

Catholic Life and Mission Policy

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy



St Ralph
Sherwin
Catholic Multi Academy Trust

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Version 1	September 2025	Fully revised policy aligned to the Prayer and Liturgy Directory (PLD), Religious Education Directory (RED), and Catholic School Inspectorate (CSI) Framework – CLM Strand)

1. Catholic Life and Mission

“When Jesus is asked which is the greatest commandment, the answer is the same in all three of the Gospels: to love God with all your mind, heart, soul and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself.”

At St Mary’s Catholic Voluntary Academy, Marple Bridge, this call to love is at the heart of our educational mission. Rooted in the vision of the Second Vatican Council (*Gravissimum Educationis* 2) and the principles of the CSI Framework, we live out a threefold mission: Its first purpose is to ensure that all pupils understand the faith that gives the school its identity as a Catholic school. The second, is to ensure that all are invited to learn how to worship God in spirit and truth through the prayer and liturgy of the Church. The third, is the formation of all to live in conformity with the pattern of human goodness, truth and justice that we find in Jesus Christ.’ ¹ This can be summarised as:

1. **Faith Understanding** – ensuring all pupils understand the faith that gives our school its identity (RED).
2. **Worship and Prayer** – inviting all to worship God in spirit and truth (PLD).
3. **Formation for Life** – enabling all to live according to the Gospel pattern of goodness, truth and justice (CLM)

This policy works alongside our Religious Education Policy, Prayer and Liturgy Policy, and Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy to ensure Catholic life is central to all we do.

¹ CSI Inspection Handbook

2. Mission

Vision Statement:

"We live and learn by journeying with Mary to Jesus, for the greater glory of God."

Motto:

For the Greater Glory of God. Ad maiorem Dei gloriam. (AMDG.)

Mission Statement:

Our mission statement is:

- **Taught** so pupils understand it at an age-appropriate level and can articulate its meaning.
- **Lived** through daily prayer, charitable work, and the promotion of Gospel values.
- **Shared** in our school environment, communications, and partnerships with parents and parishes.



3. School Environment

Visitors to St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Marple Bridge, immediately experience the distinctive Catholic character of our school through the welcoming physical environment, meaningful images and symbols, and a learning atmosphere that honours the dignity of every person as created in the image and likeness of God.

At St Mary's, we strive to create a spiritually enriching, engaging, and visually inspiring environment. Examples of this include:

- Every classroom displays a crucifix.
- Each room features a carefully maintained and inviting prayer area.
- Statues of Our Lady and our 'Let Us Pray 2Gether' resources are available in all learning spaces.
- Every class has a dedicated 'liturgy box' containing coloured cloths and high-quality religious artefacts.
- Prayer focal points are thoughtfully arranged to correspond with liturgical themes and seasons.
- Classroom displays highlight the current Religious Education topic, the liturgical season, pupil work, key prayers, and scripture passages.
- Our school grounds include a peaceful prayer (Mary) garden, an eco-friendly area, a thriving school allotment and a Wellbeing Garden.

4. Catholic Curriculum

The Catholic vision of education is distinctive, with its core beliefs, values, and aspirations inspiring every aspect of the curriculum at St Mary's. Our school is a close-knit learning community grounded in the teachings of the Gospels. While Religious Education forms the heart of our curriculum, this philosophy is woven throughout all subjects and activities, reflecting our commitment to meeting the needs of every individual in our community.

At a developmentally appropriate level, pupils are introduced to the nine principles of Catholic Social Teaching using CAFOD resources. We also engage children with accessible materials based on the writings of the late Pope Francis including *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti* and more recently Pope Leo XIV. Through this, we nurture their moral compass and equip them to thoughtfully respond to social, moral, and ethical challenges in the wider world. Our Catholic curriculum underpins our charitable work and commitment to social justice.

Relationships, Sex, and Health Education (RSHE) at St Mary's is taught within a Catholic framework, recognising that all people are created in the image and likeness of God. Please see our RSHE Policy for further details.

Learning about other faiths is an integral part of our Religious Education (RE) curriculum, as outlined in our RE Policy. Exploring the beliefs and cultures of those who do not share the Catholic faith is a vital expression of the Catholic call to love one's neighbour. It also prepares our pupils for life in modern Britain by fostering understanding and respect for diversity.

