



Spiritual Development

What is spirituality?

Spirituality is the way in which we combine our thoughts and emotions to reflect, respond to, and seek to give meaning and purpose to the experiences that we encounter in life.

At Lower Heath, we aim to provide education for the whole child to enable all pupils to flourish. We provide opportunities to promote spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development to prepare children for responsibilities and experiences of later life.

Spirituality is a very personal experience and is different for every person. It can change during a person's lifetime. Spirituality is not the same as having a religion or faith; a person can be spiritual without having a particular faith.

The *windows, mirrors, doors* analogy clarifies this meaning.

- We gaze out through windows onto the world, responding with our emotions and trying to make sense of what we see.
- We use mirrors to reflect on our thoughts and feelings, and how what we see through the window connects with our inner selves, and how we connect with what we see and understand.
- This becomes a *spiritual* experience when it transforms us and so we walk out through the door into life differently from before.

For some, this *spiritual experience* leads to a sense of transcendence: in other words, a feeling or belief that something exists beyond what can be directly seen. Christians would describe this state as God.

Pupils' spiritual development is shown through 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

There are many aspects to spiritual development, such as:

Beliefs – The development of personal beliefs, including religious beliefs; an appreciation that people have individual and shared beliefs on which they base their lives; a developing understanding of how beliefs contribute to personal identity

A sense of Awe and Wonder – being inspired by the natural world, mystery, or human achievement

Experiencing feelings of transcendence – Feelings which may give rise to belief in the existence of a divine being, or the belief that one's inner resources provide the ability to rise above everyday experience

Search for Meaning and Purpose – Asking 'why me?' at times of hardship or suffering; reflecting on the origins and purpose of life; responding to challenging experiences of life such as beauty, suffering and death.



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Self-Knowledge – An awareness of oneself in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences; a growing understanding and acceptance of individual identity; the development of self respect.

Relationships – Recognising and valuing the worth of each individual; developing a sense of community; the ability to build up relationships with others.

Creativity – Expressing innermost thoughts and feelings; exercising the imagination, inspiration, intuition and insight.

Feelings and Emotions – The sense of being moved by beauty or kindness; hurt by injustice or aggression; a growing awareness of when it is important to control emotions and feelings and how to learn to use feelings as a source of growth.

Steps to Spiritual Development

Recognise the existence of others as independent from oneself
Becoming aware of and reflecting on experience
Questioning and exploring the meaning of experience
Understanding and evaluating a range of possible responses and interpretations
Developing personal views and insights
Applying the insights gained with increasing degrees of perception to one's own life

Effective learning in itself is a *spiritual* experience. This is because learning involves engagement with and exploration of a new concept [windows], thinking deeply about it, trying to connect it to what we already know [mirrors]. If we can successfully fit this new concept to our pre-existing understanding, this evokes a positive emotional response [we often describe this as: the penny drops!] With each new concept acquired, we transform ourselves [doors], moving forward in life a little altered, intrinsically motivated, fulfilled and inspired by the experience.

Spiritual Styles: the nine sacred pathways.

In Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God, Gary L Thomas describes nine different spiritual styles or "sacred pathways." The sacred pathways describe the ways we may prefer to develop our spirituality. We can identify our sacred pathway and use practices which come naturally to that pathway – though we do not have to stick to one pathway.

- Naturalists: enjoying the outdoors
- Sensates: appreciation using the senses
- Traditionalists: valuing ritual and symbol
- Ascetics: being at peace in solitude and simplicity
- Activists: making a difference through confrontation
- Caregivers: loving others
- Enthusiasts: enjoying mystery and celebration
- Contemplatives: taking time to consider
- Intellectuals: stimulating the mind



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Using this approach, here are some examples of how spirituality is developed at Lower Heath CE Primary School.

