



## **St. John the Evangelist Catholic Academy**

**“Growing and Learning together in Christ.”**  
(School Mission Statement)

**“Lord be thy Word my rule”**  
(School Motto)



## **Newman Catholic Collegiate**

### **Collective Worship** **Liturgy and Prayer Policy**

*“Prayer is the raising of one’s mind and heart to God.”*  
St John Damascene

## **Our Mission**

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Academy is part of the Archdiocese of Birmingham and a member of the Newman Catholic Collegiate, under the patronage of Bl St. John Henry Newman. Our priority is to help students to know Jesus Christ, his mission and his Gospel, which forms our way of living. Our vision for the Collegiate is summed up in the words **“Growing together for life”**.

Our school is a Catholic school, founded on the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Specifically, St John the Evangelist Catholic Academy, seeks to live as we grow and learn together in Christ’ as our guiding principle. This policy document should be considered in the light of our School Mission Statement which outlines all that underpins our work.

St John the Evangelist is a caring, Catholic school community and we teach our children that everyone is made in the image and likeness of God. We aim to foster an awareness and understanding of the presence of God in each individual child’s life and to encourage a personal response to that presence.

We believe that Christian worship in a Catholic school is concerned with giving praise, thanks and reverence to God. It is our loving response, in word and action, to God’s invitation to enter into communion with Him, made possible through the human and divine work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Collective worship, however, should also be used as a vehicle to promote the teachings of the scriptures, consider how to care for and respect our environment, recognise our God-given gifts and talents and understand how to live as Christians in love and peace, by valuing the diversity and unity of humankind, through loving tenderly, acting justly and walking humbly in the footsteps of Christ.

## **Legal Requirements**

Collective worship is a legal daily requirement which is distinct from curriculum time. For Catholic schools, this requirement is made explicit within the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Birmingham which states: "Religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church. At all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic Faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Parents have a legal right to withdraw their child from all or any part of collective worship. At St. John the Evangelist the responsibility for arranging Collective Worship rests with the Governing Body; however, in the life of the school, it is predominantly led and managed by the RE Team (including the Principal, Vice Principal and RE Leader), with each staff member and child taking some ownership and responsibility for collective worship.

## **Rationale**

Collective worship will be an educational and spiritual experience to which all can contribute and from which all can gain. At St. John the Evangelist we will continue to foster and deepen our children's personal relationship with God our Father daily in prayer. We do this by helping them to become aware of God's presence in their lives and of His love for them, by leading them to respond to Him in a manner suited to their age. This may be in one of the following ways:

- Prayer of silence
- Spontaneous prayer
- Praying through gesture or action
- Formal prayer
- Guided Meditations

Prayer will not be confined to an act of worship. Children are encouraged to pray in the morning and in the evening. Worship in St. John the Evangelist is an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition and faith system.

## **The Aims of Collective Worship**

We believe that Collective Worship in our school aims to provide opportunity for all pupils and staff:

- To contemplate the mystery and transcendence of God
- To reflect on spiritual, moral and ethical issues
- To explore, reflect upon and act on their own beliefs
- To respond to and celebrate life
- To experience a sense of belonging and develop community spirit
- To develop a common ethos and shared Christian values
- To enrich religious experience
- To develop a liturgical understanding of the Catholic Church's context and structure
- To teach the meaning and purpose of prayers that are part of the Catholic tradition
- To take a full and active role in collective worship
- To value the wonder and awe of God's creation

*All acts of Worship in this school will:*

- Give glory, honour, thanks and praise to God
- Be a spiritual experience, fundamental to the life of the school and its Catholic character

- Give children positive liturgical experiences appropriate to their age, aptitude and family backgrounds in order to prepare them for the liturgical life of the Church.
- Be appropriately paced and offer a range of spiritual and reflective experiences offered in a variety of groupings and settings.

### **A Worshipping Community**

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Academy is a worshipping community: we place prayer, worship and liturgical celebration at the very heart of our expression of Catholic tradition. We actively strive to provide a varied experience of worship and to promote engagement through the creative contributions of both pupils and staff.

We understand that, through prayer and collective acts of worship, we can develop our relationship with God and we can talk to Him in many ways. Therefore, it is our duty to provide every child with the opportunity to meet God through engagement in the spoken word, music, dance, drama, art and through silent reflection. We particularly value opportunities to nurture pupils in leading collective worship and developing prayer experiences of their own making.

