

St Austin's RC Primary School



Collective Worship Policy

Relationship of RE to the Whole Curriculum

Collective Worship and Assemblies

'Prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for God.'
(Catechism of the Catholic Church)

'Prayer is the surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.'
(Therese of Lisieux)

At the heart of the Christian faith is the belief in a God who communicates with people. God calls every human person into a loving relationship and as with every relationship, our relationship with God can only grow through communication. Prayer is the way in which we engage in communication with God. Christians believe that prayer is essential to human fulfillment for it is only in God that we can discover ourselves, our meaning and our purpose.

'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You'
(St Augustine)

The practice of prayer is an essential feature of life at St Austin's School. It is one of the distinguishing marks of the distinctive nature of a Catholic school. Not only is it part of the curriculum in religious education, but it is also a key element in the overall ethos and character of the school.

Collective Worship is a legal requirement in all schools in England and Wales. Such worship must take place daily. It may take place in class, in the hall or in church. It may involve all of the children in school or just a group. It must involve some act of worship in which the children are able to join in with. If this is a legal requirement for all schools then it should be transcended in a Catholic school. Prayer for us should be an enriching experience for all concerned, threaded into every aspect of school life.

There are two aspects to collective worship. The first involves the use of vocal prayer in common, using the traditional Catholic prayers. The second involves more personal prayer. These guidelines will make suggestions about both types of collective worship. It is expected that every session of the day will begin and end with some act of collective worship.

Prayer

Prayer consists of:

Listening – being attentive to the voice of God in every moment of life.

Speaking – expressing our heart’s deepest longings and desires to the One who knows and understands us better than we know and understand ourselves.

Reflecting – thinking about our relationship with God. Pondering on the actions of God in history and in the unfolding mystery of our lives.

Resting – simply being consciously in the presence of God, knowing that we are loved.

Prayer can have a variety of forms and styles and express different things. The Catechism of the Catholic Church identifies the following forms of prayer:

- Blessing and Adoration – the prayer which blesses God for the goodness which has been shown to humankind.
- Petition – the prayer which asks for forgiveness and which calls for the establishment of the Kingdom of God.
- Intercession – consists in asking on behalf of another.
- Thanksgiving – acknowledging the gifts which God has given.
- Praise – the prayer which praises God simply because God is.

Collective Worship

The Nature of Collective Worship

We believe that Christian worship 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 relationship, made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit.

The Place of Collective Worship in the Life of our School

Worship in this school is more than just a legal requirement. It is an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition.

Collective worship takes into account the religious and educational needs of all who share 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.

The Aims of Collective Worship

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

- To contemplate something of the mystery of God
- To reflect on spiritual and moral issues
- To explore their own beliefs
- To respond to and to celebrate life
- To experience a sense of belonging and develop community spirit
- To develop a common ethos and shared values
- To enrich religious experience
- To grow in liturgical understanding and development
- To reinforce prayers which are part of the Catholic tradition
- To reinforce positive attitudes
- To participate fully

The Structure of Collective Worship

Prayer should mark the start and the end of each session. Children should know the following:

- The sign of the cross
- The Our Father
- The Hail Mary
- The Eternal Rest
- The prayer to St Austin
- Grace before meals

Key Stage 2 children should also be able to join in with the recitation of some of the prayers at Mass – increasing with the age of the children. Children should also have the opportunity for silent prayer and for the singing of hymns, old and new. There are a wide variety of resources, including CDs in school. Other material for vocal prayer is to be found in our own St Austin’s prayer book, purchased in 2005.

Assemblies will be as follows:

	Groups	Times
Monday	Nursery - class Reception - class Y1-6 Assembly - hall	10:50-10:55am 9:05-9:10am 2:55-3:15pm
Tuesday	Nursery - class Reception - class Y1 - class Y2 - class Y3 – class Y4 – class Y5 – class Y6 – class	10:50-10:55am 9:05-9:10am 2:15-2:20pm 1:00-1:10pm 9:40am-9:50am 9:10-9:20am 9:00-9:10am 9:00-9:10am
Wednesday	Nursery - class Reception - class Y1-6 Assembly -hall	10:50-10:55am 9:05-9:10am 2:55-3:15pm
Thursday	Nursery- class Reception - class Y1 – class Y2 - class Y3 – class Y4 - class Y5 - class Y6 - class	10:50-10:55am 9:05-9:10am 2:15-2:20am 1:00 – 1:10pm 11:00-11:10am 9:10 – 9:20am 9:00-9:10am 9:00-9:10am

Friday	Nursery - class	10:50-10:55am
	Reception - class	9:05-9:10am
	Y1 – class	9:50-9:55am
	Y2 - class	1:00 -1:10pm
	Y3 – class	11:00-11:10am
	Y4 - class	9:10 – 9:20am
	Y5 – class	9:00-9:10am
	Y6 - class	9:00 – 9:10am

School Masses for Key Stage 1 and 2 will be celebrated at the beginning and the end of the school year.

