

St Mary Magdalene CE Primary School Spirituality

Vision Statement

Building on a foundation of Core Christian Values, we inspire and equip our children to acquire confidence, encouraging a thirst for lifelong learning.

'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,' Philippians 4: 13.

What Is Spirituality?

It is very difficult to put into words what 'spirituality' actually is because it is a very personal experience. It differs from person to person, and often spirituality changes within people during their lifetime. Spirituality is not the same as having a religion or faith; a person can be spiritual without having a particular faith.

Spirituality Definition

The Southwark Diocese define Spirituality as

"Spirituality is a dimension of being human that makes us conscious of the mystery and wonder of life and moves us to seek meaning. Within the routine of life there are moments of awareness of a deeper level of reality: for example, listening to a beautiful piece of music, being stopped in our tracks by the wonder of a starry night, or the chasm opening within after the death of someone dear to us. These moments awake us to our spiritual nature. They give colour and depth to life. They make us ask fundamental questions: Who am I?...What is life for?...What really matters?"

(Southwark Diocese)

As a school, all our community had an input to our example and helped define our School view of spirituality this became:

"Spirituality is not something we can see; it is something we feel inside ourselves. It is about awe and wonder, asking questions, inspiration and being aware of something 'bigger' outside of ourselves."

Principles of Spiritual Development

- To develop an inner discipline and training,
- To be involved in corporate activities with others,
- To understand the world around them,
- To help create a more accepting and caring society,
- To discover the need for spiritual reflection.

When talking to children about Spirituality we will refer to:

- A sense of awe and wonder
- Care for nature and living things
- Wanting to love and to be loved by people

Awe and Wonder

Children are born inquisitive, and it is our duty to nurture this natural curiosity and guide them towards looking at the world and noticing, with awe and wonder, the natural and man-made delights all around us. We want to encourage them to ask 'big questions' about life, religion, nature, science and any other area of fascination.

Caring for Nature and Living Things (something bigger outside ourselves)

We provide many opportunities for children to learn about nature and the role they play in protecting our world. As a Church School, this is especially important. We have a very active Green Team (Eco Committee) who encourage us to live more sustainable lives. We have provided bird boxes and more effective approach to recycling. Through science and topic work, children learn about the world and how they can care for living things. Our School has been awarded the Green Flag Eco Schools Award which reflects the policies and approaches we have in school.

Love (asking questions /something bigger than ourselves)

We are a very caring school and pride ourselves on our ethos of family. Through our Christian Values, we teach children to care for friends, family and the community. Indeed, our Curriculum for Life Skills and RE curriculums include learning about those we love and who love us. We offer other family events throughout the school year e.g. Maths morning, Curriculum Launches so children can learn with their family in school.

How is Spirituality Nurtured?

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 physical illness, loss, bereavement and the approach of 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. As a school we therefore look to provide opportunities for the 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. As a faith school, we benefit from building relationships with religious leaders in our community.

It is also vital that all of the adults in school also see the need to develop their own spirituality for their own wellbeing, and so that they can effectively support and help our children and each other.

Self (awe and wonder / questioning / something bigger)

- 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 (awe and wonder / questioning / something bigger)

- Empathy and understanding; respect and acceptance,
- To love and be loved (loving your neighbour),
- Making a difference; duty.

Transcendence (Beyond) (awe and wonder / questioning / something bigger)

- Encountering/experiencing God (having a sense of what lies beyond the material/physical),
- Ability to formulate 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,

Beauty

- 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 develop a strong sense of spirituality

- Have regular time in the day for quiet and reflection. This might be listening to a story, lighting a candle in Collective Worship, going for a walk or visiting our Prayer Corners,
- Provide many opportunities for creativity and using the imagination,
- Valuing play opportunities,

- Singing often, especially with others,
- Ensuring regular time for prayer. This can take many forms, but should include being thankful and saying sorry,
- Allow children the opportunity to open themselves to God,
- Provide frequent opportunities for children to explore, express and share feelings,
- Constantly reaffirm the importance of relationships,
- How we talk to and relate with each other is fundamental,
- Provide opportunities to 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 healing and redemptive process,
- Encourage children to show kindness, care and compassion, and to express these in practical ways, e.g. how we treat each other every day – Make Every Contact Count and our charitable works,
- Explore the 'Big Questions' – particularly through our RE programme and Prayer Corners,
- Read often to children and give them opportunities to discuss and reflect. This includes both secular and religious texts, including the Bible.

