



Academic Year	Headteacher	Deputy Headteacher	Assistant Headteacher Catholic Life	Spirituality Team (responsible for Chaplaincy)
2023-2024	Emma Patterson	Danielle Largue	Rachael Blackburn	Kate Plass Katie Spina Milly Gullon (Maternity)

### St Mary's Mission Statement

Our school Mission Statement is '*Shining together in faith, joy and love*' and we feel that this statement reflects our distinct Catholic ethos, which is at the heart of everything we do. Here at St Mary's, our aim is for all students to shine, to flourish and to reach their full potential, both academically and holistically. We want all students to feel well-supported and to make the most of their God-given gifts and talents. We want all students to feel valued and welcomed equally and we have created a school with a 'family' ethos where compassion, kindness, mutual respect and support of each other are paramount. We are proud of our diverse and inclusive school, which provides a warm and nurturing community where all students can thrive. Our Catholic ethos is central to everything we do and we are incredibly proud of our students and staff who live out the Gospel Values every day. Our ethos is built upon the belief that all students are unique individuals made in God's image and that uniqueness is celebrated here in school. Students thrive from the vibrant spiritual life and the huge range of opportunities they have to develop spiritually and to support them on their spiritual journey. The happiness and joy of our students and staff is central to St Mary's and students enjoy engaging, interesting lessons and a wide range of opportunities outside of the classroom. Finally, the idea of 'loving your neighbour' is paramount to us, encouraging our students to act with kindness, compassion and love not only in school, but by giving service to others in the wider community.

### St Mary's Mission and Aims

- To develop in our students an understanding of the Catholic faith and a love of the values of the Gospel, in order to support all students, from whatever Faith background, on their spiritual journey and so help them live life to the full.
- To nurture in our students a sense of gratitude for their God-given gifts, talents and opportunities, and to encourage them to develop a lifelong commitment to serving others, by using their gifts and talents well, whether in school, in the home, the parish, the workplace, the local community or in the wider world.
- To ensure that relationships in school are rooted firmly in the Gospel values, with students living out those values and demonstrating respect for themselves and others, through their excellent behaviour and conduct, their good manners and their acts of kindness and compassion.
- To inspire in our students a love of learning and a real appreciation of the joys and benefits which learning can bring to others and to themselves.
- To help our students develop into self-confident young adults, at ease with themselves and others, with lively, enquiring minds, the ability to think deeply and to question and argue rationally.
- To provide our students with the knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes necessary for further learning and for adult life generally, whether at home, in the workplace or in the wider community.
- To help our students communicate by using language and number effectively.
- To help our students understand the physical world in which we live.
- To help our students appreciate the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations and provide them with good social, economic and political awareness.
- To provide our students with knowledge and experiences to keep them fit and healthy.
- To help our students develop their aesthetic appreciation, by introducing them to a wide variety of experiences, both in school and beyond.

- To develop and sustain high academic standards in all curriculum areas and ensure that students gain excellent academic qualifications commensurate with their ability.
- To provide a positive, happy and fulfilling school experience for our students, where they feel safe and secure and are regularly praised and encouraged for their efforts and achievements in all aspects of school life.

### An Overview to Collective Worship

At St Mary's, we welcome students from a variety of Faith and ethnic backgrounds and we are very proud of the wonderful diversity of our school. We provide an outstanding, all-round education, in a Catholic/Christian context, aiming to live out the values of the Gospel in every aspect of school life, following the example of Christ. We value collective worship as central to fostering a sense of community and to expressing the school's Catholic/Christian vision. All students in the school, including students of Other Faiths and No Faith, fully participate in prayer and liturgy and demonstrate high standards of engagement.

As a Catholic school, we believe that there should be regular opportunities for members of our community to join in prayer and reflection. The school recognises that there are formal and informal occasions when this is possible and that there are many forms of prayer and worship. The school seeks to encourage new ideas in liturgy and prayer that will appeal to as many of our community as possible.

