



Collective Worship Skills Strategy (2026)

St Mary's Catholic Voluntary Academy | Progression Guide & Staff Framework

Note: this is a concise skills strategy for a more comprehensive overview please refer to the document: CW Comprehensive Skills Strategy for Staff.

1. Strategic Context & Principles

This strategy provides a streamlined, highly functional developmental progression roadmap for corporate prayer and liturgy at St Mary's. Fully aligned with the St Mary's Prayer and Liturgy Policy (2025-2028), the Religious Education Directory (RED), and the national Prayer and Liturgy Directory (PLD), this document equips staff to move confidently from leading worship to facilitating pupil agency.

The Core Four-Part Structure (G-W-R-M):

- **Gather (See/Hear):** Establish the community in a dedicated prayer space.
- **Word (Hear):** Proclaim scripture using the Good News Translation (GNT); Year 6 introduces the English Standard Version (ESV).
- **Response (Think):** Deepen engagement through silent reflection, ritual, or creative response.
- **Mission (Do):** Provide a practical takeaway to live out the Gospel in daily life.

Inclusion Rule: Always use the phrase 'invited to pray' rather than 'directed to pray' to remain universally respectful of all pupils' personal faith journeys and backgrounds. Pupils will be encouraged to participate in the Catholic tradition wherever this is appropriate and possible, and all pupils will be expected to be tolerant and respectful of people's individuality and belief. (see Prayer and liturgy Policy for further details)

2. Universal Classroom Environment Mandates

Every classroom must maintain a designated, non-negotiable prayer table/space containing:

- **Liturgical Cloths:** Must adhere to the correct season using the Liturgical Wheel / Ordo.
- **Sacred Objects:** Standard non-negotiables: A crucifix, a physical GNT Bible, and a candle.
- **Interactive Elements:** A prayer tree, box, or string with plain paper or templates (hearts/praying hands) for personal, private intentions or Lenten/Advent promises.
- **Extended Use:** The space must be accessible throughout the day for quiet personal reflection, spontaneous prayer, or after tasks are completed.



3. Phase-by-Phase Progression Framework

With Particular focus on Class Celebrations of the Word.

To simplify execution, the strategy is structured below into clear pedagogical phases.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS: Nursery & Reception)

Focus: Experiencing Routine, Holy Spaces, and Ritual Foundation

Expected Pupil Capabilities & Scope:

- Participate in short daily prayer routines and age-appropriate hymn practice.
- Reception joins whole-school Monday Collective Worship (COW) from the Pentecost term. In Advent and Lent terms EYFS do their own class COW on Monday, with; both attending the whole school Friday COW from the outset.
- YR will take ownership of the 'Gather' element by late Lent/Pentecost term (suggesting what items are needed). Focusing on the 'see' aspect of see/hear/think/do.
- Evaluate non-verbally via drawing memories or sharing brief verbal responses in structured floor books (staff may scribe pupil voice).

Staff Responsibilities & Facilitation Mode:

- Model reverent prayer behavior, make the sign of the cross, and teach the holiness of liturgical symbols.
- Exclusively lead and plan the Class COW, explaining liturgical colors and objects using consistent vocabulary, supporting pupils' comprehension of the 'gather'/see element.
- Scribe student voice quotes into speech bubbles within class floor books alongside photographic evidence.
- Staff to lead opportunities for a range of prayer experiences both formal and spontaneous.
- To consider using a range of creative objects: use objects like stones, shells, and fabric to stimulate prayer and reflection.

Core Resources & Vocabulary Focus:

- Non-negotiable sacred items, children's story bibles (e.g., Lion Bible), and physical visual cues.
- Key Vocabulary: Pray, Amen, Thank You, Love, Listen, Sing, Friends, Kindness, Peace, Blessing.
- For Key Prayers see part 4, below.

Key Stage 1 (Years 1 & 2)

Focus: Introduction to Structural Frameworks & Scriptural Context

Expected Pupil Capabilities & Scope:

- Participate in Class COW, whole-school worships, daily prayer, and hymn practices.



