

*St Thomas More
Catholic Primary School*

Liturgy and Prayer Policy

Adopted by Governing Body: March 2026

Review: March 2028

“Try to be like Jesus in all that I think, do and say”

Introduction

Founded on a life of prayer and gospel values of love, peace and justice, St Thomas More Catholic Primary School will prepare its pupils for the next stage of educational development.

In the light of our Mission Statement we understand the prayer and worship of our school to be:

- A celebration of what we believe about God and our life in relationship to God and to each other
- An opportunity to help pupils deepen their own personal faith commitment
- An opportunity, through worship and liturgy, to deepen their understanding of Christian beliefs
- An opportunity for staff and pupils to develop their own personal relationship with God
- To celebrate various feasts and day to day life as a whole worshipping community

In any school there will be a range of prayer and liturgy: classroom prayer, meditation, assemblies, devotions, special services for times in the school year, celebrations of Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Each form of prayer and liturgy will have its own character dependent on the circumstances, size and age of the group, the place of celebration and its content. (Prayer and Liturgy Directory, June 2023)

Definition of Terms

Prayer, Liturgical Prayer, 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	Liturgical Prayer	Liturgy
Christian meditation	Service of the Word	Sacraments:
Prayer before meals	Assembly	Mass
Devotions	Exposition	Penance

Prayer	Liturgical Prayer	Liturgy
Simple structure	Structure (often 4 part)	Taken from official books
One or two elements	Elements drawn from liturgy	Complex structure
Balance of familiarity & creativity	Places in Scripture	Many elements
	Contrasts and creativity	Range of ministry

In Catholic terminology 'worship' is not generally used to name and describe a distinct type of prayer or event. Worship is about living our lives in a way that recognises that everything we have is a gift from God and that everything we do gives glory to God. That, of course, does include prayer but the scope is broader. With that understanding of worship it will be seen that the purpose of education in a Catholic school is to know and love Christ and to open the vision and imagination of all pupils to the wonder of living in God's world and the responsibilities that follow from this.

The Nature of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and liturgy 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.

The celebration of Catholic liturgies and prayers as an integral part of our learning and teaching enables the school community to become reflective, experience the presence of God and develop a mature spiritual life.

Legal Requirements

It is a legal requirement that there is a daily 'act of worship' offered for all pupils. This can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single 'act of worship' for all pupils, or separate 'acts of worship' in school groups. Holding an assembly that includes a prayer, said either by the teacher or everyone present, does not fulfil this requirement. Prayer, liturgical prayer and assembly are distinct activities which can contribute to this.

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. Responsibility for arranging prayer and liturgy lies with the Governing Body after consultation with the Head Teacher.

Parents have a right to withdraw their child from 'Collective Worship'. However, given the importance of prayer and liturgy in a Catholic school, parents and prospective parents will 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, within the RE curriculum.

The Place of Prayer and Liturgy in the Life of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Prayer and liturgy is an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition.

Prayer and liturgy 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.*

The Aims of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and liturgy at St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School aims to provide opportunities for pupils, staff and the school family:

- To contemplate the mystery of God*
- To reflect on spiritual and moral issues*
- To explore personal beliefs*
- To respond to and to celebrate life*
- To experience a sense of belonging and to develop community spirit*
- To develop a common ethos and shared values*
- To enrich religious experience*
- To grow in liturgical understanding and development*
- To pray using 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 prayer at St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School will:

- Give glory and honour to God;*
- Be a quality activity, fundamental to the life of the school and its Catholic character;*
- Enable pupils to develop skills so that they can prepare, organise and lead prayer times;*
- Give pupils positive liturgical experiences, appropriate to their age, aptitude and family backgrounds in order to prepare them for the liturgical life of the Church. Celebrations will be appropriate to the age and groupings of the children.*

Planning, content and celebration

Prayer and liturgy is planned following a structure with reference to the Church's seasons, RECD, feast days, the curriculum and significant dates e.g. Remembrance Day.

Parish and parents are invited to participate in many celebrations.

A variety of prayer styles will be used appropriate to the age of the children and the occasion.

