



# Spiritual Development

## Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom

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# About the Authors

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As a teacher Derek has over 15 years of classroom experience working as an RE teacher in maintained schools in Essex and Wiltshire. He worked for the Salisbury Diocese as an RE Adviser and as an Adviser to Dorset SACRE. He is currently the School Character and SIAMS Development Manager for the Church of England Education Office: a post that includes overseeing the managing of the Understanding Christianity Project, The Unlocking Gifts project and the recent review of the SIAMS inspection schedule.

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## Liz Mills

Liz is a Primary Teacher and Lead RE Teacher. She has a growing family and an insatiable appetite for finding ways to help schools, their pupils and staff, their families and communities to 'Grow, Together'. She has carried out two pieces of research, thanks to the generosity of the Farmington Institute. The first aimed to discover simple, practical ways to explore and promote 'spiritual development' for all schools. The second to investigate the impact that inter-generational community projects designed to promote creative RE might

have on all those involved. It is her hope now that the down to earth wisdom shared with her by others young and old in the course of these two pieces of research can be used to resource schools and communities now and, in the future, so that we never stop 'Growing, Together'!

## Andrew Rickett

Andrew Rickett is an experienced education consultant and is currently Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) for the Diocese of Llandaff. Previously he worked for the Diocese of Salisbury. Andrew is also an experienced inspector for Ofsted and for SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools). He was the lead inspector for the School Inspection Service (SIS), which provides inspections for schools with a designated religious character. He has supported a number of dioceses as a consultant, training and working with diocesan and school leaders in church school distinctiveness, RE, collective worship, and in particular spirituality.

## Shahne Vickery

Shahne is an established author of a wide range of popular titles that support collective worship, Christian values education and spiritual and moral development in schools. Her publications include the Experience Journeys (e.g. Experience Easter, Experience Church etc) and Creating a Multi-sensory Spiritual Garden in Your School, as well as all the Imaginor titles including Roots and Fruits 1 & 2 'and 'Jack in the Box for Early Years'

Shahne has over 20 years of experience as a teacher and deputy head in primary schools in both England and Wales. She was a Schools Adviser in the Gloucester Diocese for fifteen years and now works as part of the Education Team in the Diocese of Worcester.

She also delivers training and speaks at conferences throughout the UK. Shahne is married to Jonathan, an Anglican parish priest in Bristol.

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## Kathryn Wright

After teaching in East London secondary schools for a number of years, Kathryn became the RE adviser to the London Borough of Newham before going freelance in 2005. Until April 2019, she worked as a consultant for Culham St Gabriel's leading the Teach:RE course programme. In addition, she was the RE adviser for the Diocese of Norwich, and also supported the Dioceses of Ely and St Albans. She has also enjoyed being a RE Quality Mark assessor and a Section 48 inspector. I am a co-opted member of the NATRE executive and am on the Board of the RE Council of England and Wales. My doctorate in 2018 developed a theological framework for RE pedagogy in Church of England schools.

Kathryn has recently been appointed the CEO of the Culham St Gabriel's Trust.

# Contents

|    |                                                                                    |    |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Introduction .....                                                                 | 1  |
| 2. | The story so far .....<br>Derek Holloway                                           | 2  |
| 3. | Growing Together .....<br>Liz Mills                                                | 5  |
| 4. | Recognising Spiritual development in a Primary context .....<br>Shahne Vickery     | 12 |
| 5. | The Red Kite: Telling the Story .....<br>Andrew Rickett                            | 19 |
| 6. | Spirituality: the woven fabric of school life .....<br>Anne Lumb                   | 23 |
| 7. | Sacred Pathways .....<br>Kathryn Wright                                            | 27 |
| 8. | Spiritual development and human flourishing: Why we bother .....<br>Tatiana Wilson | 32 |
|    | Endnotes .....                                                                     | 36 |
|    | Bibliography .....                                                                 | 38 |

# I. Introduction

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**The conviction at the heart of the Church of England Vision for Education is that children who are part of a school community formed around our vision will discover an education that embraces excellence and academic rigour within the wider framework of spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development and enables them to flourish.<sup>1</sup>**

An important question in our denominational inspection schedule is therefore: *How well does the school support all pupils in their spiritual development enabling, all pupils to flourish?*

Schools approach spiritual development in many ways and we want to encourage that variety and diversity. This document is offered to stimulate further thinking, not to try and arrive at a single view or definition.<sup>2</sup>

We are grateful to Derek Holloway who has led the development of the new SIAMS schedule and brought together some of the leading innovators in this field who have contributed their latest thinking. Derek sets out something of the journey which SIAMS has been on in this area. Liz Mills who developed what has become known as the 'windows mirrors doors' approach shares how her thinking has developed and continues to develop through a series of images. Shahne Vickery looks at how four schools have sought to develop opportunities for spiritual development across the

curriculum. Andrew Rickett explores a framework for spirituality of 'self, others, beauty and beyond'. Anne Lumb looks at how spirituality might be woven through the fabric of the life of the school following the structure of the Church of England's Vision for Education. Kathryn Wright considers how recent work by Gary Thomas and Myra Perrine on Christian hospitality might be applied through the concept of 'sacred pathways'. Finally, Tatty Wilson brings this all together by considering why spiritual development is important for human flourishing and mental wellbeing.

Our hope is that the ideas developed and outlined in this document will stimulate schools in their thinking about spiritual development, encourage diocesan advisers as they support schools and enable SIAMS inspectors to understand and appreciate a range of different ideas and approaches. All of that work is for the purpose of enabling children to truly flourish spiritually, as well as in every other aspect of their being.

**Nigel Genders**  
Chief Education Officer

## 2. Derek Holloway: Spiritual Development: The Journey so far

I suspect that for many within and beyond the Church school sector, there is an assumption that spirituality is to do with religious education (RE) or perhaps PSHE and therefore it tends to be put into and left in those curriculum boxes. Many see spiritual development as a subset of the greater SMSC (Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural) domain and take the view that so long as you are doing alright on the other three you can get away with largely ignoring the spiritual or perhaps just doing the odd 'awe and wonder' moment. However, I would strongly contend that in all schools, and certainly in Church schools, spiritual development is not something you should hide away in a couple of curriculum boxes or treat as an afterthought. It must be something that should influence all areas of education as it does all areas of life.

The purpose of this section is to outline how we got to where we are now before we consider how to move forward.

For many of us working in the diocesan sector, the importance of spiritual development in inspection and in school policy in general begins from this quote from the hugely influential predecessors Alan Brown:

*If the spiritual is properly and fully addressed, the moral, social and cultural will fall into place more easily*<sup>3</sup>

Alan Brown.

This educational journey perhaps begins with the work of researchers like Rebecca Nye and David Hay who helped establish the significance of spiritual development in educational thinking.<sup>4</sup> However, the academic debate they began didn't always translate into classroom practice, although it remains significant in RE. Having recognised that there is something important about spiritual development in school a lot of energy was then put into trying to define what was meant by it. An early example was the SCAA discussion paper of 1995:

*The term needs to be seen as applying to 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"*<sup>5</sup>

SCAA discussion paper

In this was the beginning of the ideas of 'relationships with others' 'relationships with something of the numinous' and something to do with a search for personal meaning/values. Soon others began to add a strand about nature/creation... the world.

David Smith's work for the Stapleford Centre 'Making sense of Spiritual Development' (1999) helpfully presented a structure for mapping the progression of spiritual development across the curriculum.

He suggested four windows into spiritual development:

- **Spiritual Capacities:** recognition that all human beings are capable of spiritual growth through capacities such as self-awareness, reflection, empathy, imagination and creativity
- **Spiritual Experiences:** ways in which pupils can encounter the spiritual dimension of life
- **Spiritual Understanding:** the need to have developed an understanding to make sense of the spiritual experiences encountered and capacities exercised
- **Spiritual responses:** how this experience and understanding impacts on our lives and shapes the way in which we live our lives.

His work was taken by teachers and applied to classrooms perhaps most notably by Liz Mills whose Farmington fellowship work 'The Doughnut and Hole' (1997) became increasingly influential as it slowly spread through the diocesan networks. Liz explains this and her latest thinking in the next chapter of this publication

An early advocate of spiritual learning in the classroom was Michael Beesley, assistant headteacher at Poole High School and Salisbury Diocesan Advisory Teacher for Secondary schools in the late 1990s. His 'Stilling' approach became popular and helped establish a practical link in teachers' minds between spiritual development and improving teaching and learning. For some this was about preparing for learning and being able to focus. In many ways it could be seen as a precursor to the current popularity of some aspects of Mindfulness practice. For Michael then

*Stilling is an activity which offers children and young people a variety of techniques and exercises through which to acknowledge, explore and develop the spiritual dimension of their lives. These ways include, but do not go beyond, a purely cognitive and rational approach to teaching and learning, by involving the whole person through affective learning, i.e. learning through senses, feelings, imagination and intuition.*<sup>6</sup>

This approach involved teaching pupils to be 'still' and then through a series of guided imagery reflections to enhance learning across a range of curriculum subjects. He gives the example of a history teacher who at the end of a KS3 unit on the middle ages takes pupils through a guided imagery journey around a medieval market town.

## Spiritual development and Inspection

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.*

This fixed the role of spiritual development in the school curriculum and this meant that it would, as with other parts of the curriculum, require inspection. In its subsidiary guidance (January 2012) Ofsted defined what it was looking for when it came to spiritual development. It is a definition that has remained fairly fixed over recent time and its most recent iteration in the 2019 draft framework for consultation is rendered thus:

*Pupils' spiritual development is shown by their:*

- *beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values*
- *sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, including the intangible*
- *use of imagination and creativity in their learning*
- *willingness to reflect on their experiences.*

Ofsted here is seeking to review and establish provision and promotion of spiritual development. In other words, the seriousness with which the school takes this aspect of the curriculum rather than attempting to judge development of pupils.

In a Church school it can be reasonably expected that spiritual development would be a considerable strength. It was logical that Church school inspection would give a particular focus to spiritual development.

The first national Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools (SIAS) schedule in 2009 followed the Ofsted lead of considering spiritual development as part of SMSC but gave some indication that it should also be part of worship and RE and something that would be enhanced by the school environment. It asked the following questions under Christian character

- *How well does the Christian character support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of all learners whether they are Christian, of other faiths, or of none?*
- *How well is the spiritual development of learners enhanced by the school environment?*

Under collective worship

- *To what extent do learners and staff derive inspiration, spiritual growth and affirmation from worship?*

And under religious education

- *How well does RE contribute to the spiritual and moral development of all learners?*



The aspect of spirituality in the environment led to innovation and creative responses in many schools. Many began to develop spiritual gardens and reflective outdoor spaces. The work of Shahne Vickery in her 2009 publication *‘Creating a Multi-sensory Spiritual Garden in Your School’* supported this and became influential.

The 2013 SIAMS inspection schedule pretty much kept this rubric but introduced via an outstanding grade descriptor

*There is a highly developed interpretation of spirituality shared across the school community. Learners have regular opportunities to engage in high quality experiences that develop a personal spirituality. They are passionate and confident to express their thoughts and views in considerable depth through a rich variety of styles and media.*

This suggested for the first time that the school was required to define what it meant by spiritual development. It suggested that there may be different equally valid approaches and meanings to spiritual development. This reflected a shift in thinking in Church school education that was beginning to focus on how spirituality could be evaluated and assessed. It was clear that it was not possible to measure a pupil's spiritual development through a series of level statements as was happening in the rest of the curriculum. Even if this were possible, to measure it was considered unethical and undesirable. However, it was possible to provide increasingly challenging and thought-provoking experiences. Schools could support progression as well as provision and promotion.

Building on the best practice seen in schools, Andrew Rickett, an experienced SIAMS inspector working with the diocese of Salisbury, developed a series of grids to help not only with provision and promotion of spiritual development but with progression in experience as well.

This approach seeks to map opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum based on the idea of four concepts of spirituality: ‘Self, Others, Beauty and Beyond’. The definitions of these terms could vary from school to school. A Church school, for example, might want to be more specific with the ‘Beyond’. The school may want to talk about concepts of God or maybe use terms like ‘the divine’. This may be too strong for a community school. Whatever terminology is used the process that follows is the same. The starting point is the pupil's own questions about life. These questions can then be structured in age appropriate ways to ensure progression. With these reflection questions identified the school can then plan a series of encounters or openings for spiritual development that release the possibility of reflection on the student's big questions. This may be done at subject level or at a whole school level. This approach not

only maps provision but is thoughtful and wide ranging in its promotion of opportunities for spiritual development. It also builds in an element of progression in spiritual development. Andrew expands some of his thinking on this in a later chapter.

