



St. Gregory's Catholic High School

Draft Prayer and Liturgy Policy

Monitoring

The implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Headteacher.

Evaluation

The policy was reviewed by the Headteacher and SLT on 7th July 2025 prior to the submission of the policy to Governors Community Committee for scrutiny and recommendation to the Full Governing Board for approval

Key policy dates:

Ratified by the Full Governing Board: 17th March 2025

Review frequency: Every 2 years

Next policy review commences: Spring Term 2027

MISSION STATEMENT

Every member of St Gregory's Catholic High School will work together in solidarity for the common good of our diverse community. We have no better inspiration than the teaching of Jesus Christ. We believe that every person is unique and made in the image of God and should be treated with dignity, love and respect. We will follow Jesus by embracing our God given charisms to carry out our mission to serve. We are one family inspired to learn.

1. Introduction

At St. Gregory's Catholic High School, we are committed to nurturing a vibrant Catholic community where prayer and liturgy are integral to our daily life. Rooted in the guidance of the Catholic Prayer and Liturgy Directory for England and Wales, To Love You More Dearly, this policy outlines our approach to fostering spiritual growth, communal worship, and personal reflection among students and staff.

Our prayer and liturgy practices aim to:

- Provide Spiritual Formation: Encourage students to develop a personal relationship with God through regular prayer and reflection
- Promote Community: Build a sense of belonging and unity within our St. Gregory's family
- Enhance Moral and Ethical Understanding: Provide opportunities for students to explore and reflect on moral and spiritual issues as part of their individual faith journey
- Celebrate the Liturgical Year: Engage with the Church's liturgical calendar to deepen understanding and participation in the faith

Through this policy, St. Gregory's aims to create a nurturing environment where prayer and liturgy are central to our mission of educating the whole child. Through our daily rhythm of prayer and liturgy, we prepare our students to live out their faith with love and service to others and continue the mission of the Church.

2. Definitions

- Collective Worship: The legal term for acts of worship in denominational schools in England and Wales
- Leading: The leading of prayer and liturgy includes stages of planning and evaluation outside of the prayer and liturgy itself
- Liturgy: A formal act of the Church (Example: Mass)
- Liturgical Prayer: Follows structured patterns found in the liturgy (Example: Celebration of the Word)
- Prayer: These can be structured and traditional, (Example: The Lord's Prayer) or extempore
- Prayer and Liturgy: The Catholic terminology for 'Collective Worship', recognising the rich tradition of the Roman Catholic Church

3. Elements of Prayer and Liturgy

When planning prayer and liturgy at St. Gregory's, there is a careful consideration of:

- Ritual – a structured group activity that uses words, gestures, symbols and movement according to the tradition of the Church. E.g. the celebration of the sacraments
- Scripture – this is central to prayer and liturgy in the Catholic tradition. This allows us to open ourselves to God, to listen and respond
- Symbol – in celebrations of the word and liturgy, symbols are meant to be used to convey different ideas and meanings. E.g. the use of light to illuminate, highlight, and provide focus

4. Structure of Prayer and Liturgy

Prayer and Liturgy should be meaningful, and pupils should leave spiritually nourished with a purpose to achieve and live out the teachings of Christ. Where appropriate Liturgical Prayer should always be based on the Emmaus model of gather, listen, respond, and mission.

The Catholic Church defines prayer as, “...the raising of one’s mind and heart to God, or the requesting of good things from God.” (CCC 2259). Prayer does not always have to be vocal; it can also be meditative and contemplative. Prayer can also have several purposes:

- Adoration – giving praise to God
- Confession – asking for forgiveness
- Thanksgiving – giving thanks to God for His goodness
- Supplication – asking for God’s help

5. Daily Prayer and Liturgy

5.1 Daily Practices

- Morning Prayer: Each school day begins with a prayer to set a tone of reverence and focus. This takes place in both class form time and year group Celebration of the Word. The prayer shelf with a candle, crucifix and a bible will be used as a focal point for morning prayer
- End-of-Day Prayer: A closing prayer, led by the class teacher, to reflect on the day and seek God's guidance at the end of period 5

