



# St Mary Abbots Church of England Primary School



## Spirituality Policy 2023-24

At St Mary Abbots School we grow little seeds into mighty trees. Our children's development is rooted in our Christian ethos and values. We ensure that our children experience learning of the highest standard and are nurtured to flourish in all things across the curriculum; as well as physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

# Spirituality Policy

## Model policy for the development of spirituality in primary schools

This document is a starting point from which both the school and its associated church can develop a spirituality policy that fits the school's community and context and is within the tradition of the parish.

At St Mary Abbots school we describe spirituality as *enabling us to become aware of God, one another, the world around us and ourselves. It is the nurturing of the inner life of the soul of a child, enabling and embracing their questions, doubts and wonder of existence.*

### Our aim is to:

establish the right learning environment to enable the spiritual development of all pupils through the following objectives;

- 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 ( 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 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;
- 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 within the context of Christian faith.

## Teaching and learning:

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 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;
- 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;
- The provision of opportunities 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 2);
- 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 3).

## 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;
- Providing opportunities for prayer including silence and stillness;
- Sharing feelings and experiences that foster hope, joy, reassurance and encouragement;
- Encouraging children to develop relationships based on the school's Christian vision and associated values;
- 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;
- Providing an environment that promotes space to reflect, think and wonder.

## **Monitoring and evaluation:**

Spiritual development cannot be measured and continues throughout our lives. However, opportunities offered to children for spiritual development may 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;
- 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. RE books, SMSC work, creative writing, art;
- Regular inclusion in the SEF;
- CPD opportunities and sharing examples of good practice with other schools.

This policy was adopted by the governors :

date

The policy will be reviewed: November 2025

## Appendix 1

### Examples of a variety of definitions of spirituality

The examples below are intended to be a starting point for discussion as, 'the school community applies its own understanding of spiritual development so that teachers have the confidence and ability to move beyond planned opportunities to make the most of questions raised by the curiosity of pupils and opportunities that occur spontaneously across the curriculum' SIAMS schedule April 2018.

- Spirituality is finding God in all things.
- Spirituality is about being contemplative in action (or enabling reflective practice).
- Spirituality is about freedom and detachment, helping us not being tied down by unimportant things and keep mindful of important things such as God and other people i.e. not 'things and accomplishments'
- Spirituality is the inward journey, a move towards the depths of our being, where, according to the mystics, God is experienced.
- Spirituality enables us to become aware of God, one another, the world around us and ourselves.
- It is the nurturing of the inner life of the soul of a child, enabling and embracing their questions, doubts and wonder of existence.
- Spirituality is a way of living in a relationship with God
- 'Within the Christian tradition all spiritualities have the same focus, union with God, an emphasis on love and a belief in Jesus as the Son of God. But each spirituality emphasis different aspects of the tradition which over time have become Schools (of Spirituality) e.g. Franciscan, Catholic, Evangelical.' James Martin
- 'Spirituality is like a bridge. Every bridge does pretty much the same things - gets you from one place to another, sometime over perilous ground, or a river, or great heights. But they do so in different ways. They might be built of rope, wood, bricks, steel or suspension bridges. Like bridges, every spirituality offers you a distinctive passage to God. 'James Martin
- Christian spirituality is a life nurtured on the example of Jesus Christ and his care for others
- Our capacity for being – God's ways of being with us and our ways of being with God.

**Or our capacity for:**

- being in a relationship with God and God with us, • nurturing our awareness of God being with us,
- being attentive to God being with us.

Our capacity for being and recognising and supporting God's ways of being with children, and their ways of being with God.

Spiritual development relates to fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life which affect everyone. Whilst these questions are not dependent on religious affiliation or on the prerogative of religions, religion explains and addresses the fundamental questions which affect everyone.

The term spiritual and moral development needs to be seen as applying something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and /or expressed through everyday language. It has to do with relationships with other people and for believers, with God. It has to do with the universal search for individual identity – with our responses to challenging experiences, such as death or suffering. It is a way of coping with challenges and recognising success and happiness, enabling a child to flourish.

God's way of being with children and children's way of being with God

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in their discussion paper point 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

Having a higher awareness and deeper awareness and concern for others in the world around us.

An increasing awareness of the concept of others. A growing sense of empathy, concern and compassion and an ability to reflect on how their values and principles affect their relationships with others.

Spirituality is an appreciation and cherishing of what is good, joyful, truthful and beautiful, and, in relationship with others, of what is generous, creative and loving. The spirit of a person is seen in acts of courage and perseverance, in dealing with both setbacks and praise, in endeavour and enquiry.

Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of beyond – a growing relationship with the transcendental and the ability to explore experience beyond the everyday. Spiritual learners search for meaning in their very existence and their place in the greater scheme of things.

The search for God in response to God's search for us.

### **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 Salisbury Derek Holloway and David Rickett

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

## Appendix 2

### Windows, mirrors and doors approach to spirituality.

(Taken from Salisbury Diocese Spirituality Policy – Derek Holloway/Andrew Rickett 2012)

## 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 3

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

##### 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.

This policy is due to be reviewed in 2025

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