



Collective Worship and Spiritual Development Policy

The Catholic Ethos of the School

At St. Albert the Great Catholic Primary School we aim to provide the highest quality education and care for all our children. We aim to offer a welcome to each child and family and to provide a warm and caring environment within which all children can learn and develop.

Our school was founded by and is part of the Catholic Church. The school is to be conducted as a Catholic school in accordance with canon law and teachings of the Catholic Church, and in accordance with the Trust Deed of the Archdiocese of Westminster and at all times the school is to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Nature of Collective Worship at our School

The term "worship" is not defined in the Education Reform Act of 1988. Collective worship at St. Albert the Great Catholic Primary School seeks to set the individual within the context of the realm of the spiritual. It seeks to give expression to the living relationship between God and the worshipping community and between individuals within the community. Collective worship is always linked to the school's mission statement. It may be a collective gathering of the whole school, Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 separately, individual or groups of classes.

It therefore involves us gathering together to express feelings of respect and worth for ourselves, others, our local community and our world as gifts from God, as distinct from meeting to exchange information or deal with organisational issues. Collective worship should provide time for reflection on people's own experiences, a time to recognise and celebrate the values and beliefs of the whole community, both in school and the wider world. At St Albert the Great School, we aim to celebrate the highest aspirations and achievements of our community. We work in very close partnership with the parish priest who takes a leading chaplaincy role, guiding the school's spiritual focus, liturgy and theology.

Collective Worship and Assembly

Collective worship and assemblies are not the same things, but it is usual in our school for an act of worship to take place during an assembly, either as a small part of the assembly or its entirety. At St. Albert the Great Catholic Primary School every assembly incorporates an act of worship that aims to be inclusive, curricular and educational where all pupils are capable of responding.

Collective worship at our school endeavours to encourage the development of the intellectual and spiritual capacities of the child. It is a time when the individual child can be celebrated for his own or her social and academic achievements, and a time to foster the positive values held at our school, the local community and the wider world.

An assembly is a gathering of all of the school. It is concerned with all of the above and includes administrative matters and announcements about school life. It celebrates the achievements of the entire school community, pupils and staff alike and possesses a sense of occasion.

The head teacher and deputy take a prominent role in leading collective worship and assemblies. A wide variety of pupil-led worship is actively encouraged. Parents, governors, faith community representatives and other community groups are encouraged to be involved when and where appropriate, either by occasional participation or by specific invitation. The process of worship takes place through a variety of media, song, story drama, music, poetry etc. It takes place through class assemblies and Masses as well as adult-led worship time.

Learning Expectations and Intended Outcomes

The most important skill to be gained from collective worship is the ability to discover more about one's own faith, and express views and feelings in response to the religious questions that are posed through drama, readings, prayers and other media.

The feelings of wonder, awe, reverence, love, joyfulness and sorrow can be kindled and shared in the imagination, encouraging the children to see through the eyes of another.

The opportunity to reflect on feelings, practices, beliefs and relationships, as well as the opportunity to reflect on religious questions and aspirations will enable the children to respond more openly to the experiences of empathy and see issues from another's point of reference.

In the same way that investigative skills contribute to the teaching and learning of maths, science and other areas of the curriculum, so too, do they contribute to collective worship. The ability to draw meaning from artefacts, poetry, drama and symbolism is fostered. Children are encouraged to draw meaning and value from religious language and books, making the connection between themselves and their own lives, and the life of the community of which they are a part. The interpretation and application of insights is another life-skill that can be gained from worship.

Skills of analysis may be learned from considering the difference between fact and fiction, opinion and fact, belief and evidence. As the children evaluate the ideas and values presented to them they will learn to link them together in a meaningful and coherent pattern that will provide a secure basis for finding purpose in life.

Pupils and staff alike are given the opportunity to grow in their understanding of the influence of beliefs, values and traditions of their own faith and that of other religious communities so that they may develop positive attitudes and respect towards those with different lifestyles and beliefs from their own.

Our school worship is therefore about sharing what is meaningful and significant in our lives. It is about sharing our common concerns and responsibilities, and developing positive attitudes and values. It is about affirming the equality of each individual in God's sight, whatever a child's age, gender, ethnicity, physical or mental ability.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation strategies currently used for assessing the outcomes of collective worship are:

1. • Observation of the children's attentiveness and level of interest shown during the worship
2. • Classroom feedback from pupils; written and verbal
3. • Observation of the children's general behaviour in and around school as well as to one another
4. • Feedback from staff.

Prayer

Prayer is intrinsic and inherent to both collective worship and assemblies.

Our school has a very active approach to prayer and ample opportunities are provided for praying as a body and as individuals. Prayers are said on a daily basis within classes. Each class has a designated area set aside which includes a prayer table and religious artefacts. The liturgies planned within our school involve the entire school community both in the planning and experiencing stage. The opportunity for reflection is a significant element in our liturgies.

The children learn to pray by observation, by learning from adults, by trying out words for themselves, by trying the lilting words of others, but most of all by being allowed to discover that God is and, what is more, that in God's sight they matter tremendously. They are so special to God that they are his children, loved without limit.

We believe as a school that out of that relationship of trust and love, prayer may grow slowly, hesitantly, with repetition, with humour and with honesty. The essence of our relationship with God is that it is enfolded in mystery. It is holy, sacred, profound, glorious, beyond comprehension – and certainly beyond measurement.

How do we Encourage Children in Prayer?

Prayer is central to the spiritual life within the school. Praying with children is a communal activity. Each class has its own prayer focus area, as does the assembly hall. As a school which genuinely values things of the spirit (in music, art, science, literature, the environment) and respects the inner world of the child, we look to offer rich and varied opportunities for spiritual growth to take place.

We offer children the opportunity to pray in silence, aloud or in writing, music, art, dance, both formally and informally. As a staff we encourage the use of the senses in worship. There is no single prayer (unless it is the Lord's prayer) that can convey the whole truth of the relationship between God and ourselves; and just as our ordinary human relationships are built on a mixture of the routine and the exceptional, so should be our relationship with God. We seek through prayer, to help children to become aware of the love God has for them, and thereby enable them to grow in their relationships with God and with rest of humanity, and to discover that although prayer often feels as though we are moving towards God, in truth it is God who comes to us.

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