- Set up the prayer table independently, i.e. know the non-negotiables by Lent (Y1); and utilize the liturgical wheel to choose cloths (by Pentecost Y2).
- Lead peers in the worship, by starting/ending with the Sign of the Cross. Pupils should play an active part in deciding (with staff) what to include as part of the **see/hear/think/do** aspects. They should lead the '**Gather**' in Y1 and with support explain the chosen **Respond** and **Mission**. By Y2 Pentecost term pupils should be able to lead on all aspects G-W-R-M, having first discussed and rehearsed this with an adult. In Y1 & 2 pupils will select from a choice the respond and mission. In Y2, pupils will begin to suggest the why behind the what of the choices for respond/mission and later in the year suggest their own ideas for the 'Mission', trying to link this to the theme/word of the week.
- Read short scriptural extracts or phrases from the GNT (Y1 fluent readers/adults, Y2 fluent readers or read extract with adult reading the majority).
- Evaluate sessions via simple Q&A (Y1) or 'Thumbmonitors' tracking see/hear/think/do (Y2) or providing pupil voice feedback through discussion, which adults can scribe. Share ideas of what works well and what helped them feel prayerful and make suggestions for next time.

Staff Responsibilities & Facilitation Mode:

- Co-create and pre-plan worship in partnership with small pupil groups using the SRS Planning Sheet.
- Pre-select distinct, simplified choices for the 'Respond' and 'Mission' elements for pupils to select from.
- Provide pupils with the correct (extract of) scripture (GNT) for them to plan from. (Refer to the 'weekly themed scripture links' document)
- Maintain separation between the reverent worship itself and the evaluation session (e.g., by moving to desks) and scribe pupil responses for evidence.
- Staff to lead opportunities for guided meditations, Lectio Divina, and Visio Divina to help pupils develop and experience a range of prayer experiences.
- To consider using a range of creative objects: use objects like stones, shells, and fabric to stimulate prayer and reflection.
- To model a range of responses and gestures, which pupils can then begin to suggest and use in their own pupil led worships and to provide wording for these in the class worship box.
- To ensure each pupil can take part in planning and delivering a class worship at least once a term as part of a small group.
- To provide time outside of the worship to evaluate and record in the class book. Encourage pupil participation with feedback by using devices such as thumbs up and down to engage whole class, as well as scribing pupil voice from individuals. Include some photographic evidence.



Core Resources & Vocabulary Focus:

- Liturgical wheel, 'Let us Pray 2gether' cards, liturgy boxes, and targeted Chaplaincy PowerPoints.
- SRS planning sheet (includes evaluation element), Class liturgy book.
- Key Vocabulary: Worship, Alleluia, Gospel, Holy, Cross, Candle, forgive, sorry, share, community, plus in Y2 liturgy, Altar, Bible, Sacrament, Baptism, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Saint, Peace, Angel.
- Key Prayers: For formal prayers see part 4 below, plus pupils should experience spontaneous prayer and take part in our schools' daily prayers e.g. Grace before meals, after meals and end and start of day prayers.

Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 & 4)

Focus: Developing Student Ownership & Creative Execution

Expected Pupil Capabilities & Scope:

- Participate in Class COW, whole-school worships, daily prayer, and hymn practices.
- Take full active ownership of planning and delivering the Class COW using the SRS planning sheets. Leading on all aspects of G-W-R-M (see/hear/think/do).
- Set up the prayer table independently, i.e. know the non-negotiables including the correct coloured liturgical cloth (checking with staff initially and then using the liturgical wheel) and begin to explain the significance of their choices and what the colours symbolize.
- Pupils in Y3 & 4 will already be confident in selecting and suggesting their own ideas for the **gather** and **mission** elements of the planning and be able to explain why they have chosen them and how they link back to scripture/word of week/theme. – what made them choose them? With Y4 taking greater ownership by suggesting a variety of ways to '**respond**'. Sounding ideas out on adults.
- Pupils will be able to lead/read the scripture for the '**word**' (or extract from if literacy skills remain a barrier) using GNT.
- Incorporate structured responses (e.g., writing custom bidding prayers or designing short litanies).
- Evaluate peers constructively by providing formal, polite justifications and recommendations for future sessions and highlighting positive successes; sharing things that helped them to feel engaged in a prayerful way.

Staff Responsibilities & Facilitation Mode:

- Staff to lead opportunities for guided meditations, Lectio Divina, and Visio Divina to help pupils develop and experience a range of prayer experiences.
- Model the first COW of each term to re-establish high standards of practice and engagement. Model the SRS planning sheet so pupils can then use this too.
- Provide the full scripture from the GNT for that weeks' focus/theme – see the 'weekly themed scripture links' document and provide groups with the SRS planning sheet;



initially supporting them in how to populate this, moving to greater independence towards end of Y3 or in Y4 depending on cohort.

