



St George's Catholic Voluntary Academy

Collective Worship Policy

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***'For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them'
(Matthew 18:20).***

In the light of our school mission statement to enable one another to;

'Grow in faith; have faith in growing'

We understand the prayer and Liturgy of our school community to be central to all we do.

Prayer and Liturgy in a Catholic School

Just as Our Lord Jesus Christ is at the heart of all our prayer and liturgy, so too He is at the centre of every Catholic school. His Gospel is the reference point for its ethos and values; he offers the definitive example of the educator. Joining Christ in praise of the Eternal Father and united by the Holy Spirit in making intercession for the world through prayer and liturgy lies at the heart of the daily life of the school. The quality of the prayer and liturgy in school not only gives honour to God but forms the spiritual and ethical life of pupils and staff alike.

To ensure that the Lord Jesus Christ is at the centre of a Catholic school, prayer and liturgy must be at the heart of its community life. They are essential to the school's Catholic life and mission. The Catholic school is well aware that the community that it forms must be constantly nourished and compared with the sources from which the reason for its existence derives: the saving word of God in Sacred Scripture, in Tradition, and above all in liturgical and sacramental Tradition, enlightened by the Magisterium of the Church.¹⁰

The community of a Catholic school will generally be inclusive of people who are not Catholics or Christians. This context provides Catholic schools with a unique opportunity to present, in an authentic way, our tradition of Catholic prayer and liturgy, while at the same time providing a welcoming environment for all pupils and staff. In order to respond to this most fruitfully, we are called to understand the tradition of the Catholic faith and maintain an approach that respects the integrity of all members of the school community.

At St. George's, there is a range of prayer and liturgy: classroom prayer, adoration, Whole school assemblies, meditation, special services for significant times in the school year, and celebrations of Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Each form of prayer and liturgy will have its own character, dependent on the time of year, size and age of the group as per the whole school Ordo.

Through prayer and liturgy we aim to:

- Foster an understanding of what it means to belong to a community;
- Provide opportunities for enhancing spiritual growth and personal development;
- Encourage the development of a personal relationship with God;
- Provide experiences of sharing values and celebrating significant events in the lives of individuals and the community;
- Develop knowledge of and experience the seasons within the Church's year;
- Develop knowledge and understanding of scripture;
- Develop and celebrate skills of creativity

We understand worship to be a special act of occasion whose purpose is to show reverence to God. We are called to understand the tradition of the Catholic faith and maintain an approach that respects the integrity of all members of the school community.

At St George's, prayer and liturgy are integral to the spiritual life of the school and to pupils' moral and spiritual development. Taking part in daily prayer and liturgy helps build community cohesion by creating a consistent structure around the core values and symbols of Christianity. Prayer and liturgy are, therefore, an important part of our distinctive character. They are integral to the Catholic identity and life of our school. Therefore, we expect everyone to take an active part in worship.

In line with the 1998 Education Reform Act, which states that collective worship should be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character', we normally base our liturgies on the teachings of Christ and traditions of the Christian Church. However, we conduct our liturgies in a manner that is sensitive to the individual faith and beliefs of all members of the school.

While the majority of acts of worship in our school are Christian, we also hold assemblies that reflect other religious traditions that are represented in the school and wider community.

Definitions

Prayer

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. Of course, there are areas of overlap between the categories.



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 throughout 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. There is virtue in variety and also great scope for creativity: varying the focus and the format according to the liturgical year reinforces the essential Catholic focus of the school while providing opportunities for pupil engagement.