In the most recent version of SIAMS (2018) spiritual development is referenced under both worship and RE but is focused as part of the ‘Wisdom, knowledge and skills’ section. This links it closely with curriculum issues and the specific requirement that the school must evaluate:

*How well does the school support all pupils in their spiritual development enabling all pupils to flourish?*

And in the good grade descriptor the expectation of schools is explored:

*The school has a clear and secure understanding of spiritual development that is distinguishable from social, moral, and cultural development and is shared by staff. Progressively deeper opportunities exist across the curriculum which enable pupils to develop curiosity through questioning that helps them explore and articulate spiritual and ethical issues. Pupils value learning and enjoy questioning, listening and responding creatively across a range of subjects*

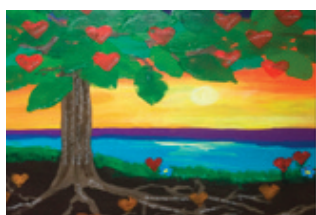
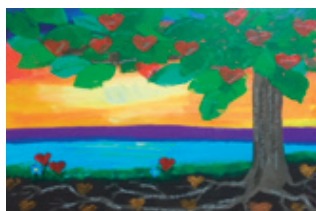
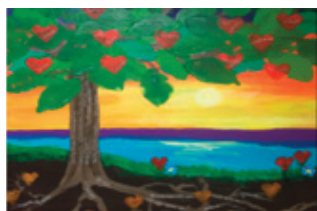
This is then the stage on the journey that spiritual development has reached in Church schools. In each school community there should be a shared understanding of what spiritual development means. It should be clearly something that stands alone from general SMSC. It should be more than just provision and promotion but some notion that the opportunities experienced by year six should be deeper than those offered in year two. It is something found in all curriculum subjects. It develops a range of skills that will enable pupils to flourish in their learning and in life more generally.

The past few decades have seen considerable research on spiritual development in schools. What follows is a selection of perhaps the most significant in terms of impact on school practice and certainly in terms of development of Church of England diocesan policies.



# 3. Liz Mills: Growing together?

## Spiritual development in schools and communities



We are very grateful to Glenda Gibson for the use of her spiritual tree picture. For more information visit [www.kooroon.com](http://www.kooroon.com)

There have been many wordy definitions of 'spiritual development' offered in government and denominational guidance papers for schools and inspectors over the years. These can often feel either too vague to get hold of or over-complicated and confusing for those not trained to understand some of the nuances of the words used. This certainly does not help when it comes to planning for this practically. In the day-to-day reality of school life, simple, appropriate definitions which can be taken at a variety of levels and then acted on are hard to find.

Over the past 20 years, I have been working to find simple clear ways to help my school and others to explore both the meaning of the terms 'spiritual development' and how these might best be applied to their own contexts. I have carried out two pieces of research for the Farmington Institute looking at this topic from different perspectives, 'The Doughnut and the Hole' (1997), and 'Growing Together?' (2018).

The aim of this chapter is firstly to explain in a little more detail the findings and images which have evolved from both these pieces of research. Secondly it offers to Church schools some suggestions as to how these might be developed further and applied specifically in their own contexts.

'The Doughnut and the Hole'<sup>7</sup> explored how 'Spiritual Development' might effectively be promoted in schools, in accordance with the requirements of the 1944 Education Act. It sprang from the realisation that there seemed to be widespread confusion over the meaning of these terms in educational contexts which was making it hard for schools to plan for this whole-heartedly. This piece of research sought to offer to any school, of whatever faith background or perspective, some well-researched, inclusive, practical ideas they could use to develop opportunities for spiritual development not only whole-heartedly but also effectively. It involved reading a wide range of research literature and working with schools, advisors and academics around the country sharing ideas and wisdom. From this it was possible to begin to collate a shared understanding of what the term 'spiritual development' might mean in school contexts. What began to emerge were the following ideas.



First, Holy Doughnuts. This initially amusing but also potentially powerful analogy I found to be a useful image to help pupils and teachers and anyone involved in schools as they struggled to express what they meant by the word 'spiritual'. It helped them to play powerfully with words in trying to grasp this tricky idea, i.e. the words, 'whole and hole, holy and holey and wholly!'

One might be able to talk about pupils as whole, (i.e. body and mind and spirit), with precious holy/holey centres. The 'spiritual' core is the central holy/holey centre and essential to but also integral within the whole. It is also the part which can be very tricky to express except in the terms of one's own individual faith or belief words and ideas.

The 'Doughnut and the Hole' image was therefore offered in the hope that this might help in maintaining in equal status the need to care for pupils' 'hole' development as part of their 'whole' development. It illustrates that both are essentially interlinked. Equally it muses on the idea of how this interlinking might happen, what might make us ultimately 'holy', according to what we personally and as schools take 'holy', or indeed 'hole-y' to mean.

This led to a set of key questions:

- what do we mean by 'holy'?
- is there a sense that spirituality in any way 'develops'?
- and if so, is there a way in which we can become in some way more 'holy'?

Not only do we have to wrestle with the concept of what we mean by spiritual but also what we mean by the word 'development' when it comes to the term 'spiritual development'? 'Development' in this context is a tricky word but, here again, the use of images and word play was found to help.

If spirituality is to do with the 'holy hole' within the 'whole', then how does this develop? What do we mean by development when it comes to spirituality?

## Ladders



One way to look at the term spiritual development in schools might be to base this on the idea of progression. Much like the charting of progress in knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum, maybe 'spirituality' can be 'charted' in a similar 'progressive' way? It might be possible therefore to use the work of thinkers such as James Fowler<sup>8</sup> on 'faith development' which offers a progressive model of spiritual development through different stages according to maturity and cognitive development.

Whilst Fowler's research has its place it has also been widely critiqued. It became clear that there was a shared innate aversion to suggesting that spirituality is something that we can or should aim to measure. To grade pupils on spiritual development and insist that schools fill in yet another series of tick charts to add to their school 'performance' data was an anathema to many in education. Gaining kudos for creating more 'holy' pupils than the school down the road could become something else schools would be expected to become competitive about! Indeed, there was a sense of rebellion against the strong pressure on schools to prove that everything that was valuable could be marked, graded and

assessed for the sake of accountability. To produce data via the assessment of spiritual development is missing, and indeed twisting, the point.

After talking to many educational practitioners and 'experts' it became clear to me that an alternative interpretation of the word development might be useful, and this was where another word-play option started to have a resonance. The word development can be interpreted in two ways, when looking at a dictionary and indeed at life.

Development can mean progress, but it can also mean the realisation or revelation of something which is already there, but just hidden.....like an old-fashioned photograph.

## Photographs



Not so long ago, camera films used to be taken to the 'developers' who would then develop the film. The images, already there, would be revealed or realised into prints for everyone to then see and enjoy. Maybe this is what spiritual development might be

about, the realising or revealing of something innately within, from the word go and throughout life, in all its fullness of challenges and possibilities? Something to realise, celebrate, enjoy and share?

This became an interesting alternative way to talk about spiritual development. It then led immediately to a further question: 'How does/can this revealing or realising happen practically, and how can schools help provide opportunities for this? As I researched further in this area of what sorts of practical, everyday situations might allow for the realisation of innate spirituality, the next set of images became useful.

## Windows, Mirrors, Doors (and Traffic Lights)



Over the course of this piece of research many practical answers to this question were offered, which over time, began to group themselves into three main ideas:

- the need to become aware of the world in all its wonder but also a sad realisation of its many problems, i.e. to realise that the world is both 'awe-full' but also sadly 'awful' at times too, (to be aware of both its 'Wows' but also its 'Ows')

- the need to have a chance to reflect or think on this both alone and with others
- the need to apply what has been learnt from this process in some sort of expressive, active way.

Searching for some simple way to summarise this, the images of windows, mirrors and doors evolved while I was waiting at a set of traffic lights. Being forced to stop and then to think before moving on, images of windows and doors emerged as wing-mirror reflections suddenly offered an idea. These 'openings' seemed to offer three useful, powerfully practical images for potential use in schools. Life is full of openings: windows which allow us to look out, mirrors which allow us to reflect and doors which allow us to move on. Likewise, traffic lights allow us time to stop and look, to wait and think and then to move on. Developing this further:



**Windows** are for looking out onto the world and becoming aware of its wonders, both the 'wows' and 'ows'; things that are 'awe-ful' and make us wonder and be grateful and things that are 'awful' and make us wonder and ask questions. The whole curriculum and life itself are full of opportunities to recognise this sensitively.



**Mirrors** are for looking into and reflecting, alone and together, to see things more clearly, for thinking and asking important questions learning from our own and each other's responses. In schools we must allow time for this for individual and group reflection and sharing of perspectives. Some subjects and times allow for this specifically, such as religious education and collective worship but in all subjects, there will be opportunities, unexpected or planned, when things just 'crop up'. Handled sensitively, it is possible to make the most of all these times, if there is ongoing deliberate and corporate staff and pupil support.



**Doors** are for looking through in order to then act or express this in some way in response; for moving on, making choices, and doing something creative, active and purposeful in response. This can simply be done through a change in attitude or behaviour or thinking. It can also be expressed powerfully through music or art or drama or dance and through some form of social action or specific acts of giving.

Since publication in 1997, these ideas have been widely used in schools, particularly Church schools. They have been disseminated through diocesan training and the simple use of the images of windows, mirrors and doors has found

resonance with teachers. It has given some a working definition of 'spiritual development' and has been used to identify opportunities for spiritual development in planning. It is a model often quoted in SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) inspection reports. After nearly twenty years this is still a workable model for many schools and has begun to be picked up in wider church ministry. But, as explained earlier, by 2017 the time seemed right to revisit these ideas and see if they could be developed further.

'Growing Together?' (2018)<sup>9</sup> aimed to take this earlier piece of research on further. In the intervening years, more research on the topic of spiritual development had brought other useful ideas for schools and communities to draw upon. Three key elements had been emerging in response to some key fundamental questions, namely, 'where', 'when' and 'why' does spiritual development happen?

First, in response to the question, 'Where does spiritual development happen?' there is the ongoing work of thinkers such as Rebecca Nye and Andy Woolf on gaining a more a relational understanding of spirituality (i.e. the importance of the influence of our relationships with others and the world around us, and how this is in constant change throughout one's life).

Secondly, in response to the question 'when' does spiritual development happen?' the work of David Csinos<sup>10</sup> on 'Spiritual Styles', (linked to discussions about different types of intelligence, learning styles and 'worship' styles), seems to have much to offer schools in their thinking about offering different ways of 'expressing' spirituality at different times to suit a whole range of tastes, capacities and gifts.

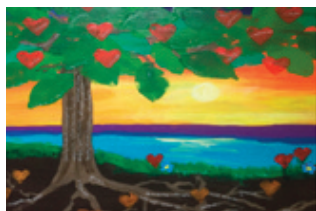
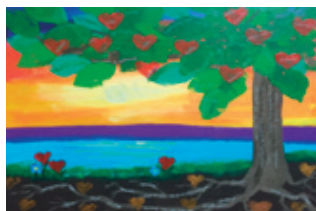
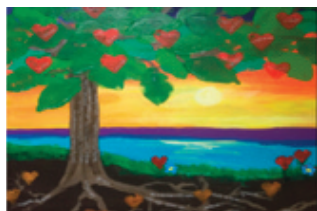
Thirdly, in response to the question 'why does spiritual development happen?' there has been a growing interest in gaining a more intergenerational community perspective on spirituality, stemming from the work of Johnson and Walker and others. This has grown out of a desire to value and understand the spiritual needs and resources within our communities of people in all stages of their lives. It seems to have much to offer schools in making the most of creative, long-term and mutually supportive community links.

The 'Growing Together?' research aimed to explore this potential through practically trialling and gauging the impact of a range of intergenerational creative community projects designed to support a school's work on 'spiritual development'. It was hoped that these trials in one school and community might prove useful practical examples. They might show how spiritual development is a whole-life context/experience-based process and not just a whole-child school-based process. Awareness of this might not only help pupils in their thinking about this but also offer practical ideas

to help other schools and their communities in their planning for the future.

In order to encapsulate all the findings of this further piece of research, another image evolved, this time of trees, 'growing, together'.

## Spirituali-trees? 'Growing, Together?'



Likening spiritual development to the growth of trees growing together seemed to offer another potentially useful analogy to play with for future work in schools and communities. The thinking behind this was threefold in answer to the three key questions, Where, When and Why does spiritual development happen?