The high-quality prayer and liturgy provided by the school, engages students deeply and leads them to full, active and conscious participation in collective worship. Students are given a wide-breadth of opportunities to be involved in prayer and liturgy, from daily collective worship in tutor time, to the full range of liturgies and Masses in school. Student involvement in prayer and liturgy engenders much reflection and inspires students into action, as evidenced by the wide-ranging service, justice and peace and fundraising work led by our students.

Students are well supported to be able to lead many aspects of prayer and liturgy themselves and robust evaluation of tutor time and prayer and reflection, evidences high student participation. Students also play a leading role in all year group and whole school liturgies and Mass, whether that be reading scripture and gospel passages, leading prayer, contributing to liturgical music, song, dance and drama. Students are fully engaged and aware of the cycle of the liturgical year and this shines through in all aspects of their participation and leadership of prayer and liturgy.

Worship at St Mary's is an integral part of school life and is at the heart of our school. The centrality of prayer and liturgy to the life of the school is clear across every area. Collective Worship is a key feature of every day, with prayer and liturgy also embedded very regularly above and beyond our tutor time daily collective worship. The pattern of daily worship reflects the prayer life and the liturgical seasons of the church.

The vibrancy and range of prayer and liturgy offered at St Mary's, engages all students and colleagues with the richness of the Catholic tradition. We are always eager to find new and effective ways of prayer, with much training for students, colleagues and leaders to support this. A variety of prayer is used in school, whether that be for student-led worship, form group or year group liturgy and prayer, or whole school liturgies and services including Artwork, Music, Images and Icons, Drama, Liturgical Dance, Story and Reflection, Stillness and Silence and Lectio Divina, Examen, Scripture and traditional prayers.

Leaders, teachers, support staff and governors regularly model good practice and every day in school, lead and contribute to a vibrant and meaningful prayer and liturgical life, encompassing a broad range of opportunities for students and staff, to pray together and individually, to further deepen their relationship with God.

Leaders give high priority to the Celebration of the Eucharist and this is celebrated weekly in school. Holy Days of Obligation, Feast Days and other significant days in the Church's calendar, such as Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday, are marked in school within the 'Thoughts and Prayers' resources, liturgies, prayer cards and other celebrations. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to staff and students at key times in the liturgical year, such as Advent and Lent.

In terms of the right of withdrawal by students from religious education and/or collective worship, we follow the CES guidance, "Guidance on the right of withdrawal from religious education and/or collective worship."

We already implement many aspects of the guidance outlined in the Prayer and Liturgy Directory 'To love You more dearly,' to be fully implemented in all schools, including St Mary's, from September 2025.

Collective Worship considers 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
- Those from other faith backgrounds- or none

## Opportunities for Collective Worship

### Tutor Time Prayer

- Each day begins with a prayer during Tutor Time. Form Tutors and students reflect on the theme of the week and pray together. Aspects of this will be student led and all students participate in this.
- The theme of the week follows the liturgical life of the church and the 'Thoughts and Prayers' resources are shared weekly to support collective worship each morning. The resources, which are developed by the Spirituality Team, are creative, high-quality and detailed.
- Opportunity is given to explore the theme of the week, what it means for us and how it calls us to action. The overall aim is for students to develop a personal relationship with God.
- Form Tutors are given additional guidance notes and training to ensure they can explain the meaning of these scripture readings with students in an engaging and accessible manner.
- Students are also given explanations in student-friendly language, on the PowerPoint and other resources, as well as modern-day examples, to further develop their understanding of the scripture.
- Additional resources are available for staff to use each morning, including candles, rosary beads, liturgical cloths etc.

