



St Thomas Catholic Voluntary Academy

Collective Worship policy

July 2025. Review Date: July 2026

"We serve God when we work and play together"

RATIONALE

It is a legal requirement that all registered school age pupils take part in an act of worship each day.

In line with the 1988 Education Reform Act, these acts of worship must be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian Character" for the majority of the time. They must also be "appropriate, having regard to the ages, aptitudes and family backgrounds of the pupils".

Families who send their children to this school are in the main Catholic or 'nominally' Christian. In addition, there are children who are from religions other than Christianity and some from non-religious backgrounds.

We recognise that in asking our children to worship, we must consider the background that our children come. Assemblies are conducted in a manner that is sensitive and respectful to the individual faiths and beliefs of all members of the school community.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP DEFINED

In an educational context, worship reflects the values, aspirations and faith of the people worshipping. It is a time when the whole school or groups within the school meet in order to consider and reflect on common concerns, issues and interests.

Worship defined in this way draws on literature, music, art, drama and other sources of inspiration and reflection for pupils and staff whose religious and cultural backgrounds are of any faith or none – in this way collective worship is inclusive not exclusive.

Whenever possible we follow the principles that:

- *Assemblies should be inclusive
- Assemblies should be educational with curricular links.



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- Assemblies should contribute to the religious education of pupils.
- Assemblies should have a sense of occasion.
- Assemblies should use materials that cover a variety of religions and cultures.
- Assemblies should, on occasions, involve parents and carers.

**The word "assembly" is used but this could be include mass or a Celebration of the Word.*

AIMS & PURPOSE

We believe at St Thomas Catholic Voluntary Academy that collective worship both supports and strengthens what we aim to do in every aspect of school life. Our caring ethos, and the value which we place on the development of the whole child spiritually, morally, socially, culturally and intellectually, is reflected in our worship.

The aims and purpose of collective worship at our school are:

- to provide an opportunity for the children to engage in an act of worship.
- to enable children to consider spiritual and moral issues.
- to enable children to explore their own beliefs.
- to encourage participation and response.
- to develop in children a sense of community spirit.
- to promote a common ethos with shared values and to reinforce positive attitudes.
- to teach children how to worship.

Through our collective worship we aim to provide a caring and supporting environment for children to:

- Become increasingly aware of themselves as individuals and groups within the school and wider community.
- Grow in understanding of the feelings of the other people in everyday situations and beliefs.
- Explore the language which people use to express their feelings.



- Deepen their sense of wonder about the world around them.
- Grow in confidence when making a presentation to the group or whole school.
- Respond freely and/or spiritual stimulus.
- Acknowledge diversity and affirm each person`s life stance, whether it be religious or not.
- Foster a sense of fellowship bringing pupils together.
- Create an atmosphere where children can experience worship.
- To encourage in pupils a reflective approach to life.
- To introduce pupils to various aspect e.g., prayers, hymns etc.

OBJECTIVES

We see school worship as an educational opportunity with clear objectives. We use this time to encourage pupils to:

- Show interest in, and a concern for, members of the school community.
- Celebrate special occasions together.
- Show concern for the daily happenings in school life, the local community, the wider world.
- Share appreciation of worthwhile projects undertaken by groups within the school.
- Explore and review the variety of values, attitudes, standards, manifested in religions and society.
- Reflect upon dimensions of human life – the wonderful, beautiful, joyful, heroic, humorous, tragic, sorrowful, solemn etc.
- Reflect on the way in which humankind has expressed the deepest spiritual feelings through the creative and expressive arts, scientific discovery, religious practice, service to God and other people.

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT



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We recognise that worship can contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the children at St Thomas Catholic Voluntary Academy. We aim to celebrate all that is good about life, including our school communities and our beautiful natural surroundings.

We recognise that it is important for pupils to share what is meaningful and significant to them – this will encompass some events which may be sad, worrying or difficult to understand or accept.

ORGANISATION & PROCEDURE

The Headteacher is responsible (under the School Standards & Framework Act 1998) for arranging the daily collective worship after consulting with the Governing Body.

