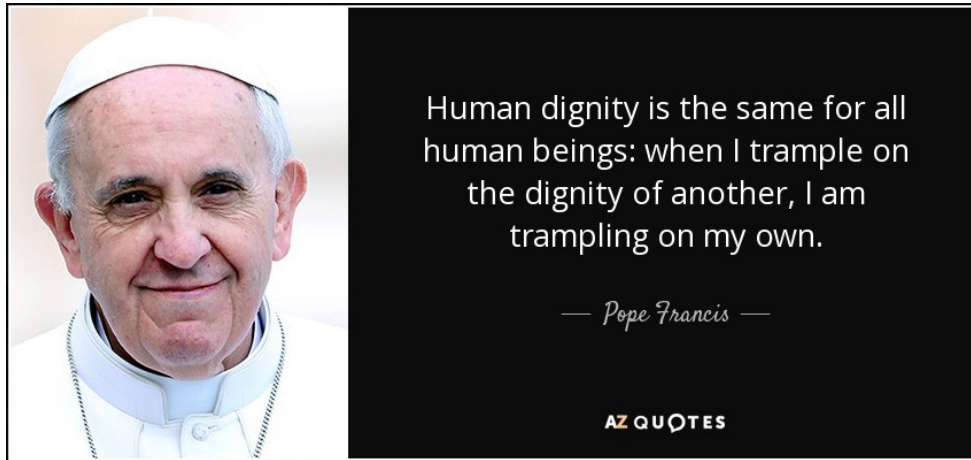


# St. Mark's Catholic Primary School



## Prayer and Liturgy Policy

*Proudly and joyfully, we love, live and learn as God's children.*



**In the St. John Bosco Multi Academy, we are committed to offering quality Catholic education to the children, families and communities that we serve. Our purpose as a company is to ensure that our schools provide caring safe, distinctively Catholic environments within which every child can grow, learn and achieve.**

#### **Commitment to equality:**

We are committed to providing a positive working environment which is free from prejudice and unlawful discrimination and any form of harassment, bullying or victimisation. We have developed a number of key policies to ensure that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in relation to human dignity and dignity in work become embedded into every aspect of school life and these policies are reviewed regularly in this regard.

#### **Aim and Purpose of Prayer and Liturgy**

At St. Mark's Catholic Primary School, Jesus Christ remains central to every aspect of school life. We aim to be a living, loving and sacramental community which is inspired by the life of Christ and the teachings of the Church, rooted in Gospel values. We hope that from the minute you enter our school you clearly see and feel that we are a Catholic community.

Acts of worship may take place at any time during the day. It may take the form of a single act of worship with the whole school community or separate acts of worship in school/class groups. When we gather for prayer and liturgy, we focus on the Word of God, we use symbol and ritual and we are open to God's presence among us. Prayer and liturgy is not designated curriculum time under regulations and will not be subsumed under any part of the curriculum including RE.

Prayer and liturgy in our school is an integral part of our ethos, aims and relationships, as Christian values permeate all aspects of school life and all relationships. It is a way of deepening our relationship with God together and individually. Through the many forms this worship takes we grow in spiritual, moral and liturgical understanding. We allow ourselves to grow in understanding of our living faith tradition and then develop a sense of wonder and inspiration in the person of Christ. It is through prayer and liturgy that we share each other's faith experiences and learn the skills of prayer and reflection. This is a very important aspect of life at St Mark's.

We aim to:

- To develop an awareness and understanding of the presence of God in each individual child's life and to encourage a personal response to that presence
- To allow each child to develop their conscience and make sound moral judgements based on commitment to following Christ
- To offer opportunities to deepen their faith and foster attitudes of care and respect for each other
- To live, experience and understand the Liturgical life of the Church through the Liturgical Year together with Solemnities and Feast days
- To promote sacramental life of Christian families and to encourage parents to take an active part in the preparation of their children for the sacraments of Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation
- To foster school-parish links to ensure that our children remain exposed and committed to the Catholic faith experiencing liturgy and worship beyond and realms of the school curriculum
- To enable each child to participate and respond to liturgy and worship in an appropriate way to their age and maturity

### **Prayer and Liturgy at St. Mark's School**

The RE lead works closely with our school Parish, staff and governors to ensure a cohesive response to the development of child and staff spirituality. Prayer and liturgy takes place in school daily, staff and pupils are encouraged to pray with thoughtfulness and with respect through a variety of prayer experiences - whole school Masses and liturgies, collective worship and prayer services together with formal classroom and individual reflective prayer. This worship will follow the liturgical year and include appropriate feast days, it will also encompass Gospel Values and Virtues, Catholic Social Teaching, Children's Rights, world events and world's faiths to enable pupils to appreciate their place in society and respect those around them.