## Where? Roots: The Importance of Relationships



The work of Rebecca Nye and Andy Woolf has much to say on the vital importance of an awareness of the influence of our relationships on our spiritual development. Where we are and who we mix with everyday affects not only how we see ourselves but also how we see others, our place in the world and our own sense of spiritual identity. It happens most powerfully and tangibly in and through our relationships as we experience the love of others. Through this we learn to love and care for ourselves and others and our world. Having healthy, loving relationships is vital for our whole/hole

development in order that we as individuals and as a society can thrive.

In schools and in society we are acutely aware of this where as we see the repercussions of relationships that have gone wrong or been lacking. Schools do all they can to compensate for this, but this is clearly not solely a school's responsibility. Schools are part of communities and these together provide the roots/context in which healthy, creative connections can be encouraged. In this piece of research I looked at how a school might develop creative intergenerational relationships with their local community in promoting this.

## When? Shoots: The Importance of Spiritual Styles.



Research into 'spiritual styles', in particular that by David Csinos<sup>11</sup>, has sprung naturally from a desire to recognise and value individuality. To encourage spiritual expression in a range of different ways and

to encourage a respectful understanding and an equal valuing of all these styles. According to Csinos, there are four key 'spiritual styles':

- **Words:** some find spiritual expression and understanding best through words, through loving the structure and clarity that well-crafted words can offer
- **Emotions:** others find the freedom of spontaneous emotional expression empowering and enabling
- **Symbols:** others are captured by the simple but multi-layered depth and mystery of symbols
- **Actions:** others find themselves most naturally energised by the practical everyday expression of faith in actions.

What is vital to note is that all of these 'styles' can and indeed should be seen as equally valuable and potentially enriching. All these styles should be encouraged at different times so that they can complement each other and become appealing options for different people in different ways and at different stages throughout their lives.

Schools and their communities have a role to play in considering this to encouraging understanding and appreciation of different spiritual styles. They can help avoid spiritual narrowness through creativity, diversity and inclusivity. In this way the encouragement of different ways of



expressing spirituality at different times might indeed encourage a real sense of growing together?

## Why? Fruit: The Importance of Intergenerational Spiritual Fruit



Research into spiritual 'fruit', has come from work done by such thinkers as Clive Beck on the 'Traits of a Spiritually Developing Person'<sup>12</sup>. This demonstrates a sense that it is a life-long continuous process of

discovery. In addition, Johnson and Walker<sup>13</sup> investigated international intergenerational perspectives on the potential for constantly 'fruitful' spiritual development. They saw how all over the world, creative links between different generations can encourage this. Such research has much to offer schools here in the UK in developing 'fruitful' planning for healthy intergenerational community connections in the future.

This involves being aware of several key issues, not least the makeup of one's own community. There is already a plethora of material for schools about building good inter-cultural relationships within communities and schools but far less that focuses on building effective two-way inter-generational connections between schools and the older generation. In order to help with this the following questions are important to consider:

First, what do we mean by old age: what are the age brackets within our own 21st century intergenerational community? Deeper consideration quickly reveals that with the 'old age' bracket, there are many additional inner brackets, each with their own varying needs and capacities. The voices of the newly retired, of grandparents, of the bereaved, carers, those suffering from physical or cognitive illnesses such as Parkinson's and Dementia. Awareness of the capacities and needs within each of these stages is vital when considering potential creative opportunities might be explored.

Secondly, what do we mean by effective intergenerational contact; who benefits most, how and why? What might effective inter-generational contact look like practically and how can this be set up and evaluated best in school contexts? What are the key drivers which might count for or against this happening in schools and within communities now and in the future? Which areas of a schools' agenda within and outside the curriculum, might best allow for creative, effective inter-generational initiatives? Who needs to be involved and what other outside influences might steer their involvement?

'Growing, together?' aimed to explore these whilst practically trialling in one school, several creative intergenerational community projects. These projects focussed particularly on key RE concepts as RE is often seen as a vital area of the curriculum in which 'spiritual development' can be deliberately explored. This piece of research was carried out in a rural community where providing RE which could be 'spiritually' challenging and relevant, was proving tricky at times. Cultural diversity was not an everyday lived experience for pupils or their families. It was hoped that instead, the richness of the inter-generational diversity within this community might be unlocked as an alternative, potentially powerful, resource to explore for RE.

The aim for this piece of research was to develop 'spiritually' challenging RE ideas through creative links with the school's intergenerational local community. It was to see if in some way, spiritual development throughout the life of the school and community might be encouraged, especially by learning to better understand and value the voices, perspectives and support of the older generation.

It was hoped that the ideas and thinking involved in these projects and their results, might then be useful for other schools and communities to learn from and develop further. It was hoped that they might help us all in our own attempts to build healthy spiritual roots/relationships wherever we are, whenever we can in terms of encouraging different spiritual shoots/styles. In this way we might encourage the continuous growth of not only our own spirituality/spiritualities, but also those of each other, whatever age, and might indeed encourage a very real and continuous sense of 'Growing, Together?'

## Application: Points to consider for (Church) schools.

How might this research, the creative images and the underlying principles allow Church Schools to best encourage spiritual development in their own contexts today? The present context of Church School provision is one ripe for thinking about this area:

Two recently published documents that should be considered here. The 'Church of England Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good', (July 2016), and the 'Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Evaluation Schedule for Schools and Inspectors: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good: Vision, Provision and Impact', (March 2018).

The first of these sets out from the start that:

*'This is a fresh articulation of the Church of England's vision for education.... It is not simply for Church schools, but... seeks to promote educational excellence everywhere, for everyone. In Church schools the deeply Christian foundation for this vision will be seen explicitly in teaching and learning both in RE and across the curriculum and also in the authentically Christian worship and ethos of those schools...The vision is deeply Christian, with the promise by Jesus of 'life in all its fullness' at its heart..... It embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people..... This is worked out theologically and educationally through four basic elements...Wisdom Hope Community Dignity*

*The vision... is for the common good of the whole human community and its environment, whether national, regional or local. It is hospitable to diversity, respects freedom of religion and belief, encourages others to contribute from the depths of their own traditions and understandings. It invites collaborations, alliances, negotiations of differences... to serve the flourishing of a healthy plural society and democracy together with a healthy plural education system.<sup>14</sup>*

Thus, as Nigel Genders explains in his introduction to the Inspection Framework:

*'The Church of England has set out a bold vision for education... for Anglican and Methodist schools to engage with as they articulate their purpose in education and shape their own vision as a school with Christian character... This new framework focuses unashamedly on vision, with the hope that it will allow governing bodies to place more emphasis on their purpose in education, ensuring that the school's Christian vision impacts in ways which enable the whole school community to flourish.<sup>15</sup>*

The 'Evaluation Schedule for Schools and Inspectors' which then follows, suggests that spiritual development should be deliberately encouraged and celebrated in all schools if they are to be genuinely 'Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good'.

So, what might be 'seen' to be different about Church schools in their approach to spiritual development? What might make their vision and approaches explicitly and distinctively Christian? How might the images of the holy doughnut, the ladders or photographs, the windows/mirrors/doors and the trees growing together be useful here. How might they be a means of trying to explore a distinctively Christian approach

which can be appropriately applied in Church Schools in our multi-faith, multi-generational communities? How might these images be useful in helping to encapsulate distinctively Christian values in Church school contexts?

**The Doughnut and the Hole?** : If 'spiritual development' might actually be about the development of the precious 'holy holes' at the heart of our 'wholes', then Church schools need to consider very carefully how they are going to 'allow for this' without attempting to 'fill' children with prescriptive indoctrination but also without leaving them in a spiritual 'vacuum' with no support or guidance or models to learn from and with.

**Ladders or Photographs?** The suggestion here is that spiritual development is not an 'item' which schools must be chart in order to prove that their pupils are making progress. Instead it is something innate in everyone at every age which simply and essentially needs to be recognised, celebrated and shared. If this is the case then church schools should be leading the way in humbly and consistently demonstrating this, despite the pressure from a culture of accountability and competitiveness to do otherwise.

**Windows, Mirrors and Doors?** Church schools can deliberately plan for such spiritual development by allowing time for these simple things: encouraging increased awareness of the world, its joys and woes, finding ways in which this can be reflected on with others' support and exploring a range of creative ways to live out and put the 'faith' which is growing from this, into practice.

**Trees: Growing Together?** Spiritual development can be understood to be a life-long experience. It is about growing together, developing not in isolation but learning from and with each other. Church schools should think about the valuable resources around them, in their schools, local communities and beyond and the ways in which they can be mutually supportive.

Is there unlocked potential treasure or need in one's own community which can be explored? How can the Church best support all of this, not least by trying to act as 'golden glue' helping to link schools not only with the resources churches can offer, but also with the wider communities they support?

## Some biblical links to explore.



### **Doughnut and the Hole:**

Whole/Hole/Holy-ness? 'I have come that they might have life: Life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)



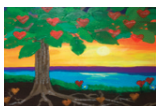
### **Ladders or Photographs:**

Progress or Realisation? 'Love is... Now I know in part, then I will know completely, even as I am fully known' (1 Corinthians 13)



### **Windows, Mirrors and Doors?**

Love God with all your..... and love your neighbour as you love yourself... (Matthew 22: 37-8)



### **Trees:** Growing, Together: Roots, Shoots, Fruit

'Rooted and established in love' (Ephesians 3:17-19)

'The fruits of the Spirit are...' (Galatians 5:22-23)

'I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and see visions, and your elders will dream dreams'. (Acts 2:17)



'There is one body, but it has many parts' (1 Corinthians 12:12)



# 4. Shahne Vickery: Recognising Spiritual Development in a Primary School Context

A project based in schools in Worcestershire and Gloucestershire led by Shahne Vickery

The following article is a summary of work undertaken by four schools in the Worcester and Gloucester Dioceses during 2018. Three of the schools had an 'Area for Development' identified in a recent SIAMS inspection relating to opportunities across the curriculum for spiritual development.

The aims of the project were to:

- explore the different ways in which spirituality can be recognised and expressed
- develop a common language to enable meaningful reflection to take place on the significance of spirituality in the whole life of the school
- be more alive to the possibilities and opportunities for spiritual growth across the curriculum.

The teachers were all clear that they felt opportunities for spirituality to flourish were actually plentiful in their schools. However, a common language had not been established to enable them share and build on good practice and to plan effectively for development as a staff team. In this respect, the words of Israel Salanter Lipkin seemed to resonate powerfully with everyone;

*"Spirituality is like a bird: If you hold it too closely, it chokes, And if you hold it too loosely, it escapes."*<sup>16</sup>

Israel Salanter Lipkin

One teacher's comment seemed to sum up a common feeling amongst the group,

*"In our school I think the spirituality bird often flies away before we have a chance to acknowledge its presence."*

Class teacher; Worcester.

The teachers were provided with a range of publications, resources and reports as background reading in preparation for their work. One publication that they found both stimulating and practical was *Making Sense of Spiritual Development* by David Smith.<sup>17</sup> Whilst the colleagues were keen to adapt and modify some of David Smith's ideas, they felt that three elements outlined in the book helped to provide a useful roadmap as they sought to address the aims of the project.

The three elements were:

- spiritual capacities
- spiritual contexts
- spiritual experiences

## I. Spiritual Capacities

David Smith notes a number of human capacities commonly identified as related to spiritual development.

The teachers studied these (as well as other material) but were soon keen to create their own version of the list to reflect the spiritual life of the children in their schools.

A summary of this part of the project is included below. It is important to make clear that the list was neither intended to

be exhaustive or arranged in any particular order of importance. In fact it has been striking to note that different teachers identified different capacities as being ‘the most significant expressions of spirituality’ for them or their children.

The teachers did not intend that the list should be used to assess the spirituality of individual children. However, they did believe that it may be helpful in thinking about how to provide opportunities in class that would build on what had gone before. In this sense spiritual development could be planned for.

Spiritual Capacities - which include children’s 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

This part of the project probably generated the most excitement and engagement, as can be sensed in the words of colleagues below;

*“These capacities have given us a common language to help staff and children express the different ways in which spirituality can be recognised across the whole of our school life. We are all buzzing about it!”*

Headteacher - Gloucestershire

*“Spirituality in our school tended to be mainly thought of as ‘awe and wonder’. We now have a much broader understanding of what it can be.”*

Collective Worship Lead Teacher - Worcestershire

*“We now have the spiritual capacities listed down the side of all our planning documents to keep us mindful of them. It is helping us to be much more intentional about planning opportunities for spiritual as well as cognitive development.”*

Middle School RE/CW Lead - Worcestershire

## 2. Spiritual Context

David Smith makes the point that spiritual capacities do not exist in a vacuum. The spiritual context will govern, to a great extent, the way in which they are understood and exercised.