- Collective Worship*

- *All days begin in the classroom with Prayer Ministry*
- *At lunchtimes pupils say Grace in the school hall or classroom*
- *End of day prayer in classroom.*
- *All assemblies start with our School Prayer*
- *St Thomas More's Feast Day*
- *Class Saint Feast Day celebrations*
- *Ash Wednesday*
- *Eucharistic Adoration*
- *Christmas - each year group participate in Christmas productions (nativity, celebration)*
- *Community Carols by Candlelight*
- *School lead family Masses at St. Edwards Parish Church*
- *Whole school Masses are celebrated in St. Edward's Church or the school hall by the Parish Priest on special occasions. The children take part in Readings, singing and prayers.*
- *Leavers Mass*
- *Year 4-6 holds a Reconciliation Service regularly in school, providing an opportunity for each child, individually, to receive the Sacrament.*
- *A mystery of the Rosary*
- *Weekly Rejoice and Sing*
- *All Saints Day*
- *Holy Souls*
- *Faith Friends - meditation, artwork, silence, forest*
- *Easter - Production, stations of the cross*
- *Pentecost celebration*

The frequency and planning of prayer and worship opportunities will be co-ordinated by the Head Teacher and the Prayer and Liturgy Co-ordinator and will include a daily "act of worship". The Timetable of Prayer and Liturgy will be arranged through each calendar month to ensure that the liturgical highlights of the year are celebrated.

Leading Prayer and Liturgy

As faith leader of the school, the Head Teacher will plan and lead prayer and liturgy across the school, supported by the SLT. All teachers are given the opportunity to lead whole school assemblies. The class teacher will lead class prayer and liturgy. Children are taught to plan and lead prayer times according to their age.

Recording

Aspects of prayer and liturgy are recorded in floor books. There is a focus on pupils and staff being in the moment, with an emphasis on spiritual development instead of recording.

Religious Practices and School Prayer Life

Prayer

- The school seeks to foster and develop relationships with God through personal and corporate prayer. It seeks to encourage a sense of God's presence permeating the life of the school.
- The school has a list of prayers suitable for the different age groups this is kept on the T drive.
- Pupils are assisted to explore a variety of prayer methods including private, spontaneous and traditional in both formal and informal styles of settings.
- Pupils are provided with the opportunity to be still and silent, in order that they may learn to listen, meditate, reflect and develop their sense of private prayer.
- Short prayers are offered at the beginning and end of the day and a Grace at mealtimes.
- Each classroom displays a prayer area to provide a focus.

Prayer Techniques

Silence outer and inner stillness

Seeing objects, images symbols, photographs, secular art and sacred art

Speaking praying aloud, reciting traditional and liturgical prayers, praying spontaneously

Listening natural sounds, musical selections

Moving gesture, dance, processions, bodily postures and movements

Singing hymns, songs, chants

Memorising prayers of all kinds

Reading Bible, prayers, poems, spiritual books, newspapers, original prayers, meditations

Litanies traditional or original

Creating drawings, banners, posters, sculptured pieces, collages, symbols, images and pictures

Environment room arrangements, sounds, music photographs, art pieces, and symbols

Prayer Parish liturgies, school liturgies

Services

Assemblies

School assemblies provide opportunities to develop among the pupils a sense of being a sharing community. They call for a personal involvement and response from the children. They provide a sense of occasion. They seek to be festive and playful. They seek to ensure that children take away an understanding of the message contained in the liturgy of assembly. They provide an invaluable source of learning experiences where each pupil can develop self-confidence through speech, drama, song, music and dance. They provide the opportunity of learning how to behave in a large social gathering. They provide an opportunity to welcome priests, parishioners and the local community to take part in the school worship.

In St Thomas More Catholic Primary School the following types of assembly take place:

- A weekly assembly led by senior leaders and class teachers take place on a Monday. This will focus on our virtues and will link to the Word of God. The theme set on a Monday continues into the singing celebration on Tuesday and into collective worships.
- Whole school Rejoice and Achieve assembly – led by the Head Teacher or SLT at the end of each week which celebrates achievement within the school. Achievements are linked to the school's Core Aims of Learn, Love, Pray and Play.
- Rejoice and Sing takes place weekly, led by School staff. Songs learnt are linked to the theme of the week.

