



ST MARY'S SCHOOL HAMPSTEAD

Prayer & Liturgy POLICY

September 2025

Reviewed: September 2025

Next Review Date: September 2026

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, worth and wellbeing of each child, high standards are expected. Intellectual development is emphasised and fostered along with the pursuit of academic excellence.

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.

About the Prayer and Liturgy Policy

This policy outlines provision of Prayer and Liturgy at St Mary's School, Hampstead. This policy has been drawn up as a result of staff discussion and has the full agreement of the governing body. The implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all the teaching staff. This policy includes all the children in our school including the children in the EYFS.

Context

'The celebration of Catholic liturgies and prayers as an integral part of the learning and teaching should enable the school community to become reflective, experience the presence of God and should develop a mature spiritual life.' (Marcus Stock (2012), Christ at the Centre, Catholic Truth Society, 23.)

Prayer and liturgy are not designated curriculum time. In the context of the Catholic school, this means that times of prayer and liturgy are not considered to be part of the allocation of curriculum time for Religious Education.

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, and the Prayer and Liturgy Co-Ordinator);
- the Prayer and Liturgy Policy is updated regularly and shared with all stakeholders;
- in collaboration with the Headmistress, ensure 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 and Prayer and Liturgy Co-Ordinators

The School Chaplain and Prayer and Liturgy Co-Ordinators 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.

Overview of Prayer and Liturgy provision

a. The Chaplaincy Team

The Chaplaincy Team comprises the Headmistress, School Chaplain and Prayer and Liturgy Co-Ordinators (as part of their role as Leaders of Learning for Religious Education). It also includes Year 6 Pupil Chaplains, whose role is to promote Chaplaincy activities and faith opportunities in the School and to help lead Collective Worship with younger year groups.

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.

The Chapel

St Mary's on-site Chapel is at the heart of the school. Mass, Gospel Services, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, Praying Together Services, singing 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.

Daily Liturgy in Years 1 to 6

Liturgies take place daily in Years 1 to 6 and consist of the following:

- **Monday: Assembly for Years 1 to 6, led by the Headmistress.** This is an opportunity for the pupils to hear the weekly Gospel message, to learn about key events in the Liturgical calendar, or to reflect upon the origins of Saints Days and Feast Days. Assemblies also introduce or make links to the Caritas Catholic Social Teaching theme of the half term. Sometimes, representatives of charities are invited to present their outreach work. The 'St Mary's Way' is also celebrated each week, with one pupil in Lower and Upper School awarded certificates for living out the Catholic ethos of our school in their actions towards others. At the end of each Assembly, pupils are invited to share in spontaneous prayer.
- **Tuesday: Liturgy in the Chapel.** Each pupil in Years 1 to 6 participates in a three-weekly cycle of Mass, Gospel Service or Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, led by the School Chaplain. Pupils of all ages are invited to lead the First Reading and Bidding Prayers. During Mass, pupils in Year 6 participate in the Chapel Choir and pupils in Year 5 are altar servers or members of the Offertory Procession. All pupils, parents and staff who have celebrated their First Holy Communion are warmly invited to receive the Eucharist, while others are welcome to come forward for a special blessing.
- **Wednesday: Singing in the Chapel.** Pupils come together in our sacred Chapel space to sing songs of worship, sharing their voices in celebration of God's love. Hymns are chosen that are relevant to events in the Liturgical calendar.
- **Thursday: Celebration of the Word.** Each class has a designated Pupil Chaplain, who has been trained by the Prayer and Liturgy Co-ordinators to plan and lead the children in celebration and reflection of the weekly Gospel reading. They follow the CAFOD Collective Worship structure of 'We Gather', 'We Listen', 'We Respond' and 'Going Forth'. Opportunities for prayer, meditation and reflection are encouraged, making use of the prayer table resources available

to them (e.g. Liturgical colour-coded cloth, candle, Rosary). Pupil Chaplains and class teachers aim to evidence and evaluate sessions regularly in the Celebration of the Word class folders.

- **Friday: Praying Together Service in the Chapel.** Each week, Lower School (Year 1 to Year 3) and Upper School (Year 4 to Year 6) meet in the Chapel for Praying Together Service. This is a liturgy prepared and led by one class based on the Gospel of the week, sharing prayers, hymns, reflections, drama and artwork. Parents and carers are also invited to attend the worship.

