



ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL
A CHURCH OF ENGLAND ACADEMY

SPIRITUALITY

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality is a core component to 'living life in all its fullness' as the mind, body and soul needs to be nurtured equally. It relates to fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life which affect everyone and is not dependant on a religious belief. It is also based on the search for ways to answer questions about life and a search for identity.

Spiritual development relates to fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life which affect everyone; it is not dependant on a person's religious beliefs or affiliation. It has to do with the universal search for individual and communal identity, and 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 ways to answer these existential questions and for values by which to live.

There is an expectation that Church of England schools will ensure the spiritual development of all children. The Vision for Education sets out a goal whereby, in addition to embracing an agenda of excellence and academic rigour, a wider framework is required where all children flourish. 'Life in all its fullness' means giving emphasis to physical and intellectual development, while also meeting the needs for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Rebecca Nye, (Nye R (2009) *Children's Spirituality: What it is and why it matters* London: Church House Publishing) suggests that spirituality can be defined as relational awareness. That means awareness of my relationship with:

Self (being a unique person and understanding self-perception)

Others (how empathy, concern, compassion and other values and principles affect relationships)

World and Beauty (perceiving and relating to the physical and creative world through responses to nature and art)

Beyond – (relating to the transcendental and understanding experiences and meaning outside the 'everyday')

To talk about spirituality is, essentially, to talk about something which is beyond words. To make conversations about spirituality more accessible to every member of our school community, This language of spirituality begins from a Christian understanding that everyone is a valued creation, individually and uniquely made by God.

The windows, mirrors, doors analogy clarifies this meaning. We gaze out through windows onto the world, responding with our emotions and trying to make sense of what we see. We use mirrors to reflect on our thoughts and feelings, and how what we see through the window connects with our inner selves, and how we connect with what we see and understand. This becomes a spiritual experience when it transforms us and so we walk out through the door into life differently from before. For some, this spiritual experience leads to a sense of transcendence: in other words a feeling or belief that something exists beyond what can be directly seen. Christians would describe this state as God.

WINDOWS

- * Opportunities for children to be aware of the world in new ways, looking out into the world.Chan
- * To wonder about life's 'WOWS. Things that are amazing.
- * To think about life's 'OWS' that take us by surprise!
- * Learning about life in all its fullness.

MIRRORS

- * Opportunities to reflect on their experiences.
- * Looking inside yourself.
- * Consider life's big questions and reach for some possible answers.
- * Learning from life by exploring our own insights and those of others.

DOORS

- * Opportunities for children to respond.
- * Moving onto a new path or situation.
- * To do something creative to develop and apply our ideas.
- * Learning to live out our beliefs and values.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IS A WHOLE SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY

For some the spiritual development of pupils might appear to be the specific responsibility of teachers of RE, but on closer inspection it is apparent that there are opportunities for enhancing the spiritual well-being of learners in every aspect of school life. It is possible to identify three areas which can contribute to the spiritual development of pupils: the general ethos of the school, collective worship and the whole curriculum (including RE).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY 'DEVELOPMENT' IN SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT?

Spirituality is an innate human capacity. Spiritual development is not about becoming more spiritual (in a measurable or expansive sense). It is about realising or becoming more and more aware of one's natural, innate spirituality. This is sometimes a slow and gradual process, at other times there might be significant stages of realisation, which are part of the ongoing 'developing' process.

Unlike the development of a photograph, people don't reach a finished state of spiritual development, but participate in the ongoing process of spiritual

realisation. If spirituality were something which developed or grew in a quantifiable sense, then surely adults would be more spiritual than children. Many would argue that children seem to be far more spiritually aware than adults. Perhaps as a part of growing older, the pressures of life can distract or distort our interests so that as adults, our spiritual awareness is dulled, and we do not 'realise it' to the full.

Spirituality can be difficult to define but the examples below help

- 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 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 emphasises 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, sometimes 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.