5. Charitable Outreach

At St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Marple Bridge, we strive to nurture an awareness of the needs of others, locally, nationally, and globally, and to cultivate a spirit of generosity and compassion inspired by the teachings of Jesus Christ. Through dedicated lessons on Catholic Social Teaching and *Fratelli Tutti*, pupils learn the importance of standing in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable.

Our Chaplaincy Team coordinates a range of fundraising events and charitable outreach activities throughout the year. These include:

- **Harvest:** Pupils are encouraged to bring in food donations for local food banks (wellspring), and the school serves as a permanent collection point for contributions all year round.
- **Remembrance:** We sell poppies and related merchandise to support the Royal British Legion.
- **Advent:** Pupils select a charity to support and collect gifts to brighten the lives of elderly members of the parish.
- **Lent:** Fundraising efforts for CAFOD are led by activities chosen by the pupils.
- **Throughout the Year:** We support various causes such as Macmillan Cancer Support through cake sales and other creative initiatives through our class charity initiative.

- **Christmas:** Pupils send Christmas cards to elderly parishioners and school neighbours, fostering community connections.

Pupils are encouraged to support one another as well as their families, teachers, and the wider community. Our aim is to cultivate a whole-school ethos that inspires generous giving of self alongside a deep respect and appreciation for others.

6. Working for Social Justice

Pupils engage in activities that inspire them to act for justice, including:

- Campaigns for environmental care (*Laudato Si'*) through recycling and energy awareness.
- Participation in Fairtrade Fortnight.
- Raising awareness of refugees and marginalised groups through assemblies, artwork, and parish involvement.
- Promoting equality and respect in line with British Values and Rights Respecting Schools principles.
- Write and meet with local MP on matters of human dignity such as Send my Friend to School and advocate for local issues in line with Catholic Social Teaching principles and our SANCTA values.

7. Chaplaincy

Our chaplaincy provision supports the spiritual life of the whole community. The spirituality and prayer life of the school are an evident part of its Catholic life and mission. The Prayer and Liturgy policy details the school provision. Chaplaincy provision at St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy plays an important role in the spiritual and moral development of the whole community

The Chaplaincy Team includes a lay chaplain, staff and pupil chaplains (SANCTA Squad), who:

- Maintain and lead class prayer spaces.
- Plan and lead celebrations of the word at class and whole-school level, following PLD guidance.
- Support Marian devotions in May and October.
- Organise seasonal prayer initiatives (Advent Wreath services, Stations of the Cross).
- Plan and lead termly Mission Days
- Lead pupil participation in parish liturgies with Father Greg and Father Stephen. Offering opportunities for informal pupil led prayer during break or lunch times
- Organising retreat days, days of recollection
- Undertaking large projects such as developing a prayer garden
- Keeping the pupils updated with information about donations to charity, such as for foodbanks and CAFOD
- Being a role model to others by modelling reverence and joy where applicable
- Writing and leading whole school acts of worship, such as the Remembrance Service

- Accompanying members of the school community, especially in times of need

8. School Community

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy is a welcoming place for children, families and members of staff from all faiths and none. Recognising that Christ is at the centre of our school we strive to support and value each member, especially the most vulnerable.

Our behaviour policy is driven by our belief that all are unique and made in God's image and likeness. See our Behaviour Policy.

Children and staff at St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Marple Bridge are encouraged to participate in a variety of awards that celebrate our commitment to living out Catholic Social Teaching. These include awards such as Livesimply, Faith in Action, and Rights Respecting School

As part of a wider family of Catholic schools, St Mary's Marple Bridge collaborates closely with local Catholic schools in clusters, within our Multi Academy Trust, and across the diocese. Through our Religious Education curriculum, pupils develop an understanding of the Universal Church and their place within a global Catholic community. Our Ambassadors for Hope proudly represent over 8000 pupils and have had the privilege of sharing their work with Bishop Patrick.

At St Mary's Marple Bridge, we encourage everyone to live life to the full and strive to achieve their God-given potential. Staff members have access to the diocesan continuing professional development and formation programmes.

We are an inclusive community where each person is valued as made in God's image and likeness. We:

- Foster strong home-school-parish links.
- Work in partnership with local Catholic schools in the diocese and trust.
- Provide staff with ongoing formation opportunities through diocesan CPD.

9. Parents

At St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy, Marple Bridge, we recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children, and we value working in close partnership with them. Parents are encouraged to support their children's learning in Religious Education by helping with homework tasks and engaging in discussions about the work being completed, especially when preparing to receive the Sacraments.