### Year Group Assemblies

- The weekly assembly for each Year Group is an important event as it symbolises our community, our purpose and is an opportunity for us to reflect and pray together.
- The assembly may be led by the Head of Year, a Key Stage Leader, a member of Senior Leadership Team or a Form Group. The rota for assemblies is shared at the start of every academic year, together with the theme for that week.
- Each assembly follows the theme of the week and has a piece of scripture linked to it as the starting point of reflection. Assemblies are age-appropriate and high-quality, allowing all students to access and engage with prayer and scripture in a meaningful way.
- For Form Group assemblies, every member of the Form Group has a role in the planning and delivery of the assembly.
- Much time is dedicated throughout the year to training the staff team (e.g. Heads of Year and Form Tutors) with regard to the planning and presentation of assemblies. During this time, the themes and scripture are explored together and good practice is shared in order to support staff fully and ensure a clear understanding of the scripture and themes.

### School Liturgy and Mass

- The liturgical year gives shape to the celebrations that take place in school. The Chapel reflects these key points of the year through the change of colours and displays in the Chapel itself, as well as in the windows of the Chapel.
- We aim to provide as many opportunities as possible for the community to gather together, and to mark important occasions and pray together.
- Liturgies are provided for all students and staff at Advent and Lent. These take place in the Main Hall. They last for one hour and allow exploration of the theme for that season in school and provide time to reflect on the message. The liturgies begin in the Atrium and allow students to settle into a reflective frame of mind before entering into the liturgy in the Main Hall in a respectful, calm way.
- Students are given much opportunity to be involved in the shape of these liturgies, as well as leading aspects of them. Students can be involved through reading, dance, drama, organising the PowerPoint presentation, art, sound, lighting, as stewards, leading the gathering element of the liturgy in the Atrium and designing the gifts to be distributed.
- Information regarding liturgies is shared with staff via Teams, Staff Briefing, email and booklets.
- Remembrance services are provided for all students and staff to attend. These take place in the Atrium and involve the Choir, a student playing The Last Post, the laying of wreaths, uniformed groups attending and taking part, as well as readings and prayers. The Atrium stage is decorated by the History Department and provides a focal point for the services. In History lessons, to help prepare for the services and display, students are taught a 'Remembrance' lesson.
- Carol Services take place in the Atrium on the final day of term before Christmas. This provides a final gathering before the holidays. Performances from the Christmas concert feature in this service to allow all students to see this performance, if they have not had the opportunity to attend the Christmas Music Evening. Communal singing of carols takes place, as well as listening to aspects of the Gospel accounts of the birth of Jesus. The Atrium stage, with a large nativity scene displayed, provides a focal point for the services.
- Each INSET Day has a liturgy for the entire staff team. This is an opportunity for staff to come together and pray.
- The weekly Staff Briefing always begins with prayer led by the Headteacher and the briefing notices sent out to staff also contain the theme of the week and a prayer. Every half-term, staff celebrate a liturgy together, which is planned and delivered by a subject department.

- On the final day of the summer term, the school gathers for the End of Year Mass. This takes place in the Sports Hall. Mass is led by one of the Priests from a local church. Students are involved through music, leading the singing from the stage, processions, saying prayers in different languages, stewards, reading, dance and drama. Several staff are also involved in the preparation of the Mass, working with the students on areas such as processions, music, languages, stewards and reading. Staff are also involved through decorating the Sports Hall and being Eucharistic Ministers.
- To prepare students and staff for the End of Year Mass, workshops are planned and run by the staff team, with the help of students. The workshops involve making artwork for the decoration of the Sports Hall, exploring the theme of the Mass and making a gift that is handed out at the end of Mass, e.g. a mini rosary. The final workshop is a time of guided meditation for all students.
- Any feast day of St Mary is highlighted on the 'Thoughts and Prayers' resources and, if it falls on a Friday, the readings at Mass reflect the celebration.
- Other important feast days are detailed in the 'Thoughts and Prayers' and shared with students and staff weekly.