We realise that, as one “instrument” of the Church, we cannot achieve this in isolation and therefore need to encourage a collaborative partnership between the home, the parish and the school. We recognise that each of these groups has a responsibility to fulfil its role and seek to support parents in this mission.

We believe that collective worship should take into account the religious and educational needs of all who share in it:

- Those that 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

### **Linking Home-School-Parish**

Parents are acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their child, and are regularly welcomed into school to secure a strong partnership. They are invited to attend Mass, class assemblies and other liturgical celebrations, along with opportunities for reflection in the form of a Class Saint liturgy. Emphasis is placed on helping them to understand the vital role they can play in teaching their children the importance of worship and developing the prayer life of their children.

Class teachers may set home learning tasks based on curriculum topics and religious learning. Parents are encouraged to support their children wherever possible; this includes sharing the Ten: Ten parent resources which reflect the weekly Sunday Gospel message. A link to the parent newsletter is sent to parents, alongside links to the parish newsletter and relevant prayers and reflections.

A Mini Vinnies group has been established within school and we seek opportunities to work with the parishioners of our parish and members of the community. Joint projects include working together to make Rosary displays and bookmarks for each class, charity events a

well-established gardening club led by parishioners. We also have strong links with CAFOD and Fr. Hudson's, who come in to share liturgies, workshops and prayer services with our children.

## **Prayer and Collective Worship at St John the Evangelist Catholic Academy**

In addition to the four formal prayer times throughout the school day (morning, grace before and after meals and home-time), prayer and worship is an integral part of the day at St John's and is not separated from the rest of school life. Pupils all share in this important aspect of our daily experience. Children have a natural aptitude for prayer and are open to God. They respond in many ways to the world around them and their experiences at school should be full of opportunities for exploration and discovery. Teachers create an environment where these responses are developed, in recognition that they can form the beginnings of prayer. To this end, each classroom has a special prayer area that reflects the liturgical season. These spaces are intended to support pupils to initiate their own prayers. Prayer spaces in Years 1 to 6 have a class prayer book, where children are encouraged to express their own prayer intentions, which can be shared with their class as the children wish.

Each week pupils participate in:

- ✠ A Gospel-based assembly to enable all children to access and reflect upon the weekend readings, planned and led by the Principal and Vice Principal (Mondays)
- ✠ Class/ Key Stage Collective Worship based on the theme of the Mass, Saints, class work and/or Virtues planned and led by class teachers and/or children (Tuesdays)
- ✠ A whole school or Key Stage Assembly based on the current Virtues (Wednesdays)
- ✠ Key Stage 'Songs of Praise' Hymn practice, led by Music Leader or class teachers and supported by Key Stage staff (hymns practised are linked to forthcoming Mass and the liturgical calendar) (Thursdays)
- ✠ A whole school, key stage or class Mass (on a rota basis) (Thursdays)
- ✠ A Success Assembly, recognising each child's God-given gifts and talents (Fridays)
- ✠ Daily opportunities for liturgy and prayer through Ten: Ten daily prayer resources and/or RE lessons/ class collective worship

Children from Year 3 to Year 6 take turns to lead collective worship throughout the year in class and Key Stage assemblies, and Reception, Year 1 and 2 will take an active role in planning, leading and participating where appropriate.

### **Liturgical Assemblies**

During Advent and Lent, additional liturgies, led by classes, are held three times per week, to enable children to experience a fuller understanding of these seasonal times of preparation for Christmas and Easter.

### **Planning**

Collective Worship at St. John the Evangelist is planned following a structure with reference to the Church's seasons, significant liturgical dates and the curriculum.

Each act of collective worship follows a 4-part structure:

- 1) Gather
- 2) Listen
- 3) Respond
- 4) Go Forth

Staff and Key Stage 2 children are expected to follow this format for every assembly/ liturgy and are encouraged to record this on a Liturgy Planning sheet (appendix one)

- Scripture will be the focus for most acts of worship
- Collective worship will relate to the school community in the light of the school's aims and mission, the Virtues, curriculum, class saints and the liturgical calendar.
- There will be flexibility to respond to changing situations within the school and the wider community.
- The school will aim to teach children the skills to enable them to prepare, organise, lead and evaluate worship.

