

ST BENEDICT'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
incorporating
WEST CUMBRIA CATHOLIC SIXTH FORM CENTRE



COLLECTIVE WORSHIP POLICY

Our Mission

At St. Benedict's Catholic High School, we are a community of faith and learning rooted in Gospel teachings and inspired by the Charism of St Benedict. Our virtues and values are entrenched in the wisdom gifted to us through the Rule of St Benedict and these permeate every aspect of our school life. Through our love of Christ, we serve our community and through that service we create global citizens who strive not only for academic excellence, but for a fulfilled life guided by Christ and Virtue.

As such we recognise and emphasise the development of the whole person, encompassing their spiritual, intellectual, emotional, and physical well-being. Our approach aims to foster a deep and personal relationship with God while nurturing intellectual curiosity, emotional intelligence, and physical health. Through regular prayer, reflection, and engagement with Scripture, we encourage students to grow spiritually, developing their faith and understanding of Catholic teachings.

Introduction

At St. Benedict's, we recognise the importance of collective worship as an integral part of our Catholic identity and spiritual development. This policy outlines our commitment to providing meaningful and inclusive collective worship experiences that reflect the values and teachings of the Catholic Church.

The Governors of St. Benedict's Catholic High School are fully aware of their legal responsibilities in regard to Collective worship and they take account of the requirements of the Education Reform Act 1988, Education Act 1996 and the School Standards Framework Act 1998.

As a Catholic Voluntary Aided School the Governors of St. Benedict's take account of the Diocesan Trust Deed which states the acts of worship shall be consistent with the rites and practices of the Catholic Church. The Foundation Governors have particular responsibility for seeing that the Catholic character of the school is reflected in Collective Acts of Worship and are in accordance with the Trust Deed.

The act of worship is not designated curriculum time under regulations and cannot be subsumed under any part of the curriculum. It is distinctive and meets legal requirements.

Worship in this school is more than just a legal requirement. It is an integral part of school life and central to our Catholic tradition.

Definitions

Collective Worship is concerned with giving glory, honour, praise and thanks to God. It is our loving response, in word and action, to God's invitation to enter into relationship made possible through the work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Holy Spirit. Worship is at the heart of St. Benedict's School.

Prayer may be an individual experience, or if it is an activity with others may form part of an act of worship.

All **liturgies** involve the praise, thanksgiving and adoration of God and are, therefore, acts of worship. However, not all worship will be liturgy as it may or may not include symbol and action.

An **assembly** is any experience of gathering/assembling in school. It may include an act of worship but the difference between worship and assembly is always made clear.

Character of Collective Worship

In keeping with the Section 7 (1) of the 1988 Act and the ethos of our school, our Collective Worship is "wholly of a broadly Christian character." Without being rigid or unfeeling towards the minority or non-Christians among us, we chiefly pray Christian prayers, sing Christian hymns and take our readings from the Holy Bible.

Our aim is for our Collective Worship to be prayerful and relevant and as essentially a part of the day as any other school activity. It takes various forms (e.g. structured services, directed reflection (from our own resources or from visiting speakers), assemblies, songs of praise etc. Student participation and preparation is greatly encouraged and implemented. The liturgical year gives our Collective Worship its framework while the needs and events of our worlds of home, school, town and society, make up its content.

Aim & Objectives

- To provide opportunities for students and staff to encounter God through prayer, reflection, and worship.
- To nurture and deepen the faith of our Catholic students while respecting the religious beliefs and backgrounds of all individuals within our school community.
- To promote values such as love, compassion, respect, justice, and service, rooted in the Gospel teachings and our Benedictine Virtues.
- To foster a sense of belonging, community, and shared responsibility among students, staff, and parents.
- To encourage active participation, engagement, and reflection during collective worship.

Principles of Collective Worship Policy

- Every effort will be made to give pupils positive experiences, based on sound educational, pastoral and liturgical principles.
- Acts of Worship will prepare pupils for the liturgical life of the Church.
- Acts of Worship will take into account, as far as possible, the age, aptitudes and backgrounds of the pupils.
- Eucharistic celebrations will highlight a special occasion and will normally be celebrated with those pupils whose faith development has reached an appropriate stage.
- Acts of Worship will usually follow the basic structure of Christian Worship.