Liturgy in School and Classroom

Whole school Masses are celebrated in the school hall or in St Edwards Parish Church by the Parish Priest/ School Chaplain on special Feast Days. The children take part in Readings, singing, prayers and serving.

Mass is celebrated by the Parish Priest/ School Chaplain in the school hall. Parents and parishioners are invited to attend all school Masses.

Each class, Year 4-6, has a Reconciliation service each term, held in school, with an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation using a rite appropriate to their age.

Each year, Year 3 children are prepared by a team of Catechists and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, according to arrangements appropriate to their age.

Non-Catholic pupils may take part in all activities, with the exception of receiving the Sacraments. However, they may, if they wish, receive a blessing at Holy Communion, and meet the priest, individually.

Worship in the Classroom

All days begin in the classroom with Prayer Ministry.

On days when there is no whole school assembly, there is an act of collective worship in each class at specified time during the day. At lunchtimes pupils say Grace either in the classroom, or in the hall.

All worship should have a theme

The cycle of worship is set out at the beginning of the school year. The themes follow the events of the Liturgical year and the virtues. Weekly themes are begun on Monday and then follow through the week. Evidence is gathered in Collective Worship books.

Form of the worship

Teachers, with their children, can decide on their own form of worship. The worship will include some of the following:

- *Reading - from scripture, a poem, a thought for the day, a story*
- *Song*
- *Formal prayer*
- *Spontaneous prayer*
- *Litany*
- *Silence/reflection*
- *Private prayer*
- *Gesture (eg. Sign of peace)*
- *Drama / dance / mime*
- *Music*
- *Time in God's world*

Teachers will endeavour to create a prayerful of atmosphere for these acts of worship. Teachers are free to choose their way of achieving this. Ways we can help create a prayerful atmosphere include:

- *Background music*
- *Lighted candles*
- *A focal point: - e.g. cloth, cross, statue, an open Bible, picture/poster*
- *Relevant art work*
- *Pictures from the internet*
- *Posture:- e.g. standing, sitting, hands joined, hands raised, holding hands, eyes closed etc.*

Monitoring

Prayer and liturgy will be monitored by the Headteachers and is reviewed termly. Updates are given to Governors termly.

Following monitoring, training needs will be identified and outcomes used to inform the school's CSED.

Resources

Resources are kept maintained within school by the Prayer and Liturgy Co-ordinator.

The learning environment

Symbols and icons of the Catholic faith are displayed in each classroom and throughout the school which helps the school community and visitors to experience the uniqueness and sacredness of our learning environment.

Focal points in each classroom and throughout the school reflect the liturgical season and will reference the Religious Education Curriculum Directory branches. In this way there is an outward sign of our school's ethos.

Sacramental Programmes

Eucharist and Reconciliation

In Year 3 the pupils receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Eucharist for the first time. They are prepared in school by a team of Catechists. Throughout the preparation period, parents, the school and parish, work together towards the reception of these Sacraments.

The preparation follows the school scheme which has been developed over a number of years drawing from a range of other schemes.

Eucharist

First Communion is celebrated in St. Edward's Parish Church.

The children celebrate their First Communion during the following week. The children have their certificates presented in assembly. They spend the rest of the day having a party within school. Parents and families are invited to join in the day.

Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is celebrated in St. Edward's Parish church. The Sacrament is held in the Spring.

Key Stage 2 Reconciliation

Year 4-6 holds are regularly provided with an opportunity for each child, individually, to receive the Sacrament.

Confirmation

Each year, Year 6 children receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. They are prepared in school by their class teacher. At this Mass they are involved in the singing, readings, prayers and Offertory procession. Candidates are confirmed, normally by the Bishop, in the Summer Term.

Eucharist

All opportunities in our schools for the celebration of the Eucharist will be done in consultation with the Prayer and Liturgy Co-ordinator and the Priest presiding. All students will carefully be prepared for this before the celebration. Students have the opportunity to prepare and lead the Bidding Prayers, readings and offertory.

The Coordinator for Prayer and Liturgy

Each school will have a co-ordinator of Prayer and Liturgy, this will usually be the person with Chaplaincy responsibility but may in some cases be the Head Teacher.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator and is evaluated and reviewed by the whole school staff and governors every two years. The Foundation Governors in particular will play a most important role.