

St John Plessington Catholic College



Prayer and Liturgy Policy

January 2025

To be reviewed January 2027

SJP Prayer and Liturgy Policy

1. Context

Our Mission - Empowering an inclusive community, founded on Gospel Values

Our Vision - A Catholic learning community committed to excellence in all we do

Our Values – Compassion-Respects-Determination-Justice

Our Motto - Always Faithful to Christ

The Nature of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and liturgy in a Catholic school names and celebrates God's presence in our lives. It is concerned with giving glory, honour, praise and thanks to God. It is our loving response, in word and action, to God's invitation to enter into a relationship, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit. *'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.'*

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2. Statement of Legal Requirement

It is a legal requirement that there is a daily 'act of worship' offered for all pupils. This can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single 'act of worship' for all pupils, or separate 'acts of worship' in school groups. Holding an assembly that includes a prayer, said either by the teacher or everyone present, does not fulfil this requirement.

Prayer, liturgical prayer and assembly are distinct activities.

In schools with a designated religious character, like Catholic schools, collective worship is far more than a statutory requirement. It is crucial to the spiritual life of the school and to pupils' moral and spiritual development. Collective worship is an important part of a Catholic school's distinctive ethos

Responsibility for arranging prayer and liturgy lies with the Governing Body after consultation with the headteacher. Parents have a right to withdraw their child from 'Collective Worship'.

3. Statement of Inclusivity

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). At SJP, we welcome students and staff of all faiths—or no faith—recognising that we are all God's children. Our school community is enriched by cultural and religious diversity, with pupils and staff coming from many parts of the world. This diversity helps us grow in our understanding of God's creation and the dignity of every person.

Prayer and liturgy takes into account the religious and educational needs of all who share in it:

- Those who form part of the worshipping community in church;
- Those for whom school may be their first and only experience of church;
- Those from other Christian traditions – or none;
- Those from other faith backgrounds.

4. Responsibility

While the Governing Body holds ultimate legal responsibility for the provision of worship at SJP School, the practical oversight and implementation of prayer and liturgy are managed collaboratively. This responsibility is shared between the Leadership Team, the designated link Governor, the Head of Religious Education, the Religious Education Department, and the Trust chaplain, Hans Broekman. Together, they ensure that all acts of worship are planned, resourced, and conducted in accordance with Catholic teaching and the school's mission.

As *Christ at the Centre* states, "The celebration of Catholic liturgies and prayers as an integral part of learning and teaching should enable the school community to become reflective, experience the presence of God, and develop a mature spiritual life."

The Role of the Coordinator for Prayer and Liturgy

- Formulating a written policy for prayer and liturgy
- Ensuring that there is a development plan for prayer and liturgy included in the school development plan
- Ensuring that prayer and liturgy is appropriate to the age, aptitudes and faith backgrounds of pupils
- Ensuring that prayer and liturgy takes account of the religious and educational needs of all who share in it and is rooted in the principles of the 'Directory for Masses with Children'
- Organising themes for prayer times
- Assisting the governors and headteacher to carry out their legal responsibilities with regard to prayer and liturgy including withdrawal from Collective Worship
- Developing staff confidence and expertise e.g. through modelling different prayer styles

5. Content and Celebration

The Aims of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and liturgy in Saint John Plessington Catholic College aims to provide opportunities for all pupils and staff:

- To contemplate the mystery of the triune God
- To reflect on spiritual and moral issues
- To explore personal beliefs
- To respond to and to celebrate life
- To experience a sense of belonging and to develop community spirit
- To develop a common 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 in God's mystery
- To take time out 'to wonder at', 'to come to terms with' and 'to give worth to.'
- To consider and celebrate the values of the Gospels
- To encourage an awareness of and compassion for the needs of the world community.
- To strengthen staff and pupils' relationship with the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

Principles of the Prayer and Liturgy Policy

All communal acts of prayer in Saint John Plessington Catholic College will:

- Give glory and honour to God;
- Be a quality activity, fundamental to the life of the school and its Catholic character;

- Enable pupils to develop skills so that they can prepare, organise and lead prayer times;
- Give pupils positive liturgical experiences, appropriate to their age, aptitude and family backgrounds in order to prepare them for the liturgical life of the Church. Celebrations will be appropriate to the age and groupings of the children.
- Be designed to actively engage pupils and elicit responses
- Be resourced and planned, excepting occasions of spontaneous prayer
- Be flexible and able to respond to special occasions.

Prayer and Liturgy is planned:

- following a structure with reference to the Church's seasons and significant dates. Scripture will be an important focus in most acts of worship.
- with flexibility to respond to changing situations within the school and the wider community.
- to develop pupil skills that enable them to prepare, organise and lead worship rather than always participating or contributing in a token way.