- Act as direct facilitators rather than co-leads; support resource gathering and scriptural understanding. However, more support should be offered in terms of the **respond** and **think** elements to help pupils to plan questions and thoughts and responses that enable them to allow more of the class to participate more fully with the worship, until pupils are able to do this independently.
- In Y3 provision should be made for a TA to take a small group of children out and plan the class COW using the **SRS celebration of the word planning sheet**. In Y4 staff will choose whether their cohort needs them to facilitate time for TA to work alongside a group at a time or whether it might suit them better to have a whole class planning time where all groups plan their COW at the same time and deliver them over the remaining weeks of the half term. Ideally by Pentecost Y3 pupils should be becoming more independent in planning, completing the sheets and delivering ready for transition to Y4.
- Differentiate student groups strategically so more independent pupils lead while staff support lower-confidence groups.
- Facilitate the evaluation process for CW, by providing time outside of the worship to evaluate and record in the class book, leading discussions to share ideas, using things such as sentence starters like, "I felt..." or "I learned..." to help them express their feelings and thoughts about the prayer time in writing. Include some photographic evidence.
- To ensure each pupil can take part in planning and delivering a class worship at least once a term as part of a small group.

Core Resources & Vocabulary Focus:

- Full text of the GNT Gospel displayed visibly, cross, rosary beads, stones, shells, bread, and grapes for visual themes. SRS planning sheet (includes evaluation element), Class liturgy book. Liturgical wheel, class worship box with non-negotiable and other resources)
- Key Vocabulary: Y3 Celebration, Scripture, Symbol, Bread & wine, Holy Spirit, Trinity, Intercession, Thanksgiving, Praise, Reverence; in Y4 Penance, Advent, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, Salvation, Kingdom of God, Disciple, Mission, Faith.
- Key Prayers: Continue to say the daily school prayers; begin to use the examen prayer at the end of some days; participate in spontaneous prayer and learn the age-appropriate formal prayers – see part 4 (below).

Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 & 6)

Focus: Building Leadership Agency, Independent Ministry & Reflection

Expected Pupil Capabilities & Scope:

- Independently formulate all elements of G-W-R-M and the corresponding evaluation criteria, using the SRS planning sheet. (depending on cohorts during the Advent term Y5 & Y6 pupils may need support/active reminders and modelling to bring them back up to speed after the summer break)



- Deliver thought-provoking liturgies tailored for outside audiences, including younger classes and parents.
- Read passages seamlessly from the GNT, transitioning to the ESV translation in Year 6 to prepare for secondary life.
- Maintain reflective prayer journals to personally track internal spiritual growth over time.
- to be brave, to take risks, and to learn from their evaluation.
- To take greater ownership of the worship experience by Make strong links and connections with scripture through whatever they are planning and especially with the Respond and Mission elements of the worship, considering who their audience is (when planning for younger pupils); linking their planning and ideas to the liturgical seasons of the church; and be able to explain the why behind the what of their choices.
- Consider locations for worship in their planning.
- Pupils in Y5 & 6 should be able to complete the planning/evaluation sheets independently (with exception of SEND pupils).
- to generate their own gather, response, word and mission according to the theme. They may use songs, actions, prayers, classroom resources within the liturgy, encouraging active participants throughout.
- Pupils in Y6 SANCTA squad (chaplaincy team) will have greater opportunities and responsibilities to become more active with leading elements of whole school worship.
- Pupils should be recording their own evaluations onto the sheets. This could be self-evaluation or peer evaluation.

Staff Responsibilities & Facilitation Mode:

- Serve purely as sounding boards and legal/safety facilitators, checking content and themes prior to the sessions. (Depending on cohort pupils may need greater support in Advent term to remind them of expectations etc In Y5 staff will judge when and how to take more of a back seat role as facilitators, aiming for independence in Y6, with exception of SEND pupils, who may still require further support in order to fully access the experience.
- Lead occasional high-level guided meditations, Lectio Divina, and Visio Divina to nourish the pupils' own interior life. Plus, allow opportunities within the class menu for pupils to work in collaboration with staff to plan/deliver these experiences from time to time.
- Build in opportunities for pupils to plan for younger pupils e.g. Y6 could plan for YR (Special friends link)
- Challenge pupils to step outside comfort zones, encouraging creative risk-taking in formatting elements. E.g. planning a worship in the outdoor areas around school.
- Provide pupils with SRS planning sheets.
- Timetable in a session in the first week of each term to allow all groups to plan the class COW ready to deliver them during that term, ensuring each pupil can take part in planning and delivering a class worship at least once a term as part of a small group.
- Staff will use the 'weekly theme scripture links' document to identify the weekly word of the week, the CST theme, virtues and scripture which should then create a focus for the worships planned by pupils.



