



Grays Convent

HIGH SCHOOL

Collective Worship Policy

This Policy was adopted by the Governing Body Autumn 2018

This Policy was amended in Spring 2022 and reviewed by the Governing body in 2022

The Mission of Grays Convent High School

At Grays Convent we recognise the value of each individual as a gift from God to the world. We are a Catholic school founded by the La Sainte Union Sisters and our ethos is one of unity, prayer, worship, service and work. We strive to follow the example of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary by enabling learning to take place in a caring and accepting community. We are blessed by Jesus the Good Shepherd, try to follow him in everything that we do, and in doing so make the most of our God given talents. We are one with God.

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.

Collective worship takes place in classrooms, in the Hall, Gym and Chapel. Where it is not possible to meet in person for collective worship due to the Covid19 pandemic, alternative arrangements are made to attend worship remotely, for example by using Google Classroom to share pre-recorded assemblies and liturgies.

The Place of Collective Worship in the Life of our School

Our school was founded by the L.S.U. Sisters to reveal God's love; therefore worship in this school is more than just a legal requirement. It is an integral part of school life since our mission statement says that "We are a Catholic school and our ethos is one of unity, prayer, worship, service and work."

Collective worship takes into account 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 – or none;
- Those from other faith backgrounds.

It will be an educational activity or experience to which all can contribute and from which all can gain.

The Aims of Collective Worship at Grays Convent

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 and to have opportunity to develop a personal relationship with him
- To reflect on spiritual and moral issues
- To explore 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 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
- To take time out 'to wonder at', 'to come to terms with' and 'to give worth to.'

Principles

All Acts of Worship in this school will:

- Give glory and honour to God;
- Be centred on the Word of God, on Mary, the life of a saint or Catholic Social Teaching.
- Be a quality activity, fundamental to the life of the school and its Catholic character;
- Develop in pupils skills that enable them to prepare, organise and lead worship rather than always participating or contributing in a token way;
- Give pupils positive liturgical experiences, appropriate to their age, aptitude and family backgrounds in order to prepare them for the liturgical life of the Church.¹ In order to do this, celebrations will:
 - be kept small wherever possible or appropriate to help to personalise the experience;
 - be short and appropriately paced;
 - be simple, including a range of experiences offered in a variety of groupings and in a variety of settings.

(¹ Directory for Masses with Children, paragraph 9.)

As a school we aim for “acts of collective worship to engage all pupils’ interest and inspire them in deep thought and heartfelt response.” (*) Pupils will regularly prepare and lead worship with confidence and enthusiasm, and experience different methods of praying. They will also show respect to those who have different beliefs and attitudes to spirituality from their own.

*Diocese of Brentwood Handbook for Inspection of the Catholic Life and Religious Education in Schools.

Collective worship in our school will be:

- properly planned
- adequately resourced
- recorded
- monitored
- evaluated

Collective worship and the law

(From CES Guidance on the right of withdrawal from RE and / or Collective worship)

Pupils in VA schools in England and Wales are required by law to take part in an act of collective worship on each school day* which must be in accordance with the provisions of the school's trust deed and instrument of government. In Catholic schools this is therefore "in accordance with the rites, practices, disciplines and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church". ** Academies in England are required by their funding agreement and Articles of Association to comply with similar requirements.***

* School Standards and Framework Act 1998, s.70(1).

** School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Schedule 20; Instrument of Government, clause 2.

*** The Mainstream Academy and Free School: Supplemental Funding Agreement (April 2016); Model Articles for Catholic Academies (February 2015)

Whilst it is very rare that children in Catholic schools do not fully participate in the religious education curriculum and collective worship of the school* , it is possible that the school receives a request that a pupil: (i) be withdrawn from religious education and/or collective worship, or (ii) receive religious education which is different to that taught at the school. (i) The right of withdrawal from Religious Education and/or Collective Worship Parents of pupils in VA schools and voluntary academies are permitted, by law, to request that their child is withdrawn from receiving all or part of religious education** and/or collective worship*** given at the school and any such request shall stand until such time that the parent's request is withdrawn.

What happens to the pupil if he/she is withdrawn from Religious Education and/or Collective Worship?

