



Prayer and Liturgy Policy

July 2025



Principles of the Prayer and Liturgy Directory and policy

At the heart of Catholic education lies the call to worship God in spirit and truth. This policy outlines the principles and expectations for the celebration of public and communal prayer within our Multi Academy community, ensuring that all liturgical practice is rooted in the glorification of God and the sanctification of His people.

Liturgical prayer, as a public act of worship, must always be God-centred, directing praise and supplication to the Holy Trinity - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It serves as a reminder of our shared baptismal calling, drawing all participants into a deeper understanding of the sacramental life and our identity as members of the Church.

Furthermore, the liturgy carries a future orientation, offering a source of hope and guidance on our continuing journey of faith. When celebrated with the presence of a priest, it provides a powerful witness to the sacred nature of worship and the priest's unique role within it. It is essential that pupils have regular opportunities to experience and appreciate the richness of the Church's liturgical life, fostering reverence, understanding, and active participation in the prayer life of the Christian community.

The Word of God.

In every school within the St. John Paul II Multi Academy Company, the celebration of the liturgy holds a place of profound significance. It not only gives glory to God but also forms the moral and spiritual foundation of the school community, shaping the character and conscience of pupils in light of the Gospel.

The proclamation of Sacred Scripture, especially the Word of God, must be approached with great care, reverence, and intentional preparation. Scripture is not merely to be read, but actively proclaimed. Through this proclamation, the school community is invited into a living encounter with Christ and a deeper response to God's presence and call.

The Gospel, as the high point of the Liturgy of the Word, must be given pride of place. Its proclamation should be marked by signs of respect, including the community standing and the use of the Sign of the Cross. This practice underscores the reverence due to the Gospel and reinforces its significance in the life of faith.

Effective liturgical preparation is essential. Staff members, chaplains, or lay liturgical leaders should guide pupils through the meaning and context of the Scripture prior to its proclamation, fostering both understanding and active engagement. Pupils proclaiming the Word should be supported and encouraged to practice, enabling them to do so with confidence and clarity.

While the primary mode of engaging with Scripture in the liturgy is listening, it is recognised that, within a school setting, additional support may be appropriate. The use of visual aids - such as displaying the text on a screen - can enhance pupils' engagement by enabling them to see and hear the Word of God simultaneously. This approach, when used appropriately, complements the auditory proclamation and aids comprehension, particularly for younger pupils or those with additional learning needs.

In all cases, the dignity of the Word of God must be upheld, ensuring that its proclamation is treated as a sacred act and a central moment of the school's liturgical life.

The Role of Leadership in Faith

- The Head teacher ensures prayer, celebration of the Word and liturgy remain central to school life.
- **Leading by example:** Leadership sets the tone for faith in school life.
- Leaders must model faith: lead in prayer and liturgy.
- **Unity in celebration:** During Mass, staff should act as one body, modelling participation for pupils.

Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator (PLC):

- A designated individual should oversee prayer and liturgical activities, ensuring organisation, leadership, monitoring, and evaluation.

All Staff Responsibilities:

- Every staff member contributes to the school's spiritual life. Their role is to help teach pupils how to pray meaningfully. Support the PLC in organising and preparing prayer.

Staff Training and Formation

- All staff involved in prayer and liturgy must receive appropriate training.

Formation

To foster a spiritually rich environment rooted in the Catholic tradition, formation in prayer and liturgy is essential for all members of the St. John Paul II Multi Academy Company. This formation nurtures both personal spiritual growth and the ability to participate meaningfully in the communal life of worship.

