

St Robert Bellarmine Catholic Primary School



Prayer and Liturgy Policy

"We are God's work of art."

Our Mission Statement

"We are God's work of art."

- Help each other
- Be happy
- Follow the light of Jesus
- Include everybody
- Everybody do their best in every way
- Be friends with everyone
- Be responsible for your own actions
- Be Respectful
- Work to the best of your abilities
- Parents, teachers and children support each other.

Chair of Governors	Anne-Marie Pennington
Headteacher	Mairead O'Neill Dowell
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1. Context and purpose

Prayer and liturgy are at the heart of the life and mission of St Robert Bellarmine Catholic Primary School. Jesus Christ is at the centre of our school; through prayer and liturgy, pupils and adults are invited to encounter Christ, give glory to God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and grow in faith, hope, love and service.

This policy is informed by *To love You more dearly: The Prayer & Liturgy Directory for Catholic Schools, Academies and Colleges in England and Wales* (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2023). The Directory uses the phrase "prayer and liturgy" in place of "collective worship" because it more fully describes the Catholic school's life of prayer, celebrations of the word and liturgical celebration.

Our mission statement, "We are God's work of art," shapes this provision. Prayer and liturgy should help every member of the school community recognise their God-given dignity, deepen their relationship with God and one another, and respond through loving action.

2. Aims

Through a rich and age-appropriate life of prayer and liturgy, the school seeks to:

- place Christ at the centre of the daily life of the school and make prayer and liturgy integral to its Catholic identity and mission;
- enable pupils and adults to encounter God through scripture, silence, symbol, music, gesture, prayer and sacramental celebration;
- form pupils progressively in the Catholic tradition of prayer and liturgy, including a shared repertoire of common prayers and liturgical music;
- support full, conscious and active participation, recognising that participation is both interior and exterior and must be appropriate to age and capacity;
- give pupils increasing opportunities to prepare, lead and evaluate prayer and celebrations of the word, while recognising the distinct ministries and norms of the Church's liturgy;
- follow the liturgical year and celebrate the seasons, feasts and solemnities of the Church;
- provide opportunities for reflection after prayer and liturgy so that pupils can consider how worship shapes discipleship, relationships and action;
- welcome all members of the school community with sensitivity and respect while maintaining the integrity and explicitly Catholic character of prayer and liturgy.

3. Understanding prayer and liturgy

The school recognises a continuum of prayer and liturgy. Different forms have different purposes and degrees of structure:

- Prayer may include classroom prayer, meditation, familiar Catholic prayers, spontaneous prayer and devotions. It will normally have a clear and simple structure and include appropriate silence.
- Celebrations of the word are prepared for the school community and are centred on the proclamation of Sacred Scripture. They may draw on liturgical texts, symbols, music and gestures with appropriate creative freedom.
- Liturgy includes the Church's official rites, especially the celebration of Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. These are celebrated according to the authorised liturgical books and the norms of the Church.
- Catholic prayer and liturgy are Christ-centred and Trinitarian: prayer is offered to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. The Paschal Mystery — Christ's life, death, resurrection and ascension — is at the heart of Christian worship.

4. Legal and ecclesial requirements

The school fulfils the legal requirement for maintained Catholic schools to provide a daily act of collective worship. In this policy and in the ordinary language of school life, this provision is described as prayer and liturgy.

Prayer and liturgy are provided in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church and with the school's trust deed and religious character. Prayer and liturgy are not designated curriculum time and are distinct from the curriculum allocation for Religious Education.

Parents have the legal right to withdraw their child from the statutory act of collective worship. Any request should be made in writing to the Headteacher so that the school can discuss the request sensitively and make appropriate arrangements. The school will continue to respect the religious freedom and dignity of every pupil while remaining faithful to its Catholic foundation.

5. Inclusion and participation

The school community includes people at different stages of faith and may include Catholics, other Christians, members of other religious traditions and people of no particular faith. All are welcomed with respect. No one should be asked to say or do anything that would compromise their conscience.

Participation is understood as more than completing a task. Pupils are helped to engage body, mind and spirit, to understand what is happening, and to be open to the way prayer and liturgy can shape their lives. Silence, attentive listening and reflective presence are valid forms of participation.

Roles such as reading, serving, music and leading intercessions are ministries of service, not simply jobs allocated to create activity. Pupils and adults who undertake ministries will be prepared and formed appropriately.

6. Responsibility

6.1 Governing Body

The Governing Body, as guardian of the Catholic life and mission of the school, will:

- ensure that prayer and liturgy remain central to the Catholic life of the school and are consistent with the Prayer and Liturgy Directory and diocesan guidance;
- approve, monitor and review this policy and ensure that it is shared with stakeholders;
- ensure that a named Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator is in place;
- receive reports on the quality, impact and development of prayer and liturgy;
- ensure that suitable financial and practical resources are available.

6.2 Headteacher

The Headteacher, as the spiritual leader of the school community, will:

- ensure that the school's provision is faithful to Catholic teaching, liturgical norms and the Prayer and Liturgy Directory;
- work in partnership with the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator, clergy and governors;
- ensure that staff responsible for prayer and liturgy receive appropriate induction, formation and training;
- ensure that sufficient time, space and resources are available for high-quality prayer and liturgy.

