



ST JOSEPH'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL
BACUP

PRAYER AND LITURGY

Collective Worship Policy

“Jesus is the Centre of our lives”

God wants me to be the best me I can be

Our Mission

Through His teaching we aim to value ourselves and each other as unique and precious individuals created by God; we encourage and develop love and respect for each other and for our world; we strive to promote and deepen our Catholic faith through prayer, work and play; we aim to foster a loving, caring environment in which each child can freely learn and develop to their full potential.

2026–2027

Policy information

Document control	Details
Policy title	Prayer and Liturgy (Collective Worship) Policy
Subject leader	Rachel Birtwistle
Review date	Autumn Term 2028
Audience	Staff, governors, families and other stakeholders

1. Purpose and scope

This policy sets out St Joseph's approach to prayer and liturgy, including the daily provision commonly described in law as collective worship. It applies to governors, leaders, staff, pupils, visitors and partners and provides a consistent framework for prayer in classrooms, groups and the whole school, Celebration of the Word, Mass and other liturgical celebrations.

Prayer and liturgy are integral to Catholic life and mission but are distinct from curriculum Religious Education and from administrative or celebratory assemblies. This policy should be read alongside the school's Catholic Life and Mission, Religious Education, safeguarding, equality and educational visits documents.

2. Catholic foundation and school mission

Prayer and liturgy name and celebrate God's presence in our lives. They are the school community's loving response, in word, silence, symbol, music and action, to God's invitation to relationship through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. They give glory, honour, praise and thanks to God and enable the community to listen, reflect, intercede, repent, celebrate and be sent out to live the Gospel.

The mission that 'Jesus is the Centre of our lives' and the motto, 'God wants me to be the best me I can be', shape a daily rhythm of prayer, care, forgiveness, learning, love and respect. Prayer and liturgy help pupils and adults encounter Christ, participate in the prayer of the Church and grow in spiritual maturity, belonging and service.

3. Terminology and forms of prayer and liturgy

The school uses the language of prayer and liturgy in line with the Catholic Prayer and Liturgy Directory, To love You more dearly. 'Collective worship' remains a useful legal term, while Catholic practice includes a richer range of experiences with different purposes and degrees of formality.

- Prayer: personal or communal relationship with God, expressed through words, silence, gesture, music, Scripture and action.
- Celebration of the Word: a structured gathering centred on the proclamation of Scripture and a response in prayer and mission.
- Liturgy: the official public worship of the Church, including the Eucharist, sacraments, Liturgy of the Hours and other authorised rites.
- Devotions: approved practices such as the Rosary, Stations of the Cross and seasonal traditions that nourish prayer without replacing liturgy.
- Assembly: a gathering for information, recognition or community business; it is not automatically an act of prayer or worship.

4. Legal, canonical and diocesan framework

The governing body ensures that a daily act of collective worship is provided for pupils in accordance with legal requirements and the school's Catholic character. Provision may be for the whole school or appropriate groups and may take place at different points in the day. Prayer and worship are not counted as curriculum RE time.

Prayer and liturgy follow the expectations of the Diocese of Salford, the Catholic Prayer and Liturgy Directory and the liturgical norms of the Church. The headteacher arranges provision on behalf of the governing body, with the prayer and liturgy lead, staff, parish priest and pupils contributing according to their roles and competence.

5. Aims and intended outcomes

- Give glory, honour, praise and thanks to God and deepen relationship with the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.
- Place Scripture at the heart of the school's prayer and connect it meaningfully with life and mission.
- Enable stillness, contemplation, wonder, thanksgiving, sorrow, intercession, praise and joyful celebration.
- Develop knowledge and confident participation in Catholic prayer, responses, signs, symbols, seasons, devotions and liturgy.
- Create belonging and unity while respecting pupils and adults from other Christian traditions, other faiths or no faith.
- Develop pupils progressively as attentive participants and increasingly independent planners, leaders and evaluators.
- Strengthen links between prayer, Catholic social teaching, service, courageous advocacy and daily conduct.
- Nourish the spiritual life and wellbeing of pupils, staff, families, parish and the wider community.

6. Principles of high-quality provision

Prayer and liturgy are planned with reverence, theological accuracy and clear purpose. They are appropriately paced, inclusive, age suitable and responsive to the group. Quality is not measured by length, complexity, performance or the number of resources used; it is evident in purposeful preparation, authentic encounter, active participation and a meaningful response.

