

# Spirituality Policy

## 2023 – 2024

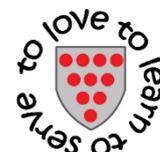
### St Johns C of E Middle School



This policy was written by Revd Duncan Hutchinson, a Church of England Diocesan Education Adviser (Worcester) and Claire Russell and is approved annually by the Local Governing Body.

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In collaboration with



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## Our Vision

**Our vision is to be a school where every individual in our community is valued and enabled to flourish as a child of God; where education impacts upon the whole-person, and care and concern for others is key. We seek to be a truly inclusive community where all can 'Give of their Best', achieve their full God-given potential, be good citizens and respect difference in our growing global world.**

## School Statement on Spirituality and Spiritual Development

At St John's C of E Middle School, we recognise that developing the spirituality of our pupils and adults is a fundamental aspect of enabling pupils and adults to flourish. Our school's distinctively Christian vision: *to be a school where every individual in our community is valued and enabled to flourish as a child of God; where education impacts upon the whole-person, and care and concern for others is key. We seek to be a truly inclusive community where all can 'Give of their Best', achieve their full God-given potential, be good citizens and respect difference in our growing global world; permeates every aspect of our shared life together as a school community. Spirituality at St John's is an expression of this vision – enabling us to take time to explore life's big questions, to ponder and explore how we relate to God, creation, one another and the mysterious and transcendent. Spiritual development is at the heart of 'developing the whole-person' acknowledging that there is more to life than the physical and academic, and that a holistic education needs to provide space to explore that which is less physical and tangible. Spirituality helps us to recognise, value and celebrate difference, to see the innate value in the other, and to promote true and holistic flourishing as we explore and experience 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).* It is well planned and of high quality so that the whole school community is engaged on a journey of discovery.

Spiritual development differs from person to person and is a very personal experience. For this reason, it is difficult to put into words. Spirituality is not the same as having a religion or faith; a person can be spiritual without having a particular faith. For Christians in church, spirituality is about developing a deeper understanding of and connection with God. It is about God's way of being with us and our way of being with God. Through this we are able to respond to the loving nature of God as revealed through the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A school is not a church, but it is a collection of people who come from a variety of backgrounds for the purpose of education. Family backgrounds may be very different and spiritual development must take account of the varied circumstances of staff and pupils.

Therefore, in light of this and in light of our school's distinctively Christian vision, at St John's C of E Middle School we define spirituality using the image of a bagel (or donut):

*"The Bagel represents the Whole Child. The outer ring is the tangible (Mind and Body), the hole represents the intangible (Spirit) but if there was no hole it wouldn't be a bagel...it is the exploration and development of that hole in our centre that makes us whole."*

Spirituality is wider than religion, it is not about adherence to a particular creedal scheme or catechism, it is about exploring the wow moments in life, the intangible moments of transcendent joy and wonder which add colour and depth. It is about acknowledging the breadth and depth of human experience beyond that which can be contained within a curricular scheme; it is about providing space for pupils and staff to experience “life in all its fullness” (John 10:10).

As a Church of England school our spirituality is often filtered through a distinctively Christian lens, but this does not limit the possibilities and scope for exploration, rather it provides a ‘jumping off point’ whereby pupils and staff can explore, reflect and act on their own spirituality.

### **Aims and Guiding Principles**

Through establishing the right learning environment in which spiritual development can be fostered, we aim to support pupils and adults 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
- develop an awareness of, and respect for, other people’s 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
- foster self-awareness and the ability 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 around 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
- develop a love of 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 pupils and adults to have a quality of life that encompasses respect, awareness, compassion, curiosity, understanding and relationships that reflect order, reason, balance and integrity within the context of Christian faith.

## Guiding principles

Spiritual development contains many facets and it is concerned with a number of areas of an individual's life. Therefore, when developing spirituality in pupils and adults, we, in line with our distinctively Christian vision and our school's definition for spirituality, look at four key areas:

- **Self**
  - Awareness of feelings: ability to reflect and express.
  - Awareness of our uniqueness: happiness with who we are.
  - Gratitude for the things we have and the person we are.
  - Exploration of personal faith.
  - Development of imagination and creativity.
  
- **Others**
  - Empathy and understanding: respect.
  - To love and be loved (loving your neighbour).
  - Making a difference: duty.
  
- **Transcendence (Beyond)**
  - Encountering / experiencing God (having a sense of what lies beyond the material / physical).
  - Ability to ask and discuss the 'Big Questions' (e.g. about life, death, suffering, nature of God).
  - Opportunities for prayer, connecting with God.
  - Making sense of the world.
  