### **Prayer and Liturgy Preparation/Evaluation**

When planning/evaluation prayer and liturgy, we consider:

#### **Gathering**

- How will we begin / enter – to music?
- Creating an atmosphere of prayer.
- Using a 'gathering chant', come in procession.
- The use of appropriate words, rituals and gestures to welcome and start prayer.

#### **Listening**

- Reading from scriptures. Give prominence to the Word.
- Pause at times for quiet contemplation.
- Use age/stage appropriate resources.
- Dramatise the readings / Use power point?
- Use a variety of media, props and artefacts. Engage the children throughout.

#### **Responding**

- What do participants do? Quiet reflection, formal / informal prayer /respond to bidding prayers. Place stone at foot of cross etc. Ensure there is variety.
- Ensure prayer is the main focus.
- Provide everyone with opportunities to practice, develop and/or learn new forms of prayer.
- Ensure all staff present are fully engaged, including visitors and volunteers.
- Allow children opportunity to lead elements of prayer and liturgy.

#### **Go Forth**

- What will I do to help those present take the message away with them –prayer card, picture, common prayer, action etc.
- Ensure everyone understands the message.

#### **Evaluation**

As well as evaluating each section, as about, after each act of Prayer and Liturgy, we should also be considering:

- Was it a positive, enriching religious experience for all present?
- Has this worship enhanced the spiritual and / or moral development of those present?
- Was the time and content appropriate for the age, ability and background of the children?
- Did all parts of worship help to develop the Liturgical formation of participants?
- Was it well-organised, led and presented?
- Was there a sense of community, common ethos and shared values?

Questionnaires are completed by staff, children, governors, parents and parishioners throughout the year regarding the quality of collective worship.

### **Jesuit Values and Virtues**

Each half term, the children develop their understanding of two new virtues (as established in this form by the Jesuits) and strive to apply these to their everyday lives. A whole-school collective worship each half term explains what they are and highlights examples of them from scripture. The virtues are displayed in all classes and around the school and children refer to them during acts of collective worship. Children's reflections to the virtues are displayed on virtue trees in each class.

### **Understanding the Liturgical Calendar**

We ensure that pupils are aware of the Liturgical Calendar and key events in the Church. The symbolism of colours is made clear from the earliest days in our school: purple for penance (seen during advent and Lent), red for Holy Spirit and martyrdom (seen at Pentecost), white, gold/yellow for important feasts and green for the ordinary times of the year. The Mission Teams have created a display of the liturgical calendar in our school hall and this is used for reflections during Mass and whole-school collective worship.

As well as following the liturgical calendar, we recognise that some months of the year have special foci. October is the month of the Rosary, November is the month when the Holy Souls (the deceased) are prayed for, May is the month when Mary is especially remembered and June is the month of the Sacred Heart when we remember especially the great love Jesus has for us.

### **Mass**

Mass is celebrated together with our parents and parish community on a weekly basis. Children play an active part in each Mass, through reading, praying, singing, altar serving and taking part in offertory processions. Each class takes it in turn to lead and prepare the celebration based on the liturgical year, focusing on solemnities, feast days and memorials of saints important to the children.

Staff, children and their families are also invited to participate in 'Family Mass' once a half term at Holy Name of Jesus Church, Great Barr. This 'Family Mass' is an addition to weekly 10:30am Sunday Mass. There are also opportunities provided for the children for Sacramental Enrolment Masses at the parish, which supports their journey of faith as members of our wider Church Community. Through gathering regular feedback from the children, their families and parishioners, family masses have evolved and the children and our community recognise that their feedback makes a change.

