



ST MARY'S SCHOOL HAMPSTEAD

Prayer & Liturgy POLICY

March 2025

Reviewed March 2025
Next Review Date: September 2025

MISSION STATEMENT

St Mary's School seeks to provide an outstanding education firmly founded on the Catholic Faith.

Spiritual and moral principles are nurtured in a way that is reflected in daily life.

Within a happy and caring environment and based on the recognition of the dignity and worth of each child, where each child is valued and high standards are expected. Intellectual development is emphasised and fostered along with the pursuit of academic excellence to achieve individual potential and spiritual development.

St Mary's values the unique contribution of every child within the school community.

St Mary's is inclusive and welcomes girls from all communities and faith backgrounds, or none, and believes that all benefit from the school's values.

St Mary's aims to encourage an active partnership between home, school, parish and the wider community.

The Context of our Chaplaincy Policy

The Chaplaincy sits at the heart of spiritual life at St Mary's, Hampstead. It exists to provide relevant spiritual and pastoral support to all girls and staff in the school community. While remaining true to the Catholic identity of the School, and drawing heavily from the example of Mary Ward, our Foundress, the Chaplaincy is committed to offering an experience that takes into account the lived experience and faith needs of all the members of the St Mary's community, students, parents and staff alike, whether they are those:

- who are regularly practicing Catholics;
- for whom St Mary's might be their first and only experience of Church;
- from other Christian denominations;
- from other faith backgrounds, or none.

The Chaplaincy strives to engage students with the spiritual aspects of themselves, no matter what their experience of faith or Church, so that they are spiritually aware and able to make their own choices and form their own beliefs. The Chaplaincy serves a number of functions:

- To offer pastoral support to girls, staff, and the wider school community;
- To provide opportunities for prayer, worship, and the Sacraments, especially the celebration of Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation to girls, staff, and parents;
- To facilitate the whole School's involvement in community service and charity fundraising.

Our Collective Responsibility

Chaplaincy is such a vital and central part of our School that it must be the shared responsibility of all members of staff. However, some staff members bear a particular responsibility for Chaplaincy, and for the provision of prayer and liturgy within the School:

a. Governance

The Governors, as guardians of the Catholic school's life and mission, have a responsibility to ensure that:

- prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the School and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the Prayer and Liturgy Directory for Catholic Schools in England and Wales;
- there is a named person who is responsible for prayer and liturgy in the School (Fr Chris Connor, our School Chaplain);
- the Prayer and Liturgy Policy is updated regularly and shared with all stakeholders;
- in collaboration with the Headmistress, ensures that there is a budget for prayer and liturgy that reflects its centrality to the life of a Catholic school.

b. Headmistress

The Headmistress, as the spiritual leader of the school as a Catholic community, ensures that:

- prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the School and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the Prayer and Liturgy Directory;
- they work in partnership with the School Chaplain and RE Leaders of Learning;

- those responsible for prayer and liturgy in the School have been given appropriate training and formation to ensure that all guidance is followed and adhered to;
- there are suitable resources for prayer and liturgy in the School.

c. School Chaplain

The School Chaplain ensures that:

- prayer and liturgy are central to the Catholic life of the School and therefore are in line with the guidance set out by the Prayer and Liturgy Directory;
- there is an Annual Plan of Provision for prayer and liturgy across the school year which identifies liturgical seasons and key celebrations, as well as opportunities for the celebration of the Sacraments;
- there is daily planned prayer for all pupils, appropriate to age and ability, as outlined in the Prayer and Liturgy Directory;
- pupils are supported in their liturgical formation to take an active role in the planning, preparation, and delivery of prayer and liturgy according to their age and capacity, and in a manner which facilitates their progressive participation;
- resources to support the planning of prayer and liturgy are appropriate and readily available to staff and pupils;
- induction on prayer and liturgy takes place for new members of staff as required;
- staff have access to effective training and formation opportunities;
- there is collaboration with local clergy and parishes;
- liaison with the Diocesan Advisory Service and others is maintained to ensure they keep updated with best practices.

The Chaplaincy Team

The Chaplaincy Team comprises the School Chaplain, Headmistress and RE Leaders of Learning. It also includes Year 6 Pupil Chaplains, whose role is to promote Chaplaincy activities and faith opportunities in the School and help lead Collective Worship with younger year groups.