During the period that this work on spirituality was being undertaken, the schools were beginning to address the requirements of the new SIAMS Evaluation Schedule (2018). In particular, they were reviewing their school’s Christian vision and this was bringing into sharp focus the distinctive context of a Church of England school.

In articulating this context the teachers found the following paragraph from the Way Ahead Report useful:

*The Church school offers a spiritual and moral basis for the development of human wholeness and a sure foundation for personal and social values based on the person and ministry of Christ. A distinctive language is provided for understanding life and interpreting human experience. As a community of faith, the Church school should, in its best expression, reflect the nature of the Trinity, a life shared and defined by reference to others. Here we can begin to discover who we are, why we are, and - perhaps most importantly - what we might be.*

The Way Ahead Report, Church of England<sup>18</sup>

In exploring what a school's Christian vision, aims and values might look like when lived out, the teachers have focused afresh on 'the person and ministry of Christ' as The Way Ahead Report puts it. One of the ways that they have done this is by considering together the question: What would Jesus do?

*"We invited a youth worker from a local church into school. He talked about the wrist band that he wears with the letters WWJD printed on it. He explained that the letters stood for the words 'What would Jesus do?' It made us think that this would be a good question to ask, not only about our personal day to day behaviour but also our response to some of the big issues facing our planet."*

Class teacher - Gloucestershire

*"We have been piloting the new collective worship publication Roots and Fruits 2 which is based on the life and teaching of Jesus. Focusing for a whole year on the person of Jesus has provided a role model and a reference point for us in our thinking about what the spiritual capacities might look like."*

Headteacher - Gloucestershire

### 3. Spiritual Experiences

*There is a danger that spirituality... could be trivialized if it is reduced to a welter of nice feelings or gasps of momentary admiration. Spiritual growth will involve reflecting on the significance of an experience for our lives. If there is no such reflection, a feeling remains just a feeling.*

David Smith - Making Sense of Spiritual Development<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned previously, schools felt that spiritual experiences were an everyday part of school life. However, the impact of reading David Smith's work and discussing it at length, emphasised the crucial importance of reflection in facilitating learning and growth. The schools decided that the quality of the opportunities they offered for the children to reflect needed to be much more carefully planned to enable the learning from the experiences to have greater depth.

We looked together at a wide variety of ways in which meaningful reflection could be facilitated. This included discussion, silence, meditation, listening to music, drawing and drama improvisation such as hot seating and freeze framing.

At this point the teachers decided to produce a working document giving examples of how they were trialing a variety of 'ways of reflecting' to support the development of different spiritual capacities that they had identified. The schools were already familiar with the Windows, Mirrors, Doors model as a way to describe the journey from experience through reflection to growth and transformation. We therefore thought it made sense to use this as a scaffold to present their work.

Part 2 of this article includes input from teachers in the different schools. It is arranged so that each of the ten capacities is exemplified through the work of each year group. (Clearly, all the capacities will be addressed a number of times during the year by every class).

It seems appropriate to conclude Part 1 of this article with the words of one of the teachers who was part of the project. She was reflecting on the journey that the school had been on and recalling the image of the spirituality bird,

*"We never want to crush spirituality by holding the bird too tightly but at least now we have a better idea about how to recognise him when he perches near us for a moment or two."*

Teacher - Gloucestershire

## Recognising Spiritual Development in the Primary School - Part 2

| Spiritual Capacities                                                                                                                                        | Experience Window                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Reflection Mirror                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Growth Door                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Reception &amp; Year 2</b><br>Be ready to say sorry when mistakes are made, to forgive themselves and forgive others.                                    | <p>Playtime: A Y2 child in my class caused a child in Reception to be upset by something that he said to her. This was unintentional on his part.</p> <p>I gently brought the matter to his attention, pointing out that the Reception child was now in tears.</p>                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>The Y2 child went home that evening and (completely independently) wrote a little story book. The subject of the story was unrelated to the incident in question, but he made the Reception child the main character in the story. The next morning, he asked the Reception teacher to suggest a time that he could say sorry and read the story to the child.</p>       | <p>The Reception child and the Y2 child are now good friends and can often be seen on the Buddy Bench chatting together at break times. They have learned a lot about what it means to give and receive forgiveness.</p>                                                 |
| <b>Year 2</b><br>Love themselves, care for themselves, believe in their potential to achieve and find inner strength and resilience when facing challenges. | <p>Forest School: The children had been learning about the way that fire can be used to cook and keep warm in the outdoors. They were using fire starters to create sparks and start a fire.</p> <p>Certain children were struggling to create sparks with the fire starters. Some of these children were individuals of higher academic ability and were unaccustomed to failure. They were finding it difficult to persevere.</p> | <p>Children who were able to use their fire starters well, talked together and decided to go and help the others.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p>Being able to offer help to children who often seem to succeed at everything was very empowering to the helpers. It built their self-esteem and made everyone realise that we all need one another</p>                                                                |
| <b>Year 3/4</b><br>Demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness when exploring life's big questions.                                                           | <p>Royal Wedding celebration: Interest was generated by a royal wedding in why people choose to marry and what makes two individuals decide to commit to one another for life.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>Whilst making bunting for the school celebrations a discussion took place about the promises that are made when people marry and the values that would be needed within a relationship to enable both parties to keep the promises. They also reflected about why some people want to be married in a religious ceremony and others prefer another type of ceremony.</p> | <p>Whilst this discussion was initiated by a wedding, the children reflected more widely about the values which are important in all long-lasting relationships. It showed that they were able to apply our school's Christian values to life outside the classroom.</p> |
| <b>Year 5</b><br>Be guided by our beliefs and values and be willing to take a stand to defend                                                               | <p>Literacy – persuasive writing: Children wrote speeches on environmental impact, having watched David Attenborough's 'Blue Planet' documentary.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>It was during the process of writing and discussing the speeches that children decided that using plastic straws was unsustainable. One child said, "God gave the world to us as a gift and we are destroying it."</p>                                                                                                                                                   | <p>The class put in a recommendation to the school council that all straws (paper and plastic) were unnecessary and should be banned from the school premises.</p>                                                                                                       |

(Continued)

| Spiritual Capacities                                                                                                                                            | Experience Window                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Reflection Mirror                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Growth Door                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Year 6</b><br>Be self-aware and empathise with the experience of others in the school and wider community.                                                   | Forest school: Children were asked to use items from forest school to create a waterproof boat that would float. Great care and attention to detail was invested in this project and children were very proud of their boats.<br><br>Children tested their boats in front of their peers. Some floated but others sank or fell apart        | During this process children reflected on why some designs were successful and others were not.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | The activity demonstrated that children were aware that some children felt sad that the boats which they had carefully made, had been destroyed when put in the water. They were respectful and sensitive when discussing why this might have happened. The children concluded that the activity showed that a great deal can be learned from 'mistakes'.  |
| <b>Whole School</b><br>Be comfortable with stillness and silence and able to engage in reflection/meditation/prayer.                                            | Whole school worship: The children had heard a poem about the time that Jesus visited the home of Martha and Mary (from Roots & Fruits 2 *).<br><br>(Mary sat down to spend time with Jesus, but Martha was too busy.)<br><br>The children were then invited to spend some time in meditation imagining that Jesus was visiting their home. | Children had some perfumed candles to create a special atmosphere of welcome. They used our normal mindfulness breathing awareness and stilling exercises to prepare for the time of meditation.<br><br>The children either focussed on the candles or closed their eyes. We asked a few simple questions to guide the children's reflection (Who might be in your home when Jesus arrived? How could you welcome him? How might you spend the time together?) We then left two or three minutes of silence. | After the meditation, the children spoke about how thinking about Jesus in their own homes made him much more real to them than when they just heard stories about him. They said the time went very quickly. We discussed the idea that 'prayer' for many people includes the practice of spending time with Jesus in their imagination.                  |
| <b>Whole School</b><br>Vertical Grouping (children from Yrs. R-6)<br><br>Appreciate and be thankful for what is good in life and show generosity towards others | Vision Day Workshop: As part of our School Vision Day a group of mixed age children were using a Christian Aid resource about the effects on the population of flooding in Bangladesh and the impact that aid workers were having in the disaster struck region.                                                                            | One of the outcomes of the drama improvisation in this workshop was that children began to reflect on how fortunate they were to live in homes that were well made and not susceptible to being completely washed away (along with all their possessions) in heavy rain.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Along with the desire to raise money for Christian Aid through a cake sale, one Y6 child became very interested in the idea of exploring what is involved in becoming an aid worker. He is in the process of researching this as a career path and is now the pupil lead in our school working towards our Silver Award in the Global Neighbours scheme.** |

\* *Roots and Fruits 2 – The Life and Teaching of Jesus is a Collective Worship* resource published by Imaginor Ltd. [www.imaginor.co.uk](http://www.imaginor.co.uk)

\*\**Global Neighbours* is a joint initiative between Christian Aid and the Church of England Education Office. For more details visit the Christian Aid website, <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/global-neighbours-accreditation-scheme>



## Appendix: Spiritual Capacities in a Christian Context

### Spiritual Capacity

- Be self-aware and empathise with the experience of others in the school and wider community

### Bible Reference

*So God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them.* Genesis 1. 27

*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.* John 13. 14 & 15

Our children will experience the Bible's teaching that every person is made in the image of God and is loved unconditionally by him. Through a focus on Christian values such as compassion, friendship, dignity, service, justice and community they will be offered opportunities to imagine what it means to walk in the shoes of another, recognising their intrinsic value and acting toward them with the respect that stems from a deep awareness of their dignity as fellow human beings.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Be guided by their beliefs and values and be willing to take a stand to defend them

### Bible Reference

*Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.* Ephesians 6. 14 & 15

*Think of all the hostility Jesus endured from sinful people; then you won't become weary and give up.* Hebrews 12. 3

Our children will learn that whilst full of love and compassion for the marginalised, Jesus was also uncompromising and courageous when he needed to be. Through a focus on Christian values such as courage, respect, perseverance and justice pupils will be given opportunities to reflect on their own developing beliefs and opinions. They will be able to hone their skills of advocacy, taking inspiration from other individuals past and present who, by standing up for their principles, have transformed society.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Love themselves, care for themselves, believe in their potential to achieve and find inner strength and resilience when facing challenges

### Bible Reference

*'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'* Joshua 1. 9

*'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.'* Matthew 11. 28

Our children will observe/experience a range of different ways of praying and in so doing will understand that Christians can ask God for strength and courage in the face of any challenge that they might be experiencing.

Through a focus on Christian values such as trust, perseverance, hope and peace they will develop a habit of reflecting on what they can learn through times of struggle as well as success.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Exercise imagination and creativity, appreciate beauty in the world and be alive to experiences of awe and wonder

### Bible Reference

*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is humankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?* Psalm 8. 3&4

*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.* Psalm 139. 14

Our children will learn about the Christian belief in a creator God and that, made in his likeness, each of us is believed to share that creative potential. Through a focus on Christian values such as generosity, joy, thankfulness, courage and hope children's innate capacity for wonder, imagination and creative exploration of the natural world will be stimulated and developed.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Be intrigued by mystery and be open to an awareness of the transcendent in the whole of life

### Bible Reference

*Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother's womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things.* Ecclesiastes 11. 5

*"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the Lord. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine."* Isaiah 55. 8

*Jesus took Peter, John and James up on a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white.* Luke 9. 28, 29

Our children, who begin school with a natural wisdom and wonder about creation, will be offered opportunities to understand the belief that God is at work in all that he has made. They will learn that love cannot be understood in purely rational terms and therefore will recognise the significance of mystery for many when thinking and speaking of God. Through a focus on Christian values such as joy, respect and dignity they will build a 'language' for appreciating the transcendent in the whole of life.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Be comfortable with stillness and silence and be open to engage in reflection/meditation/prayer

### Bible Reference

*Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46. 10  
Think about what I am saying. The Lord will help you understand all these things. 2 Timothy 2. 7*

Our children will be given opportunities to spend time in mindful reflection, meditation and prayer. They will become familiar with stilling strategies to help them cultivate an inner calm and to prepare for prayer. Through focusing on Christian values such as wisdom, hope, joy and peace, they will be invited to reflect on things in their experience that they find puzzling or intriguing as well as some of the big questions of life.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Be ready to say sorry when mistakes are made, to forgive themselves and to forgive others

### Bible Reference

*The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. Psalm 145. 8  
Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Colossians 3. 13*

Our children will learn that Christians believe that nothing is beyond the scope of God's forgiveness. They will be helped to appreciate that Christians believe that Jesus made forgiveness possible for all people through his sacrificial death and resurrection. Through a focus on Christian values such as hope, compassion, forgiveness and trust, children will begin to understand what is involved in offering forgiveness to others and also being able to accept forgiveness from others.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Be willing to take risks and to reflect, learn and grow following experiences of failure as well as success

### Bible Reference

*David replied, "The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine." 1 Samuel 17. 37*

*Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!" Luke 19. 8*

Our children will reflect on the person of Jesus who took huge risks to ensure he completed his mission which at first appeared to be a complete failure yet ultimately was transformed into victory. Through a focus on Christian values such as courage, justice, hope, trust and truthfulness, they will consider what might be sufficient reasons for taking risks in the light of what they have learned from past experiences.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness when exploring life's big questions

### Bible Reference

*Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law, the One the prophets foretold—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Nathanael asked. "Come and see," said Philip. John 1. 46, 47*

*One day as Jesus was praying in private and the disciples were with Him, He questioned them: "Who do the people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that a prophet of old has arisen." "But what about you?" Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." Luke 9. 18-20*

Our children will learn from Jesus' readiness to use questions to make people think, to challenge assumptions and enable them to come to their own conclusions. A focus on the Christian values of truth and wisdom will help children look below the surface and the superficial in order to reveal new possibilities and avoid jumping to conclusions.