We hold a daily act of collective worship in our school. This forms part of each assembly, held in the hall, which is whole-school assembly (Mondays), and a whole school hymn assembly (Wednesdays). A Celebration of the Word led by a group of children within class on a Tuesday. A Celebration Assembly (Fridays) in which children's efforts in the week are recognised. (Thursdays) is when whole school masses or class led celebration of the words to the whole school take place. *As our children progress through school, we expect them to take increasing ownership in the planning, preparation and delivery of the class liturgies so by the time the children are older juniors they can deliver a class liturgy proficiently and confidently.*

On days where the school hall is commissioned (e.g., school photographs, theatre production) an act of worship will take place within class.

The Headteacher or Deputy Head Teacher normally lead assemblies, but sometimes local clergy, other representatives of local religious groups, or visitors from community organisations e.g. The Canaan Trust, Changing Lives, NSPCC, The Knights of St Columba are invited into the school to share the leadership of the assembly.

Sometimes the themes of our assemblies reflect and build on topics that we teach as part of the school curriculum, such as the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning/PSHE (a mental health charity Changing Lives is invited in). We plan our assemblies as part of a series of themes well in advance of the day they take place through the Annual Plan of Provision, although some assemblies do respond to events as they happen either within the school community or in the wider local or national community of which we are a part.

Assemblies offer an opportunity to acknowledge and reward children for their achievements both in and out of schools. They play an important part in promoting the ethos of the school, which is that all children are valued, and all achievements are recognised. Our Friday 'Achievement Assembly' reflects the accomplishments and learning of the children.

Music is a very powerful means of creating the right atmosphere and unifies and uplifts the school community. We have a bank of music from to draw upon – taken from a variety of cultures and



types. We sing a variety of songs and hymns. We select our songs/hymns carefully to match the theme. The singing assembly is led by Mr Conlon.

We invite parents to class-led liturgies, as well as assemblies for special events (or times of the year). We encourage them to attend as this promotes the community spirit of the school and is a practical demonstration of the way the home and the schoolwork together to support the achievements of our children.

We also welcome governors' attendance at our special assemblies, similarly as a way of governors sharing in and getting to know the work of the school.

A programmed schedule for collective worship is devised by the Headteacher and shared with staff. This will include stories, poetry, biography, drama, special occasions/events and will be taken from other philosophies and religions as well as Catholicism/Christianity. There is also flexibility to include current and topical issues.

A variety of teaching and learning styles and active and interactive methods are used including:

- Sacred and secular stories/readings
- Music
- Artefacts and Visual Aids
- Dialogue and Pupils' Contributions
- Visitors
- Stories
- Film
- Prayer/ Creative Silence

The person leading the assembly will choose the style/method and resources which are appropriate to the content, the age, and the background of the children.

Pupils will be asked to participate in a variety of ways: answer questions; give opinions; describe an event/feeling; drama; discuss in pairs.

The ethos of both assembly and worship should promote "togetherness" and a sense of school family/community.



PRAYER & REFLECTION

Prayer and reflection is an effective way of enabling children to focus their thoughts. Children may be asked to close their eyes and reflect upon the assembly that has taken place. A prayer may be read (however this is not always necessary as the use of regular moments of silence also provides opportunities for pupils to respond in a personal way if they so wish). The act of worship may allow children to respond verbally.

SPECIAL ASSEMBLIES TO CELEBRATE

During the course of the year, a number of special assemblies are undertaken to reflect both the traditions and liturgical calendar of the Christian Churches (e.g. Christmas, Easter), and the religious traditions and calendars of all other faiths that may be represented in the school and the wider community.

Special assemblies may be held to mark significant days in the calendar, such as Remembrance Day, St Thomas of Hereford Feast Day, St. Patrick's Day etc.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

At this school we evaluate our acts of worship against some of the following:

- Involvement, enjoyment, attention, reaction of pupils.
- The growth of respect and tolerance within the school community.
- Positive response to shared experience.
- An atmosphere which matches the theme.
- A contribution to individual and community sense of well-being.
- A sense of occasion.
- Good order.
- Staff affirmation.
- A sense of challenge.
- A place in the plan of the school.
- Enrichment of pupils' experience.



WITHDRAW

As we are a Catholic School, and parents/carers have applied to the school knowing this, we expect all children to attend assemblies, mass and celebrations of the word. However, any parent can request permission for their child to be excused from attending religious worship.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The governing body liaises with the Headteacher on collective worship and reviews the policy and practice with him on an annual basis.