St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Guildford

The Way, The Truth, The Life

THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON
EDUCATION SERVICE

# St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School

# Prayer and Liturgy Policy

***I am the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6)***

*Our mission at St. Joseph's is to offer the community an encounter with the living God - Jesus Christ: The Way, The Truth, The Life. Our vision is to capture hearts to follow His way, enlighten minds to seek His truth and awaken souls to embrace His life. We believe in an education for the whole child - heart, mind and soul.*

St. Joseph's, through our mission, we understand that prayer and worship is central to all we do within our school community.

This prayer and liturgy policy has been approved and adopted by the governing body in November 2025 and will be reviewed in November 2027.

Signed by the Chair of Governors(LGC)

Signed by the Headteacher

1. **The context of this prayer and liturgy policy**

'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.' (Marcus Stock (2012), *Christ at the Centre*, Catholic Truth Society, 23.)

2. **Statement of requirement**

The law requires all maintained Catholic schools to provide an act of daily collective worship (prayer and liturgy) for all pupils, including those in the sixth form (Section 70, 1988 Education Act) that is in accordance with the rites, practices, disciplines, and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, schedule 20; Instrument of Government, clause 2). Academies in England are required by their funding agreement and Articles of Association to comply with similar requirements (*The Mainstream Academy and Free School: Supplemental Funding Agreement*, December 2020; *Model Articles for Catholic Academies*, February 2019).
The law requires all maintained schools to recognise and respect that parents have the legal right to withdraw their children up to the age of 16 from prayer and liturgy (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, s.71(1A)).

Sixth-form pupils can choose to withdraw themselves from prayer and liturgy (School Standards and Framework Act 1998, s.71(1B)). The school's provision for prayer and liturgy will fulfil pupils' entitlement to experience the range of liturgical treasures of the Church, including a shared repertoire of prayers and liturgical music with which pupils in the school will be familiar.

Prayer and liturgy are not designated curriculum time. In the context of the Catholic school, this means that times of prayer and liturgy are not considered to be part of the allocation of curriculum time for Religious Education.

3. **Responsibility**

**(a) Governance**

The governors, as guardians of the Catholic school's life and mission, have a responsibility to ensure that:

- prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*
- there is a named person(s) who is responsible for prayer and liturgy in the school (the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator)
- the prayer and liturgy policy is updated regularly and shared with all stakeholders
- there is a budget for prayer and liturgy that reflects its centrality to the life of a Catholic school.

**(b) Headteacher**

The Headteacher, as the spiritual leader of the school as a Catholic community, ensures that:

- prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*
- they work in partnership with the leader(s) for prayer and liturgy
- those responsible for prayer and liturgy in the school have been given appropriate training and formation to ensure that all guidance is followed and adhered to
- there are suitable resources for prayer and liturgy in the school.

**(c) Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator**

Those responsible for prayer and liturgy ensure that:

- prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the school and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*
- there is an Annual Plan of Provision for prayer and liturgy across the school year which identifies liturgical seasons and key celebrations, as well as opportunities for the celebration of the Sacraments
- there is daily planned prayer for all pupils, appropriate to age and ability, as outlined in the *Prayer and Liturgy Directory*
- pupils are supported in their liturgical formation to take an active role in the planning, preparation, and delivery of prayer and liturgy according to their age and capacity, and in a manner which facilitates their progressive participation
- resources to support the planning of prayer and liturgy are appropriate and readily available to staff and pupils
- induction on prayer and liturgy takes place for new members of staff as required
- staff have access to effective training and formation opportunities
- monitoring and evaluation of prayer and liturgy take place regularly and feed back into planning for future liturgies
- monitoring of prayer and liturgy is reported to the Headteacher and governing body to support whole-school development and the Catholic life of the school
- there is collaboration with local clergy and parishes
- liaison with the Diocesan Education Service and others is maintained to ensure they keep updated with best practice.

4. **Overview of prayer and liturgy provision**

At St. Joseph's, prayer holds deep significance as a way of nurturing a personal relationship with Jesus. The phrase "Lifting hearts and minds to God" emphasizes the importance of dedicating time to communicate with Jesus, both by speaking to Him and listening to His voice in our lives. Prayer is not just a ritual, but a meaningful interaction where young people are invited to reflect, grow spiritually, and deepen their love for Jesus. This relationship is further strengthened through liturgical celebrations throughout the school year.

