



Catholic Life and Mission Policy

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Introduction

Policy Review

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Rational

In the life and faith of Saint Mary's RC Primary Academy, Jesus Christ is at the centre. Religious Education plays a vital and central part, and it is the foundation of all of our teachings. Religious Education is indeed a core subject, but it is also the foundation of the entire educational process at Saint Mary's. Our Catholic beliefs and values underpin and guide every aspect of our school life. By promoting the Gospel values and giving praise and reverence to God, we live out our faith in a missionary way and hope that every person within our community will encounter God's love. This is achieved through prayer and liturgy, assemblies, lessons, experiences, roles and responsibilities throughout the school and our commitment to those in need.

Mission Statement

'United in Christ, One Family in God's Heart.'



Our mission is based on our belief that every pupil is a promise and a possibility, created with unique gifts and talents by our loving God. Guided by our shared faith in Christ and united as one family in God's heart, we are committed to fostering a nurturing environment where every child can grow spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and physically. We strive to:

- Cultivate Faith: Encourage a deep, personal relationship with Christ, instilling Christian values and principles in every aspect of our pupils' lives.
- Promote Excellence: Inspire a love of learning and a commitment to academic excellence, encouraging each pupil to reach their fullest potential.
- Build Community: Foster a sense of belonging and unity, where every individual is valued and supported as part of our school family.
- Empower Leadership: Develop future leaders who are compassionate, confident, and committed to making a positive impact in their communities and the world.
- Embrace Diversity: Celebrate the unique God-given gifts and backgrounds of all our pupils, promoting an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive.

Together, as one family in God's heart, we are dedicated to nurturing the **promise and possibility** within each student, helping them to shine as beacons of hope and love in the world.

The Spiritual Life of the School

We aim to develop the spiritual life of everyone within our community, regardless of their personal beliefs. We provide spiritual development for pupils and staff alike and invite our families to develop spiritually in connection with the school and parish. We do this by:

- Providing children with the skills to develop their own prayer life as well as opportunities to pray both routinely and spontaneously.
- Through scripture, music, video and role play.
- Developing sacred spaces within our school environment – both the classroom and wider school – and by promoting the Catholicity of our school through displays (e.g. the inclusion of scripture, celebrating the liturgical year etc.)
- Ensuring new staff (both ECTs and more experience colleagues new to Catholic schools) receive the appropriate training from the Diocese.
- Training members of the Chaplaincy team to take the lead in organising and leading prayer and liturgy.
- Travelling Nativity families during Advent.
- Class scrapbooks for evidencing their class Celebrations of the word, prayer life and responses to 'Big Questions'.
- Whole school Masses.
- Opportunities for Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Opportunities for Reconciliation.
- Fundraising.
- Themed prayer groups throughout the year with our Lay Chaplain (e.g. Rosary Club, Lent and Advent prayer groups).
- Catholic Life Policy.

Caring and meeting the pastoral, spiritual, moral and social needs of the children are met by:

- Providing good role models who guide our pupils in walking in Jesus' footsteps throughout their time at our school and beyond.
- Maintaining, working with and developing successful links with the home, parish, diocese, Catholic Multi-Academy trust, local community and the wider world.

Prayer

The prayer life of Saint Mary's is an integral part of our day. It is a means of expressing, fostering and nurturing faith. We aim to support our pupils in recognising that they can turn to God in prayer whenever they choose, wherever they are and however they might be feeling. As well as communal opportunities to pray, our community is encouraged to be still and listen to God. We aim to teach and develop a variety of prayer methods to the children such as:

- Teaching the traditional prayers of the Church alongside any new prayers.
- Allowing the children to develop their spiritual awareness by giving them the skills to create asking, thanksgiving, adoration and sorry prayers.
- Through the reading of the Gospels and the Holy Bible.
- Through the teaching of a variety of traditional hymns and contemporary worship songs.
- Through the inclusion of drama, music and video within prayer and liturgy, where appropriate.
- Through Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

At Saint Mary's, we say set prayers at the beginning of the school day, before lunch, after lunch and at the end of the school day.

Sacred Spaces

We have various sacred spaces around school which encourage spontaneous personal prayer. Many of these are interactive and link directly either with the liturgical year or with current Diocesan or Churchwide themes and focuses.

Each classroom in the school also promotes a prayerful environment by each having a sacred space. These are required to:

- Be dressed using the correct liturgically coloured cloth which acts as a visual reminder for the pupils and supports their developing liturgical awareness.
- Display an open Bible, with appropriately chosen scripture (perhaps linked to their Come and See learning or diocesan Word of the Week).
- Include a candle and cross/crucifix (unless the crucifix is hung on the wall above/immediately nearby).
- Include an interactive or creative element where possible.

Collective Worship

Collective Worship (Prayer and Liturgy) is provided at Saint Mary's in various ways throughout the week (see Collective Worship Policy).

Each of these are always linked to a Catholic theme, such as the Sunday gospel, our Gospel values, our virtues or the Statements to Live By.

Our Chaplaincy Team work on a rota basis with our Lay Chaplain to plan a weekly child-led Celebration of the word, which they then lead the following Monday with a member of staff supporting them.

All children get an opportunity to plan and lead Celebrations of the word for their class and these are shared on a Wednesday morning. The theme of these is taken from the diocesan Word of the Week. Planning takes many forms; however, these are the essential elements, we:

- Use the correct structure: Gather - Word - Response – Mission.
- Begin by choosing relevant scripture linked to our theme.
- Use the most recent Celebration of the word planning resources shared on 'Chaplaincy.Space' (our CMAT Chaplaincy resource).
- Consider our sense experiences through the Celebration of the word.
- Make liturgically appropriate choices when setting up our focus table, and when choosing hymns, prayer and actions.

