



# St. John's CE Primary School Friern Barnet Spiritual Development Policy

1. How is this policy a reflection of our theologically rooted Christian vision?

## ***Our vision at St John's is based on*** **'Faith, Excellence and Enjoyment'**

### At St. John's C.E. Primary School we aim:

Faith : To help children make moral choices based on Christian values, whilst promoting understanding and awareness towards those of a different culture and religion;  
Excellence: To develop the highest possible standards of behaviour, teaching and learning to support all pupils in achieving their full potential;  
Enjoyment: To provide a secure and friendly environment for all pupils where everyone strives to work in partnership with the home and the church.

Our school motto 'FAITH, EXCELLENCE AND ENJOYMENT' puts 'Faith' at the forefront and at the heart of our identity as a church school. It is closely interwoven with our school vision. We want children to grow and flourish, live out the Fruit of The Spirit in their daily lives and go out into society, making a positive impact and contribution.

As a Church of England school, Christianity provides the framework for beginning the spiritual discovery and experience of faith. The children learn to discern the teachings of Christ as the way of developing positive attitudes, behaviour and relationships needed to develop and sustain a community. The Christian Values as found in the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5: 22-23) are at the heart of our curriculum and learning, and represent all that we are and all that we aspire to be.

Spirituality is taught differently to other curriculum subjects. We teach children to understand what spirituality is, what it could be and to recognise their own spiritual experiences and "wow moments" (moments of awe and wonder). We recognise that spirituality is a quality we can nurture in children, empowering them in their spiritual development and enabling them to flourish.

Promoting spirituality should not be confused with developing faith. Faith is a set of beliefs by which you live your life by and could be a response to a belief in God. Faith is something you choose whereas spirituality is an aspect of human development - it is not separate but integral to who we are and what makes us whole. Spirituality is for everybody regardless of faith.

It is like the wind - it makes a difference but is unique to each person. It might change someone's understanding and beliefs but ultimately is an innate sense of awe and wonder. It is about understanding that there is something more than just 'me'.

## 2. Introduction

The Church of England Vision for Education is rooted in Jesus' desire that we should have 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). As our spiritual nature is such a fundamental part of our humanity, spiritual development is a key part of this holistic view of education:

*“Our vision embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people. We offer a vision of human flourishing for all, one that embraces excellence and academic rigour, but sets them in a wider framework.”<sup>1</sup>*

As Derek Holloway writes, spiritual development is intrinsic to every part of our work: *“I would strongly contend that in all schools, and certainly in Church schools, that spiritual development is not something you should hide away in a couple of curriculum boxes or treat as an afterthought. I must be something that should influence all areas of education as it does all areas of life.”<sup>2</sup>*

We believe that spiritual development is a core thread that runs through our school, and we see it as vital for the flourishing of all within our school community. In Acts 17:28, the Apostle Paul says that in God “we live and move and have our being”; becoming more aware of our innate spirituality is a life-long journey and it is our desire that all at St John’s C of E Primary move forward on that journey during their time here.

### 3. Aims

Our aim is to establish the right learning environment to enable the spiritual flourishing 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 knowledge and understanding of the school’s Christian values and the Biblical teaching that underpins them, as well as the context, language and symbolism of the Christian faith.
- Develop an awareness of and respect for other people’s beliefs and faiths and the ability to articulate their own.
- Foster self-awareness and encourage pupils to make informed decisions.
- Develop an appreciation of what it means to be a part of a community (e.g. using their gifts in the service of others), understanding the value of difference and diversity through involvement with others.
- Develop the skills and language required to enable them to reflect upon the big questions and mysteries of life, and upon experiences of awe, compassion, beauty etc.
- Begin to understand and make sense of their own feelings and emotions around certain encounters and events that occur in their life, including an awareness that experiences of disappointment, failure and loss may be occasions for spiritual growth.
- Encourage curiosity, creativity and imagination.

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 overarching 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.
- To recognise children’s spiritual experiences outside of school, enabling them to share and celebrate these experiences within school.

### 4. 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.*
- *willingness to reflect on their experiences.*

## 5. Shared understanding of spiritual development

Philip Sheldrake writes:

*"In Christian terms, spirituality refers to the way our fundamental values, lifestyles, and spiritual practices reflect particular understandings of God, human identity, and the material world as the context for human transformation...We shall see that all Christian spiritual traditions are rooted in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, particularly in the gospels and in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Christian spirituality is fundamentally concerned with following the way of Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>*

As a church school, it is this Christian framework that shapes our shared understanding of spirituality and spiritual development. We recognise the importance of engaging with our linked church/es in determining this shared understanding in the context of our school's Christian vision and values.

To make conversations about spiritual flourishing more accessible to every member of our school community, St John's C of E Primary has chosen to use the following shared understanding of spirituality and spiritual development.

### **How does St John's CE Primary promote spirituality?**

Our school aims to support all members of our school community in making sense of themselves and the world around them. We aim to help everyone to observe their own responses to different experiences. This starts from creating space to acknowledge spiritual experiences within oneself, creating space within the company of others and beyond. Our school believes that experiences,

both in and out of school, are important to the development of all. We aim to share and promote moments of spirituality, encouraging everyone to make links with the curriculum and their own everyday experiences that cause them to pause and reflect in awe and wonder. Examples of this include whole-school sharing of moments of awe and wonder in Monday collective worship, children, families and staff uploading moments of awe and wonder to Google Classroom, Awe and Wonder class books, reflection logs, sharing during class Collective Worship and more.