Leading Prayer and Liturgy

As faith leaders of the school, the Headteacher and members of SLT will plan and lead prayer and liturgy at least once per year during Celebration of the Word.

Heads of Learning and Form teachers lead Celebrations of the Word on at least twice per year

The planning and leadership of the Celebrations of the Word are assigned to specific Forms on a rotating basis. They are supported in this preparation by the Chaplaincy Team

The Form teacher will lead class prayer and liturgy such as morning prayer and Daily Examen. Children are taught to plan and lead prayer times according to their age.

Eucharist

At the heart of our Catholic school life is the Eucharist, *“the source and summit of the Christian life”* (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1324). The celebration of Mass is the moment where our community is most fully united with Christ and with one another, nourished by His Word and His Body.

As Christ at the Centre reminds us, *“The Eucharist is at the centre of Catholic life and worship. It is in the Eucharist that we are drawn most deeply into the paschal mystery of Christ.”* In our school, the Eucharist is celebrated regularly, marking significant feast days, seasons of the liturgical year, and moments in our shared journey of faith.

Pupils are encouraged to participate actively and reverently, contributing through music, reading, serving, and prayer. In this way, the Eucharist becomes not only a sacred encounter with Christ but also a living expression of our vocation to be “the Body of Christ” in the world.

There is a weekly Eucharist available for all year groups in the Chapel.

Twice a year pupils attend the Eucharistic celebration with their whole year

Routines

- Pupils and staff pray each morning at form time.
- Once a week, the year group meets for Celebration of the Word, a moment of prayer, proclamation and scripture reflection, singing and mission.
- Every afternoon, the form prays a Daily Examen and an afternoon prayer.
- In addition, the Chaplaincy provides daily resources to support morning prayer and afternoon Daily Examen and prayer.
- Staff are invited to participate in staff prayer during whole staff briefing at 0830 and at a liturgical prayer service each Wednesday morning at 0810
- There are at least two Year Group Masses per academic year as well as an Advent and Lent Service.
- Mass is celebrated every Wednesday for all pupils and staff in the Chapel.
- Every Friday morning, the Chapel is made available to staff for silent reflection.

Retreats

All Year 7 pupils participate in an on-site retreat led by the Shrewsbury Youth Mission Team.

Other opportunities

Pupils serve as lectors, altar servers, singers, and procession leaders at Celebration of the Word, school Masses and at the local parish.

6. Resources

- Form tutors are provided with a prayer card to guide morning prayer during form time.
- Pupils are encouraged to take an active role by leading the prayer, lighting the candle, and helping to create a reflective atmosphere.
- Every classroom contains a dedicated prayer shelf, which serves as the focal point for prayer in the morning and for the Daily Examen at the end of the school day.
- Each prayer shelf is thoughtfully prepared with appropriate sacramentals and reflects the liturgical colours of the season.
- The school chapel and Peace Garden, situated at the heart of SJP School, provide welcoming spaces for all members of the community to pause, reflect, and encounter God in quiet prayer. These sacred areas offer a place for personal contemplation, spiritual renewal, and a sense of peace amidst the busyness of school life.

Recording

Prayer and liturgy is recorded in the Chaplaincy Calendar and the School Calendar available through shared drives and on the website.

7. Formation and Development

At SJP School, Prayer and Liturgy are central to our Catholic life. Staff responsible for worship receive regular formation through the Diocese of Shrewsbury, and all staff benefit from dedicated INSET 'Ethos Days' and support from the RE Department and chaplain to develop their understanding and spiritual growth. Pupils' liturgical formation is progressive, combining catechesis with practical participation in ministries such as readers, altar servers, instrumentalists, choir members, and procession leaders, with training provided for all roles. As *Christ at the*

Centre states, “The celebration of Catholic liturgies and prayers as an integral part of learning and teaching should enable the school community to become reflective, experience the presence of God, and develop a mature spiritual life.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- The Deputy Head with responsibility for Catholic life co-ordinates the monitoring of prayer and liturgy.
- At least once a year the school’s provision of worship will be evaluated.
- Monitoring and evaluation of prayer and worship takes place termly to ensure the school’s provision meets the needs of all students.

Monitoring takes the form of student voice (both online and face to face); staff voice, members of the senior and pastoral leadership teams joining form prayers and regular updates to the Board of Directors and the Local Governing Body, the latter being legally responsible for ensuring the requirements of the Trust Deed are met.

The Link Governor for Catholic life and Collective Worship is Reverend Gerard Boyle.

Prayer and liturgy is monitored using prayer and liturgy monitoring form.

Chaplaincy staff, RE teachers and SLT quality assure morning prayer and daily examen

Following monitoring, training needs will be identified and outcomes used to inform the school’s CSED (Catholic Schools Evaluation Document).

9. Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator and is evaluated and reviewed by the whole school staff and governors every two years.