If pupils are withdrawn from religious education and/or collective worship, schools have a duty to supervise them, though not to provide additional teaching or to incur extra costs. Depending on school resources, the withdrawn pupil may be moved to another venue within the school, for example, the library, or, perhaps in a very small school with limited resources, the pupil may remain in the RE classroom but will not participate in the RE lesson. If the pupil is moved to another venue within the school they must be supervised. If a pupil is withdrawn and alternative arrangements cannot be made for the type of RE the parents' desire (see below), for example, due to resources/timetabling etc, it is the parents' responsibility to provide materials for their child which have clear outcomes and are connected to the faith/philosophy/world view of the parents. A school is able to refuse a request that the pupil study other aspects of the National Curriculum during times they have been withdrawn from RE and/or collective worship as time is already given over to these subjects within the school's basic curriculum. It is important to bear in mind that the parental right to withdraw a child from RE was intended by Parliament to be a 'conscience clause' and not to be used as a general opt-out clause. Care should be taken not to confuse a request for absence due to religious observance with a request to withdraw a child from RE and/or collective worship.

* The CES Census Digest 2016 records that 0.02% of pupils in Catholic schools and academies in England were withdrawn from collective worship in 2016.

** S.71(1) School Standards and Framework Act 1998

***S.71(1A) School Standards and Framework Act 1998

Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Headteacher, Head of R.E, Chaplain and is evaluated and reviewed by the governors every three years. The Foundation Governors in particular will play a most important role in this review and visit regularly to report on the spiritual life of the school.

The school will regularly seek the views of stakeholders on the effectiveness of our spiritual life.

From policy to practice (from Staff handbook)

Daily act of Worship

All Form Tutors conduct an act of worship with their form groups. Form Tutors may choose to lead the worship themselves or may organise a rota among the pupils. A daily act of worship is sent by the Chaplain each day on PowerPoint; following the liturgical year and consists of a daily Bible reading/Saint of the day/Catholic social teaching e.g. CAFOD with a reflection & prayer (traditional or personal, as a model for pupils.)

Form prayer resources

Every Form Tutor is provided with the following resources, which also need to be accessible to pupils and to other teachers covering registration:

- A Good News Bible
- 'A Catholic Prayer Book'
- Catholic Prayers in School Planners
- House Prayers, School Motto, School Mission Statement, Prayer Before Lessons
- 'Our Form Prayer Book': Provided by the Chaplain for all regular Form prayer times (usually via PowerPoint. Also, students' own prayers should be kept in this book.

Tutors are encouraged to facilitate opportunities for pupils to share and experience different styles of prayer and approaches to classroom worship. The Chaplain is available to discuss ideas or offer any help, if required. The Chaplain provides a Liturgical Calendar with the saint of the day, a range of seasonally appropriate Bible readings, prayers and hymns to choose from. Catholic Social Teaching, International days, respect for other world faith days are linked and centred on a relevant bible passage to ensure a Christian Act of Worship. Pastoral issues e.g. 'honesty' are also linked to a relevant scripture using Biblegateway. The Chaplain is available to discuss ideas or offer any help, if required.

Liturgy

Liturgy forms and unites the whole community in shared values and purpose. Through our worship, the shared Word of God, prayers and hymns both form and unite us in heart and mind to be Christ-like in our welcome, love, service, care and concern for others. We are united then in working for the common good; that all we do may give glory to God. Liturgy then spurs us to a higher level of thinking; it empowers and encourages us to serve others and to unite in working together for the good of all. Unity is the root of communion, community and communication; all three are necessary for union in our school.

By 'liturgy' we mean not only the main Liturgy of the Mass, and other official services of the Church, but also the broader sense of liturgy (stemming from the Greek (leitourgia) meaning public worship.

The following list outlines the main aspects of liturgical life of the school:

Daily acts of collective worship

Whole Year and SLT assemblies happen once a week.

An act of worship takes place every day in form time.

School prayer to be said at the start of all lessons

We are blessed by Jesus the Good Shepherd; try to follow him in everything that we do, and in doing so make the most of our God given talents. Amen.

Mass

Mass is celebrated on Holy Days of Obligation when they occur on a weekday in term time.

Year Group Masses are usually celebrated every two weeks (except during G.C.S.E.'s in the hall.) Every R.E. Class takes a turn to prepare a Mass for their Year Group, and staff who are free are welcome to attend.

There is always an Easter Mass for the whole school to attend.

We have a welcome Mass for our Year 7 pupils and their parents.

A Leavers' Mass is held in June, prepared by the Year 11's for themselves and their parents.

Remembering also, any members of staff who may be leaving.

We have an end of year Mass.