Teaching Opportunities and Strategies

Liz Mills from The Stapleford Centre, a Christian charity fostering Christian engagement in education, has identified 3 ways that schools can provide opportunities for spiritual development:

WINDOWS: giving children opportunities to become aware of the world in new ways; to wonder about life's 'Wow!s' (things that are amazing) and 'Oh!s' (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

We provide WINDOWS throughout our curriculum. We will be having specific lessons with an awe and wonder focus with a variety of stimuli, including photos, videos, music current events and real-life stories.

As a school we place high value on thinking skills. These offer a variety of MIRRORS for the children to reflect on the world in different, deeper ways. It allows them to ask and discuss bigger questions and consider their own ideas and beliefs. Through 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.

Children at our school often identify DOORS for themselves. They may hear of a local issue or an international event and request to take action, through fund raising and raising awareness. We also work with the local community as well as take part in Comic Relief, Children in Need, Samara Appeal, as well as identifying other charities to support during the year.

We will be having a focus on spirituality within our lessons to further enhance the spiritual development of our children.

Structures to support and develop spirituality:

- Opportunities are planned across our curriculum,
- Our reflective journals are used regularly as a focal point for reflection and include RE and PSHE.
- We have a planned programme for Collective Worship across the school. This maps out themes across the year, based on our core Christian values,
- There is a daily act of collective worship taking different forms, and involving children,
- Displays and pictures around the school continually celebrate and encourage reflection and spirituality,
- Our RE curriculum is inspiring and motivating,
- Visits and visitors support all our work.

Impact: How do we know this is being effective?

Spiritually developed children love and accept themselves and enjoy good relationships with each other. They take an interest and delight in the world around them; they are open to what lies beyond the material (this may manifest itself in faith/belief in God). They can express and understand feelings, 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.

Although the teaching and understanding of spirituality is sort through this policy, it does not standalone and is interlinked to other polices such as RE, PSHE, Collective Worship, and SMSC.

Spiritual development - self

Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of self – the inner person and the way that this shapes an individual's perception of themselves as a unique human being. Spiritual learners reflect on the relationship that they have with their sense of being a unique person.

Reception	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
Encounter: Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development through an exploration of identity and personal values.			
RE – Who made the wonderful world? Who cares for this special world and why? <i>Exploring puzzling questions</i>	SEAL 3: Say no to bullying. SEAL 1: New beginnings RE – What are God's rules for living? What responsibility has God given people for taking care of creation? <i>I wonder questions.</i>	SEAL 5: Good to be me – understanding emotions and controlling them.	SEAL 4: Going for goals – identifying strengths and weaknesses. Resilience – recovering from mistakes. <i>Creating spiritual pictures: e.g. entering Spirited Arts competition</i>
Reflection: Learning from life: understanding an inner meaning of self and identity – critical reasoning and big questions.			
What makes me happy? What do I do in my spare time that I like? What things do I value?	Who am I? What am I worth? What is right and wrong? How do I decide what is right and wrong?	What are feelings? Don't we deserve to be happy? What should I do about right and wrong? What do I deserve in life? Who should I look up to? What type of person do I want to be? What difference does being loved make? Is belief in something important? What rights do I have?	Should you respect yourself over all other things? Where does your identity come from? Does more mean being happier? Is my understanding self a selfish concept? Are the opinions of my friends important to me? Are my beliefs important?
Transformation: Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing an idea of self: developing a personal set of beliefs.			
A growing awareness of knowing what I like and what I don't like both materially and in the way that I want to be treated. Can say what I like and what I am good at.	An evolving awareness of the concept of self as more than purely physical characteristics. A growing realisation that being content with who you are is important for personal happiness. Know how to apologise and to try again. Beginning to recognise mistakes and how to deal with them in a positive way.	The awareness that the growing development of a personal identity is an important aspect of being human. A growing realisation that an emphasis on self alone is not sufficient as a means of living out the self. An evolving sense of the concept of identity as more than purely physical characteristics or our likes and hobbies. Can set goals for my work and behaviour that will help me to progress.	The awareness of the value of reflection to explore deeper responses to thoughts that help shape the 'inner self'. An understanding that we express our personal values in the way that we approach our relationship with others and the world around us. The ability to express an interpretation of this verbally. Can explain my opinions.