Daily Liturgy in EYFS

Liturgies take place daily in the Early Years and consist of the following:

- **Monday: Assembly led by the Headmistress.** This is an opportunity for the EYFS pupils to hear the weekly Gospel message, to learn about key events in the Liturgical calendar, or to reflect upon the origins of Saints Days and Feast Days in an age-appropriate manner. Assemblies might also introduce or make links to the Caritas Catholic Social Teaching theme of the half term. The 'St Mary's Way' is also celebrated each week, with one pupil EYFS awarded certificates for living out the Catholic ethos of our school in their actions towards others. At the end of each Assembly, pupils are invited to share in spontaneous prayer.
- **Tuesday: Singing in the Chapel.** Pupils come together in our sacred Chapel space to sing age-appropriate songs of worship, learning about the importance of joining together in celebration of God's love. Hymns are chosen that are relevant to events in the Liturgical calendar.
- **Wednesday: Celebration of the Word.** EYFS has a designated Year 6 Pupil Chaplain team, who have been trained by the Leaders of Learning for Religious Education to plan and lead the younger children in celebration and reflection of the weekly Gospel reading. Pupil Chaplains and class teachers aim to evidence this in the Celebration of the Word class folders.
- **Thursday: Praying Together Service in the Chapel.** Each week, EYFS pupils meet in the Chapel for Praying Together Service. This is a liturgy prepared and led by one class based on the Gospel of the week, sharing prayers, hymns, reflections and artwork. Parents and carers are also invited to attend the worship.
- **Friday: Celebration of the Word.** Led by their class adults, the EYFS pupils come together in prayer and reflection. They are encouraged to make use of the prayer table resources available to them (e.g. Liturgical colour-coded cloth, candle, prayer stones), creating a focused and meaningful worship experience that helps young children connect with their faith community.

The 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: altar serving, reading and leading prayers or 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);
- Early October (Harvest Festival);
- 1st November (All Saints)
- 8th December (Feast of the Immaculate Conception);
- 6th January (The Epiphany of the Lord);
- 24th January (Mary Ward Day);
- Ash Wednesday;
- Ascension Day;
- 29th June (Feast of Saints Peter and Paul).

More information regarding the specific timetable of Masses, Prayer and Liturgy in each academic year can be found in the Annual Plan of Provision (APOP).

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, liturgies in the Chapel, Celebration of the Word or Form Time. These sessions allow for spontaneous prayer or our Morning Prayer which can be found in classrooms.
- **Grace Before Meals.** Pupils are encouraged to express gratitude for their daily meals through grace before eating. Grace prayers are prominently displayed in both classrooms and the Dining Room, fostering a culture of thankfulness and mindfulness around mealtimes.

- **End of Day Prayer.** Pupils conclude each school day with a moment of prayer and reflection, offering thanks for the day's experiences and seeking guidance for the evening ahead. This closing prayer takes place in Form Time or classroom settings, using either spontaneous prayer or our established End of Day Prayer text that is available in all classrooms, helping pupils transition peacefully from school to home.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

St Mary's is committed to making all appropriate Sacraments available to our students, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered by the School Chaplain to all members of the school community who are preparing for their First Holy Communion.

Staff, parents and pupils of all ages are also invited to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation during seasons of penance, especially Lent.

First Holy Communion

First Holy Communion is offered annually to students in Year 3 and above. The preparation programme begins in September and continues throughout the school year, led by the School Chaplain and Catechist. First Holy Communion is usually celebrated in May, with families invited to attend the celebration. 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. We follow the 'Rooted in Love' rotation on a half-termly basis, allowing pupils to explore and put into practice the following principles:

- Autumn 1: Care of Creation
- Autumn 2: Preferential Option for the Poor
- Spring 1: Solidarity and Peace
- Spring 2: Community and Participation
- Summer 1: Dignity of Workers
- Summer 2: Human Dignity

Fundraising

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

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 or visiting hospices.

Resourcing

Prayer and liturgy are central to the school's understanding of itself as a Catholic school, and this is reflected in the annual budget allocation and available resources, including staff time, chaplaincy provision, and dedicated spaces for prayer and liturgy. The Catholic character of the school is reflected in religious artefacts and images on display throughout the building. Dedicated spaces for prayer and liturgy will be furnished and maintained as such, and updated to reflect the Church's liturgical season.

Training and formation

Staff training and formation costs are funded separately to resources, to ensure that all staff are able to fulfil their responsibility to contribute to the prayer and liturgical life of the school.

All new staff are 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, often led by the Diocese of Westminster. There is also 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.

Reviewed: September 2025

Next Review Date: July 2026

Charlotte Owen, Fr Chris Connor, Katy Meyer and Lucy McManus
Headmistress, School Chaplain, Prayer and Liturgy Co-Ordinators 2025-26