5.2 Classroom Prayer

- Prayer Space: Each classroom is equipped with a designated sacred space, reflecting the liturgical season and providing a focal point for personal reflection
- Student-Led Prayer: Students are encouraged to lead prayers, fostering leadership and ownership of their spiritual development

6. Celebration of the Word

Celebration of the Word reflects the traditions of the Catholic Church, considering the spiritual and educational needs of all who share in it:

- Those who form part of the worshipping community in churches
- Those for whom school may be their first and only experience of Church
- Those from other Christian traditions, faith communities or none

Celebration of the Word is more than just a legal requirement at St Gregory’s; it is an integral part of school life. Everyone in our community can contribute to it and gain from it, regardless of their level of belief and commitment.

Morning Celebration of the Word is led by both staff and pupils. In the instance of pupil led Celebration of the Word, staff facilitate this by providing guidance and resources where needed. Staff are equipped to do this through regular staff formation during CPD time, with the support of the school chaplain and the senior leadership team.

We are also aware and acknowledge that Celebration of the Word and assembly are distinctive activities. Where they may sometimes form part of the same gathering, the difference will always be made explicit by making the sign of the cross and saying together, "Let everything we do and say this day be . . ." at the start and end of Celebration of the Word.

Celebration of the Word content and delivery will:

- Use a balance of silent reflection, prayers, responses, music, drama, and multimedia
- Promote communal singing of hymns as a year group
- Set an appropriate atmosphere with a sense of order, expectation, and occasion
- Provide a focus using artefacts, candles, signs, and symbols which can be virtual or real
- Each form room has a prayer shelf for their bible, candle and crucifix to be placed
- Focus on an area of Catholic Social Teaching and/or a school charism
- Respond to local and national events, as required
- Led by staff, students, and visitors
- Adhere to this policy

6.1 Whole School Worship

Weekly Celebration of the Word: The entire school comes together for communal worship as a year group at 8.35am on the following days:

- Monday – Year 11
- Tuesday – Year 10
- Wednesday – Year 9
- Thursday – Year 8
- Friday – Year 7

Special Liturgies: Celebrations during significant liturgical events such as Advent, Lent, feast days and holy days of obligation are planned and prepared in partnership with our local parish priests. These liturgies take place in the Chapel, Drama Theatre and Sports Hall throughout the school year during term time.

6.2 Class-Led Liturgies

Student Participation: Classes plan and lead their own liturgies, allowing students to engage actively in the worship process. This occurs a minimum of once per year for each form as part of the school's Personal Development programme.

6.3 Staff Prayer and Formation

Staff prayer and formation are vital elements of the spiritual life of the St. Gregory's community. As educators and role models, staff are not only called to teach but also to witness to the faith through personal and communal prayer.

Regular opportunities for prayer and ongoing faith formation nurture the spiritual well-being of staff, deepen their relationship with God, and strengthen the Catholic identity

of the school. By fostering a culture rooted in prayer, staff are better equipped to inspire students and uphold the mission of Catholic education.

Staff reflection and prayer takes place after briefing on a Monday morning. This is led by a different member of staff each week with and is rooted in our school charisms, Catholic Social Teaching and the liturgical year.

All staff meetings including Departmental, Pastoral, Safeguarding, Middle Leadership, Operations and Senior Leadership Teams begin with their own bespoke prayer.

7. Celebration of the Sacraments

7.1 Mass

'The Mass is the source and summit of the life of the Church. The Mass, also known as the Celebration of the Eucharist, is the most important action of the Church and from its celebration, the life of the Church flows. It is important therefore that the Mass is celebrated worthily and well.' (Prayer & Liturgy Directory, p40)

Opportunities to celebrate Mass at St. Gregory's throughout the school year is outlined in the Annual Plan for Provision.