Spiritual development - others

Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of others – a growing empathy, concern and compassion for how to treat others. Spiritual learners reflect on how their values and principles affect their relationships with others.

Reception	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
Encounter: Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development: recognising the values and worth of others			
RE - Who made the wonderful world? Who cares for this special world and why? How did Jesus 'Rescue' people?	SEAL 2: getting in and falling out – building successful relationships. SEAL 6: Relationships RE – What are God's rules for living? What responsibility has God given people for taking care of creation? <i>I wonder questions.</i>	SEAL 2: Developing positive behaviour towards others. SEAL 7: Changes – how influence can be both positive and negative. The importance of decision making. <i>Engaging with parables and the teachings of Jesus i.e. Good Samaritan/ Sermon on the mount</i>	SEAL 4: Going for goals – understanding other peoples' views. Learning to get on with different types of people. SEAL 7: Changes – learning to accept different opinions and beliefs. <i>Exploring the role of Christian reformers in combating slavery in the past (and today).</i>
Reflection: Learning from life: understanding an awareness of the affect of others– a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
What makes a good friend? Why are my friends important to me? What do I like in my friends? How do my friends make me feel? How do I look after my friends and family?	Why do people bully others? How do I treat others? Do I treat other people in the same way? Should I treat everyone in the same way? Should I treat my friends differently to others? Why do we fight and argue? Should we always be loyal to our friends? How can I demonstrate compassion?	Why do people ignore others when they need help? Is being a good friend easy? Why do we sometimes hurt the feelings of our friends? How sincerely can I care for those who may be in need but I have never met? Why should we care for them? Will we ever live in a world without fighting? What responsibilities do I have for others?	Is it better to please oneself first; or others? Why do people have to suffer? What is pain? Is there such a thing as a bad person? What is worth striving for? Why isn't life always fair? Is being fair always that right thing to do? Does more mean being happier?
Transformation: Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing an idea of relationship with others: expressing innermost thoughts through words, art or actions.			
Understanding that other people have their own views and opinions and may value different things to you.	A growing appreciation that the views and opinions of others should be listened to with respect whether those views are similar to your own or different.	Acknowledgement and respect for the rights of others to have their own deep thoughts that shape their inner self. A developing ability to enter into discussions with others about their values and opinions.	A growing empathy with the values of others and developing an understanding of the need to appreciate them to build meaningful relationships. A growing ability to express how understanding the value of others is an important part of building meaningful relationships.

Spiritual development – world and beauty

Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of a physical and creative world – a growing relationship with beauty through the ability to respond emotionally to experiences of the wonder of the natural world and the results of human creativity. Spiritual learners explore their understanding of beauty and the affect this has on their perception of and relationship with the world.