### Spiritual Capacity

- Appreciate and be thankful for what is good in their lives and show generosity towards others

### Bible Reference

*Be thankful in all circumstances. 1 Thessalonians 5. 18  
Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9. 7*

Our children will have opportunities to reflect on all that is good in life and appreciate the Christian belief that this as God's 'gift' rather than their entitlement. Through a focus on Christian values such as thankfulness, generosity, justice, community and service they will better learn to appreciate what they have. They will grow in their understanding that for many millions of people in the world life is a struggle, and will engage with issues of justice, poverty and the environment.

# 5. Andrew Rickett: The Red Kite: Telling the Story

**Spirituality is the act of being fully human by discovering and revealing ourselves through love. We realise this through the personal stories that hold meaning for us and help us to become who we are. The more that we explore these and therefore journey to this land of the spirit, the more natural it becomes.**

## Moving to the land of the spirit:

I struggled for many years to understand how to 'inspect' spirituality as an inspector and how to work with schools as a consultant to help them develop spirituality. How could I make inspection judgements or offer support if I didn't have a coherent interpretation of what spirituality meant in the context of a Church school. The answer was to reflect on what I had heard from listening to the many thousands of children I have heard talking about spirituality during my work. I found that children expressed their spirituality largely through telling stories and that these stories had definite themes. They related stories about their personal experiences, stories that related to their engagement with others, stories that spoke about beauty and then those that tackled the transcendent questions of meaning and purpose.

Simply relaying these stories did not themselves create a sense of spiritual expression. However, providing the time and opportunity for children to relive their stories and reflect on why they were valuable to them, did allow them to express an emotional reaction to them. The ability to live the emotion again, in the retelling of a significant story, provided the means for children to move in their minds to the land of the spirit. I believe at the heart of the vast majority of the stories that children need to tell, is love. I was interested in the extent to which schools give children the time for opportunities to tell their stories and listen to those of others: the opportunity for children to learn from their shared stories that have value.

## A framework for spirituality

From listening to children talk about spirituality through their stories, they focus on four aspects: self, others, beauty and questions about something beyond the country of the body. I was drawn back to the work of David Hay and Rebecca Nye. The children seemed to focus on four aspects:

### 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.

### 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.

## 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.

## 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.

I put these four aspects into a simple pattern:

Self

Others

Beauty

Beyond

When I work with children and adults exploring spirituality, I ask them to reflect on which of the four aspects they are referring to as they share their thoughts. When talking with both children and adults about spirituality I have yet to find any response that doesn't reflect one or more of these aspects. Interestingly, children more readily share their views than adults.

There is nothing yet however, that connects the four areas together. But when listening carefully to what people say when they share their views about spirituality, one concept is described more often than others. That connecting idea is 'relationships'.

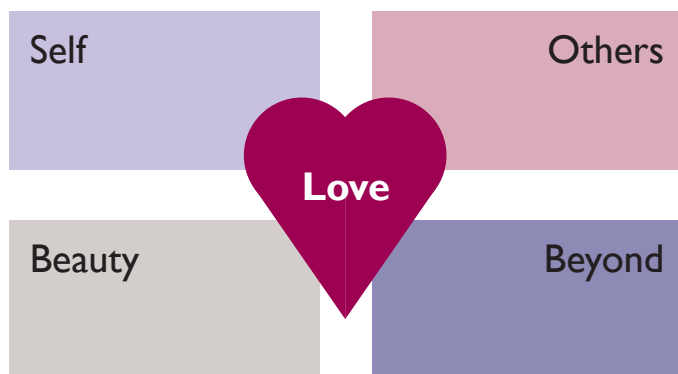
We describe a relationship with ourselves: we talk about self-identity, we talk of knowing ourselves. The real 'me' is not the colour of my hair or what I wear or what I do. These things belong in the country of the body and, however much they help to create 'me', they don't capture the essence of what makes me act and the choices that I make.

We describe a relationship with others: we talk of our feelings towards others we know but also of the recognition that we are bound to people whom we have never met. It is that wider connection, that deepens our humanity. We are only fully human through our relationship with other people. A popular African saying is 'I am a person through other people.' We describe a relationship with beauty: we talk of stunning views, stirring words, art that compels us, music that consoles us. Children and adults have a broad capacity to respond to beauty, but we have to ensure that when children are given these experiences, they explore these for themselves to find their own point of meaning and significance.

We describe a relationship with the beyond: This is the hardest aspect to articulate, mainly because there is nothing tangible to hold on to. However, children can have a growing awareness of their place in the world and a sense that life has a process. If children or adults do mention God in relation to any of the four aspects, then they most commonly include it in this 'box'. One of the things that we need to do is take God out of this box and ensure that he is equally apparent throughout each aspect.

Each of the four aspects is not mutually exclusive. They inevitably intertwine and overlap with each other. The concept of a relationship implies that an emotional response is involved. For example, there may be a special plant in my garden which has significance for me and which is a thing of great beauty. My relationship with that plant is for its physical beauty but also because of the story of its value – it may for example, have been planted on a wedding day. The plant has a greater significance for the wider associations and value which I have accorded it and so I have a deeper connection with it. The heart of the relationship with the plant in my garden is love.

So, it is relationships that bind each of the four aspects together and can be seen at the heart. What connects them is love.



Spirituality is the act of being fully human by revealing ourselves, our relationships with others, with beauty and the beyond and doing so through love.

## Telling stories

Human beings are storytellers. We tell stories to each other all the time and in every situation. We tell stories about ourselves, others, the world around us and, sometimes, our thoughts about things that are intangible. The plumber doesn't need to know the story I tell him about how I found the leak at 3.00am in the morning, but I tell him nonetheless. The car breakdown service doesn't need to know the story of why I am in this place at this time, but I tell him. Telling stories give our lives context, helps us make sense and allows us to establish a relationship. We can empathise with each other: yes, I have had the same sort of leak in the plumbing! But stories have greater meaning than this.

People perceive and changes through the mind and not the physical. It is through the land of the spirit that we relate our existence and make sense of the world around us. It is human nature to try and make sense of the world around us and, as storytellers, assume that everything has meaning by giving it a narrative.

We all have a personal narrative through which we give our lives a sense of meaning. The stories that we tell about ourselves reflect the person we are. These stories are significant because they have helped shape who we are and give a sense of identity. We all have these significant stories. They are stories from which we have learnt and very probably have changed us in some way. At the heart of many of these stories is love. However, we rarely tell these stories, or take time to listen to others tell them or, more concernedly, encourage children to rehearse them and learn from them. They are often shut down and in closing them down, we forget we have them.

Here is an example. I call it the red kite story:

A year four class was asked to think about an important place as part of a religious education lesson. One child described her holiday on a beach flying a red kite. That was all the child was asked to tell, it was enough to fulfil the lesson objective. She could say where the significant place was. However, as the lesson moved on, the child was still on the beach in her mind. You could tell by watching her. Later, I asked her if she would tell me. The child began to come alive as she described how a strong wind was blowing her red kite and making her afraid that she would take off. It was pulling her along. Then she felt her father's arms around her, holding her tight.

The story is not about a special place, or the red kite, or the wind or a holiday, though these are all important elements in the whole. At heart, the story is about the child recognising and cherishing the love of her father as he protects her and being given the opportunity to relive that love again. But her story wasn't allowed to be heard. It was only when she was talking about her father, did it dawn on her that that was the essence of her story. She discovered it for herself, but only in the retelling. It was in having that time to reflect that her understanding transformed. I didn't have to do anything, I just listened to her talk.

How many red kite stories do we shut down or just not give children the chance to tell? What value do we put on giving children the time to listen to each other's' stories and learn from them? Her story was about a relationship: of course, the red kite and wind were part of that, but at its heart was love for others and a growing understanding of self and place. We learn from stories. In Church schools, we tell stories with messages to children all the time. The Bible is full of stories that Jesus told. We often tell children what the message is that they need to learn from those stories. But children, and adults, have their own stories too. We need to let them be heard and learn from each other as in so doing, we can move to the land of the spirit.

## Metaphorically speaking

When children are asked to explain something intangible, they use the language of metaphors, even though they may not have been taught them in school yet! They use them instinctively. Susan Sontag<sup>20</sup>, in her essay on metaphors, explains how their figurative language sharpens rather than blunts accuracy in evoking and explaining. She makes the point that research often emphasises what learning can do for us. It has lost the exploration of what learning does to us.



The eminent mathematician, Professor Cedric Villani, is known for beginning his lectures by telling a story and then proceeding to weave the maths into it. He says that as a result, far more people understand the concepts he is delivering because the human brain is not designed for maths, but is made for language and telling stories using metaphors.

The exploration of metaphors to make sense of the transcendent is one way of helping give children a language through which they can express their spirituality. This acquisition of a vocabulary, through which children create an individual literacy that allows them to express a personal spirituality, has yet to be fully explored in Church schools.

## The land of the spirit

Spirituality should be at the heart of a school's ethos. Opportunities to explore spiritual development are not planned, they occur naturally in everyday life. The potential is there for us to be transformed by these moments in taking us from the country of the body to the land of the spirit. In reflecting on and defining our relationships through the telling of our stories, we become fully human.

# 6. Anne Lumb: Spirituality: the woven fabric of school life?

## Introduction

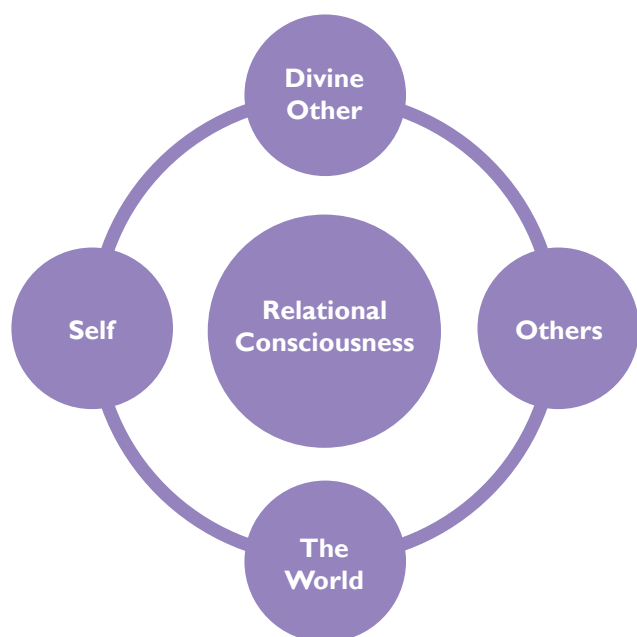
How can we recognise and encourage the creation of space for the spiritual in our schools? As an Inspector, what might we be looking for when we are considering whether a school is attending to the spiritual wellbeing of all members of the school community? We could maintain that it is difficult and indeed may not be desirable to try to 'measure' spirituality. Nevertheless, we can develop a language through which we can articulate the myriad of ways in which schools pay attention to the spiritual dimension of school life. In this chapter I will attempt to draw together various strands of thinking around spirituality, wellbeing, nurture and flourishing since these areas overlap; informing and influencing each other and expressed differently in each individual school context. The whole agenda around mental health and wellbeing, the development of character and nurture of the whole person has, quite rightly, come increasingly to the fore in recent times. There is a recognition that children and young people and indeed staff too are more than examination and academic qualification 'fodder'.