- **Nature**
  - Developing a sense of awe and wonder.
  - Enjoying the miracles of everyday life.
  - Taking time for what really matters.
  - Appreciating beauty in art, music, nature, etc.

## Approaches to Spiritual Development

At St John's, we seek to find ways in which all areas of the curriculum can contribute to pupils' spiritual development and to highlight opportunities for these in our planning by:

- seeking to foster spiritual capacities, e.g. imagination, insight and empathy
- allowing pupils the security and opportunity to explore and express feelings and emotions and to celebrate diversity
- providing opportunities for prayer including silence and stillness
- sharing feelings and experiences that foster hope, joy, reassurance and encouragement
- encouraging pupils to develop relationships based on the school's Christian vision and associated values
- enabling pupils 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
- providing an environment that promotes space to reflect, think and wonder.

As part of our approach to spiritual development, we use the follow strategy in our school:

**WINDOWS:** *giving the pupils opportunities to become aware of the world in new ways; to wonder about life's WOWs (things that are amazing) and Oohs (things that bring us up short). In this, pupils are learning about life in all its fullness and glory.*

*We provide WINDOWS throughout our curriculum. We have lessons with an awe and wonder focus using a variety of stimuli including photos, videos, music, current events ad real-life stories.*

**MIRRORS:** *giving pupils 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.*

*MIRRORS are used throughout high quality RE lessons; pupils are consistently challenged to reflect on their learning about religion to help them learn from religion, regardless of whether they have a specific faith.*

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

*Pupils in our school identify DOORS. They may hear of a local issue or an international event and request to take action through fund-raising and raising awareness – this is often done via school council, worship leaders but our pupils have the confidence that they know they are listened to and respected by adults in the school and will raise issues and concerns independently.*

## **Planning, Recording, Monitoring and Evaluation**

Through teaching and learning, the school pursues the aims and objectives 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 opportunities for spiritual development are recognised, acknowledged and / or celebrated by staff and pupils
- Collective Worship celebrates the love of God for every individual and provides opportunities for pupils 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
- that pupils' 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 for pupils to listen attentively and observe carefully, to listen with discernment, to value what is good and worthwhile and to make judgements through discussion and exchange of views and ideas
- support is provided for learning to live with success and failure for themselves and with others
- that the outstanding RE curriculum delivers knowledge and understanding of spirituality from a number of world faith and world view perspectives
- that pupils 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
- strategies for positive mental health are promoted.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

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

- observing and listening to pupils through learning walks, pupil focus groups and our worship council
- regular discussions at staff and governor meetings alongside the school's Christian vision and values
- sharing of classroom work and practice
- ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of what spirituality means in this school by providing them with 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 and sharing examples of good practice with other schools
- regular diocesan Spirituality review.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Governing Body will:

- provide a statement within the school prospectus, and on the school website, which makes clear that the aims of spiritual development within the school are based on its Christian foundation, but are inclusive in practice
- in conjunction with the Headteacher, monitor the effectiveness of spirituality within the school and make recommendations for its development in accordance with the SIAMS Schedule.

The Headteacher will:

- co-ordinate timetabling / themes across the year(s) into long, medium and short-term planning, in conjunction with the Head of Collective Worship, school and church community, so that spirituality can be embedded throughout the curriculum
- ensure that the school prospectus, welcome / induction pack and website have clear statements about the school's ethos for developing spirituality and its distinction from moral, social and cultural development
- be a part of the SIAMS inspection process
- support other members of staff
- know where to access good resources to support spiritual development
- lead staff meetings or provide quality CPD other sources that have a focus on development of spirituality.

Staff will:

- support the crucial role that spiritual development plays within the school
- plan and lead activities for the development of spirituality when required
- provide opportunities for pupils to reflect, question and be inspired
- understand the school's definition of spirituality and promote it where possible.

### **Staff Development and Training**

We ensure that all staff, including support staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams. This support is provided by Diocese of Worcester Education Team and provided in-house. Training needs for staff may be identified through regular subject leader audits as well as performance management cycles.

### **Resources**

A number of resources are available to support the development of spiritual development within school including:

- Prayer Spaces in Schools resources
- Space Makers Resource: Five Contemplative Practices
- Spirituality resources on Staff Drive
- Roots and Fruits
- Diocesan Wellbeing and Spirituality Compendium
- Diocesan Prayer Area resources.

## **Review**

This policy will be subject to the normal cycle of policy review and will be reviewed and ratified by the Governing Board every year. Furthermore, there may be occasions where this policy is reviewed outside the normal review cycle, including but not limited to:

- a change in the SIAMS Schedule for Inspections
- a change in the understanding of spiritual development.