

St John's Highbury Vale Church of England Primary School

Spirituality Policy

At St John's Highbury Vale every child is valued as a unique individual created in the image of God. We aim to be a school where everyone has equal opportunities and where teaching and learning are of a consistently high standard.

At the heart of our school vision is a desire for an authentic and life-giving relationship both with one another and with God, in the words of St Paul:

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Philippians 4:13

This can be lived out through our school motto:

'every child, every opportunity, every day.'

At St John's Highbury Vale we believe that spirituality is about reaching the very inner most being of an individual and making that part of them come alive so that they can connect with the world and those around them. Spirituality is about appreciating and cherishing what is good, joyful, truthful and beautiful. It is about looking for what is generous, creative and loving in everyone.

At St John's Highbury Vale, we believe in providing a wide and varied range of opportunities for growth within a safe, non-judgemental, supportive environment. This is definitely linked to the school's strong Christian faith.

Our aims

In order to foster spiritual development, the school aims to provide children with opportunities to:

- 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 peoples' 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);
- Flourish mentally and spiritually to support mental health;
- Foster self-awareness, and encourage each other to make informed decisions;

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- Develop the skills and language required to enable them to reflect upon the big questions and mysteries of life;
- Develop an awareness that 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 and beauty;
- Learn to value the natural world, a sense of awe and wonder and a commitment to care for creation.
- Begin to understand and make sense of their own feelings and emotions in response to certain encounters and events that occur in their life;
- Develop enthusiasm to explore and learn through enquiry and first hand experiences.

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.

Teaching and learning

The curriculum and all areas of our community life will be driven by the school's vision, which is explicitly rooted in a Christian narrative.

We have six associated values through which we teach our vision across the academic year; Friendship, Respect, Wisdom, Forgiveness, Love and Courage.

Through teaching and learning, the school pursues these aims by ensuring:

- Opportunities for spiritual development are actively planned into the curriculum and encouraged in all areas of school life;
- Unplanned and spontaneous spiritual experiences are recognised, acknowledged and celebrated by staff and children;
- Collective Worship celebrates the love of God for every individual and provides opportunities for children to respond and reflect;
- A solid understanding of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; of prayer and of sacred texts is nurtured and developed;
- The school building and outdoor environment provides appropriate spaces for silence, stillness and prayer;
- The three churches associated with the school and other places of worship, are a valuable resource across the curriculum, giving children the opportunity to explore their own spirituality and encounter the divine, within a sacred place;
- That children's spiritual capacities such as imagination, empathy and insight are fostered through the creative arts (e.g. music, art, film, artefacts) and interactive multi-sensory teaching strategies, making use of the outdoor environment and relevant educational visits;
- Opportunities to look attentively and observe carefully, listening with discernment, valuing what is good and worthwhile and making judgements through discussion and exchange of views and ideas;
- Learning to live with success and failure for themselves and with others;

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- That moral development is linked to spiritual development through strategies such as 'windows, mirrors and doors' (see Appendix 1);
- That the 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;
- That children learn to respect everyone, as modelled by staff in their relationships with others;
- Promotion of strategies for positive mental health (see Appendix 2).

Approaches

In our school we seek to find ways in which all areas of the curriculum can promote and contribute to children's spiritual development and highlight opportunities for these in our planning:

- 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;
- Providing opportunities to visit places of worship;
- 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 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 will be monitored and evaluated in the following ways;

- Observing and listening to children;
- Regular discussion at staff and governor meetings;
- 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, RE books, SMSC work; creative writing;
- Regular inclusion in SEF;
- Regular review of policy and schemes of work.

We want our school to be a place where spiritual growth and development are central to our learning and community life together, knowing that it is when we stop and listen, children and staff are able to flourish and live life in all its fullness.

Appendix 1: Windows, mirrors and doors approach to spirituality

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 2: 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 physical and mental illness, loss, bereavement and the approach to death.

They recommend that we should acknowledge a person's religious belief and allow space for their faith as part of their support. Schools should therefore look to provide opportunities for inclusive spiritual development that supports good mental health. Schools should also provide opportunities to learn from people of different faiths and beliefs about how their spirituality shapes them and supports their mental health and wellbeing.

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