How then can we negotiate our way through this agenda in order to report in helpful and meaningful ways through the SIAMS inspection process?

Drawing on my research into the spiritual dimension of a Church of England Primary School and the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership/Bishop Grosseteste University whole-child project, and my experience as a diocesan schools adviser and SIAMS inspector, I will attempt to provide some practical suggestions for inspectors and school leaders to consider when reporting on or leading development of the spiritual dimension of a Church of England School. These areas have been linked to the four strands of the Church of England Vision for Education. However, these are not meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive but are intended as starting points for discussion.

## Creating different kinds of space – Dignity and Respect

The research of David Hay and Rebecca Nye on children's spirituality has been hugely influential in the whole area of spiritual development<sup>21</sup>. In particular, Nye identified 'relational consciousness' as being at the heart of the way in which children express their spirituality. How they relate to themselves, others, the world around them and a 'divine other' formed the basis of the conversations which Nye had with the children taking part in her research project (see diagram below). This model has been used in various ways in the school context to enable school leaders and staff to be intentional in their provision of opportunities for spirituality. Indeed, the quality of relationships in a school at all levels may be an indicator of the depth to which those relationships are encouraged and encountered and acknowledged to have a spiritual dimension to them. For example, in the case study school where I did my doctoral research there was a language of discourse which articulated the view that all members of the school community were engaged in encouraging the children to discover who they might become through exploring 'who we are at our deepest level' (Headteacher). The school's guiding principles define it as a 'take care' school where they 'take care of our self, each other, the world and with our work' within the context of the Christian ethos and foundation of the school (Lumb, 2016 p.17). In such a context, all have dignity and respect since each person is unique and valued, with their own sense of worth and identity.



Where then might we identify schools creating the space to explore the spiritual in an already crowded school day? Below I outline briefly the areas where I have observed through my research and through working with teachers, school leaders and support staff the creation of space for 'everyday spirituality'. Further details and questions for discussion can be found in the Grove book *Spirituality in a Church School Within a Performance-Driven Culture*. These are simply indicators of where we might look rather than an exhaustive checklist to tick off. Schools will explore these areas in different ways, some intentionally and some unintentionally. I would suggest that the best examples will be in schools where exploring the spiritual has become part of the everyday language and experience of all members of the school community.

## 1. Physical Space

- Special space or sanctuary?
- Content and atmosphere – how do we ensure this is a safe space for all to be?
- Reflection areas – where, why, when and how are they used?

## 2. Subject or curriculum space

- How do we 'create and manage opportunities for spirituality in the classroom for all' (EYFS manager)?

- Where are the 'spaces between the subjects' (after Bernstein) where we can explore what children and young people think?
- Where is 'thinking space' created throughout the school day?

## 3. Spiritual space

- Creating spiritual space intentionally – eg 'Spiritualtree' project.
- Creating spiritual space for thinking and talking – the process of designing a physical 'spiritual space'; using the resulting physical space; 'Spirituality is more about process than product' (Nye).

## 4. Relational space

- Who is walking with you? 'Being valued and walking with others has a positive effect on developing spirituality' (local vicar)
- Relationships developed over time – school, home, church.
- Journeying together.

## 5. Prayer space

- Are there opportunities to make prayer part of the daily life of the school?
- Are there physical prayer spaces?
- Is prayer practised by those who would like to participate, as well as learned about by all?

## Journeying together – Community and Living Well Together

Although it is important to provide opportunities for individual development, we gain many of our best insights when exploring in the company of others. The image of 'journeying together' is an ancient one. The word 'pedagogue' from the Greek *paidagogos* means 'the one who leads the child towards its home'. Weber argues that pedagogues or teachers should not be regarded as leaders who already know the truth 'but as experienced and trustworthy companions who encounter and accompany children on their path through life.'

If we learn well in the company of others:

- In what ways is the school encouraging an atmosphere where all are welcomed to the table of learning, making their own unique contribution and learning from each other?
- In RE, for example, are there balanced conversations about religion and belief?
- In all subject areas are there safe spaces being created in which children and young people are learning to disagree respectfully; identifying the learning; exploring, enquiring, discussing, debating, examining together; developing a 'Community of Enquiry'?

## Different ways of being – Hope and Aspiration

Where schools are actively facilitating the creation of space for everyday spirituality it is likely that all members of the school community are encouraged to engage with different notions of 'being'. In the case study school referred to above, the language used in the management and organisation of the curriculum centred on certain aphorisms (see Lumb, 2016 pp 16 – 18) and on different notions of 'being'. These notions of 'being' could produce tension (for example between the need to 'be disciplined' in learning and the need to 'be creative'). Nevertheless, the fact that these 'ways of being' could be identified ensured there were opportunities for children to be themselves in order to produce a piece of writing 'in which a spiritual dimension to life could be expressed' (Lumb, 2016 p.18).

When exploring the life of Jesus as a model for living, the question is often asked, 'What would Jesus do?' (WWJD). Whilst that can be a helpful question to ask, we might also ask in any given situation, 'Who would Jesus be?' in the sense of 'What kind of person should I be in this situation?' Such a question asks us to consider the nature of our 'being' and the values or virtues we are living out. In other words, learning how to 'be' not just what to do is an important aspiration for all members of the school community.

The notion of making space for exploring the spiritual and learning how to be comfortable with 'being' can be linked to the practice of 'mindfulness'. In some schools this practice can provide opportunities for staff and pupils/students to develop the skill of 'noticing' things in such a way as to enhance learning and personal development. By being present and 'in the moment' it may become possible to be more fully present to the self, to others, to the world and potentially to the divine. This reminds us of Nye's identification of 'relational

consciousness' as the vehicle through which children express their spirituality.

What might be the impact of learning how to 'be' and of paying attention to everyday spirituality? A conversation with a Year 6 teacher whilst engaged in a SIAMS inspection helpfully illustrates one way in which the weaving of spirituality throughout a school can impact on an individual child in unexpected ways. The Year 6 teacher, when talking about the impact of the school's Christian values on the children, gave an example of a Y6 boy who had always struggled with keeping his emotions under control particularly when under stress. During recent exams his teacher observed that the boy seemed to have developed a calm centre which enabled him to pause, stay calm and do his best in SATs tests. The development of a 'calm centre' from which to live can contribute positively to mental health and wellbeing and a sense of the flourishing of all within the school community.

Some questions to consider:

- In making space for everyday spirituality, are all members of the school community encouraged to 'be' the best version of themselves they can possibly be?
- What kinds of 'being' are encouraged?
- Where (or who) is the 'calm centre' of the school? Are individuals encouraged to develop their own 'calm centre'?

## Importance of questioning – Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

The opportunity to ask and discuss 'big questions' can be a key indicator of the way in which spirituality is explored in a school. Where all members of the school community are encouraged to ask and explore 'big questions' in a safe space, it is likely that all are developing a rich theological and philosophical age-appropriate language. This enables the articulation of deep thinking even (and especially sometimes) with the youngest children.

- Where is the space for questioning throughout the curriculum? E.g. Use of What If Learning ([www.whatiflearning.co.uk](http://www.whatiflearning.co.uk)). Where is pedagogy being informed by values/virtues?
- In what ways does RE provide the space for enquiry and exploration of 'big questions'?

- Where do teachers not only skilfully question and enable deeper learning to take place but also encourage learners to develop the skill of asking their own questions? E.g. Use of Philosophy for Children (P4C) sessions.

At a SIAMS Inspector training session on identifying an 'Outstanding' school under the 2013 SIAMS Framework, Andrew Rickett has spoken of 'paddling', 'snorkelling' and 'diving' to describe different depths to which learners might engage in questioning and spiritual reflection.

## The importance of leadership – Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

The importance of leaders in mediating the tension between performance and nurture, between exploring spirituality and learning knowledge, to ensure the flourishing of all members of the school community is explored in the conference paper Education and the whole person: factors enabling all members of a school community to flourish and achieve.

Questions to think about:

- Is this a school where leaders have created a climate of journey and discovery where it is ok for pupils, students and adults alike to question, wonder, enquire, make mistakes and to talk about the spiritual? <sup>22</sup>
- How deeply does this climate percolate through the life of the school?
- How long will it last? Does it go beyond senior leaders, RE Subject Leaders, collective worship co-ordinators, foundation governors such that all members of the school community are invested in the development of the whole-person so that all might experience life in all its fullness?

## Concluding thoughts and questions

To return to our original question, 'What if spirituality is woven through the fabric/life of the school?' Some indicators might be:

- In this school, where are learners given the space to wonder and ask questions; to imagine a better world and to think of ways of making it better?
- In what ways are learners developing the life skills to live with mystery – knowing there are not always answers to questions and that that is ok?

- What is the balance between 'being' and 'doing'?
- How are learners being encouraged to develop a sense of self and identity which they are comfortable with?
- In what ways are learners able to relate well to others?
- How are learners encouraged to develop a sense of awe and wonder about the natural world which extends to action to protect and nurture that world?
- Where and when are learners given meaningful opportunities to consider the existence of God or a 'divine other' beyond what can be seen?
- In what ways are learners encouraged to 'never stop asking questions'?

Finally, to summarise, our task as inspectors is to consider: How deep does this go and how long will it last?



# 7. Kathryn Wright: Sacred Pathways: An inclusive approach to spiritual development

## Understanding Spirituality

In the world of education spiritual development is often couched in terms of things we need to do in order to become more spiritual. For example, Ofsted (2016) talks about pupils' ability to reflect and how this informs their perspective on life. This definition focuses on enjoyment and fascination about the world and using one's imagination and creativity. In one sense there is nothing wrong with this way of describing spirituality and we would all want to encourage these skills and attitudes. However, from a Christian perspective they do not go to the heart of the nature of spirituality. For Christians, spirituality arises out of faith and a relationship with God. Spirituality is primarily about being, rather than doing. The focus is therefore on how one can deepen this relationship and live it out in the world authentically. As Alister McGrath maintains,

*Spirituality... arises from a creative and dynamic synthesis of faith and life, forged in the crucible of the desire to live out the Christian faith authentically, responsibly, effectively and fully.*<sup>23</sup>

McGrath, 1999, p.9

Spirituality is primarily about relationships. It is about understanding the internal relationship within ourselves, and external relationships with one other and from a Christian perspective with God. To enable spiritual development to flourish means that firstly an appropriate environment for nurturing relationships must be created. Secondly that we need to be aware that everyone has different ways of relating to one another and to God. These two principles underpin the approach put forward here in order to foster spiritual development in our children and young people.

## An inclusive approach

Christian hospitality provides a framework for understanding an inclusive approach to spirituality in Church Schools. Wright (2017)<sup>24</sup> argues that Christian hospitality is about God's presence; that when hospitality is shown, emotional and spiritual change take place (2017, p.124). She goes on to suggest that true hospitality meets the needs of all, particularly the most vulnerable, providing a place where all are accepted and loved. She maintains that Biblical narratives about hospitality demonstrate that it is more than providing a meal, it is about nourishment of the soul.

The former Bishop of Huntingdon uses a metaphor of warm fires and open doors to illustrate this:

*By Warm Fires I mean a vibrant and attractive sense of our Christian identity, and by Open Doors I mean a real welcome to anyone and everyone to gather round the fire.... We would be far worse off if either we lost the clarity and warmth of the fire at the centre. Or started to close the door on some because they are not already committed to it enough. We need to combine good strong roots, a robust sense of church and school alike as Christian or 'in Christ'; with a very open door always inviting, but never forcing, leaving room for questioning, doubt, disagreement, journeying and just looking.*

Church of England, 2015, p.13<sup>25</sup>

So how do we ensure that our approach to spirituality is truly welcoming? How can we establish an approach which meets the needs of all, wherever they may be on their journey? How can we enable all pupils and adults to flourish spiritually in our schools?

The works of Gary Thomas (2010)<sup>26</sup> and Myra Perrine (2007)<sup>27</sup> provide helpful insights into how we can ensure our approach is inclusive and exemplifies the principles of Christian hospitality.

Thomas asserts that over the last fifty years Christians' approach to spirituality has become mechanistic and empty (2010, p.15). He argues that for too long the focus on developing spirituality has been through having a personal 'quiet time'. However, he argues this narrows our understanding of spiritual development, as everyone has a different personality and what he describes as a 'spiritual temperament'. Thomas shows that through history men and women of faith have connected with God in different ways; by studying theology, by composing hymns and songs, by walking in the countryside, by working with the poor and oppressed.

