

PRAYER POLICY



Mission Statement

"We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus as we learn love and grow together"

Reviewed –Autumn 2018
To be reviewed – Autumn 2019
Reviewed by the Teaching and Learning Committee

Signature:

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Chair of Governors

Ratified at Full Governing Body meeting
Date ratified: 20th November 2018

Pope Francis

We are encouraged by the teaching of Pope Francis. In his daily Mass (October 8th 2013) Pope Francis touched on the importance of prayer and forgiveness in the life of a Christian, warning against common attitudes which “close the door” to God. He said

***“The Lord tells us that the first task in life is ‘Prayer.’
Not the prayer of words like a parrot but the prayer of the heart, gazing on the
Lord, hearing the Lord, asking the Lord”.***

A Worshipping Community

St. Vincent de Paul School is a worshipping community in which prayer, worship and liturgical celebration are at the very heart of the expression of Catholic tradition. We actively strive to provide a varied experience of worship and to promote engagement through the creative contributions of both pupils and staff.

Pupils are taught that prayer is a way of talking to God. They are encouraged to develop prayers of their own and to request God’s support during times of difficulty, and when saying sorry, or thanking and praising Him.

We understand that through prayer we can develop our relationship with God and we can talk to Him in many ways. Therefore, it is our duty to provide every child with the opportunity to meet God through engagement in the spoken word, music, dance, drama, art and through silent reflection. We particularly value opportunities to nurture pupils in developing prayer experiences of their own making.

***‘For prayer, worship and liturgy to be real educational experiences
and for them to contribute successfully to the development of
faith in each individual in the community, participation in the
preparation and the action of these events is of prime importance.’***

(Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School)

We realise that as one “instrument” of the Church we cannot achieve this in isolation and need therefore to encourage a collaborative partnership between the home, the parish and the school. Each of these groups has a responsibility to fulfil its role, regardless of any limitations from any of the others.

Linking Home, School and Parish

We make every effort to reinforce and strengthen our links. As part of our faith development commitment, Children attend Mass at St Joseph’s on a rota each week.

Parents are acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their child, and are regularly welcomed into the school to ensure a strong partnership is secured. They are invited to attend class assemblies and other liturgical celebrations, along with

workshops and opportunities for reflection. Emphasis is placed on helping them to understand the vital role they can play in developing the prayer life of their children.

Every child receives a copy of the 'Wednesday Word' each week and is encouraged to put aside some special time to contemplate the Gospel stories and associated ideas and prayers.

Prayer is an integral part of the day at St Vincent de Paul School and is not separated from the rest of school life; therefore pupils will share in this important aspect of our daily experience.

Child Led Worship

'For prayer, worship and liturgy to be real educational experiences and for them to contribute successfully to the development of faith in each individual in the community, participation in the preparation and the action of these events is of prime importance.' (Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School)

We believe that children have a natural aptitude and openness to prayer. Children love to organise and to 'take charge and at St Vincent de Paul School they are actively encouraged to 'take the lead in prayer'

Staff have been trained to empower children to lead their own worship sessions and these are now well established across the school from Nursery to Year 6. A framework of structured activities guides our pupils to initiate prayer within a sensitive and respectful environment. Pupils have the freedom to bring themselves before our God in a fearless and joyful way, working with their friends in an age appropriate way.

Class Assemblies

Children respond in many ways to the world around them and their school life should be full of opportunities for exploration and discovery. Teachers therefore, create an environment where these responses are developed in the recognition that they can form the beginnings of prayer. Every class is encouraged to present at least one assembly to the rest of the school during the academic year. Dates are negotiated with staff so that every teacher feels enthused with the possibilities of themes for their class assembly.

Adult Led Assemblies

Although the Wednesday Key Stage Assembly is led by the Headteacher, it is presented in such a way as to fully engage the whole school. It often reflects the readings of the forthcoming weekend where appropriate and helps to strengthen the links between The Wednesday Word, Sunday Mass and the Gospel theme for the week. Pupils participate by leading the readings, prayers and singing appropriate hymns. There is always a prayer focus and a display on the big screen to capture and hold attention.

