prayer is to pray. This means speaking to the Lord, asking Him for our needs and thanking Him for the many gifts He has given to us. This leads to praise and adoration. The third step is to be silent so the Lord Himself can guide the direction of our hearts.

How do we pray?

The best prayers are those that come from the heart. There are times, however, when we find it almost "impossible" to pray: and then we need prayer books and the prayers we have learned by heart. Our children should have the opportunity to find out about and respond in a variety of ways to Jesus' example and teaching with regard to prayer.

They should be encouraged to explore the different forms of prayer, and be helped to grow in appreciation of the importance of prayer in sustaining a living relationship with God. Children's experience of prayer and worship in school, which for some of our children will be the only prayer experiences they will receive, will have a deep impact on their spiritual development as Christians, and a love of their Catholic heritage, which they

can take into their adult life. Their love of Prayer Worship must be continually developed and fostered.

In prayer, we become aware of God's presence with us and his love for us. We listen to Him in order to discover His will for us and to express to Him our gratitude, praise, love and adoration.

Children learn to pray chiefly by sharing in the faith and prayer of adult Christians, especially parents, priests and teachers. Therefore we believe that we should go a step beyond teaching them prayers, we should pray with them in their presence. We should encourage them to pray by themselves, especially in the morning and at night. There are many ways of helping the children meet God Our Father in prayer:

- ***Prayers of silence***

To help the children participate in a prayerful silence, we can use various ways of focussing their minds on prayer. We can ask them to concentrate on an object, a picture, a lighted candle, some quiet background music or by giving them guidance about what to think.

- ***Spontaneous prayer***

Once started, it is often difficult to stop children praying spontaneously. The children may not be able to express their thoughts accurately at first, and they may initially be shy or embarrassed. Many of their prayers may be prayers of petition for a sick parent, grandparent or friend. At St Mary's we try to encourage them to pray not only for what they want, but also to pray that things will turn out as God knows best. We also encourage the children to express thanksgiving, love and praise to God the Father.

- ***Prayers through gestures or actions***

We encourage children to make even the simplest gestures thoughtfully so that the gesture or action is a prayer in itself. Gestures that the children will be taught as they move through the school will include: making the Sign of the Cross, joining their hands, offering the sign of peace, bowing their heads at the name of Jesus, genuflection, hands gestures, processions etc.

- ***Prayers of the Church***

As the children move through school, they will be taught and introduced to the commonly used prayers of the Church, so that they are able to join in and participate in parish celebrations. Each child has a prayer book containing the prayers that they should know. The introduction of many of the responses of the Holy Mass are incorporated into their classroom and assembly prayer and worship celebrations. Our aim is to help the children to develop a reverence and a positive attitude to praying.

- ***Prayers through music and song***

Listening to reflective music can create an atmosphere conducive to prayer and reflection. The singing of hymns can be so joyful. In the words of St Augustine, "to

sing is to pray twice.” Reflective music and singing are both used during prayer and worship sessions.

- ***Prayer stations***

The creation of prayer “spaces” around school for children to pause, reflect and pray is an expression of our desire to live out our Catholic lives. There is a prayer area in every teaching or meeting space in the school. A prayer garden is located within the forested area of the school field, a secluded place to which classes and groups of children can be taken to listen to stories and reflect on what they have heard. The permanent display of the Stations of the Cross in the School Hall has provided another focal point for children and adults to pray. At different times of the year, temporary displays also encourage children to reflect on other aspects of Catholic expressions of faith, e.g. the Mysteries of the Rosary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, etc.

Revised and reviewed March 2019