For All Pupils

All pupils must be given regular opportunities to grow in their understanding and experience of liturgical prayer. This includes formation in:

- The celebration of the Mass
- Celebrations of the Word
- Personal and communal prayer
- The role of music in prayer and liturgy

These elements should be integrated into the wider curriculum and school life, ensuring pupils are supported in developing a lifelong habit of prayer and participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

For Particular Pupil Groups

Pupils entrusted with specific liturgical roles require targeted formation and support. This includes:

- **Ministers of the Word** – trained in proclaiming Scripture with reverence and clarity
- **Readers of the Prayer of the Faithful** – supported in composing and reading prayers with confidence
- **Sacristians** – guided in preparing the sacred space and understanding liturgical items
- **Prayer Preparers** – assisted in creating prayer moments that are meaningful, theologically sound, and appropriate for their setting

For All Staff

All staff share responsibility in modelling and supporting the prayer life of the school. As such, formation is necessary in:

- Celebrating the Word
- Leading and participating in prayer
- Understanding and using music effectively in liturgical settings

Particular attention should be given to staff who regularly lead prayer, such as:

- Class teachers
- Form tutors
- Pastoral leaders

For Particular Staff Groups

Some roles require deeper liturgical and theological formation due to their leadership in worship:

- **Music Leads** – to ensure that musical choices support the liturgical calendar and theological themes
- **Prayer and Liturgy Coordinators** – to oversee the planning and quality of school liturgy
- **Ministers of the Eucharist** – to serve reverently and in accordance with Church norms

Formation Delivery Expectations

Formation should be delivered through a range of structured and ongoing opportunities, including:

- Diocesan formation programmes
- Chaplaincy and liturgy team meetings
- Staff CPD sessions and inset days
- RE lessons and form time
- Whole school and year group assemblies
- Prayer and hymn practices before and after liturgical celebrations

Through this shared commitment to formation, our schools will cultivate a culture where prayer and liturgy are not only central to school life but also transformative in the lives of pupils and staff alike.

Liturgy, Celebration of the Word and Prayer

Liturgy- Public worship of the Church which Includes: The **Sacraments** (especially the Eucharist), **Mass, Penance, Liturgy of the Hours** and **Holy Days of Obligation**. Drawn from official Church books (e.g., Roman Missal, Lectionary) Liturgies are Complex structure with precise rules and set forms. Liturgies Involves multiple ministries (priest, readers, musicians, altar servers, etc.) and are celebrated during key Church seasons and holy days. There is an emphasises the communal and sacramental life of the Church.

Celebration of the Word - A structured time to reflect on the Word of God. Which can include reading and reflecting on Scripture, prayers, and possibly symbols or responses. Celebration of the Word is carried out in a four parts—**Gathering, The Word, Responding and Mission**. Celebration of the Word contains elements of both prayer and liturgy. Not a sacrament, but can be very rich in meaning and symbolic action. Allows space for creativity, especially in music, visuals, and reflection. Can be used in a whole school setting or in smaller gatherings.

Prayer: Personal or communal communication with God which may take the form of traditional prayers, **meditation**, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise. In all schools, we pray in the morning, before meals and at other periods of the day provide regular encounters with Christ. We also follow the diocesan guidance regards traditional prayer cycles.

Prayer Life

Times and Seasons of Prayer

- **Planned prayer** - **All pupils** are expected to plan prayer. Not all pupils are expected to lead prayer
- Liturgical seasons and key school moments should be acknowledged.
- Some prayers should be repeated for continuity.
- Both Primary and Secondary settings - The diocesan directive for traditional prayers should be followed
- Prayer should respond to both celebration and sorrow.
- Services should be age-appropriate and well-prepared.

Sacred Spaces and Places of Prayer

- Every classroom and workspace should have a crucifix.
- Primary school classrooms should have a dedicated prayer space.
- Communal areas should reflect a prayerful atmosphere.
- Prayer spaces should accommodate other faiths with respect.
- Chapels should remain sacred and accessible at all times.
- The Blessed Sacrament should be removed during school holidays.

Daily & Weekly Prayer

Primary Schools:

- Daily prayers: morning, before/after lunch, end of day.
- Weekly Gospel-led assembly.
- Pupil-prepared prayer each week.

Secondary Schools:

- Daily prayers
- Weekly pupil-prepared prayers, for all year groups.