Reception	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
Encounter: Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development: challenging experiences of beauty			
Art Music Science RE: Who made the wonderful world? Who cares for this special world and why? <i>Collect and make a creation table of natural objects found outside</i>	Art Music Science Geography RE: What responsibility has God given people for taking care of creation? <i>Engagement with creation stories from Christian and other traditions</i>	Art Music Science Geography <i>Exploring diversity within the created world environments; Natural world DVD</i>	Art, Music, Science Geography <i>How have we made Gods world ugly? What can we do? Explore through stories like The man who planted trees by Jean Giono Plan and design a spiritual garden for the school</i>
Reflection: Learning from life: reflecting on experiences of beauty – a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
What types of weather do you like the most and why? What is your favourite colour and why? What sounds do you like to listen to? What makes you afraid? What is your favourite time of day/season?	Do different colours have different moods? What gives them these moods? What is the most beautiful thing in the world? Why should I care about animals and plants? How/why does the weather affect our mood?	How do we know we've found all the colours in the world? What season do you feel most reflects your personality What is the difference between hearing and listening? Should we try to tame nature? What does it mean that beauty is in the eye of the beholder? What would it be like without seasons?	What is a perfect world? Why is there ugliness in the world? Can you love something that is ugly? Why do you like certain types of music? What response do you get when you look at a piece of art? Is beauty something that you can learn, or do you just have to feel it? What is the point in being creative?
Transformation: Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing an idea of the meaning of beauty: expressing innermost thoughts through words art or actions. Being moved emotionally by beauty.			
Have an instant response to something wonderful/ exciting and awesome happening. Evident in expression and simple phrases. Respond to sensory feelings and be able to show it.	Give a verbal response that explains a reaction to something wonderful/ exciting or awesome. Be seen to respond to a stimulus and begin to explain in simple terms verbally or through body language.	Be able to understand and give meaning to something wonderful/ exciting or awesome. Be able to verbalise their sensory responses and begin to explore their reactions to stimuli. A growing confidence to explore concepts orally.	Be able to explain/ give an emotional response to stimuli and begin to articulate this from a personal perspective. Be able to display shades of meaning when verbalising sensory responses and understand and interpret their reaction. A developing appreciation that some things don't have answers.

Spiritual development – beyond

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

Reception	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
Encounter: Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development: a growing appreciation of the intangible – truth, love			
Art Music Drama Prayer Corners <i>Becoming aware of worship through collective worship in school.</i>	RE – Easter RE – Why did Jesus teach the Lord’s prayer as the way to pray? Prayer Corners <i>I wonder questions. Visiting local church; exploring the senses of worship in church touch, colour, smell sound, stillness.</i>	Science – life processes Prayer Corners <i>Exploring children’s stories that deal with death ie Heaven by Nicolas Allen / Badgers Parting Gifts by Susan Varley Explore Symbolism of The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe.</i>	RE - Easter RE – Wisdom Prayer Corners <i>Creating Spiritual pictures to express ideas about God. i.e entering Spirited Arts competition Reflecting on Death rituals connected with Christian and other traditions Visiting Westminster Abbey to explore The Stations of the Cross</i>
Reflection: Learning from life: reflecting on the beyond – a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
What are the stars for? Why do we have rainbows? How big is the sky? What is the smallest thing there is? Why are people different? What does God look like?	Where is God? What might heaven be like? Is there such a thing as an angel? If you can’t see something, is it still real? What is true happiness? When have you experienced moments of awe and wonder?	What is the purpose of the earth? Is God alive now? Why is there illness? Why do destructive things, like earthquakes, have to happen? Which is stronger – love or hate? Is it good that scientists can’t explain everything? Why are there religions? What is beyond the universe?	Do we come back after death as a different being? Is there life after death? Where do our spirits go when we are dead? Do we have a soul? If so, what happens to it after death? Why do we love? What lasts forever? What is unknowable? What else is there to discover? How do we know what we don’t know? What is worth dying for?
Transformation: Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing the need to understand the purpose of life.			
Have the confidence to ask questions that have no answers.	Have a sense of enjoyment in devising and discussing questions that have no answer. Use imagination to interpret responses to big questions.	Understand what big questions are. Be able to explain imaginative responses to questions of meaning.	Can generate big questions. Begin to express through a personal vocabulary responses to questions of meaning. Begin to be able to use critical reasoning in responding to a big question