*The focus on spiritual temperaments (or sacred pathways) is an attempt to help us understand how we best relate to God, so we can develop new ways of drawing near to him* <sup>28</sup>

Thomas, 2010, p. 18

Our spiritual temperaments are therefore the place where we find our 'sacred space' (Perrine, 2007, p.9). They are our default mode spiritually. If we neglect our own spiritual temperament, we are less likely to flourish and feel spiritually thirsty as a result. According to Thomas and Perrine, we are likely to have more than one dominant spiritual temperament, and some which we will find more challenging.

If we are to provide an inclusive approach in schools, then we need to consider how pupils and adults best relate to God and provide opportunities for them to connect with God in ways that are appropriate for them. By understanding the different spiritual temperaments or sacred pathways we demonstrate that we welcome all and aim to meet the spiritual needs of everyone in our community.

## Sacred Pathways

Thomas outlines nine spiritual temperaments or sacred pathways (2010, p.23-30). He roots these in biblical narratives, personal experience and story. They are:

**Naturalists: Loving God outdoors.** They are moved by creation, particularly being outside but also through the use of the Psalms and other writings about God as creator and his creation. Naturalists love to surround themselves by what God has made. An example of a Naturalist would be St Francis of Assisi. Here are some suggestions to support this pathway:

- Use natural objects in prayer spaces e.g. flowers, stones, water
- Make sure pupils have an opportunity to enjoy being outside, especially in different types of weather and e.g. snow, rain, a storm, sunny days, doing the RSPB birdwatch, holding Forest School sessions...

- Sing or listen to songs about creation
- Use Christian liturgy from communities such as Iona or Northumbria or find out about the Celtic Christian tradition.

**Sensates: Loving God with the senses.** They are often moved by sights, sounds and smells. They often love incense, beautiful architecture, liturgy and many forms of music. Visual imagery for Sensates is often particularly powerful. An example of a Sensate would be Michelangelo. Here are some suggestions to support this pathway:

- Use candles and child friendly liturgy in collective worship e.g. give each pupil a tea light in a jar to use during the Advent season
- Consider carefully how different curriculum subjects can engage with all the senses e.g. use of art, story, importance of oracy
- Use a visualisation to help pupils focus on their breathing and their senses, there are examples in the Understanding Christianity (RE Today 2016)<sup>29</sup> resource
- Give pupils opportunities to enter competitions such as NATRE Spirited Arts and Spirited Poetry <https://www.natre.org.uk/about-natre/projects/spirited-arts/spirited-poetry-2019/>.

**Traditionalists: Loving God through ritual and symbol.** They love the historic aspects of faith such as symbols, sacraments and ritual. Sometimes this can be misunderstood as following rules, but it is about love of pattern, structure and discipline. Examples of Traditionalists in the Bible are Ezra and Moses. Here are some suggestions to support this pathway:

- Introduce rituals such as welcomes and greetings, use a simple form of the Apostle's Creed or make explicit the 'GERS' (gathering, engaging, responding sending) pattern in collective worship
- Establish traditions such as giving a birthday cake or card to every child in the class or initiating a thought for the day
- Create a Book of Remembrance about key moments in the spiritual life of the school
- Use an 'on this day in history Christian Calendar' to remind pupils of events and people in Christian history.

**Ascetics: Loving God in solitude and simplicity** They like to be left alone e.g. to pray, contemplate, reflect. They do not want anything to distract them. Silent retreat is valued by ascetics. The Shaker style of simplicity would be a good example of a Christian ascetic lifestyle, and people like Jerome or Bonhoeffer are examples of Ascetics. Here are some suggestions to support this pathway:

- Consider fundraising events which involve 'abstinence' such as going without food or not using social media. Or consider a communal 'giving up' of something during Lent
- Invite children and young people to take part in a silent retreat event for a whole day, or visit a monastery
- Create a specific space in the school day for silence and consider the use of silence in school INSET days for staff.

**Activists: Loving God through confrontation.** They want to bring about justice and often take up a cause. Activists want to influence and bring about change in the community. Examples of Activists are people like William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King or Florence Nightingale. Here are some suggestions to support this pathway:

- Undertake a village/street litter pick, going beyond the school grounds
- Prayer walk around the school or local community
- Write letters or emails to local politicians or organisation such as Amnesty International
- Sign up for the Global Neighbours scheme <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/schools/global-neighbours-accreditation-scheme>.

**Caregivers: Loving God by Loving others.** They love serving others, particularly those who are poor and needy. They give time and energy to supporting and caring for others. Mother Teresa is a good example of a Caregiver. Here are some suggestions which support this pathway:

- Send 'get well' messages to children and adults when appropriate
- Look carefully at the entrance to the school and the welcome given e.g. seating area, displays, how people are welcomed
- Consider whether the school building can be used to host other groups e.g. toddler group, mental health support groups, sports groups, music groups....

**Enthusiasts: Loving God with Mystery and Celebration.** They love to celebrate. They want to be 'cheerleaders' for God - shouting, dancing, singing. They value experiencing God's power. Contemporary worship such as Hillsong would be an Enthusiast approach. Miriam in the bible (see Exodus 15) is a good example of an Enthusiast. Here are some suggestions which support this pathway:

- Use a range of music in collective worship such as gospel and contemporary as well as more traditional songs
- Re-enact biblical narratives such as the entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday
- Hold regular celebration events particularly when members of the school community have risen above the ordinary or shown courage in adversity
- Ensure a sense of playfulness and curiosity characterise the curriculum.

**Intellectuals: Loving God with the Mind.** They need their minds to be stirred. They like to study and read about their faith in order to understand it more deeply. An example of an Intellectual would be C.S Lewis. Here are some suggestions which support this pathway:

- Provide opportunities for debate and discussion about spiritual matters e.g. a philosophy group, 'Ask a question' group,
- Encourage pupils to lead collective worship giving a 'thought for the day' or brief theological reflection.
- Use news items to help pupils make connections between biblical teachings and the world around them
- Ensure that each classroom has a concordance, commentaries and dictionaries available for when pupils are studying sacred texts (especially from Key Stage 2 onwards.)

**Contemplatives: Loving God through Adoration.** They seek to be intimate with God. They want to 'sit at the feet of Jesus'. They seek to love God with a pure, deep love. Examples of Contemplatives are Henri Nouwen, Teresa of Avila and Thomas Merton. Here are some suggestions which support this pathway:

- Provide time for pupils to write poetry, music, prayers or narratives about their spirituality
- Consider using 'Lectio Divina' or a similar approach as part of collective worship or in prayer spaces.

- Use 'stilling' or Christian mindfulness.

Perrine (2007) provides a number of ways to reflect on and evaluate one's own spiritual temperaments. Many of these tools could be adapted for use in schools. For example, she suggests you could use a pie chart to show what your most passionate spiritual temperaments are, and which are most difficult. This idea could also be used with pupils.

**Consider:** Do you recognise yourself in any of these? What about your pupils? What about colleagues? What about other adults in your school community?

**A suggestion:** Why not audit your provision? Ask each member of staff to consider which spiritual temperaments they provide for most and least? You might consider a 'continuum line' in a staff meeting from 'most to least', take each temperament and discuss together. You may want to focus on one aspect of school life such as the curriculum, pedagogy or collective worship.

**Monitoring:** Why not equip governors and/or pupils to monitor your provision? Share with them the concept of sacred pathways, and then ask them to reflect on collective worship and prayer spaces? Are they providing for all spiritual temperaments?

## Supporting different spiritual pathways in the school community: some examples

If we are to provide an inclusive approach to spiritual development, then this means we need to be meeting the needs of different spiritual temperaments. The following provides some specific examples for discussion and action. They are inspired by Thomas (2010) and Perrine (2007) and draw on a range of other publications listed in the bibliography.

### Naturalists: Loving God outdoors

Using the natural world more intentionally as part of the curriculum can support this pathway. This approach often happens in Reception and Key Stage 1. Taking lessons for all pupils outside, holding collective worship in the sunshine and encouraging pupils to actively engage with the natural world during breaktimes actively supports their spiritual development. If children are making dens or caring for wildlife, ask them about their motivations and what it means to them. If you are limited with outdoor space, you could bring it inside by showing images of the natural world in displays around the school ideally linked to biblical text; or why not use passages from the Psalms in collective worship or to inspire artwork?

### Sensates: Loving God with the senses

The sense of touch can be more difficult to provide for in terms of spiritual development. Why not purchase some holding crosses, one for each child? Some schools purchase one for every child starting in Reception as a welcome gift. The holding cross can be used to focus thought, to simply hold when listening to story or poem or it might be used when a child is upset. They can also provide visual stimulus to think about the meaning of the Easter story. Playdough and clay are two other useful resources to help pupils sense the spiritual through touch in many curriculum areas. A teacher might ask pupils what it feels like to touch and use such a material. In addition, pupils might use playdough or clay in circle time or prayer spaces, making objects as a response to questions such as, 'What are you worried about?' or 'What are you thankful for?'.

### Traditionalists: Loving God through ritual and symbol

Festivals and ceremonies are a great way to support this sacred pathway. Explaining the meaning behind the seasons of the church year is a good place to start. Using the Church's seasonal colours around the school, not just in collective worship can make this aspect more prominent and provokes questioning. A school I visited used the colours in their entrance area with clear explanation of the meaning and symbolism behind it. Communicating about the seasons of the Church year through the school website or newsletters helps to engage the whole community.

### Ascetics: Loving God in solitude and simplicity

Providing space is essential for this group to thrive spiritually. It is important that distractions are removed, and an area created where solitude is a possibility. This might be a space in the library with headphones to put on, or an outdoor space away from the noise of the playground. In these spaces it is helpful to have prayers such as the Shield of St Patrick or the Lord's prayer for pupils to reflect on and read slowly. Silent space can also be created in the 'everyday' of school life, for example, before lunch you might have a 'pause for thought' moment.

### Activists: Loving God through confrontation

This pathway provides a good way for pupils to engage with courageous advocacy. It is important to encourage pupils who have a passion for a particular charity or worthy cause. In one school I visited pupils developed a strong relationship with a local homeless charity working with them to provide practical help and resources. This work began because one pupil identified a need and had a heart for justice and change in the local community.

### Caregivers: Loving God by Loving Others

There are many ways that pupils and adults in the school community can be a blessing to one another. Some schools leave blessings for one another around the school on post it notes, pebbles or lolly sticks. This might take place all year round or during a focused week. This can inspire pupils to bless people beyond the school community such as providing practical help to refugees, visiting the elderly or learning sign language.

### Enthusiasts: Loving God with mystery and celebration

Schools are good at celebrations. This pathway is often well served, but you might consider something a little different. Why not consider setting up a gospel singing group or help pupils make musical instruments to use regularly in worship? The latter is a great way to welcome Reception aged children into collective worship. They can make percussion instruments and use them in collective worship or on special occasions. Older pupils can lead actions, movement or singing in collective worship. Encouraging pupils to use their whole body in worship can help them to remember songs more effectively.

### Intellectuals: Loving God with the Mind

For pupils with this dominant pathway having space and time to think, debate and discuss is essential. One easy way of doing this is to ensure that your library has a selection of books that will stimulate thinking about spiritual and theological matters. Are there stories about some of the great theologians, thinkers and philosophers? You could set up a small reading group for those who want to debate and discuss what they have read. Do they agree or disagree with the key thinker and why? Do they share the same views? Why? Why not?

### Contemplatives: Loving God through adoration

Colouring has become very popular as an aid to contemplation and reflection. This can be used effectively in schools to support this pathway. Pupils (and adults) could be invited to use colouring activities based on words of scripture, famous inspirational quotes or simply beautiful patterns as a way of affirming calmness and peace. This could be a weekly activity during registration or form time as an act of worship. Alternatively, why not hold a 'Colouring Café' where the school community contributes to a big colouring project and creates a display for a festival occasion? For example, creating a version of the 'Stations of the Cross'.

**Consider:** Are we fully inclusive in our approach to spirituality? Are we supporting all the different spiritual temperaments? Which pathways could we better support? How might we do this?

**A suggestion:** Why not think about how you plan the curriculum? To maximise opportunities for spiritual development, why not consider how you might facilitate the different sacred pathways through the curriculum? Intentionally planning for the provision of different sacred pathways is more likely to lead to change in the long term.