6.3 Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator

The Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator will:

- maintain an Annual Plan of Provision identifying liturgical seasons, key celebrations, Masses, opportunities for Reconciliation and other significant occasions;
- ensure that all pupils experience planned daily prayer appropriate to their age and capacity;
- support pupils to take an increasingly active and skilled role in preparing and leading prayer and celebrations of the word;
- ensure that staff and pupils have access to suitable Catholic resources;

- coordinate induction, formation and continuing professional development;
- monitor and evaluate provision regularly and use findings to inform improvement;
- report on prayer and liturgy to the Headteacher and Governing Body;
- work collaboratively with local clergy, parish communities and diocesan advisers.

6.4 Staff

All staff contribute to the prayer and liturgical life of the school. Class teachers have particular responsibility for ensuring that pupils participate in daily prayer and for supporting pupils in planning, preparing and reflecting on prayer and celebrations of the word. Staff will model reverence, attentive participation and respect.

6.5 Pupils

Pupils will be supported progressively to participate in, prepare and lead prayer and celebrations of the word according to their age, experience and capacity. Opportunities may include preparing a prayer focus, choosing appropriate scripture or music, reading, composing intercessions, leading responses, serving, singing and contributing to evaluation and reflection.

7. Provision across the school

Prayer and liturgy take place every day. Provision is planned so that pupils experience prayer in different groupings, including the classroom, year or phase groups and the whole school community, as appropriate. Prayer may also take place outdoors, in the school hall, in church and in other suitable sacred or reflective spaces.

The school's Annual Plan of Provision gives the detailed pattern for each academic year. It will include:

- daily classroom prayer and opportunities for stillness and silence;
- regular celebrations of the word in classes, phases and as a whole school;
- celebration of the liturgical seasons and important feasts and solemnities;
- Masses across the school year, planned with the parish and clergy;
- opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and/or non-sacramental penitential celebrations as appropriate;
- traditional Catholic devotions and forms of prayer, where appropriate to the season and age of pupils;
- prayer at significant moments in the life of the school and opportunities for families and the wider community to participate.

There is no fixed formula or prescribed duration for every act of prayer. The form, length and level of complexity will be appropriate to the purpose, age and capacity of those taking part.

8. Planning prayer and celebrations of the word

Planning begins with the purpose of the celebration and the needs of the praying community. Scripture has a central place. Planning will take account of the liturgical season, the age and experience of pupils, the space available, and the appropriate use of symbol, silence, music and gesture.

A celebration of the word will normally have a clear liturgical shape. The familiar pattern Gather – Listen – Respond – Go Forth may be used as a flexible planning tool, but it is not a mandatory formula for every celebration. The structure should serve prayer rather than become a classroom task sequence.

- Gather: prepare the space and community to become attentive to God's presence.
- Listen: proclaim Sacred Scripture with dignity and allow the word of God to be heard.
- Respond: enable an appropriate response through prayer, silence, music, gesture, intercession or reflection.
- Go Forth: connect prayer with Christian witness, mission and action in daily life.

Prayer should not be treated as a lesson. Learning may arise from prayer and liturgy, but the primary purpose is worship, encounter and response to God.

9. Scripture, music, silence, symbol and sacred space

Sacred Scripture will be proclaimed with dignity and from an approved Catholic translation. Readers will be prepared so that they communicate both the words and their meaning.

Music is a form of prayer and participation, not simply background or performance. Choices will be appropriate to the liturgical season, the celebration and the age of pupils. The school will develop a shared repertoire that enables confident communal singing.

Silence will be used deliberately and appropriately. Pupils will be formed gradually to value silence as a space for listening, reflection and prayer.

Prayer spaces and focal points will be simple, dignified and purposeful. They may include the Bible, crucifix, candles, liturgical colours, icons or other suitable religious artefacts. Spaces and displays will reflect the liturgical year and will avoid unnecessary clutter.

10. Mass, sacraments and other liturgies

When Mass or another official liturgy of the Church is celebrated, the authorised liturgical books and relevant diocesan guidance will be followed. Adaptation and creativity will remain within the permissions given by the Church.

Pupils undertaking liturgical ministries will receive appropriate preparation and formation. Where the school celebrates with the parish, ministries will be planned collaboratively. The school recognises that liturgical celebrations are acts of worship rather than performances.

11. Formation

Formation in prayer and liturgy is progressive and lifelong. Pupils and adults need opportunities to experience good prayer and liturgy, understand its meaning, develop the practical skills needed for ministry, and reflect afterwards on its impact.

New staff will receive induction into the Catholic prayer and liturgical life of the school. Whole-staff formation will be provided at least annually, with additional training for those undertaking particular responsibilities or ministries. Formation may draw on the expertise of clergy, the diocese and other appropriate Catholic agencies.

12. Resourcing

The centrality of prayer and liturgy will be reflected in the school's allocation of time, budget, resources and space. Resources will include suitable Bibles and liturgical texts, music, artefacts, candles and materials for prayer spaces, together with appropriate digital and published resources.

External resources will be evaluated for their fidelity to Catholic teaching and liturgical norms, their suitability for the school community and their contribution to the school's Catholic ethos. Copyright and licensing requirements will be observed.

13. Monitoring, evaluation and improvement

The quality and impact of prayer and liturgy will be monitored regularly and evaluated at least annually. Evaluation will consider not only organisation and presentation but also the extent to which provision supports prayerful participation, encounter with scripture, understanding of the liturgical year, progressive pupil leadership and the school's Catholic mission.

Evidence may include pupil and staff voice, observation, planning records, examples of pupil preparation, reflection after celebrations, feedback from parents and clergy, and governor monitoring. Findings will identify strengths and areas for development and will inform the Annual Plan of Provision, staff formation and future planning.

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the Governing Body's regular cycle of policy review and sooner if there are significant changes to diocesan, national or Church guidance.