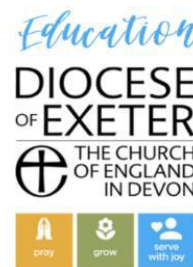


Model Policy for Spiritual Development in Church Schools

Updated Autumn 2026



School vision, theology and logo

Please delete all blue italic type once your school has considered the comments.

This is a model policy that can be adapted to the context of your school or parts of it can be used within your SMSC policy. The process of considering each aspect of the policy with staff, governors and perhaps children and families, will have an impact on how effective this policy is.

The models in this template policy are offered as tools to support reflection and professional dialogue. Schools should adopt, adapt or develop approaches that best reflect their context, vision and understanding of spirituality

Our vision

Write your school vision here.

Our vision drives and supports the ethos of our school and the policies and practices within it. We believe that spirituality is the golden thread that runs through our school. We attach great importance to it for both children's development and for the growth and well-being of all within our school community. Spiritual development is nurtured through collective worship, the curriculum, the school environment and the quality of our relationships. It is developed through opportunities for stillness, creativity, curiosity and the exploration of big questions about ourselves, others, the world and God/divine-being/something greater than ourselves. We recognise that spiritual development contributes significantly to wellbeing, sense of identity, belonging, resilience and understanding of self and others. Our understanding of spirituality is rooted in the example and teachings of Jesus, who created opportunities for reflection, encounter, wonder, relationship, service and prayer.

We aim for children, and adults, to grow in their ability to:

- be guided by their beliefs and values and be willing to take a stand to defend them
- be self-aware and empathise with the experience of others in the school and wider community
- love themselves, care for themselves, believe in their potential to achieve, and find inner strength and resilience when facing challenges
- exercise imagination and creativity, appreciate beauty in the world and be alive to experiences of awe and wonder
- be intrigued by mystery and be open to an awareness of the transcendent in the whole of life
- be comfortable with stillness and silence and open to engage in reflection/meditation/prayer
- be ready to say sorry when mistakes are made, to forgive themselves and to forgive others
- be willing to take risks and to reflect, learn and grow following experiences of failure as well as success
- demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness when exploring life's big questions
- appreciate and be thankful for what is good in life like friends and family, and show generosity towards others

(From David Smith's work on Spiritual Capacities)

Our shared understanding of 'spirituality'

As a staff and governor team, we have agreed on a shared understanding of spiritual development in our school community to support us as we talk about spirituality.

Schools may choose from one of the following or come up with something that resonates more with your own school context and vision:

Spiritual development is the development of an awareness that there is "something more to life than meets the eye, something more than the material, something more than the obvious, something to wonder at, something to respond to." (Terence Copley)

Spirituality is delighting in all things, being absorbed into the present moment, not too attached to self, and eager to explore boundaries of 'beyond' and 'other', searching for meaning, discovering purpose, open to more. "Spirituality is about our relationship with ourselves, with others, with the world around us and with God (or the transcendent)." (Rebecca Nye)

Spirituality is an awareness of mystery and its value to human flourishing.

"Spirituality was generally viewed as enriching individuals in their understanding of and ability to relate to, others and of society as a whole". Education for Adult Life (SCAA 1996)

"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 to 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, 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." SCAA discussion paper

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.

Spiritual development is the ongoing process of exploring meaning, purpose and identity through our relationships with ourselves, others, the world around us and God, enabling us to flourish and live life in all its fullness.

Legal requirements:

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.

To fulfil their legal obligations under section 48 of the 2005 Education Act, SIAMS inspections make judgments on SMSC education in Church of England and Methodist schools.

The SIAMS Inspection Framework references spirituality implicitly and explicitly in two of the inspector questions:

IQ2: How does the curriculum reflect the school's theologically rooted Christian vision?

b) How is spiritual development an intrinsic part of the curriculum?

IQ3: How is daily collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually?

a) How do the theologically rooted Christian vision and the Anglican/Methodist foundation of the school shape worship and spirituality in the school?

b) How do partnerships with the DBE and/or MAST, and partnerships with parish/local church/es enhance this?

c) In what ways is the worship life of the school inclusive, invitational, and inspirational?

d) 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?

e) How does the trust contribute to and enhance the school's worship and spiritual life?

The Church of England Vision for Education has a core desire for 'Life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) which requires educating the whole person.