Celebrations of the Word

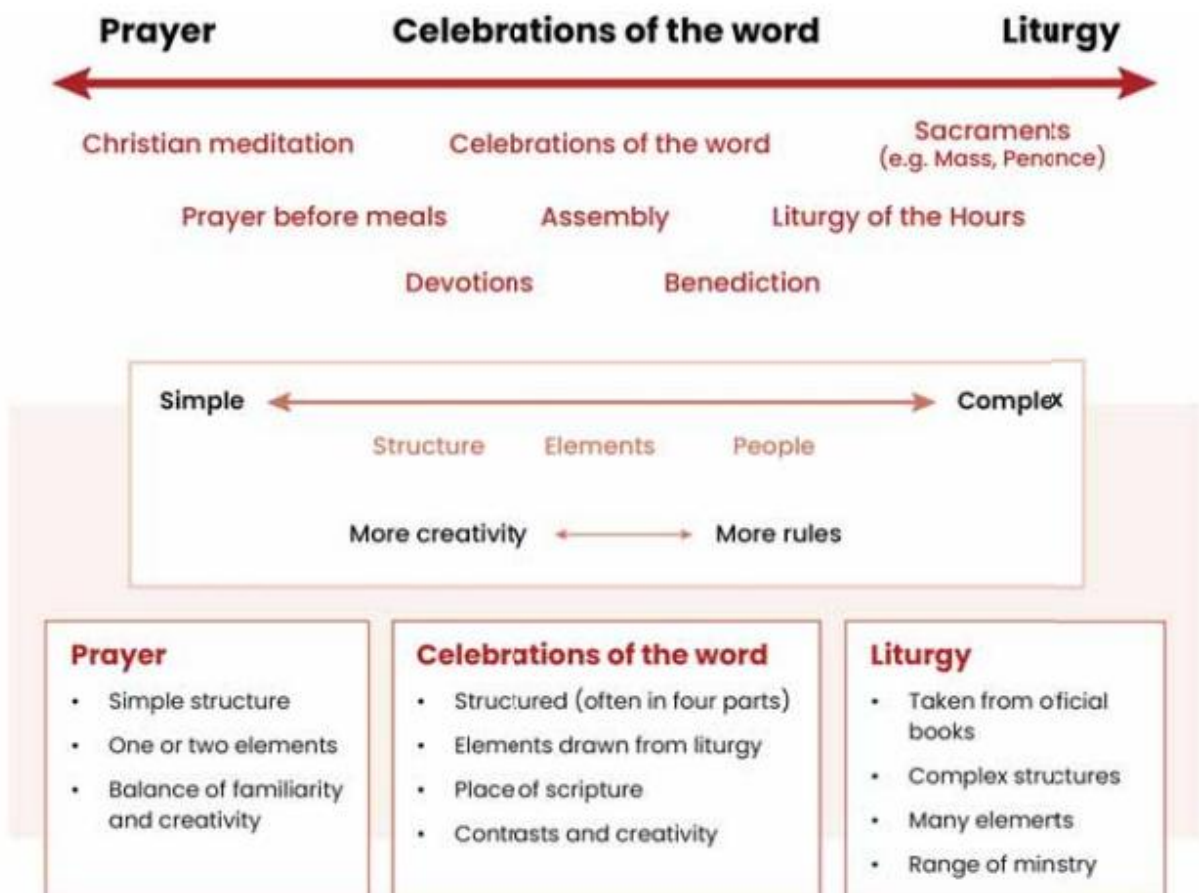


As the time allotted to prayer lengthens and the number of people involved grows, there is a corresponding need for more formal structures. The term 'celebrations of the word' is used for celebrations which are created for the school community and not directly taken from the liturgical books of the Church. 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. The possibility for some creativity and adaptation remains but they have to be exercised within the parameters authorised by the liturgical books.



Prayer and Liturgy at St. George's

Prayer and liturgy form close bonds of unity between those who gather to pray and celebrate. At St George's, liturgy and worship provides opportunities for the community to come together to celebrate and share. Our experience and understanding of what we

are about, however, will vary due to our age, development, and the circumstances in which we gather. So participation can never simply be action. It is also about the engagement of hearts and minds, the imagination, memory, and will – it plays out in the choices we make and the actions we take as a community and as individuals. Participation is therefore both interior and exterior, and there is a close interplay between the two.

Time for worship is in addition to the 10% curriculum time for classroom Religious Education, as required by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

Liturgical assembly

The 'liturgical assembly' is a technical term used by the Church to refer to all those who participate in the liturgy. Christ is present when the liturgical assembly gathers. He is present throughout the liturgy in its actions and prayers: in the Sacraments, in his word, in his ordained ministers, and when the Church prays and sings. Many parts of the liturgy are shared by the assembly together. All are called to sing and pray together, to listen and to respond to the word proclaimed.

At key times during the school year, parents and others may also be present at liturgical celebrations. They are not just there as spectators but as participants in their own right. As such, it is important that their presence is acknowledged, and they are provided with the means to participate.

