

St. Michael at Bowes
Church of England
Junior School



Spirituality Policy

Date: March 2024



SPIRITUALITY POLICY

St Michael at Bowes School is committed to the safeguarding of our pupils and staff.

STATEMENT OF VISION AND VALUES

In consultation with pupils, parents, governors, community members and staff our vision and values were generated.

Vision

Our vision is made up of three distinct sections. They explain:

1. Who we are;
2. What we do;
3. Why we do it.

‘AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BUILDING ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVES.’

‘AN INCLUSIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY’ (who we are) In this school, Christianity forms the core of what we uphold and teach; we believe it to be evident in the ethos of the school. At the same time, we acknowledge and value the multi- faith nature of our community and society. We are accepting of others in line with the wider values of our city and country, which is reflected in the Christian tenet of **‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.’**
Matthew 22:39

‘BUILDING ON FIRM FOUNDATIONS’ (what we do) God is our foundation; we build on this based on Jesus’ teachings. Expanding on and enhancing the values, our children and families live by. in all areas of school life and the curriculum, we build strongly on the foundations each child enters with, whether that be faith, talent or academic attainment.
‘Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.’ Matthew 7:24-27

‘FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVES’ (why we do it) We understand that we are shaping lives for the future. We expect our children to achieve well academically, to become fully rounded human beings, to develop a strong sense of self and walk out into the world confidently, ready to make their mark; to have a positive impact on their own lives and the lives of others. With a Growth Mindset we strive to be the best we can be, not only academically, but also morally, socially and spiritually. **‘You will enjoy what you work for and you will be blessed with good things.’** Psalm 128:2

What is Spirituality at St. Michael at Bowes? – Our Shared Understanding

At St Michael at Bowes, we define spirituality through four key words/areas and facilitate the development of these through our ambitious curriculum, which is an extension of our Vision. Just like a tree (which is spelt by the first four letters of each word), we believe Spirituality can grow and develop over time and as we nurture Spiritual development or all stakeholders in our school community, we know they will benefit from the fruit of this in the future.

While closely aligned with our Parish Church, we acknowledge that the Church's definition of 'spirituality' is articulated within the context of a robust spiritual journey in the Christian Faith. At St. Michael at Bowes, we honour and welcome the diversity of religious and non-religious beliefs within our community. We encourage everyone to pursue a healthy spirituality within the framework of holistic well-being encompassing Mind, Body, and Soul (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

At St. Michael at Bowes, we perceive spirituality as the connection between our inner life (or soul) and the gratification, significance, and purpose found beyond ourselves. Cultivating a healthy spirituality is a dynamic endeavour. Rooted in the Bible and Christian practices, it grounds us and provides impetus. We gaze outward to marvel at the wonders of the world, inward to reflect on our experiences, fostering resilience and courage, and forward to uncover the meaning and transformative impact of our lives on those around us. Spirituality is inherent to our being; it serves as a window to view the world, a mirror to reflect on our beliefs and values, and a door to living responsively.

Transformation - The door

Spirituality is about Transformation. The image of the door is support to think about the things that change in life when we go from one place to somewhere else. Think about other people who might be beyond the door. What do we have in common? What is different? How can we help?



Transformation

Reflection - The mirror

Spirituality is about Reflection. This encourages our school community to spend time reflecting on themselves; their thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings. Space to ask questions about themselves.



Reflection

Experience - The window

Spirituality is about Experience. This encourages Imagine looking out of a window at the world around us. Think about its beauty and any questions or curiosities you have. Giving space to ask questions about the world around us.



Experience

Encounter - The candle.

Spirituality is about Encounters. An awareness of the things we cannot see in life, but we can feel. For many in community this is expressed as an awareness of God and personal faith. It is also about developing imagination.



Encounter

We believe these four areas of Spirituality are accessible and relevant to all members of school community and can be expressed, grown and further defined in a variety of ways relevant to personal circumstances, views and beliefs. It supports our Vision as a community that is inclusive and welcoming of all, as we build on the firm foundations of shared values to have successful lives. Children and staff are encouraged to use this language when recognising spiritual development within the community and curriculum. For examples of a variety of definitions for spirituality please see **Appendix 1**.