In its inspection guidance, Ofsted identifies defines pupils' spiritual development as 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

Evidence may be gathered by Ofsted inspectors from anywhere relevant to ensure that schools are promoting SMSC, mental and physical development of pupils at the schools; and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Spiritual development is not an additional subject. It is embedded throughout the life and work of the school. Opportunities for reflection, creativity, questioning, wonder, discussion and personal growth are planned across the curriculum and arise naturally through relationships, collective worship, educational visits, engagement with nature, service to others and everyday experiences.

We support pupils in their spiritual development by:

- providing opportunities for spiritual development in collective worship
- providing opportunities for spiritual development in RE and the exploration of religious and non-religions worldviews
- providing opportunities for spiritual development in the wider curriculum
- capturing opportunities for awe and wonder as planned moments and as they arise
- providing 'reflection spaces' in classrooms, public spaces, outside, and by using the church building, and through the 'Prayer Spaces in School' website

- offering pupils opportunities to develop their own spiritual leadership, *give school specific examples eg through leading collective worship, Ethos group/worship ambassadors and other opportunities*

As a staff team:

- We have a staff understanding and shared language of spiritual development.
- We have a culture within our school that recognises the importance of spirituality to individuals, both children and staff.
- We revisit spirituality as an area for consideration in our staff meetings and offer training.
- Our governors monitor the impact of our spirituality focus. *You may like to outline here how they do this. Is it through regular ethos committee meetings, learning walks, a governor agenda item?*
- We have staff guidance accessible to continue to support staff in this aspect of our curriculum. *Please see our diocesan webpage on spiritual development for further support and information.*
- We have an understanding of spirituality that is rooted in the example and teachings of Jesus and create opportunities for reflection, encounter, wonder, relationship, service and prayer.
- We ensure new staff are aware of our school policy on spiritual development.
- We use a model and/or a shared language to support our own thinking in spirituality, *eg 'Windows, Mirrors, Doors; Candle' approach; In, out and Up or the school model and/or language*
- We have a variety of reflection areas both inside and outside the school building. *You could show examples or photographs*
- We may draw on a range of models and professional thinking to support our understanding of spiritual development. *For example, the four key areas of Self, Others, Beauty and Beyond (Andrew Rickett / Rebecca Nye).*
- We recognise that children will have different 'Spiritual Temperaments' or 'Sacred Pathways, through the work of Gary Thomas (2010) and Myra Perrine (2007). This will influence our planning as we look to nurture spirituality across the curriculum, not just in RE and Collective Worship. *We encourage staff who are specialist subject leads to identify opportunities for spiritual development in their subject, and to share them with colleagues.*
- We have identified opportunities for spiritual development and deeper thinking across the curriculum, for all age groups.
- We actively use the language we have agreed on with staff to nurture an awareness of spirituality and its importance to well-being and development with the children.
- We aim to help each pupil to develop a spiritual understanding in terms of their own cultural context and personal worldview.
- We share with parents, whenever possible, the outcomes of our focus on spiritual development through newsletters, social media, displays and our website.
- We discuss spirituality with our church and the Diocesan Education Team and others who can further support this golden thread.
- *You may also have decided as a school to create posters, a charter, or other school specific visual reminders in your school environment.*

Our awareness and understanding of spiritual development will enrich what we offer to the children and to all in our school community, supporting the development of the whole child beyond the physical and the academic.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Senior leaders, governors and children will support pupils and adults to share their experiences and opportunities for spiritual development through *eg discussions, focused days or planned times during the week, spiritual journals, reflection spaces*. This will impact on the opportunities and

experiences that are available to children and adults across the school community enabling all to flourish.

Leaders and governors also gather evidence including through pupil voice, learning walks, curriculum reviews, collective worship monitoring, staff discussions and review of reflection spaces to evaluate the effectiveness of provision for spiritual development. This forms part of the ongoing cycle of monitoring and evaluation to support improvement.

This policy will be reviewed in light of future Church of England guidance regarding spirituality and spiritual development in schools.

Other related policies:

Collective Worship

Teaching and Learning

Relationships and Behaviour

SMSC

Curriculum policy

Referenced reading:

[Church of England Education Office \(CEEO\) Spiritual Development – Interpretations of Spiritual Development in the Classroom \(2019\)](#)

[Current SIAMS Framework](#)

[Current Ofsted Inspection documentation](#)