7.2 Reconciliation

During the seasons of Advent and Lent, one of the two versions of the Church's rite of Penance will be offered to staff and pupils. This will take place during morning Celebration of the Word or at another point in the school day, depending on the availability of a priest.

7.3 Confirmation

As a school within in the Archdiocese of Liverpool, St. Gregory's assists in sacramental preparation of young people for Confirmation. This occurs in Year 8 through Celebration of the Word, chaplaincy and Religious Education (as per the Archdiocesan directives).

8. The Liturgical Year

8.1 Seasonal Themes

The liturgical year is central to the spiritual life of a Catholic school, guiding its rhythm of prayer, worship, and reflection. It provides a structured way to celebrate and remember the key events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, helping students grow in faith and understanding of the Church's traditions. By aligning school prayer and liturgy with the liturgical calendar, the school fosters a deeper connection to the universal Church, nurtures a sense of sacred time, and encourages a lived experience of the Gospel throughout the academic year:

- Advent and Christmas: Preparing for the coming of Christ through reflection and service
- Lent and Easter: Emphasising penance, reflection, and the celebration of the Resurrection
- Feast Days: Observing key saints' feast days to learn from their examples

9. Roles and Responsibilities

The effective planning and celebration of prayer and liturgy at St. Gregory's relies on the active involvement of all staff and key stakeholders. Each member of the school community has a unique role to play in nurturing and sustaining the spiritual life of the school, ensuring a shared understanding of how we work together to promote meaningful, inclusive, and faith-filled liturgical experiences that reflect our Catholic mission and values.

9.1 Governing Body

- Ensure the Prayer and Liturgy Policy is implemented effectively
- Support the development of spiritual life within the school

9.2 Senior Leadership Team

- Quality assure and support the planning and execution of prayer and liturgy activities
- Provide resources and training for staff to lead worship confidently

9.3 Religious Education Leader

- Coordinate the integration of prayer and liturgy into the curriculum where appropriate
- Support staff in developing and leading prayer and liturgy sessions

9.4 Chaplain

- To coordinate the Celebration of the Word rota in line with the liturgical calendar
- To lead and promote chaplaincy teams in all year groups
- Maintain good communication between the school, clergy and local parishes
- Represent the school at Chaplaincy and Archdiocesan meetings

9.5 Staff

- Participate in and lead prayer and liturgy activities
- Encourage and support students in their spiritual development
- Support pupils in preparing and delivering Celebration of the Word

9.6 Students

- Engage actively in prayer and liturgy
- Take responsibility for their personal spiritual growth
- Prepare and deliver Celebration of the Word as a form group

10. Inclusivity and Respect

At St. Gregory's, we respect the diverse backgrounds of our school community whilst also recognising as a Catholic school, we have a duty to make provision for baptised Catholics. While our practices are rooted in Catholic tradition, we strive to create an environment where all students feel valued and included. Participation in prayer and liturgy is strongly encouraged but remains voluntary, with respect to individual beliefs upheld at all times.

11. Evaluation and Development

To ensure the continued relevance and effectiveness of our prayer and liturgy practices:

- Regular Review: The policy will be reviewed annually to reflect changes in the school community and the wider Church
- Feedback: Input from students, staff, and parents will be sought to inform improvements
- Training: Ongoing professional development and formation will be provided to staff to enhance their ability to lead and support prayer and liturgy

12. Resourcing

St Gregory's Catholic High School has:

- A full time Chaplain to support staff, students and the local community in all aspects of the Catholic life of the school.
- The school chapel which is a facility open to the whole school. It provides a place of sanctuary, peace, quiet and space for personal and collective prayer. The Blessed Sacrament is reserved in the tabernacle during term time
- Resources to support all staff in the delivery of Celebration of the Word. Books, bibles, prayer books, symbols, artefacts and information are available at any time from the chaplain
- The support and experience of local Priests and parishioners of the Pastoral Area available when needed
- Access to other resources and updated by the Chaplain on a regular basis
- Inset training on the preparation and delivery of Celebration of the Word available to all staff
- Induction sessions when required for new staff, ECTs and ITTs