### **Resources**

Resources are monitored by the RE leader and new resources are ordered, within the budget, where required. There are a wide range of resources available to aid planning for collective worship and prayer, such as assembly books, access to ten:ten resources (staff have their own log ins), artwork etc. These can be found in the cupboards in the school hall or in the Principal's office. Music resources/ CDs for collective worship are kept in the Principal's office and a copy of backing tracks have also been downloaded onto the staff's shared area of the school network. There are also resources from the Birmingham Diocese Education Service and several Internet sites that are also a useful resource for planning; these links have been distributed to all teaching staff, with recommendations to support planning and delivery of collective worship.

Each class has several artefacts for their prayer areas such as crucifixes, crosses, praying hands, rosary beads, statues, bibles etc. These may be share amongst staff as they wish.

### **Mass and the Eucharist**

Eucharistic celebrations are a crucial element of our collective worship at St. John the Evangelist. Opportunities for children to participate in the Mass are given every two weeks, parents (where possible due to the size of the school hall) and other members of the school and Parish communities are encouraged to attend.

Eucharistic celebrations will take the following forms:

- Whole school Masses at the start and end of each term and for Holy Days of Obligation and special feasts
- Class Masses
- Key Stage Masses
- Children will be encouraged to participate in several school-led Saturday evening/ Sunday Masses throughout the year
- Masses for children preparing to receive the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion and Confirmation
- Our school also take representatives from Key Stage 2 to the annual North Staffordshire Combined Schools Mass and Good Shepherd's Mass and will take up opportunities to have an active involvement in these Masses.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Termly and annual monitoring schedules are completed and reviewed by the RE Team/ Leader, with input from SLT where required. Monitoring and evaluation of collective worship and prayer takes place in a variety of ways: looking at class prayer, class RE journals, scrutinising RE books and planning, formally and informally monitoring acts of collective worship, pupil interviews and evidence of reflections on worship.

Termly meetings with the link governor, (Insert link governor name), are scheduled and minutes from these meetings are reported and shared with the RE Team/Leader, Principal, local governing body and Board of Directors. Actions from the previous minutes are discussed at the following meeting to ensure progress and impact.

The school's provision for collective worship is evaluated annually to consider how it meets the needs of pupils and whether it truly reflects the aims and mission of the school.

The RE Team/Leader may evaluate the quality of collective worship in the school by conducting informal evaluations, with the permission and consultation with staff members throughout the school year. Staff are always invited to observe Senior Leader's assemblies, prayer times and acts of collective as good practice.

### **Inclusion and Equal Opportunities**

All children at St John the Evangelist Catholic Academy have a right to be included in accessible Collective Worship unless withdrawn at parental request. Inclusion of all is a cornerstone of Catholic belief and of our own school mission statement. Collective worship should play an active role in developing an inclusive attitude in the children themselves.

### **Health and Safety**

It is the responsibility of class teachers to follow school Health and Safety procedures. Lighted candles should only be used under adult supervision during Masses and acts of worship and a safety lighter should be safely stored away from children.

Class teachers in EYFS, KS1 and lower KS2 should use battery operated candles in class, but real candles should be used at Mass.

There is a Risk Assessments for Mass available on request.

### **RE Leader/ Team:**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years.

This policy was agreed by the Directors in January 2023

This policy will be reviewed January 2026

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of the Board of Directors).

Appendix One

Liturgy Planning sheet

Date:	
Liturgical Season/Feast	
Key Stage/Year Groups	

*[When are we celebrating? Who will be celebrating? Where will we celebrating? Environment]*

	<b>Resources/ Additional Information</b> <i>[Which ministries are needed? What needs to be prepared?]</i>
<b>Gathering</b> <i>[To become a gathered assembly. To prepare us to participate—to listen and respond]</i>	
<b>Listening</b> <i>[Participating in the Word of God (readings from scriptures, singing the psalms), is common to all Catholic worship.]</i>	
<b>Responding</b> <i>[Our response can be made up silence, reflection, prayer, symbolic action or song.]</i>	
<b>Mission/Going Forth</b> <i>[In our liturgical celebrations we offer praise to God; we are also strengthened in our mission to live as Christ in the world.]</i>	

Appendix Two

Prayers taught to the children at St. John the Evangelist:

See the Overview of School and Parish Prayer