### **Whole School Collective Worship and Celebrations**

On Monday mornings, we have a high-quality scripture assembly which focuses upon the liturgical year with the relevant liturgy of the word, is supported by the help of our Catholic Life Leaders. These sessions of prayer and liturgy will also include important feast days, Gospel Virtues, Catholic Social Teaching Principles and any other current affairs. At different occasions throughout the year, our Mission Teams will plan and lead these and our St. Mark's community are all invited.

On Monday afternoons, we gather for 'Songs of Praise'. This is where they learn Mass responses and sing both traditional and modern hymns. Music is a central part of worship in our school and hymns are used in all areas of worship from supporting themes within Masses and assemblies to providing atmosphere through chants and reflective music in collective worship. This is also an opportunity for children to teach other classes their focus prayers and share what prayer and liturgy they have enjoyed in class.

On a Friday morning, we celebrate the children's God-given talents and achievements in and out of school. We celebrate a 'Congratulations Award' as well as a 'Values and Virtues Award' amongst other awards to celebrate a range of their God-given talents.

Collective worship and celebrations in school are regularly evaluated by members of the whole school community: children, staff, parents, governors, directors and parishioners.

### **Prayer Bags and Prayer Challenges**

Throughout the year, the children are given a range of opportunities to extend prayer to their homes and communities. Throughout the year, there are opportunities for children to take home a focussed Prayer Bag created by the school. These are taken home and shared so that through examination of text, artefact and prayer the family unit has the opportunity to pray together on a theme familiar to the child. The bags appropriate scripture passages, formal school prayer, traditional Church but also introduce families to class saints and inspirational figures within the Church past and present. This can also help support the faith and sacramental development of our pupils.

As well as prayer bags, our Catholic Life Leaders (through pupil interviews) plan different prayer challenges and experiences for children to complete at home with their families. These have included an 'Advent Challenge' (where children have been given a prayer cloth to take home and complete their own prayer table at home); an 'Oscar Romero Challenge' (where children and their families have created crosses, prayer services, prayers and songs to share with their families); designing Rosary Beads etc. These are all planned and lead by children in our Mission Teams. These challenges have helped the children to develop their faith at home, involve parents in the prayer and spiritual life of the school and developed their understanding of the liturgical calendar, special celebrations, the lives of saints, etc. Feedback from the children and their families showed that they enjoyed creative prayer challenges together, incorporating their own faiths with the challenges, parents understanding of the faith and sharing prayer between home and school.

### **Sacred Spaces**

We have dedicated sacred spaces throughout the school, ie. our prayer garden. Each classroom has a prayer focus area to help pupils in their prayer life and is used in acts of class worship. It has reminders of liturgical themes and colours as well as class saints and inspiration figures, it also contains traditional prayers and RE curriculum foci.

### **Mission Teams**

Mission Teams give the children more ownership and understanding of this central aspect of their faith. Our Mission Teams work with staff and members of our Parish to prepare for, plan and celebrate school liturgies. Each Mission Team leads whole school prayer and liturgy as well as other events and projects throughout the year. Different teams monitor prayer tables in classrooms and the prayer areas around school. They also help oversee the class prayer bags and challenges which go home with each child for one week each year. Our Mission Teams are a driving force for change as well as enhancing prayer and liturgy at St. Mark's.

### **Vocational Life**

Every year, we hold Vocations Week. Speakers from all different walks of life talk to the children about their vocation, both spiritually and career wise, which enables the children to be inspired on what they may use their God-given talents for. This is used to add depth to our RE teaching

and inspire our worship. As well as Vocations Week, we dedicate time to exploring vocations throughout our curriculum, allowing children time to reflect and consider God's call in their own lives. For example, when celebrating special events like Black History Month, Anti-bullying Week, Women's History Week, we experience guest speakers, workshops, etc. which also incorporate vocations, the life of Saints and how others have responded to God's call.

### **Saints**

Throughout the year, we celebrate a range of saints in school. Each year we have a focus on different saints to allow the children to learn about our heavenly role models. The saints we learn about reflect our diverse school community and our values, gifts and talents. Our school mission teams suggest new saints for us to learn about as well as our Year 6's as part of their Confirmation preparations.