As students mature through their journey at St. Joseph's, we hope and work hard that their prayer life evolves. Moving from simple expressions of faith to a deeper understanding and intimacy with God, their journey is marked by the continuous development of their spiritual relationship. Prayer becomes an integral part of their lives, allowing them to hear God's guidance and carry His wisdom into their everyday actions. Ultimately, prayer is not only an expression of love for Jesus, but a way of actively inviting His presence into our hearts, shaping our lives with His grace and wisdom.

**Daily Prayer**

Prayer is woven throughout our daily timetable to ensure that our school community remains connected to God at all times.

- **Start of Day:** The school day begins with a collective prayer and a reflection on the Mission.
- **Lunchtime:** Grace is said before meals to remind us of the blessings we receive.
- **End of Day:** The day concludes with the Our Father, and during the months of October and May, the Hail Mary is also recited.

**Weekly Timetable of Worship**

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| Monday | **Gospel Celebration of the Word**<br>Whole school worship, led by the Headteacher (or Deputy), exploring the upcoming weekend's Gospel and challenging the children to respond to a value or virtue that can be perceived from the scripture. Children focus on this "Tool of St Joseph" throughout their week in school. Resources are shared with parents (via the Headteacher's Blog) to encourage parents to celebrate the Gospel at home with their children. |
| Tuesday | **Prayer Formation**<br>A class-based opportunity to gather together and begin exploring the value or virtue of the week, through a prayer tradition, led by the Class Teacher. Throughout the year, children are introduced and progress through a range of formal, traditional, creative and free prayer experiences and encouraged to seek opportunities to live out the values and virtues of the faith. |
| Wednesday | **Prayer Enrichment**<br>Led by the Class Teacher. This is an opportunity for pupils and staff to embed and develop the centrality of prayer in their daily lives, enriched by the Celebrate lens of the Day by Day planning. |
| Thursday | **Child-led Celebration of the Word**<br>Working with our school Chaplaincy provision, children prepare and lead a Celebration of the Word for their class. They follow the format: Gather, Listen, Respond & Mission to structure their time together. The outcome of the week's focus on a "Tool of St Joseph" is then recorded in the class worship book, showing how we have grown closer to Jesus through our weekly theme. Children also evaluate the impact of their experience each week to help us as a community grow stronger and more faithful in our ministry. |
| Friday | **Class Celebration of the Word**<br>Each class throughout the year will create their own celebration of the Word, based on the weekly Gospel theme and share their reflections and understanding with the school and parents. This is shown through the creative medium of drama, song, choral readings and prayer. |

**Liturgical Celebrations**

At St. Joseph's liturgy and worship provide opportunities for all members of the community(children, adults, parents, and parishioners) to come together in faith. These celebrations reflect the Church's liturgical calendar, ensuring that daily scripture readings correspond to the relevant liturgical season.

- **Advent and Lent:** These seasons of preparation for Christmas and Easter are given special attention. Activities such as fundraising for charitable causes, prayer groups, and reflective sessions are organized for the children, with volunteer staff leading these initiatives. Assemblies and prayers at these times reflect the themes of these seasons. Newsletters are sent home to inform parents about the importance of the seasons and encourage participation.

- **Christmas:** Infant and Junior nativities and carol concerts celebrate the birth of Christ, allowing children to share the story of the nativity with the school and the wider community.

- **Holy Week:** In the final week of the Spring Term, preparations for Easter include focusing on the key events of Holy Week, with class prayers and reflections on Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, and Good Friday. The week culminates with the 'Way of the Cross,' where parents and parishioners are invited to witness the 'Passion Play,' with each class meditating on different aspects of Holy Week.

- **New Life Liturgy:** Following Easter, a New Life Liturgy celebrates the resurrection. This special assembly, organised by the Reception class, highlights the importance of new life in Christ and marks the joy of the Easter season.

**Holy Days of Obligation**

Holy Days of Obligation are marked with a Mass or Liturgy led by different year groups. These are held either in the parish church of St. Mary's or within the school hall, ensuring that the entire community comes together to celebrate the faith.

**Patronal Feast Day**

St. Joseph's Feast Day is a special occasion marked with a Mass where each class is represented, followed by various activities and celebrations throughout the day. This is a joyful event where the whole school comes together in honour of our Patron Saint.