Retreats

At Saint Mary's, we understand the importance of communal worship and understand the very special opportunity for spiritual reflection and growth which a retreat can offer. Retreats are planned into our school calendar and are led by our CMAT Chaplaincy Team including our own Lay Chaplain, our Lead Lay Chaplain and the Director of Chaplaincy.

The Mass

The celebration of Holy Mass is central to our Catholic faith. In school our Masses are carefully planned in advance in careful consideration with our parish priest, Fr Dominic O'Connor. Mass is celebrated in Church at least half termly, and all staff and children attend from Year 1 to Year 6. We always aim to celebrate Holy Days of Obligation with Mass, although when this is not possible, we offer a Celebration of the word in school instead. As EYFS do not join us yet in church for Mass, our Lay Chaplain will arrange a Celebration of the word for our youngest pupils which their class teacher leads when the rest of the school are attending Mass in church for Holy Days and Feast Days. We firmly believe in the importance of celebrating the Mass by:

- Providing opportunities for School Masses throughout the academic year.
- Celebrating Holy Mass on Feast Days and Holy days of Obligation.
- Celebrating Mass at the key times of the school year each new term and a leavers Mass for Year 6.
- By teaching the structure of the Mass to the children.
- By practicing responses and hymns in preparation for Mass.
- By inviting pupils to help in Mass (e.g. by welcoming, reading, taking up the offertory or by altar serving).

The Liturgical Year

Seasonality has a profound effect on the day-to-day life at Saint Mary's. Using the Liturgical year as a framework, we draw on the wealth of the whole church to teach our children who God is and what they are. Through our environment and prayer life, the seasonality of the church is experienced by all members of our community. For example, Devotion to Our Lady (as Mother of Jesus and to us, and as patron saint of our school) is encouraged throughout the year, but especially during the months of May and October. Our Lay Chaplain offers a Rosary club during these months, to which pupils and staff are invited. Prayers or remembrance are encouraged in November. The Advent and the Christmas season is observed and celebrated through the Come and See programme, as well as through the use of the CAFOD advent calendar in classrooms, travelling cribs in EYFS, Advent Wreaths around school, KS1 Nativities and KS2 carol concerts. After the Christmas Holidays, the season is continued up to its official ending with a celebration of Mass for Epiphany. Lent preparations take place through break time prayer groups, opportunities for reconciliation and a whole-school Stations of the Cross.

Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we strive to foster a deeper understanding of the joy that comes from both forgiving and being forgiven, the ongoing development of conscience, and God's boundless mercy. We encourage our children to embrace and live by the values of this Sacrament, and the relationships within the school community should reflect these ideals. During Advent and Lent, our children are offered the opportunity to receive the Sacrament at school.

Charitable Giving

We aim to bring about an awareness of the needs of others and make links to the call to do this through scripture and through Catholic Social Teaching. During Advent 1, our pupils and community are encouraged to bring in food for those less fortunate leading up to our Harvest Festival celebrations. The food is taken to a local food bank. We support the work of CAFOD in different ways, though often through the Big Lent Walk. We also fundraise annually for Macmillan Cancer Care, Children in Need and a local charity called Centrepont Outreach in Boston. It is our aim that our whole school ethos is one that will foster and nurture a generous giving of self which will be lived out by all members of our school community, both during their direct time within our school and long after they move on.

The Bishop's Spiritual Themes

During the year 2018, Bishop Patrick encouraged all schools to promote his three spiritual themes of; Encounter, Discipleship and Missionary Discipleship. We display these around school and refer to these within our Celebrations of the word and Religious Education lessons. We strive to support our pupils and staff to engage fully with these themes so that each might grow in their personal relationship with God.

Parental Involvement

Parents are the first educators of their children and therefore, we believe that if our Catholic ethos is to be effective, we must at each stage seek to involve parents and give them the confidence to play their part in the formation of their children.

Parents are their children's primary educators, and we believe that for our Catholic ethos to be truly effective, it is essential to engage parents at every stage. We aim to empower them with the confidence to actively participate in their children's formation. We aim to involve parents by:

- Inviting them in for prayer and liturgies when possible.
- Inviting them to join us in the celebration of Holy Mass and other liturgies and Celebrations of the word at different times during the school year.
- They are invited to parent meetings when Religious Education is discussed e.g. Parents Evenings twice a year and for RSHE information meetings.
- Inviting them to special celebrations such as Nativities and Carol Services.
- They are encouraged to participate with their children during Advent when the 'Travelling Cribs' are sent home in EYFS and these encourage a time of sharing and reflection.
- They are encouraged to participate with their children during Advent and Lent when our 'Advent/Lent at Home' Celebration of the words, made by our Lay Chaplain, are shared with families.
- They are given information through the school website which also has a direct link to the Parish website.
- Inviting them to share their views through meetings and questionnaires.
- Inviting them, and all visitors to our school, to add their own prayer intentions to our prayer tree in the main reception area.

Equality Statement

We have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010, in respect of safeguarding and in respect of pupils with special educational needs (SEN).

The curriculum is inclusive and facilitates the needs of all children regardless of their age, size, mobility, gender, ethnicity and ability. Making Catholic Life and Mission, Collective Worship and Religious Education inclusive for all is of upmost importance and we will be sharing the guidance for inclusive practice for pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, found within the upcoming Prayer and Liturgy Directory, with all of our staff to support them with this moving forward too.