

Spiritual Development at St Mary's

John Bradford (1995) stated 'For a human being, especially a child or young person, to have a full quality of life, spirituality in all its aspects must be nurtured and affirmed.'

What is spiritual development?

Spiritual development differs from person to person and is a very personal experience. For this reason, it is difficult to put into words. Spirituality concerns a person's relationship with themselves, with others, with God (or the transcendent), and with nature and the environment. Spirituality is not the same as having a religion or faith; a person can be spiritual without having a particular faith.

In keeping with our Christian Vision, we recognise that we are all created in God's image and have a spiritual dimension to our existence. We nurture this through the academic rigour we bring to our work and through our passion to help children and adults to flourish and achieve their God given potential.

The four elements – these consist of:

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

How we aim to nurture spirituality

Children's spiritual development is nurtured through all aspects of our provision. We believe it is important to develop strong relationships using our school Vision and Values as well as the development of knowledge, concepts, skills and attitudes.

We give children opportunities to:

- Have regular time in the day for quiet and reflection. This might be listening to a story, lighting the candles in worship, listening to music, use of the reflection areas around school or the prayers said throughout the day.
- Have opportunities for creativity and using their imagination
- Sing in lessons and as part of our weekly worship
- Explore, express, share and compare feelings and opinions. This is planned into all subjects across our curriculum but it more focused within our PSHE using the Jigsaw scheme, worship and RE lessons. Other structures such as Restorative Justice, Metacognition, Growth Mindset, Mindfulness and 'I wonder' questions, are used to support this further.
- Constantly reaffirm the importance of relationships. How we talk to and relate with each other is fundamental.
- Express awe and wonder, appreciate beauty in all its forms, and appreciate the connections and unity in the world
- Encourage each other to admit mistakes and to say sorry. Recognising and owning up to faults is an important process that allows us to heal and grow from our experiences.
- Encourage everyone to show kindness, caring and compassion, and to express these in practical ways. (e.g.: how we treat each other every day; charitable works; through prayer spaces)
- Explore the 'Big Questions' – particularly through our RE curriculum, topics, worship, theme weeks and news events.
- Read often, giving them opportunities to discuss and reflect. This includes both secular and religious texts, in particular the Bible.
- Begin to develop their own system of beliefs, which may or may not include religious beliefs.
- Reflect on the situations of others through role play or stories.

Structures to support and develop spirituality

- Opportunities are planned across our curriculum.
- We have a planned programme for Collective Worship across the school. Themes are planned for the year, based on our School Values and the Diocesan plans. Worship also involves British Values and is flexible enough to respond to world events.
- There is a daily act of Collective Worship taking different forms, and involving our Worship Leaders, other children and a range of visitors.
- Displays and pictures around the school continually celebrate and encourage reflection and spirituality.
- Visits and visitors support all our work.

Impact: how do we know this is being effective?

We know our activities are being effective as children love and accept themselves and enjoy good relationships with each other. They take an interest and delight in the world around them and are open to what lies beyond the material (this may manifest itself in faith/belief in God). They are able to express and understand feelings, as well as respect those of others. They have a strong moral sense and a love of what is good. They are able to enjoy quiet and stillness, they possess an active imagination, and show joy in creativity and discovering new skills.

What is the Role of the School Community?

All members of the school community have a responsibility for helping to nurture children's spiritual development.

School staff do this through:

- Establishing and maintaining a partnership between children, parents and staff; recognising and respecting the faith background of the children and their families.
- Understanding and considering the needs and backgrounds of each individual child.
- Using our School Vision and Values to be positive role models within the community- promoting respect for other people and their views, showing consideration for and support towards others.
- Drawing on the experiences of children and their families to support teaching and learning across the curriculum, including RE lessons.
- Being willing to develop their own knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith and the faiths of others.
- Taking part in, and supporting, Collective Worship.
- Having a positive attitude to the value of spiritual education.

Three ways that we as a school provide opportunities for spiritual development:

- **WINDOWS:** giving the children 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, children 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 and real-life stories.*
- **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. *MIRRORS throughout high quality RE lessons, children 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 children 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. *Children 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 children have the confidence that they know they are listened to and respected by adults in the school and will raise issues and concerns independently.*

Children do this through:

- Respecting the views and beliefs of others.
- Using our School Vision and Values to help themselves and others to learn.
- Taking an active part in Collective Worship.
- Being active learners within lessons to enable them to engage with and develop the skills needed to enable them to fulfil their God given potential.
- Participating in learning that allows them to engage in examination of and reflection upon a range of religious belief and practice.

Parents and Governors help through:

- Adopting a positive attitude to the value of spiritual education.
- Supporting the school's Christian ethos and acts of community worship.
- Respecting the views and beliefs of others and demonstrating this to others.