



**St. Aidan's Catholic Primary School
Prayer and Collective Worship Policy**

Introduction

‘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.’

Collective Worship in a Catholic school acknowledges and celebrates the life-giving presence of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) in our lives. It is how we, as a community of faith, come together to give glory, honour, praise and thanks to God. It is through acts of shared Worship, prayer and liturgy, that the Catholic identity of our schools are shaped and sustained.

Sacramental aspects of the Church’s liturgical life, especially the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation, must be intrinsically woven into the fabric of a school’s Catholic identity. It is therefore expected that all schools will have a schedule of liturgical events which will include planned for participation in Mass and other Eucharistic liturgies such as Adoration, and the opportunity for its members to participate in the sacrament of reconciliation during the seasons of Advent and Lent.

Legal requirements

The law requires all maintained schools:

- provide daily Collective Worship for all pupils including those in the sixth form (Section 70, 1988 Education Act);
- Acts of Collective Worship are not to be designated curriculum time. In the context of the Catholic school this means that times of Collective Worship are not considered to be part of the allocation of curriculum time for Religious Education;
- recognise and respect that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from Collective Worship.

In addition

- Foundation governors in voluntary aided Catholic schools have a statutory responsibility to preserve and develop the religious character of their schools;
- Governors in Catholic academies give a written commitment to do the same.

Definitions

Liturgy

Liturgy literally means ‘work of the people’ and points to the fact that something else is going on beyond prayer. It is the formalising of worship at the heart of which is symbol and action.

Prayer

One of the early fathers of the Church described prayer as “the raising of one’s mind and heart to God or requesting of good things from God.” These words of St John Damascene, now found in the catechism, illustrate why in this Catholic school we begin and end each session with a prayer.

Collective Worship

Collective worship is our loving response, in word and action, to God’s invitation to enter into a relationship with Godself, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and witness of the Holy Spirit.

Collective Worship and Prayer

We aim to be a worshipping, celebrating, reconciling school, living and growing with Christ.
(Mission Statement)

At St Aidan's we believe that collective worship plays a key role in the life of our school. Coming together with our children in a quiet period of prayer and reflection each day strengthens and deepens our Catholic roots as we celebrate all aspects of school life. We encourage a variety of prayer forms: spontaneous, contemplative and formal.

Aims

- provide opportunities for the children to develop a personal relationship with God through prayer
- Children should be involved actively in ways suited to their age and stage of personal, social and religious development. It is therefore appropriate that most worship takes place with the school community.
- As many children as possible should have a special part to play in the celebration.
- Celebrations should address the emotions and feelings children experience. Usually this is through the use of story.
- Music, mime, drama and art together with visual aids should be used to enhance the atmosphere. Examples of visual aids include candles (battery operated), lighting and symbolic materials.
- Celebrations should incorporate and make use of the many and varied cultural backgrounds of our children wherever this is possible and appropriate.
- Celebrations should be linked to the Liturgical year. They should also reflect thanksgiving, special days and feast days, e.g. First Holy Communion celebrations, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, beginning of school year, staff mass, Leavers' mass.
- It is important to provide opportunities for private prayer and reflection.
- Scripture should be used as a source after exploring the children's own experience.
- Time and thought should be given to the creation of the right atmosphere and setting for prayer and worship.
- It is important that teachers consider pupil's different contexts and prior learning.
- Teachers should respect and take time to discuss the children's experiences with them thus enabling them to develop a deeper personal relationship with God.
- The example of adults is of paramount importance. It is important that adults are seen to treat each other with respect.
- gain both respect and appreciation of other faiths

In addition to weekly acts of worship daily prayers take place in every class. A number of special celebrations take place throughout the year and the classes responsible for the preparation of these are indicated in the yearly spiritual development plan (see RE policy).

Catholic Collective worship will always have Christ at its heart reflecting the liturgical tradition of the Church.

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you"

Matthew. 7: 7

Eucharistic Celebrations

The Eucharist is the focus and source of Christian life. At the beginning and end of a term and Holy days of obligation the school community celebrates the Eucharist with parishioners in the parish church.

Our aim is to lead all the children to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations especially the Holy Mass. Every effort is made to increase the children's participation and make it an intense experience.

When preparing these celebrations reference will be made to the complete text of the Church's 'Directory for Masses with Children' as a basis for our practice.

We believe that children are best introduced to prayer, the sacraments and particularly the Eucharist in a step by step approach. In school, therefore, the 'Liturgy of the Word', rather than the Eucharist will be the norm. The Wednesday Word is used in class and collective worship as well as being sent home and shared with parents.

Organisation

Monday

Whole school Assembly led by Head Teacher/Deputy. This links with Sunday's Gospel and topical events.

Tuesday

Hymn Practice

Wednesday

KS1 Assembly Birthdays and Come and See topics.

Friday

Whole School Assembly. Awards, end of topic assembly, Class Masses

Collective worship takes place within the classroom on the remaining days using the prayer corner as a focal point.

Planning:

- Collective Worship in this school is planned following a structure with reference to the Church's seasons, the weekly Mass Readings our Christian values, significant dates and the curriculum.
- Scripture will be the focus for all acts of worship
- It will relate to the school community in the light of the school's aims and mission
- There will be flexibility to respond to changing situations within the school and the wider community
- We will aim to teach children the skills to enable them to prepare, organise and lead worship

Collective worship in our school may follow the pattern or variation of the pattern detailed below: -

Gathering - how we come together, the setting, the environment (quiet/ reflective music, lighted candles, statues, sign of the cross, focus and examination of conscience etc.);

Word - a reading from the Scriptures (or another suitable source), breaking the word, time to reflect on this and prayers to fit into the theme;

Action - a ritual movement that everyone can join in with that fits with the theme (gestures such as shaking hands, holding hands, lighting a candle, prayers, responses to prayers, etc.);

Mission - 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.

Aids to Collective Worship

There is a range of resources available to aid prayer and reflection: a selection of material, crosses, candles, posters, Bibles and story books and music. We also use the Ten Ten resources to help with leading of assemblies. In addition to this we use the Come and See Respond booklets to help the children to plan their own liturgies.

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

Prayer will not be confined to an act of worship. Children are encouraged to pray at other times 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.