## Conclusions

We can see that spirituality means different things to different people depending on their dominant spiritual temperaments. In the bible, the word for spirit comes from the Hebrew *ruach*, which has a range of meanings; spirit, breath, wind, life-giving. The Latin root *spiritus* also means breath. In all of these there is a sense that our spirit is fundamental to life itself; without it being nurtured we wither and become dry. Everyone's spirit needs to be nourished. The approach outlined here provides one way of ensuring that we are at least aware of the different ways in which people connect with God and at best provides a framework for a truly hospitable and inclusive approach to spirituality in schools.



## 8. Tatiana Wilson: Spiritual development and human flourishing: why we bother

The promotion of spiritual development is a requirement of all schools in England as part of their offering of a 'balanced and broadly based'<sup>30</sup> curriculum. However, knowing that this is a requirement is different to appreciating its worth. For Church of England schools considerable thought needs to go into how this can be worked out with integrity, recognising that our schools have a Christian foundation whilst many of our families and staff may not have any religious affiliation.

So why do we bother and what does spiritual development offer above other aspects of the curriculum and how is spiritual development linked to faith? Dallas Willard<sup>31</sup> suggests that "spiritual" is not just something we ought to be. It is something we are and cannot escape, regardless of how we may think of feel about it'. All of us are innately spiritual. Indeed Ofsted (1994) wrote:

*Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality. 'Spiritual' is not synonymous with 'religious'; all areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils' spiritual development.*

It identifies (2018) that the spiritual development of pupils is shown by their:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life and their interest in 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.

Rebecca Nye (2009)<sup>32</sup> uses the acronym SPIRIT (Space, Process, Imagination, Relationships, Intimacy and Trust) to describe the means by which children grow spiritually. 'Intimacy' and 'Trust' are fragile qualities and there is something significant about the quality of the learning environment that a school provides that needs to be considered and, in some ways, distinct from some of the other modes of learning. All six of these elements have strong links to creating a culture of wellbeing and nurture; a place where children can explore who they are and what matters to them.

### Spiritual Development



My favourite metaphor for spiritual development is that of an old-fashioned photograph being developed. The technician creates the right environment for the image that is already there to come to the fore. It is an image that focusses on nurture rather than coercion. Spiritual development as we have already read should be space-giving, encouraging and reflective. Children (and staff) need an environment characterised by these features in order to explore. John Ortberg (2010)<sup>33</sup> describes the process as becoming more you-ier; just as an acorn can only become an oak tree so we develop into 'more that person God had in mind when he thought you up. You don't just become holier'. There is a luminous quality to spiritual development which Priestley (1985 p37), cautioning against fixed conceptualisations, likened to the impossibility of 'catching the wind'. The wind, though it might be experienced, observed and described, cannot be easily captured.

As we have already read in earlier chapters there is not a one size fits all approach to spiritual development and each of us have our own default spiritualities that nurture us. However, schooling should provide young people with a rich and varied diet from which to draw. From his work interviewing children Dave Csinos (2011) has suggested there are four different spiritual styles<sup>34</sup>: word, emotion, symbol and action. Whether

you draw on this or the work of Thomas (2010) and Perinne (2007) the key thing seems to be variety. But variety without reflection only goes half way. Young people need to be given the space to articulate what works for them and what resonates less, so that they may appreciate their own preferences but also ask themselves what am I missing because of this?

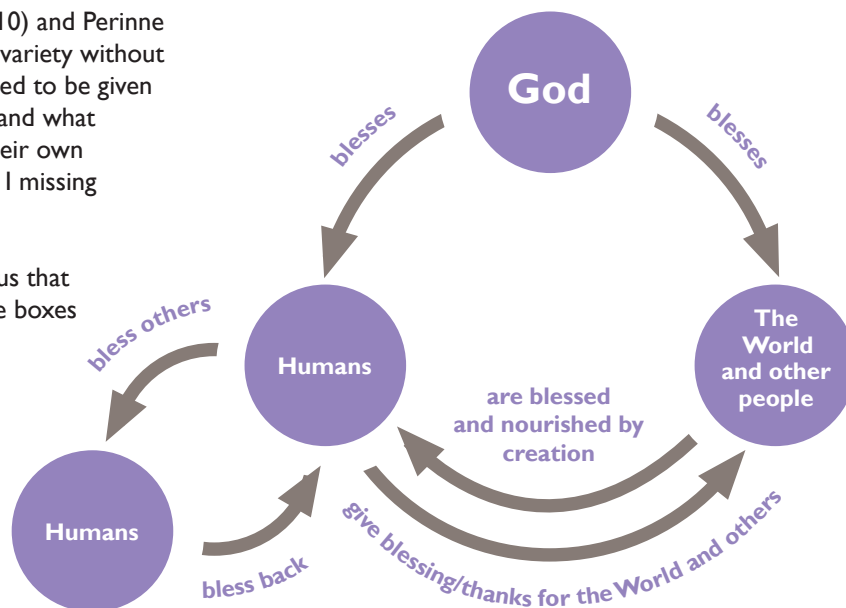
In his introduction Derek Holloway reminds us that spiritual development needs to be beyond the boxes of RE and PSHE and that instead it must be something that should influence all areas of education as it does all areas of life'. This chimes with the Church of England's Vision for Education (2016)<sup>35</sup>, at the heart of which is that education should support human flourishing, drawing on the Jesus' words in John's Gospel: 'I have come that you might have life, life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

For Christians Jesus' promise of life in all its fullness stems from being known and loved by God and shaped as part of God's ecology of blessing.<sup>36</sup> As God blesses us, we bless others, including creation, and in turn are blessed by them.

As Mills and Rickett have already suggested, spiritual development needs to be understood within the context of relationship with ourselves, each other, the world and beyond.

But what do these words of Jesus mean for schools in a multi-faith and belief society and for schools who are asked to provide an inclusive education rooted in the school's Christian foundation? The truth of this lies in the fact that Jesus is appreciated differently by different people<sup>37</sup> and schools should be environments that enable children and staff to explore a range of perspectives. As Mills reminds us in her analogy of a tree, we are all rooted within our own context: our family, location, local community, social groups, culture, and life experiences. Whether a child's roots are in Christianity or in another faith or belief inclusive spiritual development should enable them all to have a life enhancing encounter with the person of Jesus. It therefore follows that children need the opportunity to draw on their own perspectives as part of their spiritual development.

The 2018 SIAMS evaluation schedule is clear that collective worship in a Church of England school is 'inclusive, invitational and inspiring' and that it needs to offer 'the opportunity, without compulsion, to all pupils and adults to grow spiritually through experiences of prayer, stillness, worship and reflection' (2018 p13). Collective worship, when led well, can offer significant opportunities for spiritual development.



Within prayer, stillness, worship and reflection there is a wide range of opportunities to explore. Where possible schools should explore new ways of facilitating worship each year so that over time the repertoire of what is provided is broadened and deepened. This may well include drawing on the expertise of others or looking more widely for sources of inspiration.

We do children a disservice if their experience of faith and belief is not authentic and schools should draw on the support of people of faith within their community to enhance their provision. For young people the opportunity to learn about faith lived out in the everyday adds an important dimension to their own exploration of faith and spiritual development.

Church schools should also draw on the richness of their Christian tradition as part of this exploration and this can particularly enhance the breadth and depth of collective worship.

## Spiritual Development and Transcendence

Spiritual development must include an element transcendence: the ability to reach beyond the material realm and glimpse a deeper reality. Hull (1999) maintained that the term spiritual can be rightly applied to anything which 'lifts human beings above and beyond the biological'. He viewed the ability to realise transcendence as a key feature of human

development and for this reason it forms a central component of the educational process.

*Transcendence is, indeed, a key feature of spiritualization. In speech we transcend the limits of our bodies; in imagination we transcend the limits of space and time; in creativity we transcend the limits of our own particular experience; in mathematics we transcend the grip of the particular and in music we transcend noise. In religion, we transcend humanity altogether, ... and we name this transcendence the Ultimate, the divine or God.*

Hull (1999 p 3)

## Broadening opportunity for spiritual development

If spiritual development is to be something 'that should influence all areas of education as it does all areas of life' it is helpful for schools to have a shared language to describe this and to have explored what this might look like in different subject areas.<sup>38</sup> The work of David Hay and Rebecca Nye (2006)<sup>39</sup> is helpful here. Their survey of writers on spirituality and child psychology found that experiences of spirituality can be categorized into 3 broad areas: awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing and value-sensing. The table below (adapted from Hay and Nye (2006) by Pawson (2018 p152)<sup>40</sup>) gives some details of these different aspects of spirituality and some suggested activities for use by teachers.

| Categories of spirituality | Meaning                                                                                | Suggested activities                                                                          |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Awareness-sensing</b>   | Paying attention to, being aware of, one's awareness                                   | Stilling, meditation and contemplation                                                        |
| ● Here-and-now             | The ability to be 'in the moment'                                                      | Meditation exercises focusing on the breath                                                   |
| ● Tuning                   | An intense feeling of connection or belonging                                          | Listening to evocative music, viewing a beautiful image                                       |
| ● Flow                     | Getting caught up in an activity, where the experience transcends the physical         | Opportunities for pupils to become engrossed in an activity                                   |
| ● Focusing                 | Getting in touch with the felt-sense of reality                                        | 'Grounding' activities, e.g. getting in touch with bodily feelings                            |
| <b>Mystery-sensing</b>     | Seeing patterns in the world; becoming aware of transcendence                          | Asking big questions                                                                          |
| ● Wonder and awe           | Sensing our smallness in the vastness of the universe; a profound feeling of amazement | Creating 'wow' moments through sensual stimulation                                            |
| ● Imagination              | Transcending the ordinary through thoughts that go beyond the obvious                  | Telling stories; exploring symbolic meanings, myths and archetypes                            |
| <b>Value-sensing</b>       | Awareness of the significance and importance of truth, principles, justice, fairness   | Discussing ethical dilemmas                                                                   |
| ● Delight and despair      | Sensing the emotional impact of experiences                                            | Exploring issues related to the environment, poverty, human kindness, spiritual enlightenment |
| ● Ultimate goodness        | Trusting in goodness and love                                                          | Exploring examples of compassion, altruism and agape                                          |
| ● Meaning                  | Awareness of a deeper, transcendent meaning                                            | Exploring issues of identity and purpose                                                      |

## Spiritual development and well being

Statistics tell us that in recent years levels of stress and anxiety in schools have increased significantly both for pupils and staff.<sup>41</sup> When schools consider a holistic, inclusive approach to spiritual development it needs to be attentive to the flourishing of the whole community of children, staff and parents because none of us exist in a vacuum and key relationships shape us.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCP) (2014) 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'.<sup>42</sup> They describe spirituality as being within and beyond formal religion (- the 'holey' centre of Mills' metaphorical doughnut<sup>43</sup>) 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'.<sup>44</sup> In any school year there will always be moments when we need to travel with others through the 'ows' and 'wows' of life. It is helpful if schools have given some thought to what this might look like in times of bereavement or sadness and to know who they might draw on for further support. The RCP recommends that a person with a religious belief may need support which acknowledges and gives space to their faith. Schools should therefore look to provide opportunities for inclusive spiritual development that supports good mental health. There should be 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. Areas to explore might include:

- Curriculum units on identity and belonging.
- The value of prayer, worship and reflection.
- How different spiritualities can help us to find meaning and purpose in the things we value.
- How faith can bring hope and healing in times of suffering and loss.
- How a sense of the beyond can change a person's understanding of who they are, their relationship to others and the world.

So why is it that we bother? We bother because to develop spiritually is an innate need in all of us if we are to flourish as people. It is central to being community as well as part of our growth as individuals. It enables us to connect more deeply

with creation and, for many, to connect to God. John Hull (1999 p2) argues that 'human development would be lopsided without the development of the spirit'; the development of spirituality forms a central purpose in education.

## Building Bridges

If this is true and we believe the development of spirituality is a central purpose in education, it follows that this area of school life should also be shared with parents and carers so that they too can contribute to this aspect of children's development at home. There are many ways that schools can do this including: making this explicit in curriculum plans; including families in collective worship themes; sharing opportunities for first hand encounter through the school year; offering suggestions for activities or discussion points at home. In addition, schools can signpost opportunities for families outside of school including those at their local church(es) that they might draw on.

## Conclusion

The philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff (2004) has suggested that the ultimate goal for Christian educators should be to seek 'shalom'.<sup>45</sup> 'Shalom' is a biblical vision of what God wants for humans and can be defined as flourishing in the enjoyment of relationships: with self, others, creation and with God. If we want our schools to be places of flourishing, we need to acknowledge the synergy and inter-relatedness of spirituality, mental health and wellbeing. These elements should be part of holistic vision for an education that values relationship and connection.

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