- Staff to provide a bank of resources for pupils to plan from or suitable and safe online weblinks etc and devices for pupils to access during the planning sessions.
- Facilitate the evaluation process for CW, by providing time outside of worship to evaluate and record in the class book. Include some photographic evidence. Ensure pupils engage in giving positive feedback on what helped create a prayerful atmosphere and suggestions for improving the worship next time with a focus on all elements (G-W-R-M and see/hear/think/do) and the spiritual experience as a whole.
- Chaplain and SLT to provide opportunities across the year for Y6 to plan and deliver elements of whole school events, through groups like the SANCTA squad.
- Support pupils with journaling and decide how to embed this experience in their prayer and worship life, providing the necessary resources.
- Staff should be ready to role model the delivery of class COW and should lead the first one in the Advent term. After which they may also choose to lead other class COW, but this will happen on an ad hoc basis to allow staff to jump in and model any specific skills or elements which from observation of the COW's staff have identified as areas where further direction may be useful.
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Core Resources & Vocabulary Focus:

- The Ordo calendar, YouCat (Youth Catechism), safe digital devices for hymn/video sourcing, safe weblinks and any journaling templates.
- SRS planning sheet (includes evaluation element), Class liturgy book.
- Key Vocabulary: Y5: Paschal Mystery, Transfiguration, Ascension, Beatitudes, Covenant, Incarnation, Redemption, Sanctuary, Vocation, and Y6: Eucharistic Prayer, Consecration, Tabernacle, Liturgical year, Ordinary Time, Doxology, Chalice, Paten, Corporal, Acolyte.
- Key Prayers: Pupils will know the school prayers (including the examen prayer which they will sometimes use in place of the end of day prayer), be able to lead prayers and know both informal and formal prayers (see part 4 below) and have a good understanding of spontaneous prayer, maybe even providing opportunities through their worship planning to allow others the opportunity for spontaneous prayer.

4. Liturgical Repertoire & Prayer Progression Matrix

To ensure alignment with Section 5 of the Policy, the following cross-referenced master index defines the exact months formal oral prayers are taught, alongside the structured progression of liturgical responses and gestures.

In EYFS pupils will learn some prayers whereas others may be heard rather than learnt. (Refer to CW comprehensive skill strategy for staff for more details)

Staff can refer back to the 'prayer and liturgy policy' for the wording of the prayers listed below.



EYFS (Nursery & Reception)	• Sept: Sign of the Cross • Oct/May: Hail Mary • Nov/Jan: The Lord's Prayer • Dec: Angel of God • June: Act of Hope • July: Act of Love • Daily: Sung EYFS Grace	• Simple responses (e.g., 'And with your spirit', 'Peace be with you', 'Amen') • Simple litany responses ('Thank you for...')	• Sign of the Cross ('From my head to my heart, shoulder to shoulder.../From God in heaven...') • Joining/holding hands • Shaking hands for Sign of Peace • Crossing chest at Communion for blessing
Key Stage 1 (Years 1 & 2)	• All EYFS Prayers • Sept: Sign of the Cross • Oct: Hail Mary • Nov: The Lord's Prayer • Dec: Angel of God • Jan: Lord Have Mercy • Feb: Act of Faith • Mar: Act of Contrition • Apr: Glory Be / Come Holy Spirit • June: Act of Hope • July: Act of Love	• EYFS responses • Bidding prayer responses • Short litany responses ('Pray for us') • Mass responses & Eucharistic acclamations (Year 2)	• EYFS gestures • Signing forehead, lips, and heart to greet the Gospel • Standard Bow • Genuflection • Utilizing Holy Water • Participating in the Offertory procession
Lower Key Stage 2 (Years 3 & 4)	• All KS1 Prayers • Sept: Prayer of St Richard of Chichester • Jan: The Apostles' Creed • Apr: Come Holy Spirit • May: The Angelus • Daily: Examen Prayer	• All KS1 responses • Full Mass responses • Regular proclamation of Mass readings with correct introduction and closing formulae	• Independent implementation of all KS1 movements • Purposeful, reverent bowing to the Altar prior to approaching the Lectern
Upper Key Stage 2 (Years 5 & 6)	• All LKS2 Prayers • Oct: The Rosary • Nov: Eternal Rest • Dec: The Magnificat • Jan: The Nicene Creed • Independent tracking of the monthly cycle without support	• All Mass prayers and acclamations fluently • Renewal of Baptismal Promises • Writing and leading standard or customized community Bidding Prayers	• Complete liturgical leadership of service movements • Leading processions, serving at the Altar, organizing sacred artifacts autonomously



5. Companion Core School Prayers Reference

Standard, non-negotiable school scripts for daily implementation across all year groups:

Morning Prayer

"God my Father, you love me; you're with me night and day. I want to love you always, in all I do and say, I'll try to please you, Father. Bless me through the day. Amen."