- Christ is present in the praying and singing of the liturgical assembly.
- The Holy Spirit draws the assembly together in response to God's invitation.

In practice

We conduct all liturgies, masses or assemblies in a dignified and respectful way. We tell children that liturgy time is a period of calm reflection. We regard it as a special time and expect children to behave in an appropriate way. We ask them to be quiet and thoughtful and to listen carefully to the teachings and participate fully in prayer and hymns. We create an appropriate atmosphere by using music, gesture, symbolic actions, visual stimuli and artefacts and reflections to act as a focal point for the attention of the children.

On a Monday, our celebration of the Word is usually led by the Head teacher. All of these assemblies have a clear focus and include a mission for the children to follow during the week. All teachers then look out for those children who are particularly fulfilling this mission and they then receive the Head's award for succeeding in such a mission during the Achievement celebration of the Word on a Friday. The themes for Head's celebration of the Word vary between events throughout the year and our school Gospel Values.

On a Tuesday, we have a cycle of prayer and liturgy involving Child Led celebration of the Word, Visio Divina and Lectio Divina.

The themes for Celebration of the Word are carefully thought out and follow the
Each class has their own liturgy box full of resources to enable pupils to lead one another in worship. They have also developed the use of the iPads to find appropriate Bible scripture using 'www.openbible.info'.

For Visio Divina and Lectio Divina, we use a selection of resources from Finding God – exploring through art.

On a Wednesday, we have Praise celebration of the Word, led by the St. George's music team. These focus upon necessary learning of hymns and songs for liturgies and masses as well as developing our bank of 'Psalms' to use within Mass. These can be both traditional and contemporary.

On a Thursday, classes take turns to lead a celebration of the Word for the whole school. These follow a rota for the foci which coincides with the focus for the Head's assembly and mission/learning for the week, developed into the Ordo for the school year.

On a Friday, we have achievement celebration of the Word. The children are able to work towards three awards, the Head teacher award (based on the mission from Monday's celebration of the Word), The Pupil Choice Award (based on the personal development focus for that half term) and the Teacher's choice award (for any topic the teacher feels appropriate). Friday's celebration of the Word offers an opportunity to acknowledge and reward children for their achievements both in and out of schools. They play an important part in promoting the ethos of the school, which is that all children are valued and all achievements are recognized. Our school is a successful school and we shall celebrate the successes of all the children in assemblies.

We sometimes have our parish priest in for celebration of the Word and he also comes in 2 or 3 times a term for mass.

We invite parents to all Masses and regular celebrations of the Word. We encourage them to attend, as this promotes the community spirit of the school and is a practical demonstration of the way the home and school work together to support the achievements of our children.

We welcome governors' attendance at our liturgies, masses or assemblies at any time. Holy days of Obligation are marked with a mass. St George's day is also marked with a mass in which each class is represented and a day of activities is planned to celebrate linked to St. George.

Advent and Lent

The seasons of Advent and Lent are times of preparation for Christmas and Easter, but need to be given their own importance. A focus is given to both these seasons by fundraising for certain causes and providing prayer/activity for the children to attend. Prayer and assemblies at these times reflect the season. The Advent liturgy takes place as a whole school where each class takes responsibility for delivering a specific part of the liturgy. Foundation Stage and KS1 deliver a Nativity play to reflect the events leading up to the birth of Jesus. To mark the beginning of Lent, we hold an Ash Wednesday Liturgy in the hall with all year groups taking part, led by our Chaplaincy Team. It consists of prayers, music, drama, dance, art, silent reflection, and the distribution of ashes. During the last week of the Spring term, the Lower Junior department put on a Passion play to enable pupils to reflect upon the events leading up to the resurrection. After Easter, there is a New Life liturgy or Mass which is planned to emphasise the importance of the resurrection. It is important that the children appreciate that Christmas Day and Easter Sunday are the beginnings of the seasons of Christmas and Easter.

Prayer

Children have a natural aptitude for prayer. They are open to God. They respond in joy, wonder, elation, anger or disappointment to the world around them. True prayer draws us to discover God within our deepest being, and calls us to walk with God in faith.