Spirituality is woven into the fabric and life of our school. We create space for all to experience and develop spirituality within everyday school life. We aim to provide this everyday language and experience of spirituality to all members of the school community.

We will create frameworks that help them to consider big, sometimes overwhelming, concepts such as life, death, identity, war, environmental factors etc. but without necessarily offering answers. These opportunities come through the teaching and learning of our whole school curriculum particularly our values, Collective Worship, RE, PSHE, Science, Art, Music and English. Children will have exposure to spiritual experiences and conversations to know that it exists for everyone including adults.

#### **Opportunities for spirituality development come when:**

- children foster self-awareness and are encouraged to make informed decisions;
- children begin to understand and make sense of their own feelings and emotions around certain encounters and events that occur in their life;
- children understand the value of difference and diversity through involvement with others;
- children are encouraged to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination;
- children are given space to stop, look, listen, think and reflect
- children feel safe to share opinions and think differently from others
- children use their imagination

#### **Children need:**

- time to be listened to;
- adults that are respectful;
- space to explore, think and discuss;
- opportunities that encourage wonder and surprise;
- to develop the skills and language required to enable them to reflect upon the big questions and mysteries of life;
- to develop an awareness that experiences of disappointment, failure and loss may be occasions for spiritual growth;
- to develop the ability to reflect upon experiences of awe, compassion, beauty etc;
- to develop a capacity to value the natural world, a sense of awe and wonder and a commitment to care for creation;
- to know that there is not always a product or end result;
- to know there is another way.

## 6. Provision

The school pursues the aims 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 pupils.
- 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.
- Pupils' 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.
- Moral development is linked to spiritual development.
- Pupils 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.
- The delivery and content will be made accessible to all pupils including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Consideration of Early Years curriculum and how the curriculum for younger children can support spiritual development.
- The religious background of all pupils will be taken into consideration when planning teaching.

**At St John's, we provide space for spirituality within the daily life of the school through:**

- Collective worship (all provide an opportunity to share and reflect);
- Awe and wonder displays to document and celebrate instances of awe and wonder;
- Planned and spontaneous prayer within the class timetabled day;
- Class assemblies;
- Reflective logs;
- A focus on inclusion for example through movement and dance e.g. sensory circuit;
- Teachers skilfully question and enable deeper learning to take place;
- Encouraging learners to develop the skill of asking their own questions;
- Sensory room and calm centre (physical space);
- Spirituality through the senses (Loving God outdoors, use of natural objects in prayer spaces e.g. flowers, stones, water);
- Making sure pupils have an opportunity to enjoy being outside, especially in different types of weather and e.g. snow, rain, a storm, sunny days;
- Y1, Y2 and YR (Reception) Forest School sessions;
- Sing or listen to songs about creation e.g. Indescribable by Chris Tomlin;
- Lighting candles during Collective Worship.

**Activities and opportunities which create space for spiritual development at St John's will include:**

- exposure and appreciation of nature & science;
- following rituals and traditions;
- use of prayer and reflection time;
- time for silence and stillness;
- acts of service that benefit others;
- stories that promote thought and imagination.

Evidence of spirituality may come through art, play, attitudes, movement and using the senses. These opportunities are recognised, acknowledged and celebrated by staff and children;

## 7. CPD and training

This is a complex area and staff should be trained and equipped to provide for the spiritual development of pupils within the context of a Church of England school. We access diocesan-led training for those with a particular role in planning for and evaluating spiritual development.

## 8. Monitoring and evaluation

Spiritual development cannot be measured and continues throughout our lives. However, opportunities offered to pupils for spiritual development will be monitored and evaluated in the

following ways:

- Observing and listening to pupils.
- 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 spiritual development means in this school by providing them with induction and development training.
- Evidence from pupils' work, e.g. reflective diary, RE books, SMSC work, creative writing, art.
- Regular inclusion in the SEF.
  
- CPD opportunities and sharing examples of good practice with other schools.
- Seeking to evaluate, formally and informally, with pupils and adults, activities with a particular focus on spirituality and spiritual development (e.g. collective worship)

Provision for spiritual development is monitored by Macci Dobie (Head Teacher), Claire Horne (Deputy Head Teacher) Rev. Dagmar Wilkinson (School Rector), Araba Hagan (RE Lead), Dean Diomedous (RE Lead) through:

Monitoring arrangements will include; planning, awe and wonder images shared during Collective Worship, reflective logs, scrutiny of work, surveys, learning walks, class displays, daily check in with self (*How am I feeling today*).

Provision for spiritual development is independently inspected by law under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (SIAMS).

## 9. Opportunities for spiritual flourishing of adults

Under the SIAMS framework, it is also the intention that the spiritual flourishing of adults should be enabled and enhanced by the work of the school. We consider ways in which our routines and practices (e.g. staff meetings, CPD, collective worship, church services, staff retreats) can contribute to the spiritual life of adults in our community.

### Evaluation/Review

This policy is reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and/or designated senior teacher and ratified every **three years** by the Governing Body.

Date of validation: November 2024

Date of review: November 2027

### References

<sup>1</sup> The Church of England Education Office, *Church of England Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good*. (The Church of England Education Office 2016)

<sup>2</sup> Derek Holloway et al, *Spiritual Development : Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom* (The Church of England Education Office April 2019)

<sup>3</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality, A Brief History*. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) p.