The Chapel

St Mary's Chapel on-site Chapel is at the heart of the school. Mass, Gospel Services, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Praying Together Services, hymn practice and choir practice all take place in the Chapel. The Chapel is a place of life and is open to all - whether you wish to say a prayer or simply take advantage of a quiet place to sit and think. We endeavour to have the Blessed Sacrament reposed in the tabernacle at all times while the School is open.

Communal Worship

Liturgy

Each girl participates in a three-weekly cycle of Mass/Gospel Service/Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in Years 1-6. There is also a weekly hymn practice that these same girls participate in. A weekly Collective Worship takes place across the whole school, including EYFS, each Thursday morning and is led by our Year 6 Pupil Chaplains.

Eucharist

"The Eucharist is the Source and Summit of our Christian Life." (CCC 1324). It is integral to the faith life of St Mary's. During term time, we endeavour to offer between one and two Masses per week in the School Chapel: one is part of our three-weekly liturgy cycle, and the other is a Community Mass to which parents are invited at 08.10 on a Friday morning. Mass in the School is also open to all members of the community who wish to attend, including parents. Wherever possible, students will fill the service roles of the Mass, for example: serving altar, reading and leading singing.

The school endeavours to ensure sufficient members of staff are trained to lead a Service of Word and Communion in the event of a genuine emergency. However, a Service of Word and Communion can never replace the Holy Sacrifice of Mass.

Whole School Masses

For special school events and for Holy Days of Obligation that fall during term time, the School will have a Whole School Mass for Years 1-6 that is held during the school day. In most years, the following Whole School Masses are held:

- Early September (Welcome Mass);
- 8th December (Feast of the Immaculate Conception);
- 24th January (Mary Ward Day);
- Ash Wednesday;
- Ascension Day;
- 29th June (Feast of Saints Peter and Paul).

Prayer

Prayer is integral to life here at St Mary's. Our prayer life follows the rhythm of the School day, as our liturgical practices follow the rhythm of the Church calendar. It is our duty to offer reverent, diverse, and appropriate prayer experiences, and to ensure enough time is devoted to prayer and worship in the timetable to impress on everyone the importance of prayer.

The prayer life of the School should, as much as possible, reflect the liturgical life of the Church. Care should be taken to highlight and explain the various seasons, and to offer appropriate liturgies. Throughout the year, common forms of prayer and devotion are made available to the students, to enable them to experience different ways of praying.

Prayer is offered in a number of ways:

Daily Morning Prayer

Starting the day with a morning prayer is important to the School community and students are expected to begin each day with prayer. This will either be done in an assembly, liturgy, hymn practice, Collective Worship or Form Time. These sessions allow for spontaneous prayer or our Morning Prayer which can be found in classrooms.

Grace Before Meals

Students are encouraged to be thankful for the food that they eat, and in all dining rooms in the school, Grace is displayed prominently.

Sacraments

St Mary's is committed to making all appropriate Sacraments available to our students, and the

Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered to all members of the school community who are preparing for their First Holy Communion.

First Holy Communion

First Holy Communion is offered annually to students in Year 4 and above.

The First Holy Communion preparation programme begins in September and continues throughout the school year. First Holy Communion is usually celebrated in May. We believe the programme teaches young people to take ownership of their faith through various activities, conversations, and prayer.

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching forms the foundation of everything we do at St Mary's, so it is natural that our charitable fundraising and outreach efforts fall under the Chaplaincy banner.

Fundraising

Each year, the students, staff and parents vote for a Whole School Charity, towards which all funds raised in that year will go.

Our priority when choosing charities to support is that its aims must not have any objectives or goals contrary to Catholic Teaching. The charity does not have to be Catholic but its values should be ones that St Mary's and Catholicism uphold.

Outreach

Our Community Hope Project aims to provide homeless members of our wider community with immediate and practical support in the form of care bags full of toiletries, water and a voucher of small monetary value to buy some food. The bags also contain helpline numbers for the homeless.

We also run annual Lenten Promises where each class comes up with a way that they can support the school or local community, such as litter picking in the local area.

Training and formation

All new staff will be supported during induction and beyond, so that they fully understand the responsibility they carry within their individual role for leading prayer and liturgy in the School. Any individual training needs will be identified and addressed through training and formation. There will also be the opportunity for whole-staff professional development at least once a year, so that all staff understand the importance of prayer and liturgy and relevant staff are well supported to lead as required.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality and impact of prayer and liturgy will take place regularly, and at least annually, and involve all key stakeholders: pupils, parents, staff, clergy, and governors. Areas for development will be identified and issues raised will be actioned and evidenced as appropriate.

Review

The Policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of policy review conducted by the governors.