**Year Group Masses and Adoration**

Throughout the year, year groups are invited to join Adoration and then the Parish Mass.

**Reconciliation**

Reconciliation services are offered to Year 6 (Advent) and Year 5 (Lent), led by parish priests. These services provide an opportunity for individual confession. For children who have not yet received their First Holy Communion, a time for reflection and prayer is provided, encouraging spiritual growth and the development of a closer relationship with God.

**Reflection Day**

In the final term, Year 6 students participate in a day retreat. This day is a time for reflection and spiritual preparation, particularly as it relates to their upcoming Leavers' Mass. The day involves

activities such as drama, prayer writing, crafts, and music, all aimed at helping the children reflect on their time at St. Joseph's and prepare for the next stage of their spiritual journey.

**Other Opportunities for Prayer**

In addition to the scheduled prayer times, children are offered a variety of prayer opportunities throughout the day:

- **Lunchtime Prayer Activities**: Our Parish Chaplain runs prayer groups on Tuesday lunchtime to support children in their prayer journey.
- **Chaplain Support**: A lunchtime chaplain is available to offer guidance and support, particularly in the areas of relationships and behaviour.
- **Seasonal and Special Prayers**: During important times of the year, such as November for Remembrance or during Marian months (October and May), additional prayer opportunities are provided. Special prayers such as the Rosary, Bible stories, and praise and worship are incorporated into the school's routine.

These initiatives ensure that prayer remains a central and meaningful part of life at St. Joseph's, fostering a community that is rooted in faith, love, and service to one another.

**5. Our school context**

The implementation of Liturgical norms and practice in the school draws also from the principles from the Directory of Masses with children.

**a. Scripture**

Scripture readings will be taken from the lectionary (ESVCE). The Revised New Jerusalem Bible or Catholic Good News Bible. Liturgical readings will normally be proclaimed from the lectionary or well-bound bible. However, printed copies, appropriately presented, may be used as a reasonable adjustment for children or adults who need to annotate the text or present it in another format.

**b. Core Structure for Liturgies of the Word**

These will follow the established pattern of Gather, Listen, Response, Mission.

**c. Posture and gesture**

The postures and gestures proper to the assembly in the liturgical books will be used, in particular, making the sign of the cross, standing for the Gospel and standing or kneeling for the Eucharistic Prayer.

**d. Music.**

Whole school liturgies will include a gathering hymn. The Ordinary of the Mass will be sung (Gloria, Holy Holy, Amen, Lamb of God). The school community works with the School Singing Programme to develop its repertoire. Music is chosen following the principles outlined in Sing to the Lord, in particular paying attention to a judgement which is liturgical, pastoral and musical.

**e. Ministries**

Liturgical ministries are exercised by those reborn by water and the Holy Spirit and who are in sacramental communion with the Catholic Church. Such ministries include reading of scripture, bidding prayers, presentation of the gifts and serving. As these flow from the dignity of baptism they are open to children who have not yet been admitted to the Eucharist, according to their age and maturity. All may participate in the communal actions of the liturgy, according to their conscience and the wishes of their families. Other opportunities to serve the school community will be afforded to those who are not able to undertake liturgical ministries.

6. **Resourcing**

Prayer and liturgy are central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school, and this is reflected in the annual budget allocation and available resources, including staff time, chaplaincy provision, and dedicated spaces for prayer and liturgy. The Catholic character of the school is reflected in religious artefacts and images on display throughout the building. Dedicated spaces for prayer and liturgy will be furnished and maintained as such, and updated to reflect the Church's liturgical season. Staff training and formation costs will be funded separately to ensure that all staff are able to fulfil their responsibility to contribute to the prayer and liturgical life of the school.

7. **Training and formation**

All new staff will be supported during induction and beyond, so that they fully understand the responsibility they carry within their individual role for leading prayer and liturgy in the school. Any individual training needs will be identified and addressed through training and formation. There will also be the opportunity for whole-staff professional development at least once a year, so that all staff understand the importance of prayer and liturgy and relevant staff are well supported to lead as required.

8. **Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy will take place regularly, and at least annually, and involve all key stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, clergy, and governors. Areas for development will be identified and issues raised will be actioned and evidenced as appropriate.

9. **Review**

This policy is reviewed annually with input and direction from stakeholders at Diocesan, Trust and Local Governance levels, with feedback and consultation with children. Staff and parents are at the forefront of our strategic decision making.