When praying with children we must remember that each of them is unique and therefore their prayer is unique. They come from different homes with different experiences, and teachers will need to provide creative and varied opportunities for prayer so that children from many diverse backgrounds have the best opportunities to discover their own spiritual

response. The use of music and singing supports this, as does the availability of the 'Let us Pray' resources so that children may lead prayer and experience a variety of different ways of praying. The important aspect to remember is to be deliberate and purposeful in shaping a rhythm of prayer and liturgy that is harmony with the liturgical year, and that it is engaging and accessible for all.

Daily prayer in the classroom

A daily experience of prayer – in classroom, assembly or elsewhere – is much more than just a legal requirement. It should be at the heart of every school. It is a centre to which many of the achievements and challenges of daily life can be brought and from which strength and purpose can be taken. At this centre is the person of Jesus, the Son of God.

Daily prayer helps make Jesus real for all in the school, a friend whom they can trust and relate to, one who is a guide, and one to whom they can turn in time of need. Prayer within the classroom should take place before and after lunch, at the start and end of the day. The community must be able to pray as well as recite prayers together. Pupils should learn, and experience, all forms of prayer so that they can adore, give praise and thanks, express sorrow to God on their own behalf and on behalf of others, as well as offer prayers of petition and intercession. Children are invited by the leader to make the sign of the cross to welcome God into our hearts. So rather than directing them we would invite them – this simple change can help ensure that participation is a conscious, sincere, and authentic choice for each individual. We follow the school's prayer progression document, which enables a gradual build-up of prayer knowledge.

Each class should provide a prayer focus within their room, in the form of a display, collection of artifacts, bible and candle etc. where the children can focus during times of class prayer or private reflection during the day. We also have prayer stations around the school where children can pray spontaneously: these change depending on the liturgical calendar where they will all have a distinct character. Here are examples from KS2 and KS1 during Lent.



While it is important that children should learn to pray, there is always a place for learning prayer that can be recited together. The RE curriculum plays an important role by providing opportunities to teach pupils about prayer, and also for them to learn prayers.

Staff Prayer

"One of the distinctive features of the Catholic school is that it proclaims itself as a faith community...as part of their life as a faith community, Catholic schools are committed to communal prayer. There is an expectation that all teachers will play an active part in this."

All staff meetings and briefings begin with a prayer or reflection providing an opportunity to be still and quiet at the end of the day.

Home-School Parish Links

Liturgy and worship can be a key way to develop and realise the links we have between home-school and parish. The school also provides a lead at celebrations within the parish and supports sacramental preparation and celebration through classwork and attendance of First Holy Communion celebrations. A post communion celebration is provided within school, led by the Parish Priest.

The school's harvest celebration provides an opportunity for all parties to come together. Children and parents are involved in gathering and arranging food, staff and children lead and participate in the liturgy, parents and parishioners pack the food into boxes which is delivered personally by the children to two local charities.

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The priests of the parish provide chaplaincy for the school and have an active and special role in the sacramental life of the school. They visit school on a weekly basis – often several times per week.

Differentiation

A key principle of the Directory of Masses with children is to enhance the quality of worship by adapting, whilst maintaining authenticity to the Catholic tradition, thus encouraging participation. Therefore, worship and liturgy should be "suited to children's age and capabilities."

Children do not always understand all of the experiences provided in worship and liturgy, as they are aimed at a wide range of ages. They must, however, experience some elements that are relevant to them whenever they attend. Prayer and liturgy should be inclusive and accessible to all, and the perspectives and approaches we take support those within our school with SEND will be essential to some, but beneficial to all. We must remove the barriers that many young people face and our prayer and liturgy at St.George's is an inclusive example of best practice.

Curriculum RE plays an important role in preparing pupils for worship by giving them the means to understand the religious language and significance of the actions. Particular attention should be given to the Word of God, and all readings used in worship and liturgy, so that it is proclaimed at a level appropriate to the pupils' age and capacity.

SEND pupils attend mass and other celebrations of the word. They will have any provisions they need e.g headphones, fidget toys and are seated next to an adult who will support them. We also ensure that there are visuals on the screen to help the children understand the themes and meaning behind the scripture and prayers.