School vision and ethos

Our vision is to provide a distinctive Catholic education that nurtures the spiritual, intellectual, social, and emotional growth of our students. Guided by the teachings and values of Jesus Christ, The Rule of St Benedict, and Christian virtue, we aspire to empower each individual to become a compassionate, responsible, and active member of society. We strive to create an inclusive and supportive community where faith, knowledge, and service are intertwined, fostering a lifelong love for learning and a commitment to serving others.

Catholic Identity:

We are proud to be a Catholic school, where Gospel values are at the heart of all we do. We aim to create an environment that encourages students to develop a personal relationship with God, deepen their understanding of Catholic teachings, and live out their faith in their daily lives. We value prayer, worship, and reflection as integral components of our school life.

Holistic Development:

We recognise the unique talents, abilities, and aspirations of each student. Our holistic approach focuses on nurturing their intellectual, emotional, spiritual, social, and physical development. Our holistic approach to education provides a space for personal reflection, allowing students to explore their emotions, values, and beliefs. Through shared worship experiences, students are able to develop a sense of belonging and community, fostering their social and emotional well-being.

Community and Service:

We foster a sense of belonging and community where students, staff, parents, and the wider community work together in partnership. We encourage mutual respect, kindness, and support, valuing the dignity and worth of every individual. Through our collective worship, students are encouraged to develop a spirit of service, understanding the importance of helping and supporting others in their community.

Moral and Ethical Values:

Our school upholds and promotes values grounded in the Catholic faith, such as love, compassion, respect, justice, and forgiveness. We strive to develop in our students a strong moral compass, integrity, and an understanding of social justice issues. Our collective worship encourages students to live out these values and make ethical choices in their interactions with others.

Inclusivity and Diversity:

We celebrate the richness of diversity within our school community and beyond. We welcome students of all backgrounds, faiths, and cultures, promoting mutual understanding, acceptance, and respect. We strive to create an inclusive environment that recognises and values the unique gifts, contributions, and dignity of each individual. We stand firm in our invitational worship when communicating with students and families of different faiths, backgrounds, and cultures.

Partnership with Parents and Guardians:

We recognise the vital role parents and guardians play in the education and formation of their children. We actively seek their involvement, support, and collaboration in their child's learning journey, maintaining open lines of communication, and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for their child's well-being and progress. Collective worship provides an opportunity for parents and guardians to engage with their child's spiritual development. It allows them to participate in prayer and worship alongside their children, reinforcing the partnership between the school and home. Collective worship also opens avenues for communication and collaboration between the school and parents, promoting a shared responsibility for the spiritual well-being of the students.

Daily Prayers

'Prayer, worship and liturgical celebration are central to our Catholic tradition. It is of prime importance, however, that sound educational and pastoral principles determine the ways in which these are experienced in the school community.'

Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of a Roman Catholic School, Third Ed. 1994, CES

The school day begins and ends with prayer, which is central to our life and work in this Catholic School. At St. Benedict's, we believe that our community can be made distinctive by:

- Organising regular opportunities for staff and students to pray;
- Encouraging and assisting students to reflect on their prayers;
- Guide students in the creation of their own prayers;
- Enable students to prepare and actively participate in the liturgy;
- Foster peaceful and reflective environments for students to develop their prayer life;
- Celebrate prayer and learning through assemblies where students are able to assist in the planning and participation of collective worship;
- Working with our parish communities;
- Inviting parents to engage with the prayer life of the school;
- Sharing with students in Eucharistic and other liturgical celebrations;
- Offering students, the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during either Advent or Lent (depending on the availability of local clergy).

Mass

We aim to ensure Holy Mass is celebrated regularly throughout the academic year, although this is contingent upon the availability of priests in our local community. In collaboration with our dedicated staff and with the ongoing support of the local clergy, we diligently arrange the prayers, readings, music, and various liturgical presentations. Moreover, we actively engage our students in the planning process, fostering their participation and involvement. It is our aim that every year group experiences a minimum of one Mass per half term, nurturing their spiritual growth and reinforcing the liturgical life of our Catholic school.

Liturgies

On certain occasions, it may be more appropriate to arrange non-Eucharistic services. In such cases, the Chaplain takes charge and leads the proceedings, often with the assistance of other staff members. Crucially, these liturgies involve students in their design and, when suitable, in their delivery as well.

Year Group Assemblies

We create a school Collective Worship rota for each term (please refer to the attached document) that outlines acts of collective worship (commonly referred to as assemblies), organised by Senior Leaders, Heads of Year, School Chaplain, or Form Groups. This rota aligns with the liturgical calendar, encompassing the significant feasts of the Church's calendar. Themes are scheduled to aid those who are leading the assemblies.

It is our objective to empower students to take a more active role in both the planning and delivery of these assemblies. Our aim is to foster student leadership and engagement in this aspect of our school's Catholic identity.

Every Collective Worship Assembly, where possible, will follow the following routine:

- Students line up in form groups outside on the yard. At this point students should be registered and be prepared for the occasion. Uniform should be checked here and any issues resolved.
- The assembly leader assigned for that day should be at the front of the hall ensuring students are silent and respectful.
- Students enter the main hall in silence and sit in silence awaiting the rest of the year group.
- Students are greeted with good morning and respond. After which students are asked to stand.
- All (in line with personal beliefs) make the sign of the Sign of the Cross and join in with reciting the opening prayer.
- Students are asked to stand for our Gospel reading which is read by students who have volunteered to be part of our year group reading rota.
- Exploration of Religious Theme as indicated by the Collective Worship rota for the term.
- Reference to scripture and the school's Benedictine virtues.
- Closing Prayer & intercessory petition to St Benedict & relevant Saints in accordance with feast days.
- Sign of the Cross.
- Notices/Awards.
- If Notices/Awards are likely to detract from the purpose of the assembly, be used as a means of disciplining students or cause the Assembly to overrun, these should be delivered in Form Period.

The format of Collective Worship should be as follows:

Entry

- The Head of Year is present in the hall to supervise and control student entry and exit.
- The assembly leader, assigned to that day, is present to assist with supervision and standards.
- Students must enter the Theatre in silence and in full correct uniform.

Atmosphere (environment)

The staff member entrusted with leading each assembly should prioritise the creation of an uplifting atmosphere that fosters prayer, reflection, and worship. It is crucial to cultivate a sense of awe through various means such as a focal point, thoughtful use of music, lighting, emphasis on meaningful words, and relevant quotations.

Planning

The assembly should be thoroughly planned and prepared with use of imaginative resources. These resources may include visual aids like multimedia presentations, videos, artwork, or props that effectively convey religious themes, messages, or stories. All assemblies must contain use of symbols as well as a weekly mission/challenge that is relevant to the theme of our worship.

Theme

- The Theme should help students explore the liturgical year/school mission/school virtues/celebrate our students' achievements and gifts and talents. The themes for each week are sent to all staff members a term in advance.
- It should be clear what key messages we want the students to leave the Collective Worship with. This is achieved through our use of Scripture, relevant quotes, symbolism, and mission/challenges.

- Staff should make sure they open with opportunities for student response and ensure students are carrying this out in a respectful and reflective manner.

Engagement & response

All staff should ensure that, throughout the act of Collective Worship, our students:

- Students act with reverence and respect.
- Students are inspired.
- Students participate enthusiastically.
- Students are challenged to put the teaching into practice.

Policy monitoring and review

- The monitoring of Collective Worship forms part of the school improvement plan.
- The Governing Body include the monitoring of Collective Worship on their agenda.
- Issues raised in the monitoring process will be used to further develop Collective Worship.
- Monitoring of Collective Worship includes observations of collective acts of worship, discussions with those who lead worship, discussions with those who experience worship (pupils, parents, governors and other members of the school community).
- Monitoring will check on resources, visual aids, etc.
- Staff development and in-service training will be recorded.
- From time to time a school audit for collective worship will be conducted to assist in monitoring Collective Worship.
- When the monitoring of Collective Worship has been completed it will lead to an evaluation of the current position and plans for the further development of Collective Worship within the school.
- Chaplaincy team, Subject Leader for RE/RS and SLT to visit tutor groups and to support and develop acts of collective worship.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of progress towards implementation of this policy annually by Subject Leader for RE, chaplaincy co-ordinator, and Head Teacher



Chair of Governors

Reviewed: 21.09.2025

To be reviewed: 21.09.2027