Throughout the school year, parents are warmly invited to join a variety of events including class assemblies, curriculum meetings, whole school Masses, and liturgical celebrations held both in school and at the local parish church. Special events, such

as the Christmas Celebration, also provide opportunities for parents to come together with the school community.

During Advent, parents are invited to take part in the 'Travelling Cribs' initiative, which encourages family sharing and reflection at home. Similarly, during Lent, the 'Easter Mystery' resources are sent home to support spiritual preparation. Parents are also encouraged to become active members of the PTA, helping to organise and host events that bring our school community together. All funds raised directly support and enrich the experiences we offer to our pupils and families.

We value parents' voices and invite them to share their views through questionnaires, curriculum meetings, and parents' evenings. St Mary's operates an open-door policy, welcoming ongoing dialogue and partnership with families.

10. Parish Links

Strong links with the local parishes are a vital part of the Catholic life at St Mary's Marple Bridge. Our school is served by both St Mary's Parish, with Father Greg as parish priest, and Holy Spirit Parish, where Father Stephen leads the community.

Pupils have opportunities to visit the churches to explore their features and learn about their significance. Father Greg and Father Stephen support our Religious Education curriculum by visiting school to speak on important topics such as Baptism, Reconciliation, and Vocation. Our relationship with both priests is further strengthened through their celebration of key services within school, including Mass and the commissioning of the Chaplaincy Team.

We actively support the Justice and Peace groups of both parishes by promoting their campaigns and acting as a collection point for donations. Additionally, we share communications from Father Greg and Father Stephen with our school community to encourage attendance at church and participation in parish events.

Our pupils:

- Attend parish Masses and liturgies throughout the year.
- Contribute to parish events through singing, readings, and charity work.

11. The Coordinator for Catholic Life and Mission

The Coordinator for Catholic Life and Mission is John Nish, Headteacher.

(Full role description in Appendix 1)

12. Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is monitored by the Coordinator for Catholic Life and Mission, evaluated by staff and governors every three years, or earlier should updated guidance from the

Catholic Education Service or Diocesan Education Service be recommended. This policy is reviewed in line with diocesan guidance and CSI expectations. Foundation Governors play a key role in its evaluation.

The next scheduled review will take place in September 2028.

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Appendix 1

The Role of the Coordinator for Catholic Life and Mission

- Formulating a written policy for Catholic life and mission
- Ensuring that there is a development plan for Catholic life and mission included in the school development plan
- Ensuring that pupils are able to explain the Catholic life and mission of the school, appropriate to their age, aptitudes and faith backgrounds
- Organising themes for outreach, timetable of charitable support, involvement in campaigns
- Developing staff confidence and expertise and enabling them to articulate the mission of the school and its impact on life

Planning, recording, monitoring and evaluating

- Maintaining and developing effective procedures and documentation
- Planning school involvement in national and local projects e.g. the environment
- Use a global planner to ensure relevant days are marked in school e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day,
- Making judgements on outcomes, provision and leadership of Catholic life and mission to inform the ongoing work on the school Catholic Self Evaluation Document

Communication

- Communicating to members of the school community the significance of Catholic life and mission in the life of a Catholic school
- Reporting to and consulting with the governors and headteacher regarding matters of concern and development
- Acting as consultant to colleagues
- Encouraging positive attitudes towards Catholic life and mission
- Informing newly appointed colleagues of school policy regarding Catholic life and mission
- Communicating with parents, governors and the parish community
- Liaison with the school chaplain/Chaplaincy team
- Liaison with the Diocesan Department for Education

Professional development/Ongoing formation

- Leading and organising in-service training and ongoing formation on the Catholic life and mission of the school
- Attending appropriate in-service courses e.g. updating Rainbows training, CAFOD CPD, reporting back and leading staff training
- Keeping up to date by personal reading

Resources

- Evaluating existing resources and contacts
- Ensuring resources are available to promote the Catholic life and mission of the school e.g. resources for Rainbows, Mini Vinnies, Catholic Social Teaching, Faith in Action
- Budgeting efficiently

[Consideration should be given to the establishment of a planning group for Catholic life and mission, which might include, the coordinator, the headteacher, deputy, staff, pupils, governors and school chaplain. It would be part of the role of the coordinator to lead this group.]