



Holy Cross Catholic MAC

Prayer and Worship Policy

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| Responsible for policy | Marina Kelly |
| Date of policy | March 2021 |
| Date approved by HCC MAC Board | 31 March 2021 |
| Date of policy review | March 2024 |

[Please amend the section on Collective Worship to reflect the current practice for your school]

Achieving together in faith



Prayer and Worship Policy

Introduction

The **Mission** of *Holy Cross Catholic Multi Academy Company* (the '**MAC**') is:

Our school communities are united as the family of God to provide an outstanding Catholic education for all our pupils. With Christ at the centre of all we do, we will inspire every child to be the best person they can be by developing their God-given gifts and talents.

The main aims of the MAC are:

High aspirations for all

Outstanding education - creating an ethos of collective responsibility, through which the MAC will promote achievement and improve pupil performance

Living out Gospel values instilling a *Catholic ethos* in all our schools, with reconciliation and peace at the heart of all we do

Young people – developing our young people to be resilient and to make positive contributions to their parishes and our diverse and ever-changing communities

Community - strengthening and nurturing the Catholic life of our schools

Realising talent - developing pupils, staff and all other members of our academy for the benefit of the *Holy Cross* community and society generally

Optimising resources - realising best value by sharing assets, gaining economies of scale and making the most of what we have

Standards - maintaining the highest quality of Catholic education by ensuring accountability at all levels

Service to God - serving others in our school and local communities and in national and international communities in need.

Our schools are bound together by our motto:

Achieving together in faith

Rationale

Prayer and worship celebrates God's presence in our MAC community and our lives and leads us on the way to eternal salvation.

It is about 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 with our creator, made possible through the saving work and example of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh to enlighten all, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, *who opens the eyes of the mind and makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth.*¹

Aims

The MAC aims, in its schools, to help pupils to grow in their Faith in accordance with the doctrine, teachings and traditions of the Catholic Church. The Mac aims to encourage all pupils in its care to develop a personal relationship with God through prayer. Our schools are worshipping communities.

Through collective worship MAC schools aim to provide opportunities for all pupils and staff:

- to *contemplate* the mystery of God, based around the major Feasts of the church
- to *reflect* on spiritual and moral issues
- to *explore* personal beliefs
- to *respond* to and to celebrate life as a gift from God
- to *experience* a sense of belonging and to develop community spirit
- to *develop* a common Catholic 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, with real, active and reverent participation both in school and in their own parishes
- to *take time out* 'to wonder at', 'to come to terms with' and 'to give worth to.'
- to find *role models* among the Saints, particularly those whose sainthood emanates from their actions as young people
- to *experience* the benefits of moments of silence and silent prayer

¹ *Dei Verbum* – the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Vatican II 1965

Collective Worship

[Please amend the following list to reflect practice in your school]

Collective Worship in Holy Cross Catholic MAC schools is practised in various ways:

- Whole school liturgies and other acts of public Worship
- Stations of the Cross during Lent
- Services of reconciliation followed by individual confession.
- Remembrance assemblies.
- Year group or key stage acts of Worship
- Mass at the end of each term and on Feast Days and other occasions.
- Classroom prayers throughout the school day, including the Angelus before lunch and a class prayer at the end of the day.
- Form/class group collective worship in the Chapel or Parish Church or other suitable place
- Staff collective prayer each morning
- All staff meetings begin with prayer
- Every staff INSET day begins with Mass
- Every lesson across every subject begins with a short prayer

Leading Worship

Any member of the teaching staff in a school may be asked to take part in, or to plan and/or lead collective worship. Pupils are to be taught and encouraged to plan and lead collective worship appropriate to their age.

Planning and Content of Worship

Collective worship is planned to follow the structure of the liturgical seasons of the Church's year, the Rites of the Church where appropriate, the RE programme, feast days and other significant dates (e.g. School Patron Saint's Feast day). Pupils are taught that collective worship and liturgy are the foundation of our faith and its purposes is our sanctification – that "in Christ the perfect achievement of our reconciliation came forth and the fullness of divine worship was given to us".² A variety of prayer and worship styles are used which are appropriate to the age, stage of development and the occasion. Parents and parishioners are invited to participate in some celebrations.

² *Sacrosanctum Concilium* - The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Vatican II 1963

Prayer

Helping pupils to pray is a fostering of a relationship with God. We support pupils on their journey in faith. Pupils are given experience of personal prayer by being encouraged to speak in their own way to God, and of communal prayer by being introduced gradually to formal words for prayer at the appropriate level.

We celebrate our relationship with God throughout the school day, therefore prayer and “sacred silence” are not confined to acts of collective worship. Throughout the RE programme and time with the class teacher, prayer builds upon the pupils’ natural spontaneous expressions of joy, wonder, awe, concern, thanks, sorrow, sadness, anger, fear and disappointment, evoked through their growing awareness of themselves, others and the world around them. We are conscious of children’s need for expression through speech, song, movement, art, writing and silence. We are aware of the importance of giving the pupils a focus for prayer in each classroom and whenever acts of worship are held.