### Weekly Mass

- The weekly voluntary Mass is open to everyone to attend. It takes place on a Friday morning in the Chapel.
- A rota of the local Priests is devised in consultation with them so that we can offer Mass each week.
- Each week, Mass is prepared and led by a Form Group. The Form Tutor receives guidance regarding the Mass, which includes the ministries to be filled by students and the readings. The form group write their own bidding prayers for the Mass and have the flexibility to add other student led and creative elements, including prayer cards, music etc.
- On the Friday before the Mass, a rehearsal takes place to ensure reverence and respect. Furthermore, to ensure the overall experience for all attending Mass is meaningful.
- Readings follow the theme of the week and the readings at the Mass follow the readings of the day.
- All the words and responses are provided on a screen in the Chapel to ensure all can participate fully in the Mass.
- Staff and students are encouraged to attend Mass on a Friday. The Mass is advertised on the Chaplaincy noticeboard, as well as in the weekly 'Thoughts and Prayers' resources.

### Staff Prayer

- Every staff meeting in school starts with a prayer e.g. Department meetings, Pastoral Meetings, SLT meetings.
- The weekly Staff Briefing always starts with a prayer, led by the Headteacher.
- Every half-term, staff celebrate a liturgy together, which is planned and delivered by a subject department.
- Staff also attend many other liturgies taking place in school and share this experience with students.
- Staff are encouraged regularly to come to Friday morning Mass.
- Staff prayer is offered during Advent and Lent. This takes place in the Chapel and is led by the Spirituality Team.

### Retreat experiences

- We offer all students a retreat experience, and as many students and staff as possible an off-site retreat experience.
- Students are offered the opportunity to go to the Youth Village, Consett for a retreat with YMT.
- We do not believe that financial constraints should be a barrier to accessing such opportunities and so financial support is offered wherever needed, to ensure all students have equal access to this opportunity.
- Form Tutors are given the opportunity to attend the retreat with their Form Group/Year Group.
- We also provide high-quality in-school retreats for all year groups. All students in each year group spend the day reflecting and exploring different aspects of their faith and spirituality.
- A Staff Retreat is also offered, at an external venue. Activities are provided that allow staff to come together as a community for reflection and development. Aspects of retreat are also regularly built into INSET days in school.

### Features of Prayer and Liturgy

We aim for collective worship to be engaging, creative and meaningful and it involves some or all of the following features:

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| • Introduction                               | • Music             |
| • Focal point                                | • Video             |
| • Sign of the Cross                          | • Dance/Drama       |
| • Scripture Reading / Reflection             | • Stillness/Silence |
| • Response to scripture reading / reflection | • Artwork           |
| • Prayer                                     | • Reflection        |

### Raising Awareness of Collective Worship

- As a Catholic School, we recognise the importance of positive role models and examples in the school community. As such, it is important to promote, inform and report to all members of the school community about collective worship.

- Form Tutors are expected to encourage students to attend and be involved with Mass, liturgies, prayer and retreats. Additional opportunities, enrichment and extra-curricular clubs are also advertised through the Spirituality Team.
- St Mary's fortnightly newsletter, the school website and Twitter, are used to inform parents and carers, governors and students about all the activities that have taken place and that are planned for later in the year.
- The Main School and Sixth Form Spirituality Leaders take a leading role in the planning, delivering and promoting of collective worship.
- Assistant Headteacher for Catholic Life writes to parents and carers termly to share information about activities, events and ways in which they can support this aspect of school life with their children.
- The school website includes information for parents and carers about the theme of the week, as well as suggestions about the ways parents and carers can explore the themes at home with their children.

### Roles and Responsibilities

All acts of collective worship involve a range of staff and students and it is the responsibility of all staff to support the Catholic/Christian ethos of our school and the collective worship element of this. The Assistant Headteacher for Catholic Life leads and oversees all aspects of collective worship, ensuring high-quality, meaningful collective worship for everyone in our school community. The Spirituality Team also play an important role in the planning and leading of collective worship.

Policy review date	By whom	Approved
September 2023	Local Governing Committee	08/09/23
November 2023	Local Governing Committee	30/11/23