Grace Before Meals

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

Grace After Meals

"Thank you, God, for the food that we have eaten. Thank you, God, for all our friends. Thank you, God, for everything. Thank you, God. Amen."

End of Day Prayer

"God Our Father, I 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."

The 5-Finger Daily Examen Reflection

An options-based framework utilized to bring a standard, reflective closure to the school day:

- 1. Thumb (Presence):** God is present with us right now. Let us come and sit quietly in his presence (Pause and notice).
- 2. First Finger (Review):** Reflect on what has occurred today—the highs, lows, achievements, and challenges. Share them directly with God.
- 3. Middle Finger (Gratitude):** What are you thankful for today? Give praise to God for friends, family, gifts, the natural world, or small blessings.
- 4. Ring Finger (Discernment):** How did you feel today? Review your internal choices. Did you follow God's light? How can you walk closer with Him?
- 5. Little Finger (Tomorrow):** What will you do tomorrow? Commit your plans, worries, and hopes to God, asking Him to walk directly by your side.

6. The Mass

- Pupils will visit the local parish church to share in masses at least once a term, allowing them to engage with formal communal prayer and to enable pupils who may not experience mass outside of school to gather an understanding of what mass is about and to help them to learn to be respectful.
- EYFS pupils will visit the church to explore and become familiar with the church and may also attend parish masses from time to time.



- Masses for holy days of obligation or those marking the start or end of term will, where possible, be held in school, so that the whole school can attend. Where this is not possible due to the commitments of the clergy, SLT will decide which classes will attend the local parish mass, if this is possible. (Priority may be given to KS2 as these pupils will have made their first Holy Communion)
- During mass, pupils will be encouraged by staff to participate in responses, gestures and prayers at an age-appropriate level.
- Staff will act as role models for pupils and encourage them to participate by standing and kneeling and participating in actions such as making the sign of peace at the correct times etc.
- With the agreement of the clergy and SLT pupils may be given the opportunity to take a more active role in the mass in an age-appropriate way, much akin to the elements they are responsible for when planning and leading a worship.

This table suggests ways in which, for the specific ages of pupils, they may be asked to participate in the Mass. Please note they may need to be supported by staff to write prayers or practice readings in advance:

Nursery and Reception	For EYFS the expectation is for pupils to become familiar with the experience of mass and for staff to support them by teaching them that this is a holy, special and peaceful (quiet) time when we come together to be with God. The focus is on making them feel welcomed and settled; learning with the support and guidance of familiar adults when to sit and stand etc.
Year 1 & 2	In masses Y1 & 2 pupils will be encouraged to participate by taking part in the offertory this would be simply bringing up the gifts of bread and wine. If they wish to bring other offerings (these should be brought up during the entrance procession), depending on the mass. There is generally more flexibility for this in school-based end or start of term masses where pupils may wish to offer up their work or symbols of gratitude, or things like a globe to remember our brothers and sisters across the world etc linked to the theme of the mass itself.
Year 3 & 4	When participating in masses Y3 and Y4 pupils may be called upon to do the readings,



Year 5 & 6	In terms of participating at masses Y6/SANCTA squad may need to lead all elements with pupils potentially taking part by reading prayers, writing and reading bidding prayers, reading the word and should be clear on how and why they need to go up and bow to the altar before moving to the lectern etc. Pupils may also be invited to write prayers or reflections for use at mass. This may include explaining any gifts offered by Years 1 & 2 as part of the opening procession. However, when the whole school is attending together or where pupils are invited to a parish mass and we asked to contribute it is more likely that Y5/6 will focus on the Bidding prayer element as they are the oldest in school and could write as well as read these, selecting the relevant responses to use. Thus, allowing younger pupils to fulfil other roles.
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7. Class led Whole School Celebrations of the Word (COW)

* Staff should take a leading role in preparing these worships with their class.

* Pupils should lead the same elements of G-W-M-D as they would be expected to do in their own class COW's i.e. in an age-appropriate manner, so e.g. if Y2 focus on the Gather and Mission then pupils might be expected to take a more active role in the planning and leading aspects of gather and mission, with adults sometimes facilitating the **'word'** element; whereas by Year 6 it is expected that pupils will lead on all aspects and will be able to read the word clearly and with respect etc.

For more specific details staff can refer to the 'CW comprehensive skill strategy for staff' document.