

Promoting, Valuing and Celebrating Spirituality

Achievements in a Christian Setting.

'I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.' John 10:14

'Something more to life than meets the eye, something more than the material, something more than the obvious, something to wonder at, something to respond to' (Terence Copley)
Spirituality is an awareness of mystery and its value to human flourishing.

St Paul's Church of England Junior School Spiritual Development Policy Statement

What is Spirituality?

Spirituality is the way in which we combine our thoughts and emotions to reflect, respond to, and seek to give meaning and purpose to the experiences that we encounter in life. As a school we have defined it as the following: 'It is not something that we can see; it is something we feel inside. It is about awe and wonder, asking questions, inspiration and being aware of something 'bigger' outside of ourselves.'

The *windows, mirrors, doors* analogy clarifies this meaning. We gaze out through windows onto the world, responding with our emotions and trying to make sense of what we see. We use mirrors to reflect on our thoughts and feelings, and how what we see through the window connects with our inner selves, and how we connect with what we see and understand. This becomes a *spiritual experience* when it transforms us and so we walk out through the door into life differently from before. For some, this spiritual experience leads to a sense of transcendence: in other words a feeling or belief that something exists beyond what can be directly seen. Christians would describe this state as God.

Pupils' spiritual development is shown through their:

- Beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values.
- Sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, including the intangible
- Use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- Willingness to reflect on their experiences

Why is spiritual development important in our school?

As a church school we believe that our role is to educate the whole child and that the spiritual growth of our children is as important as, and indeed is a vital contributor to their academic development. The values developed each half term through our Worships, our school vision, as well as opportunities woven throughout the curriculum underpin all we seek to achieve in the lives of our children. Getting people to consider the world around them, reflecting and thinking for themselves, evoking positive emotional responses and pondering ultimate questions is the integral ingredient in our recipe for spiritual development.

Our vision

Our vision influences the ethos of our school and the policies and practices within it. We believe that spirituality is a core thread that runs through our school and we attach great importance to it for both children's development and for the growth and well-being of all within our school community.

We aim for children, and adults to grow in their ability to;

- Be guided by their beliefs and values and be willing to take a stand to defend them
 - Be self-aware and empathise with the experience of others in the school, community and world.
 - **Love** themselves, care for themselves, believe in their potential to achieve, and find inner strength and resilience when facing challenges
 - Exercise imagination and creativity, appreciate beauty in the world and be alive to experiences of awe and wonder
 - Be intrigued by mystery and be open to an awareness of the transcendent in the whole of life
 - Be comfortable with stillness and silence and open to engage in reflection/meditation/prayer
 - Be ready to say sorry when mistakes are made, to **forgive** themselves and to forgive others
 - Be willing to take risks and to **reflect**, learn and grow following experiences of failure as well as success
 - Demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness when exploring life's big questions
 - Appreciate and be thankful for what is good in life like friends and family and show generosity towards others.
- (From David Smiths' work on Spiritual Capacities) in relation to our school values

We support pupils in their spiritual development by:

- providing opportunities for spiritual development in collective worship
- providing opportunities for spiritual development in RE
- providing opportunities for spiritual development in the wider curriculum
- capturing opportunities for awe and wonder as they arise
- providing 'Reflective Corners/Areas' in classrooms, public spaces, outside and by using the church building and through the Prayer Well in Hall.
- offering pupils opportunities to develop their own spiritual leadership, through leading collective worship and other opportunities

Collective Worship and RE are two key areas of school life that provide ideal vehicles for effective spiritual development.

- Reflection and response
- Thinking deeply and drawing links between ideas
- Stillness and prayer
- The respect and personal collective beliefs
- Sharing and celebrating common beliefs
- Celebrating success and talent
- Sharing happiness, sorrow, hurt, excitement, anticipation and fear
- Shared activities such as singing, listening, laughing, reflecting on a theme
- Remembering and celebrating the lives of people
- Emphasising common purpose and values
- Through pupil led worship, children have opportunity to support the spiritual development of others, that in turn leads to a sense of fulfilment and is therefore a spiritual experience for the young leaders.
- The use of visual stimulus such as religious symbols, candles, art, icons and photos.

Religious Education is a subject that looks at the spiritual experiences of others and how these change and shape their lives. RE allows children to use what they find out about other people and their beliefs to reflect on their own experiences. Through this process, children can engage with ultimate questions of meaning and purpose and begin to shape their own beliefs. RE allows children to engage with the idea of mystery and questions with no clear answers.

The wider curriculum also provides opportunities for spiritual development. These can often be found within individual subject policies but some key areas are listed below.

PE – pushing yourself to the limits, emotion in sport such as those evoked through success and failure.

DT – discovering how something works, the beauty in design

English -the reading and writing of poetry, imagining oneself as someone else, escaping into other worlds.

Maths – infinity, pattern and order, truth, certainty and likelihood

Science – questions of beginning, creation and evolution, the universe and beyond

Computing – the speed of the growth of knowledge

Creative Arts (Art, Music, Drama and Dance) – the work of creative artists from a variety of times and places, artistic creativity, exploring deep feelings and profound beliefs, the effects of the arts on emotions and senses.

Geography – wonder of the diversity of environments and people, world (economic) development, empathy with people from other parts of the world

History – being a part of history, war and peace, empathy with people from other times in history

Legal requirements:

Section 78 of the Education Act 2002 states:

The curriculum for a maintained school or maintained nursery school satisfies the requirements of this section if it is a balanced and broadly-based curriculum which: (a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and (b) prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The SIAMS Schedule (2018) references spirituality in both the RE and Collective Worship strands but the main focus is as part of strand two on Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills. The Church of England Vision for Education has a core desire for 'Life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) which requires educating the whole person.

The OFSTED framework 2019 states that pupil's spiritual development is shown by their:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life
- knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faith, feelings, and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others, and the world around them
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

The model that St Paul's has adapted to suit our own staff and children's Spiritual Development is that of **the Windows, Mirrors, Doors**. The concept of this is as mentioned at the beginning of this policy.

Windows

Giving children opportunities to become aware of the world in new ways; to **wonder** about life's 'Wows' (things that are amazing) and 'Ows' (things that bring us up short). In this children are learning about life in all its fullness.





Other related policies:

Collective Worship

Teaching and Learning

Relationships and Behaviour

SMSC

All subject specific curriculum policies

Referenced reading:

Church of England Education Office (CEEO) Spiritual Development – Interpretations of Spiritual Development in the Classroom (2019)

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/supporting-children/school-effectiveness/re-collective-worship-and-spirituality/spiritual-development/>