Staff Prayer

Staff pray together at meetings and briefings and Governors and Directors pray together at their meetings, thus, offering the whole enterprise into the hands of God. It is an expectation in our schools that teaching and classroom support staff are present at, and participate in all acts of collective worship to ensure that they are fully part of the school worship community and can actively support students in their prayer and faith journeys. A planned series of staff INSETs happen termly to develop staff in their understanding of the rôle and purpose of prayer and collective worship and the liturgies of the Church, and the resourcing and facilitation of them.

Legal Requirements

It is a legal requirement that there is a daily act of worship offered for all children. Our schools have a very strong tradition of being fully inclusive, having respect for the faith and beliefs of all in our schools.

Collective worship and assembly are distinct activities. 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 Collective Worship and its facilitation lies with the Head Teacher and this will be delegated to the appropriate staff in school, which may include: the Person in Charge of Catholic Life/Religious Education lead; the School Chaplain; Heads of Year/Key Stage leads and site support teams.

Parents and Parish

The Catholic ethos of our schools is rooted in the values of a Christ-centred life. To ensure we live out these beliefs we support children in developing an understanding of their role as Catholics within a wider faith community.

At the baptism of their children, parents are prayed for as ‘the first teachers of their children in the ways of faith’ that they might be ‘the best of teachers’. Parents are recognised as the primary educators of their children and they have a key role in creating a family atmosphere founded on love and respect for God and their neighbour, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered.

The family is the first school of the social virtues and parents have a responsibility to encourage children in the development of their catholic faith. Parents are expected to set a good example and support their children in their faith development by:

- providing opportunities to pray together as a family and experience their faith in their family setting and personal relationships;
- teaching their children about their faith informally at home and, more formally, through their school and church setting;
- ensuring that children understand how to express their faith through prayer, devotions and participation in the sacraments;
- supporting the school’s preparation of their children for the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confirmation;
- ensuring that their children understand how to apply what they have experienced and learnt about their faith to how they live their daily lives.

All parents/carers have a right to withdraw their children from collective worship

It should be noted that it is difficult to manage withdrawal from collective worship in totality in our schools as collective worship can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single act of worship for all children, or separate acts of worship in school groups or individuals. It should also be noted that prayer will not be confined to acts of collective worship. Our preference for dealing with withdrawal is to encourage presence, without participation, during collective worship. Whilst we respect parental wishes, we would also encourage discussions of any individual concerns regarding collective worship to avoid any student feeling excluded.

Collective Worship and Assemblies

The format for Collective Worship and Assemblies for our schools will consist of the following stages and will always begin and end with the **Sign of the Cross**

- **Gather** – how we come together, the setting, the environment (quiet reflective music, lighted candles, icons etc.)
- **Proclaim** – every liturgy will centre around at least one text from the Bible, with the reading of the day being the first source. The Word of God will be proclaimed from a bible.

- **Respond** – The response to the Word may lead into a time of ritual action or communal prayer. The ritual action may vary (dance, music, drama, art, poetry etc.) We place our needs before God (intercessory prayers)
- **Go Forth** – Giving the children something to hold on to from the experience of the liturgy that they can take into their daily lives.

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be shared with staff and Governors and will be reviewed at least every three years.

Appendix 1 - Information on Prayer

Why is prayer necessary?

Prayer is the foundation of Christian Life. Prayer is communication or communion with God. Through prayer 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)! Everything is possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it."³ 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 speak to the Lord, giving him praise and adoration, thanking him for the many gifts he has given to us and asking him for our needs. A third step is to be silent so that the Lord himself can guide the direction of our hearts.

How do we Pray? The best prayers come from the heart and may be improvised in our own words, times of meditation, may be taken from books of prayer or the psalms, or may be 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 to 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 and 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 express to him our gratitude, praise, love and adoration.

We can foster the children's life of prayer by helping them become aware of God's presence in their lives and his love for them, and by leading them to respond to him in a manner appropriate to their age.

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

³ The Gospel of St Mark, Chapter 14.

beyond simply 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, some of which are:

Prayers of Silence: To help pupils to participate in prayerful silence and meditation, 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, a religious symbol or by giving them guidance about what to think: "Let's think about..."

Spontaneous Prayer: Once we have begun, it is often difficult to stop children from praying spontaneously. They 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. We should 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 in their spontaneous prayer.

Praying through gesture or action: 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, hand gestures, processions etc.

Formal/Traditional Prayers: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them".⁴ As the children move through school they will be taught and introduced to the commonly used prayers and Rites of the Church so that they are able to join in and participate in parish celebrations of Holy Mass, the Daily Prayer of the Church (the Office) and other devotions. 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.

Praying through Music and Song: Listening to reflective music can create an atmosphere conducive to prayer and reflection. The singing of hymns and psalms can be both reflective and joyful. "Address...one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart."⁵ "He who sings prays twice."⁶

In our schools, appropriate reflective music and singing are both used to facilitate prayer and as integral parts of acts of collective worship.

⁴ Gospel of St Matthew, Chapter 18

⁵ St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 5

⁶ St Augustine of Hippo

As a rough guide, an act of collective worship with children (other than a Rite of the Church) should in the early years last about one minute for each year of the child's life – e.g. 5 minutes for Reception/Year 1 children.