### **Retreats and Visits**

We have regular support in school and through our MAC from One Life Music who engages in central Sacramental or liturgical ideas and allows the children to reflect and respond through music and prayer. We also enjoy a visit from Rise Theatre company and other companies to help strengthen our faith. Children also have the opportunity to visit places of religious and spiritual significance such as St. Chad's Cathedral. These visits help pupils understand their faith history as well as experience how others worship. Every year, our Year 6's enjoy a retreat to Alton Castle where they encounter Christ through creation, challenging activities and community. These retreats promote their personal, social and spiritual development.

Twice a year, we also enjoy staff retreats allowing us to grow in our faith together and spend time in the presence of Jesus. We attend an annual retreat provided by the MAC, where all schools come together to reflect on a certain theme in a day of prayer; this year's theme being 'belonging'.

### **Parish Links**

As part of the Church community, the school has strong links with the parish. Our school and parish have built a partnership over many years that works together in unison to fulfil the school and church's mission. Our school Parish is the Holy Name of Jesus Church, Great Barr. As well as our parish priests visiting the school weekly to celebrate Mass and other celebrations, children and staff facilitate 'Family Masses' in the parish where the children read, lead singing, altar serve and hold a coffee morning for the parish community. Our parish community is regularly invited to join in celebrations such as Pentecost celebrations, St. Mark's Feast Day, Caribbean summer fayres, etc. Following these events, we welcome feedback from parishioners to ensure we are forever working in partnership and making improvements. We are lucky to be very well-supported by the parish of Holy Name.

### **Links with Parents**

At St. Mark's we believe that positive relationships with parents is crucial; we work together with them, as their child's primary educators, to support the religious formation and education. Liturgies, celebrations and events related to the Catholic Life of our school are shared in school newsletters, Class Dojo, Twitter and are published on the school website. Parents and families are regularly invited to join the school community in Masses, assemblies, parent workshops and fundraising activities. Parents of pupils in Sacramental year groups are also invited to Sacramental Meetings and Commitment Masses as part of the Sacramental Preparation Programme. Parents and families also support the school in being able to offer an extensive range of educational visits to various places of worship. Pupils in each class also have the opportunity to take home a Prayer Bag or challenge, promoting opportunities for children and their families to talk and pray together.

### **Sacramental Preparation**

Parents are involved in preparing the children in Year 3 for the sacrament of Reconciliation and their First Holy Communion. There are three workshops throughout the year and these are followed by Masses, specifically for these children and they participate fully. In preparation for Confirmation, parents and sponsors are actively involved. There is a series of workshops which the

pupils attend with their families. There is also an inscription Mass which involves the pupils, parents, sponsors, teachers and the parish, where the children commit themselves to the process of making their Confirmation, in due course. The school supports this sacramental preparation through retreats and visits and pupils share their experiences with the school community through prayer and assemblies.

### **Equal Opportunities**

The fair and equal treatment of all individuals irrelevant of race, creed, disability or gender, are integral to the Gospels' Revelations and the Church's message and is central to our school mission statement. All children are given equal access to the Religious Education curriculum, promoting their understanding to their full potential. A variety of prayer and worship activities are used to try to meet all children's different needs e.g. whole School, whole class, group, pair and individual prayer, also different styles of prayer from formal liturgies to private reflective prayer.

### **Governing Body**

RE together with prayer and liturgy is always a key part of the School Development Plan, and is reported upon termly as part of the Head Teacher's Report to Governors. Governors are also invited to conduct learning walks and join with other members of the whole school community in the celebration of collective worship, Mass and attend INSET Days and staff meetings relating to the Catholic Life of the School. Before every governors' meetings, governors and staff join together for prayer and liturgy planned and lead by the Principal and RE lead.

### **Monitoring and Review of this Policy**

The RE leaders will monitor the implementation of the policy. All staff will be involved in evaluating the effectiveness of this policy in helping to improve standards of collective worship within the school. This evaluation will inform the process for reviewing this policy. Pupils will be involved in reviewing and evaluating liturgy in school with the RE leader and Principal.

The next scheduled review date for this policy is September 2025.