

St. John's Church of England Primary School



St. John's Vision statement

Shine like stars

Through God's love, we will flourish and develop our gifts in our nurturing community, as we strive to be an inspiration to all.

Your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.' Matthew 5:16

Policy: Spirituality Policy
Reviewed: May 2023
Future Review: July 2025

At St. John's Church of England Primary School we describe spirituality as:

Christian spirituality is about being connected with God in a way that changes how we live.

It is a spirituality that recognises that God can be found in everyone and everything, and so seeks to respond to the world with love, compassion and generosity.

(The pupils from Yr.5/6 worked with Father Peter and the RE Co-ordinator on agreeing what we feel spirituality is about at St. John's School. It was then discussed and agreed with all staff and governors)

"We realise the importance of our voices only when we are silenced." Quote from Malala, the Pakistani girls' education activist who survived a Taliban assassination attempt in 2012.

We want our school to be a place where spiritual growth and development are central to our learning and community life together, knowing that it is when we stop and listen, children and staff are able to flourish and live life in all its fullness.

'I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.'
John 10:10

Aims

In order to foster spiritual development, the school aims to provide children with opportunities to:

- Develop an appreciation of their uniqueness and value as a child made in the image of God;
- Develop an understanding of the distinctive ethos of this church school as well as the context, language and symbolism of the Christian faith;
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the school's core Christian values and the Biblical teaching that underpins them;
- Experience feelings of wonder;
- Develop an awareness of and respect for other peoples' beliefs and faiths and the ability to articulate their own
- Develop an appreciation of what it means to be a part of a community (e.g. using their gifts and abilities in the service of others);
- Develop strategies to build good mental health (see mental health policy);
- Foster self-awareness and encourage pupils to make informed decisions;
- Develop the skills and language required to enable them to reflect upon the big questions and mysteries of life;
- Begin to understand and make sense of their own feelings and emotions to certain encounters and events that occur in their life.
- Develop an awareness that experiences of disappointment, failure and loss may be occasions for spiritual growth;
- Understand the value of difference and diversity through involvement with others;

- Encourage curiosity, creativity and imagination;
- Develop the ability to reflect upon experiences of awe, compassion, beauty etc.
- Develop a capacity to value the natural world, a sense of awe and wonder and a commitment to care for creation.

These objectives will enable the pupils to have a quality of life that encompasses respect, awareness, compassion, curiosity, understanding and relationships that reflect order, reason, balance and integrity.

Teaching and learning

Through teaching and learning, the school pursues these aims by ensuring:

- The curriculum and all areas of our community life will be driven by the school's Christian vision statement and associated values;
- Opportunities for spiritual development are actively planned into the curriculum and encouraged in all areas of school life;
- Unplanned and spontaneous spiritual experiences are recognised, acknowledged and/or celebrated by staff and children;
- Collective worship celebrates the love of God for every individual and provides opportunities for children to respond and reflect on this;
- A solid understanding of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; of prayer and of the Bible is nurtured and developed;
- The school building and outdoor environment provides appropriate spaces for silence, stillness and prayer;
- The school church and other sacred places are used across the curriculum, giving children the opportunity to explore their own spirituality;
- That children's spiritual capacities such as imagination, empathy and insight are fostered through the creative arts and interactive multi-sensory teaching strategies making use of the outdoor environment and relevant educational visits;
- Opportunities are provided to listen attentively and observe carefully, listening with discernment, valuing what is good and worthwhile and making judgements through discussion and exchange of views and ideas;
- Support for learning to live with success and failure for themselves and with others;
- That moral development is linked to spiritual development through strategies such as 'windows, mirrors and doors' (see Appendix 1);
- That the outstanding RE curriculum delivers knowledge and understanding of spirituality from a number of world faith and world view perspectives.
- That children are given as many opportunities as possible to explore the wonder of the natural world and to develop an understanding of the Christian belief that creation is a gift from God to be enjoyed, cherished and protected;
- Promotion of strategies for positive mental health (see Appendix 2)

Approaches

In our school we seek to find ways in which all areas of the curriculum can contribute to children's spiritual development and to highlight opportunities for these in our planning by:

- Seeking to foster spiritual capacities, e.g. imagination, insight and empathy;
- Allowing children the security and opportunity to explore and express feelings and emotions and to celebrate diversity; (e.g. in special days like our International Day, working in partnership with other schools, working on specific projects and festivals with other schools, visitors in from other faiths)
- Providing opportunities for prayer including silence and stillness; (e.g. encourage pupils to use our prayer area in the Reception Area, opportunity for them to write their own prayers, to volunteer to lead the prayer in daily collective worship, in services, time of stillness to reflect, to appreciate)
- Sharing feelings and experiences that foster hope, joy, reassurance and encouragement; (e.g. speakers from Christian Aid, Fair trade, global projects, sponsoring children in Uganda)
- Encouraging children to develop relationships based on the school's Christian vision and associated values; (e.g. quality time spent on agreeing values for each year, certificates for values, linked to all aspects of school life)
- Enabling children to make the links between the Church and Biblical teachings, the life of the school and the wider community and how these impact on their own understanding of themselves and their place within the world today; (e.g. Bible Study Group, incorporated into daily collective worship and services, partnership work with the church)
- Providing an environment that promotes space to reflect, think and wonder (e.g. activities that are evident in the Reflection Books, incorporated into RE lessons, daily collective worship, PSHE, literacy activities)

Monitoring and Evaluation

Spiritual development cannot be measured and continues throughout our lives. However, opportunities offered to children for spiritual development will be monitored and evaluated in the following ways;

- Observing and listening to children;
- Regular discussion at staff and governor meetings alongside the school's Christian vision and values, governors regularly meeting with the School Council, talking to pupils during half-termly learning walks, annual questionnaires for pupils and parents ;
- Sharing of classroom work and practice incorporated into staff meeting time SMT meetings, governors' meetings;
- Ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of what spirituality means in this school and providing induction and development training;
- Evidence from pupils' work, e.g. reflective diary, RE books, SMSC work; creative writing, art;
- Regular inclusion in the SEF;
- CPD opportunities.

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in their discussion paper points out that “spiritual” is not synonymous with “religious”. All areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils’ spiritual development. Spiritual development relates to fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life which affect everyone, and is not dependant on a religious affiliation.

It has to do with the universal search for individual identity – with our responses to challenging experiences, such as death, suffering, beauty and encounters with good and evil. It is to do with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live

Sources and further reading:

Children’s Spirituality – what it is and why it matters? - Rebecca Nye with quotations from Gerald May , Rowan Williams and Jo Anne Taylor

The Diocese of Gloucester Derek Holloway and David Rickett

The Diocese of Salisbury

The Diocese of Exeter

Making sense of spiritual development – David Smith

More than Caring and Sharing. Making a church school distinctive – John Cox

Ofsted SCAA discussion paper

Adams, K, Hyde B, Wooley R (2008) *The Spiritual Dimension of Childhood*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Adams, K (2010). *Unseen Worlds. Looking through the Lens of Childhood*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Hart T. (2003) *The Secret Spiritual World of Children*. Maui, inner Ocean.

Appendix 1 Windows, mirrors and doors approach to spirituality

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.

MIRRORS:



□ giving children opportunities to *reflect* on their experiences; to **meditate** on life's big questions and to consider some possible answers. In this they are learning *from* life by exploring their own insights and perspectives and those of others.

DOORS:



□ giving children opportunities to *respond* to all of this; to **do** something creative as a means of expressing, applying and further developing their thoughts and convictions. In this they are learning to *live* by putting into action what they are coming to believe and value.

Appendix 2 Extract from the Mental Health and Wellbeing Guidance; Advice for Schools and SIAMS Inspectors 2018

1. Spirituality and mental health

The Royal College of Psychiatrists has published some useful guidance on spirituality and mental health where they identify ways in which some aspects of spirituality can offer real benefits for mental health. They identify spirituality as being within and beyond formal religion and recognise that it 'often becomes more important to people in times of emotional stress and physical and mental illness, loss, bereavement and the approach to death.

They recommend that a person with a religious belief may need support which acknowledges and gives space to their faith as part of their support. Schools should therefore look to provide opportunities for inclusive spiritual development that supports good mental health as well as opportunities to learn from people of different faiths and beliefs about how their spirituality shapes them and supports their mental health and wellbeing. Religious Education which offers the opportunity for young people to engage with a diversity of people can support this. Schools would also benefit from building relationships with the religious leaders in their community.