Celebration of the Word

Gather: Coming together, making a sign of the cross, potentially lighting a candle and creating a sense of belonging in a community. **The Word**: Engaging with scripture, readings, or passages to evoke thought and conversation. **Respond**: Using God's word as the foundation for deepening thinking and discussion. Reflecting on thoughts and conversations about scripture—the Liturgy of the Word. Not necessarily a theological debate, but a discussion on what the scripture means today, how it resonates with individuals, and what emotions, thoughts, or experiences it brings to mind. *This response may take various forms - art,*

music, drama, or personal reflection to deepen pupil engagement with scripture. **Mission:** Taking action. After encountering the Word and reflecting on it, what follows? What do we carry forward into the world? How does this shape our actions, thoughts, and choices?

Note - Texts should not replace Scripture. Non-scriptural material may supplement but not replace Scripture.

Liturgy

- Liturgy should be shaped by the nature and needs of the school. The school and parish should work together to support one another.
- Pupil leads should be well-prepared for Mass - Practicing readings and ensuring the Word of God is confidently proclaimed
- Texts and scripture should be in full and not paraphrased
- Offertory should be done by those who will receive holy communion
- All Pupils should access readings prior to the Mass
- Guidance for pupils given for every Mass regards communion practices
- Pupils of a different faith should not be asked to read in Mass – If they would like to read, they will volunteer and discussions will take place with the priest
- All pupils and staff are 'invited' to join in prayer
- Monitoring should take place soon after liturgies

Variety and Creativity in Liturgy

- **Sacraments should be celebrated with excellence:** First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation should be deeply meaningful and well-prepared.
- **Be attuned to the liturgical year:** Liturgy should be relevant and reflect the seasons of the Church.
- **Significant liturgies should be reviewed promptly:** Evaluate them quickly to identify strengths and areas for growth.
- **Invest in liturgical development:** Consider variations in Mass settings, hymns, and worship styles to keep liturgy rich and engaging.
- **Balance heritage and modernity:** Honour the tradition of faith while ensuring liturgy speaks to today's generation.

Reconciliation

- Opportunities should be provided during Lent and Advent.
- Communal celebrations should include:
 - Liturgy of the Word
 - Examination of Conscience
 - Individual confession and absolution
- Confession - Non-Catholics should be offered a non-sacramental conversation with a priest.

Music in Liturgy

Music is a powerful way to engage the school community in prayer, lifting hearts and minds to God. It should always support the sacred nature of the liturgy and invite full, active participation from all present.

Singing should be a regular and encouraged part of school worship. A variety of musical styles should be used to reflect the richness of the Church's musical tradition and the diversity of the school community.

While secular music has no place in the Mass, it may be considered in other prayerful contexts, such as assemblies or reflections, where it supports the theme and upholds Christian values.

To support participation and accessibility:

- Hymn practice sessions can help pupils feel more confident and engaged.

Ultimately, all music used in prayer and liturgy should deepen the experience of worship and help direct attention to God.

Copyright Compliance:

- Schools must adhere to ICEL and other copyright regulations for liturgical texts and music.
- Printed music should include copyright notices, verifying coverage under CCLI or other licenses. This is free.

Ritual in Liturgy

- Structured activities reinforce Christ at the heart of all we do.
- Rituals remind us of God's presence and activity in the universe.
- Sacraments are key encounters with God.
- Symbols, such as water, hold deep meaning and should be used meaningfully

Signs and Symbols

- Symbols should be authentic and maintain their function.
- One meaningful symbol is better than many—focus should remain clear.
- Symbols should engage the senses and encourage reflection.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Individual schools are responsible for regularly monitoring and evaluating their prayer and liturgy provision. This includes maintaining and updating the Annual Plan for Provision (APOP) document to track pupil and staff participation, inform school improvement and prepare for external reviews. Effective monitoring ensures that worship remains vibrant, relevant, and aligned with the school's Catholic mission.

Resources and Budget

Schools must allocate sufficient resources and budget to support prayer and liturgical life. This includes investing in sacred artefacts, music, training and appropriate worship spaces. Providing these resources helps create a prayerful environment that nurtures the spiritual growth of pupils and staff alike. All schools should have a named Prayer & Liturgy Co ordinator and an allocated budget.