- The Trinity and the person of Jesus Christ are named accurately, and Scripture is proclaimed with dignity.
- Language, music, silence, symbol, gesture, space and action serve the prayer rather than distract from it.
- Participation is invited and supported; pupils are not pressured to disclose personal beliefs or perform beyond readiness.
- The gathering is clearly distinguished from notices, behaviour correction, awards or routine administration.
- The prayer leads naturally to reflection, thanksgiving, intercession or action and is evaluated in relation to its purpose.

7. Daily and weekly pattern

Every pupil is offered a daily opportunity for collective prayer or worship. The weekly pattern provides a balanced range of whole-school, class and group experiences and remains flexible enough to respond to the liturgical year, feast days, local and world events, pastoral need and parish life.

Provision includes whole-school and class Celebration of the Word, daily classroom prayer, the school prayer, hymn practice with a prayerful purpose, weekly Celebration Worship, prayer led by pupils and adults, Mass and sacramental celebrations, seasonal devotions and quiet reflection. A current timetable is maintained separately so operational changes can be made without weakening the principles or entitlement in this policy.

8. Structure: gather, hear, respond and go forth

Celebration of the Word normally follows a coherent movement: gathering as a community; hearing and reflecting on the Word of God; responding through prayer, silence, song, symbol or action; and going forth with a clear invitation to live what has been heard. This structure supports, but does not become a rigid script.

Leaders identify the purpose, group, season and context before selecting Scripture and response. Scripture is not reduced to a slogan, and a theme is not forced onto an unrelated passage. Appropriate opening and closing words, signs, responses and silence help pupils understand that they are entering and leaving a sacred time.

9. Scripture, liturgical year and Catholic tradition

Scripture is central to most acts of prayer and is selected with attention to context, age and liturgical season. It is proclaimed from a suitable Bible or lectionary and treated with reverence. Pupils gradually learn common responses, the Sign of the Cross, traditional and spontaneous prayer, psalms, hymns, litanies, blessings and other forms appropriate to their age.

Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, Ordinary Time, Marian devotion, saints' days and significant school and parish occasions shape the year. Liturgical colours and symbols are used accurately. The school prayer and Mark 10 Mission resources support continuity and mission when used with professional judgement and current diocesan guidance.

10. Eucharist, sacraments and liturgical celebrations

The Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life and is celebrated with appropriate preparation, reverence and participation. School Masses, currently offered regularly and for significant occasions, are planned in partnership with the priest. Children's roles are suited to their age, faith development, liturgical norms and the needs of the celebration.

The school has regard to the Directory for Masses with Children and current diocesan guidance. Readings, music, offertory, bidding prayers, movement and visual presentation serve the liturgy rather than becoming a performance. Pupils who are not Catholic are welcomed respectfully and are guided sensitively regarding reception of Holy Communion and other sacramental practice.

11. Progression in participation and leadership

Pupil leadership develops progressively rather than through token roles or over-reliance on a fixed template. In the early years, children learn attentive presence, simple responses, silence, gesture and short prayers with adult modelling. As they mature, they choose suitable elements, compose intercessions, proclaim Scripture, prepare the environment, lead responses, use silence and explain the reason for their choices.

By upper Key Stage 2, pupils should increasingly plan, lead and evaluate Celebration of the Word with appropriate independence, drawing on Scripture, the liturgical year and the needs of the community. Adults ensure theological and liturgical accuracy, safeguard pupils from pressure and intervene proportionately. Prayer leaders and prayer buddies help others while widening, rather than limiting, participation.

12. Inclusion, belonging and participation

Prayer and liturgy welcome the whole school community, including Catholics, members of other Christian traditions, people of other faiths and those of no religious faith. The Catholic identity and purpose of prayer are expressed clearly without caricaturing or devaluing anyone. No pupil is assessed on faith, required to make a personal profession of belief or asked to represent a whole religion or worldview.

Reasonable adjustments support pupils with SEND through accessible language, symbols, sensory planning, positioning, movement, signing, alternative communication, advance preparation and carefully chosen roles. Participation can include attentive presence, silence, listening, gesture, music, art or practical service. Provision respects dignity, medical needs and cultural context while remaining recognisably Catholic.

13. Prayer environment and resources

Classrooms and shared spaces include prayer focal points that are dignified, uncluttered, accessible and responsive to the liturgical season. Symbols and icons of the Catholic faith help the community recognise sacred space, but displays are not a substitute for prayerful practice. Pupils contribute thoughtfully to preparing and caring for these spaces.

Class worship boxes may include Bibles, crosses, liturgical cloths, candles or safe alternatives, prayer beads, Rosaries, prayer cards, icons, statues, stones and other suitable objects. Resources are used accurately and respectfully, stored safely and reviewed for quality. Digital presentation, recorded music and images are used selectively and comply with copyright, safeguarding and data-protection expectations.