Services for Holy Week and Advent will be celebrated in Church.

Parents and Parishioners are invited to attend all our Masses and services in school and in the parish church.

During October and May, Rosary services are held in Fr Martin’s garden, in front of the Grotto or in our Marian trail prayer space in the meadow.

In November we have a special Remembrance Day assembly.

Children in Key Stage 2 attend Mass in church on Ash Wednesday, while Foundation and Key Stage 1 children attend a short service in the school hall.

Every Friday during Lent and Advent, classes throughout the school perform special assemblies, including a Mother’s Day Assembly. Children from Y1 – Y6 visit church during Lent to participate in the Stations of the Cross with Father Martin or Deacon Kevin.

Collective worship should also take place in class: Here are the basic principles:

- The teacher should always prepare and lead most Acts of Collective Worship and be an excellent role model for the children to emulate;
- Teachers should withdraw their input gradually at the appropriate time – given the age, capacity and stage of development of the children;
- It must never detract from being an enriching experience where glory, honor and praise is given to God;
- The REJOICE part of Come and See is a good place to start the process involving the children in preparing and leading worship;
- The required elements should always be present to assist with the children’s liturgical formation;
- The recommended planning format should be used for all age groups (some younger children may just prepare/lead in one or two elements);
- Timings should always be appropriate for the age of the children.
- The process is as follows: Prepare, Gather, Listen, Respond, Go Forth and Evaluation.

It should be noted that some children will be more able/willing than others to plan and lead Collective Worship. There should be no coercion, but all children should have the opportunity to participate if they wish to do so.

All Collective Acts of Worship should be evaluated by the teacher. The children should evaluate their own participation. Older children should be asked to evaluate others in an appropriate manner, for example: *What did you enjoy? What would you have done?*

Collections of prayers that the children may want to include are available in school. Children should also be encouraged to write their own prayers. Prayers can be effectively used as a conclusion for collective worship.

It is important that the children experience Mass as much as possible. The Holy Mass is the heart and centre of Catholic Worship. It is our duty and responsibility to introduce children to the celebration of the Mass in its fullness.

Celebrations of Mass with children should be adapted for them, but not so much that the children's Mass is radically different from the normal parish Mass. Hymns, readings and prayers should be carefully chosen to suit the age of the children and the theme of the Mass. All children, by the virtue of their Baptism, have the right to attend Mass.

Assemblies

Assemblies are an opportunity for larger numbers of children to gather for worship. These assemblies should ideally reflect the liturgical season, the period of the school year, the current Come and See topic, or some other significant theme. They should also contain various elements and styles of collective worship. Children should always take some part in the assemblies.

Parents and other family members are always welcome at special whole school assemblies. They also perform a valuable social function, since they are one of the few occasions when the whole school comes together.

A visual focus can help many children to pray. Such a focus can prevent prayer becoming merely a cerebral exercise. An object, such as a crucifix, a picture, a vase, a candle or a statue, can focus prayer, giving the children a chance to visualize their thoughts. Ideally, the other elements of collective worship should relate to this focus.

Music has always played a significant role in Catholic worship and it can be effectively used to enhance collective worship in schools. In St Austin's we use a variety of hymns, both traditional and modern, to accompany the topics throughout the year. Many of the class prayers can be sung, especially in the foundation unit and key stage 1. Hymns can be sung to reflect the theme of the prayers. Planning is essential to ensure that the music chosen is relevant and available.

Singing hymns or prayers together is a powerful medium of Catholic worship. Children and staff can join together in a common act of praise, reflection and intercession. As our own patron saint, St Augustine of Hippo, wrote: "He who sings, prays twice."

Personal Prayer

Personal prayer is vital and all children should have regular, frequent opportunities to pray silently in their own words to God. After all, the purpose of prayer is to seek and hopefully find God. Silent prayer can easily be incorporated in each day's collective worship. For this purpose the pupils may access the prayer garden in our meadow.

It is important to make it clear that prayer is not just about asking for things, but also about thanksgiving and praise.

Planning

Planning is essential for good collective worship. Teachers should plan their use of Scripture readings, music and bidding prayers to reflect the Liturgical season and the Come and See topic being taught. Teachers should include opportunities for silent prayer on a daily basis, if possible.

When including the children in planning, they should be free to include all types of methods of expressing themselves, including through music and dance.

Collective worship should not be allowed to become merely routine. We owe it to the children to introduce them to the rich Catholic tradition of prayer in its fullness, suitably adapted to the age and maturity of the class.

To introduce a child to the practice of prayer is to show them a way to God.