Christmas Carol service

A Christmas Carol service is celebrated during the school day for pupils and staff. Parents, Governors and other visitors are invited to an evening Carol Service.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

During the season of Advent & Lent, there is opportunity for all who wish, to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in special services prepared by the pupils.

Lenten / Easter Reflections with the Chaplain

R.E. classes visit the Chapel for Lenten and Easter Reflections on the Holy Week Stories/ Stations of the Cross / Resurrection stories.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in Advent, Lent and June with the Chaplain

Girls have opportunity to experience silent reflection before the Blessed Sacrament either in Year groups or R.E. classes during Advent, Lent and June, the month of the Blessed Sacrament.

Additional Voluntary Liturgies: (Everyone is invited and very welcome to all our liturgies)

We have a variety of prayer groups offering different styles of prayer, these are known as Chapel Clubs and are chosen by the girls. They include:

Celebrations

Celebrations are held in the Chapel on special feast days, when there isn't a Mass e.g. Feast of the Presentation in the Temple. We have a dramatized Bible story, reflection, prayer & praise with singing.

Prayer & Praise

Chapel Rep meetings include Gospel style contemporary and traditional hymns with time for spoken prayer & praise as well.

Drama Group

A dramatized Bible story, with reflection, prayer/ lively praise song

Rosary Group

Rosary Group is open to all once a week in May and October and additionally on request or for special intentions.

Drop in Prayer (Personal Prayer time)

At breaktimes, and after school on request, girls are encouraged to drop in to the Chapel even just for a minute to pray to God in their own way. (Girls and Staff are always welcome to visit the Chapel in their free time.)

Stations of the Cross

Pupils are invited to join in praying the Stations of the Cross during the season of Lent. Stations of the Cross are displayed in the Main Foyer and up the stairs during Lent as well as in the Chapel. They are also included in Class Lenten Reflections with the Chaplain

Meditation

Meditation or quiet reflective prayer is offered in Chapel Rep meetings. It is included in some Lenten/Easter Reflections and with Class Groups coming for Exposition in June.

Staff Prayer

Each week begins with prayer/reflection at Staff Briefing. All Staff are always welcome to visit the Chapel when they have a few minutes free and especially when there is Exposition. They are always welcome to attend the Masses in school. Staff have a mass on the first day of term.

Prayer in Action

During Advent and Lent the whole school community shares the same daily/weekly focus or task.

Private Prayer

In addition to our school liturgies, we also have opportunities for private prayer:

- Staff are always welcome to pray in the Chapel.
- The Chaplain is available for prayer on request by pupils or staff.
- Pupils need to ask the Chaplain if they wish to pray privately in the Chapel.
- If the Chaplain is not available they must be accompanied by an adult for safety reasons e.g. matches, candles, breakables.
- No food or drink is allowed in the Chapel, except for liturgical celebrations.
- Pupils are asked to leave their bags outside the Chapel.
- We respect the Chapel as a quiet, special place in our school.

Retreat

A retreat is available for each Key Stage with Aylesford Priory and the Walsingham House team.

Staff Briefings and collective meetings

Staff briefing on a Monday begins with a prayer and/or reflection led by the Headteacher or Chaplain. It might also be led by a member of SLT / Head of R.E. All staff meetings begin with a prayer. Staff have a Mass on the first day of term, including the blessing of hands.

Appendix 1

Summary of Legal Requirements

We acknowledge the legal requirement that there must be a daily act of worship for all pupils. (This can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single act of worship for all pupils, or separate acts of worship in school groups.) We understand that simply holding an assembly that includes a prayer, said either by the teacher or everyone present, does not fulfil this requirement. We also acknowledge that collective worship and assembly are distinct activities. They may sometimes form part of the same gathering, but the difference between the two will always be made clear.

The act of worship is not designated curriculum time under regulations and will not be subsumed under any part of the curriculum, including religious education.

As a rule, acts of worship will take place on the school premises. However, the governing body has the discretion to allow acts of worship to be held elsewhere e.g. church, "on a special occasion".

In this school, as with any Voluntary Aided School, responsibility for arranging Collective Worship rests with the Governing Body after consultation with the headteacher.

Parents have a right to withdraw their child from Collective Worship. However, given the importance of Collective Worship in a Catholic school, parents and prospective parents will be made aware of the fact that it can never be confined to 'timetabled slots' but may take place in a variety of contexts other than those which are specifically structured.