14. Safeguarding, safety and sensitive events

Prayer and liturgy follow the school's safeguarding, safer-working, health-and-safety and visitor procedures. Candles, incense, electrical equipment, processions, raised areas, large gatherings, visitors and off-site worship are risk assessed appropriately. Images and recordings are captured and shared only through approved arrangements.

Following bereavement, tragedy, conflict or distressing news, leaders consider pupils' age, direct connection, faith and pastoral needs before planning a response. Language is truthful but not graphic, silence is supported rather than imposed, and prayer does not replace safeguarding, bereavement or mental-health support. Families and relevant professionals are involved where appropriate.

15. Partnership with parish, families and community

The parish priest and parish community are valued partners in the school's prayer and liturgical life. School and parish collaborate over Mass, sacramental preparation, feast days, visits, services and opportunities to worship together. Roles and expectations are agreed clearly, and school remains responsible for safeguarding and pupil welfare.

Parents and carers are invited to appropriate celebrations and supported to understand the school's Catholic prayer tradition. Home prayer resources, workshops, retreats, parish visits, cluster worship, Valley Masses, Caritas opportunities and joint-school events may deepen participation. Access, timing and communication are considered so opportunities are genuinely welcoming.

16. Recording, communication and data protection

Prayer and liturgy may be recorded proportionately through floor books, pupil planning and evaluation, photographs, newsletters, the school website or approved social-media channels. Evidence supports memory, celebration and evaluation; it does not turn prayer into a display exercise or require every gathering to generate written work.

Consent, safeguarding and data-protection requirements apply to identifiable images, pupil work and recordings. Sensitive prayer intentions, disclosures and personal reflections are not published. Staff use approved school devices and systems, and leaders review public content for dignity, accuracy and appropriate context.

17. Right of withdrawal

Parents and carers have a legal right to request that their child be withdrawn from collective worship. A request should be made to the headteacher. The school will invite discussion to clarify the Catholic nature and breadth of provision, the precise scope of the request and practical arrangements, recognising that prayer and liturgy are woven through school life as well as occurring in planned gatherings.

The right is respected without pressure or stigma. The school remains responsible for supervision and will provide suitable alternative activity during a formal act from which the pupil is withdrawn. Withdrawal from collective worship is distinct from withdrawal from Religious Education and from ordinary presence at events or school routines that reflect the school's Catholic character.

18. Roles and responsibilities

- The prayer and liturgy lead, Rachel Birtwistle, develops coherent provision, supports staff and pupil leaders, oversees resources, monitors quality and reports priorities to senior leaders and governors.
- Mrs Colak and designated pupil prayer leaders support planning, participation and development within the agreed school framework.
- The headteacher ensures daily entitlement, Catholic authenticity, suitable time and resources, and liaison with governors, parish and Diocese.
- Class teachers model and teach prayer, plan high-quality class provision, enable pupil leadership and respond to pastoral and safeguarding needs.
- The parish priest advises on liturgy and celebrates the sacraments in accordance with Church norms.
- Foundation governors provide informed challenge and support and ensure provision reflects the school's trust deed and Catholic character.

19. Professional development, monitoring and evaluation

Staff formation and professional development reflect the Prayer and Liturgy Directory, diocesan guidance, monitoring and pupil need. Support may include Scripture proclamation, liturgical planning, music, silence, spontaneous and traditional prayer, pupil leadership, inclusion, Eucharistic practice, safeguarding and use of sacred space. New staff receive timely induction.

Leaders evaluate provision through a proportionate range of observation, pupil and staff voice, floor books and plans, participation, environment review, parent and parish feedback and professional dialogue. Evaluation considers encounter, appropriateness, participation, progression and impact rather than performance alone. Findings inform the Catholic self-evaluation process, staff formation and future planning.

20. Related documents, approval and review

- To love You more dearly: The Prayer and Liturgy Directory
- Current Diocese of Salford guidance
- Catholic Life and Mission and Religious Education policies
- Prayer progression and current school worship timetable
- Safeguarding and child protection policy and staff code of conduct
- Health and safety, educational visits and visitor procedures
- SEND policy and equality information and objectives
- Current Catholic Schools Inspectorate framework and school self-evaluation

This policy will be reviewed by the prayer and liturgy lead and senior leadership team on a Policy review cycle or sooner if legal, diocesan, liturgical, safeguarding or school requirements change. Material changes will be communicated to staff, governors, pupils and families as appropriate.