These areas take inspiration from the work of Liz Mills’ – ‘windows, mirrors, doors’ approach and Andrew Rickett’s – ‘self, others, beauty and beyond’

See Appendix 4 for these definitions as written with the RE Pupil team and shared with the full school community.

Opportunities for Spiritual development:

Driven by our Vision for children to have the foundations in all aspects of their ‘self’ (physical, social, moral, spiritual, cultural and emotions) to have successful lives, our broad, ambitious curriculum, alongside the additional activities, resources and experiences we provide, give our pupils lots of opportunities to grow and develop their Spirituality in a way that is meaningful to them. This list is a starting point and not exhaustive of what we do.

Transformation

- 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
- Use of Picture News supports pupil awareness of current events and challenges them to consider the realities of other people in the local and global community
- An empowered, pupil led school council who support the school to run events for the issues that are important to them and affect others

Reflection

- Support for learning to live with success and failure for themselves and with others; developing Growth Mindset
- The outstanding RE curriculum delivers knowledge and understanding of spirituality from a number of world faith and world view perspectives, which pupils are then encouraged to compare to their own ideas and beliefs

- Share and promote strategies for positive mental health and well-being for individual circumstances
- Access to an interactive and engaging Reflection Zone. Religious texts and prayer mats available as well as Big Questions for children to respond to and also space to ask their own questions. Prompts for each area of Spiritual development and questions to ponder and explore. Evidence of this can be seen in Big Books and Reflection Zones.
- An opportunity to reflect spiritually at the end of Collective Worship and continue discussions throughout the day about this

Experience

- Opportunities for spiritual development are actively planned into the curriculum and encouraged in all areas of school life e.g. trips, practical activities, creative expression
- Unplanned and spontaneous spiritual experiences are also recognised, acknowledged and/or celebrated by staff and children;
- The children are given as many opportunities as possible to explore the wonder of the natural world. We share the Christian belief that creation is a gift from God to be enjoyed, cherished and protected while supporting pupils to find reasons to cherish the world for their own beliefs and views. This is supported by our Pupil Eco-team who hold the school accountable for its impact on the environment and support new ways to protect our natural world

Encounter

- Collective worship celebrates the love of God for every individual and provides opportunities for children to respond and reflect on this;
- For those of the Christian faith, 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; encourage those of other world faiths and views to develop theirs and share with others
- The school building and outdoor environment provides appropriate spaces for silence, reflection, stillness and prayer, which have been developed by pupil teams;
- The school, church and other sacred places are used across the curriculum, giving children the opportunity to explore their own spirituality; (we ensure as well as accessing our school church that pupils visit a range of different sacred places as part of the curriculum.)
- 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;

- Access to an interactive and engaging Reflection Zone. Religious texts and prayer mats available as well as Big Questions for children to respond to and also space to ask their own questions. Prompts for each area of Spiritual development and questions to ponder and explore

We hope these opportunities will provide and develop in our pupils:

- An appreciation of their uniqueness and value, as a child made in the image of God;
- An understanding of the distinctive ethos of this church school as well as the context, language and symbolism of the Christian faith;
- Knowledge and understanding of the school's core Christian values and the Biblical teaching that underpins them while also developing their own core values;
- Feelings of curiosity and wonder and themselves and the world around them;
- An awareness of and respect for other peoples' beliefs and faiths and the ability to develop and articulate their own;
- 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);
- Strategies to build good mental health and promote healthy well-being now and into their futures (see mental health policy);
- Foster self-awareness and encourage pupils to make informed decisions;
- 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, events and changes that might occur in life.
- An awareness that experiences of disappointment, failure and loss may be occasions for spiritual growth; learning how to move forwards
- Understand the value of difference and diversity through involvement with others;
- Encourage creativity and imagination;
- The ability to reflect upon experiences of awe, compassion, beauty etc.