Extra Special Times in the Year

As a school we recognise that there are special times within our Catholic tradition that we focus on specific prayers. During May and October, Our Lady and the Rosary are a special focus. Pupils, staff and parents gather each Thursday before school to pray a decade of the Rosary and to share the reflection. Similarly, there are weekly prayer opportunities before school during Lent which explore the Gospel and lead all present into prayer and reflection.

These special prayer gatherings are led by the Headteacher and attended by about forty or so pupils, parents and staff. The pupils have taken over the day today preparations and prepare a 'holy space' in the school hall.

Spontaneous Prayer

In addition to the morning, lunch and evening prayers, we also value spontaneous prayer. Each classroom has a special prayer space that reflects the current topic and the liturgical season. The links with the Curriculum Directory are clearly displayed, responding to the guidance of our Bishops. The prayer areas are intended to support pupils in their communication with God and allow them to initiate their own prayers whilst providing a thought provoking and attractive focus.

(See Appendix 1 for examples of school prayers)

Reflection Opportunities

We have created a prayer garden which is an ideal area for reflection. This is an ideal setting for RE lessons and provides a tranquil area for meditation. It can be used for group or class acts of collective worship.

Similarly, special areas within school have been developed to assist and focus prayer. These may reflect a specific liturgical season or a current Catholic focus such as Laudato Si and Adoremus. These displays can be found both within classrooms and in communal spaces such as the hall or entrance area. The digital screen in the main school entrance raises the profile of our Catholic life and reminds the whole community of our special 'prayer life'

Our Diverse Catholic Community

We identify opportunities for pupils to pray using their mother tongue and these prayers can also be shared during assemblies, liturgies and celebrations. A home/school prayer book is available in every classroom and encourages pupils and parents to talk about and then enter their special intentions in the language that they feel most comfortable using.

Senior leaders encourage the various ethnic groups to use the school and school grounds for celebrations which reflect their own Catholic traditions. For example the Filipino community and the Kerala community use the school grounds for special religious processions such as those seeking the intercession of Mary.

The school also has its own May procession when the life of Our Lady is honoured.

Traditional Church Prayers

Knowing prayers by heart is a gift for life so staff also plan opportunities for pupils to learn formal prayers. These are introduced early in a child's school journey so that they gradually become familiar with their words and meaning. Children love to recite familiar words and to hear from staff and parents that they also learnt these prayers when they were young. Knowledge and understanding of traditional prayers also helps children 'identify sources' (AT1(1) L 4/5) when they are writing at the higher levels in Years 5 and 6.

Music, Dance, Drama and Art

As people of faith we will all have our preferred way of 'speaking to God'. Music, dance, drama and art often appeal to children in a way that the spoken word fails to do. It is important that we give children the opportunity to experience prayer through different activities so that they learn at an early age that there are many ways of praying. At St Vincent de Paul School we endeavour to engage our pupils in a wide variety of prayerful activities so that they grow up with respect for and an understanding of all prayer forms.

We remember that:

"Prayer is the raising up of the mind and heart to God"

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Appendix 1: Examples of school prayers which may be used

Morning Prayers

Nursery

Jesus loves me, This is true. Wherever I am, Whatever I do.
Amen

Reception

Jesus loves me, This is true. Wherever I am, Whatever I do.
Guide me Jesus through this day, In all I think and do and say.
Amen.

Key stage One and Two

God our Father, may this day be yours, All that I think and do and say,
My work and enjoyment, The hard things and the happy things, everything.
May your son Jesus my friend and brother, be with me throughout the day
Please help me to work well, to listen and to pay attention.
Please help me to understand all that I am being taught.
Amen.

Midday Prayer

Bless us O Lord as we sit together. Bless the food we eat today.
Bless the hands that make the food. Bless us O Lord,
Amen.

End of Day Prayer

O my God, I've come to say, Thank you for your love today.
Thank you for my family and all the friends you give to me.
Guard me in the dark of night and in the morning send your light.
Amen.

Appendix 2: Traditional prayers for use in different year groups

For a larger collection of prayers please access the T Drive:

