

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Celebration of the Word Policy 2025-2026

Version	Date	Description of changes and person/organisation responsible
1.0	June 2019	New Collective Worship Policy
2.0	January 2021	Reviewed- Policy updated in line with changes from Diocese
3.0	February 2024	Reviewed- Policy updated in line with changes from Diocese. Collective Worship renamed to Celebration of the Word (COTW). Amendments in when COTW takes place.
4.0	October 2025	Reviewed the policy and updated to be in line with new planning format of child-led COTW.

People Responsible:	Headteacher Prayer and Liturgy Coordinator Governing Body
Reviewed date:	October 2025
Next review date:	October 2026

Mission Statement

Learn, Grow, Love, Live

At Holy Cross Catholic Primary School
we learn about ourselves and about the world.
We grow in faith, we act with kindness, generosity and love
to ourselves and others.
We live life to the full and have a future full of hope.

Introduction & Legal Requirements:

We acknowledge the legal requirement that there must be a daily act of worship for all students. This can take place at any time during the school day and can be either a single act of worship for all students, or separate acts of worship in school groups. We believe that simply holding an assembly that includes a prayer, said by either the teacher or everyone present, does not fulfil this requirement; Catholic worship is where all members of the community participate in thought and word and deed for the greater good of our Catholic community, in all uses of the meaning of the word “Catholic”. We also acknowledge that Celebration of the Word and assembly are distinct activities. They may sometimes form part of the same gathering, but the difference between the two will always be made clear.

Celebration of the Word is more than just a legal requirement. It is an integral part of school life and central to the Catholic tradition. It is concerned with the revelation of God’s presence so that praise, honor and thanksgiving may be given to Him. We aim to strengthen this Eucharistic community, which is called together to give witness to Jesus Christ. Celebration of the Word is the community’s response to God, which invites us to enter into a loving relationship with Him, made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Aims of Celebration of the Word:

Celebration of the Word enables all members of the community to:

- Worship God and contemplate His mysteries
- Consider and celebrate our Christian values
- Develop a sense of enquiry and to encourage a search for human meaning
- Unite our worshipping Eucharistic community
- Develop an awareness of the presence of God in others and in oneself
- Consider spiritual and moral issues
- Develop a sense of belonging and a sense of community
- To foster and nurture relationships
- Grow in spiritual, moral, cultural and liturgical understanding
- Develop the experience and skills of prayer
- Reflect upon our own individual faith journeys
- Extend our Christian understanding of scripture and applying to events in our British and international society.

Principles:

Celebration of the Word aims to be memorable and enjoyable. It is designed to actively engage students. It is resourced and well planned with the promotion of Christian values at the heart of the worship. It is also flexible, able to respond to special occasions and unforeseen events e.g. a time of disaster or of celebration. It should be structured to ensure a quality experience for all participants. It should be clear in its liturgical focus and varied in its delivery. It should relate to the age, ability and cultural background of students.

We promote the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs. Christian values, alongside Catholic Social Teaching (CST), are embedded in our school and in our worship and we teach and encourage students to respect one another and to respect and tolerate difference, especially those of a different faith or no faith. It is indeed our most fundamental responsibility to keep our students safe and prepare them for life in modern multi-cultural Britain and globally.

We recognise that extremism and exposure to extremist materials and influences can lead to poor outcomes for children and so should be addressed as a safeguarding concern. We also recognise

that if we fail to challenge extremist views we are failing to protect our students and this must be considered in our approach to the Celebration of the Word.

The Role of the Co-ordinator for Celebration of the Word:

The co-ordinator will be responsible for:

- Formulating a written policy in consultation with stakeholders
- Ensuring there is an improvement plan for Celebration of the Word
- Ensuring that Celebration of the Word is appropriate to the age, aptitudes and family backgrounds of students
- Ensuring that Celebration of the Word takes account of the religious and educational needs of all who share in it and is rooted in the Catholic teachings
- Organising themes for worship
- Assisting the governors and Head of School in carrying out their legal responsibilities with regard to Celebration of the Word

Communication:

This policy will be communicated to:

- All members of the school community
- Parish priests
- New members of staff and will form part of their induction
- New parents, to promote positive attitudes towards collective worship

The Nature of Celebration of the Word at Holy Cross:

We believe that Christian worship in a Catholic school 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.

Rationale:

Our school will comply with the requirements set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act regarding Celebration of the Word and in accordance with the Trust Deed as a school within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Clifton. School worship is an affirmation and celebration of the Christian foundation and value of the school. Worship is central to the life and purpose of our school and will reflect the Christian understanding of God as Trinity. This will include belief in God the source of all being and life, belief in Jesus who reveals God's love by his life, death and resurrection and belief in the Holy Spirit who makes the presence of Jesus known in the world.

Celebration of the Word will take place every day. Celebration of the Word will be wholly of a Christian character. The act of worship is not designated curriculum time under regulations and will not be subsumed under any part of the curriculum, including religious education. In this school, responsibility for arranging Celebration of the Word rests with the Governing Body after consultation with the Headteacher.

Aims:

Celebration of the Word will be in accordance with the teaching of the Catholic Church and will:

- Provide an experience of worship that will allow children to respond to the presence, power and love of God
- Introduce children to Christian language and symbolism and the cycle of the church year
- Explore a variety of ways of praying as well as using community prayers

- Strengthen and support the school community giving expression to and affirming the Christian values of the school
- Reflect on values that are of a Christian nature and on their own beliefs
- Develop a community spirit, a common ethos and shared values
- Recognise the value and worth of each individual in God's world
- Consider spiritual and moral issues
- Foster concern for others within the school and wider world
- Respond to the celebration offered

Framework:

Every child will take part in Celebration of the Word unless withdrawn by his/her parents/guardians and suitable arrangements should be made for these pupils. Since this is a church school, however, worship is central to its life and work and is regarded as a very important part of children's education.

1 (see notes)

Celebration of the Words are recorded in the class floor book – located in the classroom prayer area.

Whilst fully complying with the law, the school will be sensitive to the fact that not all children will come from practising Catholic families.

All staff at Holy Cross are aware of Looked after Children in their classes. We ensure that they receive all possible support and encouragement as pupils who need special provision and positive discrimination, whilst preserving confidentiality and showing sensitivity and understanding.

Organisation:

- Whole school, class or group worship may take place during the school day.
- Whole school Celebration of the Word is held during assemblies on Monday and Friday and is the responsibility of the person leading the assembly.
- On Tuesday and Thursday Celebration of the Word is the responsibility of the teacher in charge of the class or group of pupils and it will be held primarily in the classroom but it may be held anywhere within the school and at any time during the school day.
- Worship is resourced through a collection of artefacts, books, Bibles and prayer books.
- The class-led Celebration of the Word will follow the structure: Gather, Word, Response and Mission.
- Children are expected to reflect on their Celebration of the Word by responding to questions on the back of their planning sheet – this is to enable them to consider the impact of the session on pupils and themselves as well as consider how they could improve in the future.
- Each classroom will have a crucifix displayed to be the focus for prayer.
- Each classroom will have an R.E. display and a separate Prayer Area (only EYFS will have this combined as with continuous provision, the children use the R.E. table as a prayer station).
- Each class has a prayer book with children's own prayers/ Celebration of the Word presentations.
- Celebration of the Word will take account of personal issues, local issues, national and international issues and the church's calendar.
- Visitors will be invited into school to lead worship.
- Whole school masses are celebrated for Feast Days and are led by a year group and the parish priest.
- Penitential services will assist in personal reflection and growth (a reconciliation service is held during the season of Lent).
- The Easter Liturgy will include events around the Passion of Christ and will be a focus for worship. The school's local parish priests are invited to visit the school during this celebration and participate in the class reflections. The school work on a 3-year cycle:

Easter Whole School Celebration

Cycle A

- Reflection Classrooms

Cycle B

- Easter in a Box

Cycle C

- Easter Windows

Monitoring and Evaluation:

At least once a year the school's provision of worship will be evaluated to consider whether it meets the needs of all pupils and whether pupils are making progress in acquiring skills and abilities in organising and leading worship. Worship will be monitored by the Headteacher and the R.E. Lead with support from the Chaplaincy team.

Notes:

1. Parents have a right to withdraw their child from Celebration of the Word. However, given the importance of Celebration of the Word in a Catholic school, parents and prospective parents need to be made aware of the fact that it can never be confined to 'timetabled slots' but may take place in a variety of contexts other than those which are specifically structured.