- A capacity to value the natural world, a sense of awe and wonder and a commitment to care for creation.
- Self-respect and confidence in their identity
- Compassion for others and the ability to form meaningful relationships with others
- Feel bold enough to ask their own questions in life and express any doubts and wonders
- Connect with themselves, God – if they have a personal faith, and the world around them

These objectives will enable the pupils to have a quality of life that encompasses respect, awareness, compassion, curiosity, and understanding, and relationships that reflect order, reason, balance, and integrity within the context of Christian faith. As over-arching aims, our approach to spiritual development will:

- Reflect the school's Church of England status.
- Reflect and strengthen the school's Christian vision and ethos.
- Take place within a school environment which enables pupils and adults to flourish

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;

- Big Questions at the end of each day for classes to consider, discuss and debate. Questions linked to vision, values, school events and issues affecting the local and global community.
- Reflections in each RE lesson linking personal experience to lesson content
- Big Books capture moments of Spiritual development from trips or learning experiences beyond the classroom as well as the tree in the hall
- 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 and providing induction and development training;
- Evidence from pupils' work, e.g. reflective diary, Big Books, RE books, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) work, creative writing, art;
 - Regular inclusion in the SEF;
 - CPD opportunities.

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

Legal requirements

The importance of spiritual development in schools is recognised in legislation.

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.

Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Spiritual development is a particular focus of Church school inspections under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (SIAMS) which asks:

- *How do the theologically rooted Christian vision and the Anglican/Methodist foundation of the school shape worship and spirituality in the school?*
- *How is collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually?*
- *How is spiritual development an intrinsic part of the curriculum?*
- *In the context of the school as a Church school, what do pupils and adults understand to be the meaning of spirituality? How does this enhance and enrich collective worship and individuals' spiritual development?*
- *How does the trust contribute to and enhance the school's worship and spiritual life?*

The OFSTED School Inspection Handbook (2019) states:

Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a broad concept that can be seen across the school's activities ...

Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their:

- *ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life.*
- *knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, 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.*

This policy was adopted by the governors March 2024

The policy will be renewed March 2026

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. It should be developed with the church to ensure that it is within the tradition of the parish. These definitions will not be appropriate for everyone but we believe something in here resonates with everyone.

- Spirituality is finding God in all things.
- Spirituality is about being a 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.
- Spirituality 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 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 (caveat: some bridges wobble!)
- 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.
- 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.
- Delighting in all things, being absorbed in the present moment, not attached to self. Eager to explore boundaries of ‘beyond’ and ‘other’, searching for meaning, discovering purpose and being open to more.
- 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.

Living fully with nothing excluded from our hearts

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 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

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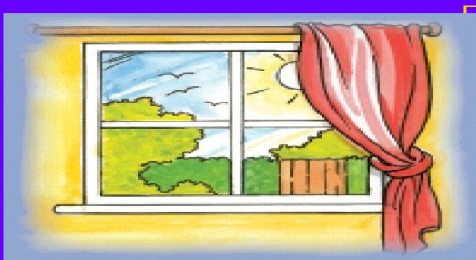
Hart T. (2003) *The Secret Spiritual World of Children*. Maui, inner Ocean.

Appendix 2 Windows, mirrors and doors approach to spirituality. (Taken from Salisbury Diocese Spirituality Policy – Derek Holloway/Andrew Rickett 2012)

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(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.

Spirituality in Our School



MIRRORS - SELF

Like looking in a mirror..

Thinking about ourselves and how we feel about things.



WINDOWS - BEAUTY

Like looking through a window...

Looking at the world in new ways.



DOORS - OTHERS

Like opening a door to welcome people in ...

Understanding how other people feel.



CANDLE- BEYOND

Like watching a flame and thinking..

Reflecting on our learning and experiences.

Appendix 3: 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

Appendix 4:

Child friendly version of Spirituality at St Michael at Bowes, written with the RE pupil team



Spirituality at St Michael at Bowes

Individual Shared Collective

The door

Think about the things that change in life when we go from one place to somewhere else. Think about other people who might be beyond the door. What do we have in common? What is different? How can we help?



Transformation



Reflection

The mirror

Think about yourself. What do you think, believe or feel? Think about your values and how they are shared.

The window

Imagine looking out of a window at the world around us. Think about its beauty and any questions or curiosities you have.



Experience



Encounter

The candle

Think about the things you cannot see in life, but you can feel. Your faith in God, love or your imagination.

How are you growing your beliefs, views and spirituality?