Equal Opportunities

Multicultural issues

In respect of worship and liturgy, it is very important to be faithful to the Catholic tradition. The school community reflects to our multi-cultural society, thus it is appropriate to incorporate a multi-cultural dimension to the worship and liturgy. A certain degree of sensitivity is required to avoid tokenism and enable authentication celebration. The Catholic Church is a world-wide community (the largest multicultural institution in the world) with a wealth of different cultural traditions, as is Christianity a world-wide faith. It is helpful to draw upon these common traditions to promote a multicultural perspective.

Multifaith issues

Worship and liturgy that has a multi-faith dimension is more problematic. It is unwise for a Catholic school to fully celebrate a non-Christian feast or event. Liturgies and prayer should look to be inclusive where possible. We are sensitive to needs of children of other faiths and provide time for their own worship in school for example during Ramadan. The presence of another faith will enrich and deepen the understanding of our own when there

is genuine dialogue. We believe a faith community is well placed for that dialogue to be most respected and fostered. Our admissions policy reflects and welcomes that dialogue. Prayer is universal to all faiths and opportunities for personal and reflective prayer is the most inclusive.

Planning/Monitoring/Evaluation

Good liturgical celebrations are dependent upon good preparation. The involvement of those who celebrate in this preparation is crucial.

Key elements which guide liturgy preparations:

- The Scripture readings
- Something to 'see, think, hear and do'
- The season of the liturgical year/feast
- The nature of the celebration
- Particular events or concerns for the school or wider community
- The nature of the school

Masses

Masses are planned by the RE Co-ordinator in liaison with the class/year group that is delivering. It is crucial that the priest or leader is briefed and provided with information about the structure of the celebration. Masses are prepared with the guidance of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory 2024. Children introduce the themes of the mass to the school and will read the readings, prayers of the faithful and bring up the bread and wine during the presentation of gifts. We also include silence into our masses and all of our liturgies, giving the children time to reflect on the prayers and what they mean to them. Music is a central part of masses, drawing our school together and transforming them into worshippers. Careful consideration is taken when choosing music; Musical factors include the quality of the composition, its ability to express the tone, content, and form of a text and the ease with which it can be remembered and sung. The singing at St. George's is always of a high quality and the children thrive on this wonderful way to pray. Echoed by the words of St. Augustine, 'To sing is to pray twice'. When approaching music for mass we always follow the order of priority: Gospel Acclamation. Sanctus, Memorial Acclamation, Great Amen, before focusing on the opening hymn, the Gloria (if appropriate for time of year), Psalm and the communion processional hymn.

Class Celebration of the Word

Class Celebration of the Word to the whole school are collective acts of worship and should therefore be planned for accordingly. They are planned alongside our School Chaplain. They should start with the sign of the cross, a prayer which involves all those present and signals the beginning of the celebration. Prayers should be seen as an integral part of the celebration and should represent the various forms of prayer which the children experience. Readings and stories should be at an appropriate level to engage the interest of the whole community and should be read clearly. The use of art, dance, music and drama adds interest to the celebration, creates atmosphere and maintains participation of the rest of the community.

It is important to evaluate all aspects of the liturgy including the preparation process in order to improve. Worship is a special living experience and evaluation needs to support its development. Child-led class liturgies are evaluated too. From the younger years as a whole class to UKS2 where members of the Chaplaincy Team will complete theirs.

RE Leads and senior leadership team evaluate liturgy across the school according to the yearly monitoring cycle. Class liturgies are monitored by each class every week and Head's Celebration of the Word and Wednesday's Praise Celebration of the Word, half termly. All whole school liturgies including masses, Advent Liturgy and Ash Wednesday liturgy are evaluated by each class too. Parent views are collected regularly through a QR code.

Right of Withdrawal

As we are a Catholic School, and parents have applied to the school knowing this, we expect all children to attend assembly, mass and liturgies. However, any parent can request permission for their child to be excused from attending religious worship.

Monitoring and review

It is the role of a named school governor with responsibility for religious education and collective worship to monitor the policy and practice of collective worship. The governor concerned liaises with the headteacher before reporting to the governors on religious education and collective worship.

The Bishop entrusts his responsibility for prayer and liturgy to the governors and headteachers. It is their responsibility to ensure that it is in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline, and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church.