mind body soul

Spiritual Health

Lower Heath
CE Primary School and Nursery
Part of the **Marches** Academy Trust

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allwood World• Outdoor play• Nature in art• Reflection time• External visits <p>NATURALISTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Candles in worship• Singing together• Communal worship at church <p>SENSATES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Festival celebrations• Daily Worship• Symbols and values• Celebrating seasons <p>TRADITIONALISTS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spiritual Garden• Rest Easy• Silent reading• Reduced distractions in classes <p>ASCETICS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Harvest• Black History Month• Courageous Advocacy• Interfaith week• Charities <p>ACTIVISTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elmhurst Care Home• Reading Buddies• Wellbeing Ambassadors <p>CAREGIVERS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child-led worship• Thankfulness value• Lower Heath Pledge <p>ENTHUSIASTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bible Stories• RE curriculum• Christmas cards• Prayer spaces <p>CONTEMPLATIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enrichment experiences• Big questions to challenge• Awe and wonder in lessons <p>INTELLECTUALS</p>



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Why is spiritual development important?

As a church school, we believe that our role is to educate the whole child and that the spiritual growth of our children is as important as, and indeed is a vital contributor to, their academic development. The themes developed each week through our worship, our school vision, as well as opportunities woven throughout our curriculum underpin all we seek to achieve in the lives of our children. Getting people to consider the world around them, reflecting and thinking for themselves, evoking positive emotional responses and pondering ultimate questions is the integral ingredient in our recipe for spiritual development.

How is provision made for spiritual development?

Because spiritual development is a key, *standout* feature of what makes us distinctive as a church school, the provision of opportunities for spiritual development is thoughtful, deliberate and intentional.

Ethos

An important contributor to effective spiritual development is the underlying vision and values principles upon which the school operates. The school vision, based on the Christian principle of “Let your light shine”, describes these principles that in turn determine how adults and children relate to one another. This creates the right climate for effective spiritual development. For example:

- Policies and ensuing practices are clearly seen to reflect the worth of individuals.
- Everyone involved in the life of the school is valued and seen to be valued.
- Behaviour and people management policies and practices are collectively arrived at and discussed regularly.
- All adults recognise the need to set good examples of mutual respect and considerate behaviour.
- The quality and nature of the learning environment and displays reflect the value placed on pupils and staff.
- The atmosphere of the school welcomes differences in beliefs and values and invites everyone to belong.
- The achievements, successes and efforts of everyone are recognised and celebrated.
- School provides a broad curriculum supported by a wide range of events, experiences and activities, including visits to places of beauty, interest and challenge that enable pupils to admire and wonder at the natural environment and human creative endeavour.

Collective worship and Religion and Worldviews (RWE) are two key areas of school life that provide ideal vehicles for effective spiritual development.

Collective Worship provides opportunities for:

- Reflection and response
- Thinking deeply and drawing links between ideas
- Stillness and prayer
- The respect of personal and collective beliefs
- Sharing and celebrating common beliefs
- Celebrating success and talent
- Sharing happiness, sorrow, hurt, excitement, anticipation, fear, etc.
- Shared activities such as singing, listening, laughing, reflecting on a theme
- Remembering and celebrating the lives of people of spiritual significance



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- Emphasizing common purpose and values
- Experiencing emotions
- Taking part with sincerity and a sense of higher purpose
- Through pupil-led worship, children have opportunity to support the spiritual development of others, that in turn leads to a sense of fulfilment and is therefore a spiritual experience for the young leaders
- Creative responses to experience such as music, drama, poetry, story
- The use of visual stimulus such as religious symbols, candles, art, icons, photos, video

Religion and Worldviews Education is a subject that looks at the spiritual experiences of others and how these change and shape their lives. RWE allows children to use what they find out about other people and their beliefs to reflect on their own experiences. Through this process, children can engage with ultimate questions of meaning and purpose and begin to shape their own beliefs. RWE allows children to engage with the idea of mystery and questions with no clear answers.

The wider curriculum also provides opportunities for spiritual development. The school's planning format indicates where the children's learning will provide opportunities for spiritual reflection.

In English:

- Empathy with authors and the characters in stories and plays.
- The appreciation of beauty in language.
- Emotions and sentiments in writing and speech.
- The values of great works.
- The reading and writing of poetry.
- Imagining oneself as someone else.
- Escaping into other worlds through literature.
- Pleasure derived from the creative process.

In Mathematics:

- Infinity and nothing.
- Pattern and order.
- Shape and regularity.
- Truth, certainty and likelihood.
- The universality of mathematics over time and space.
- The wonder of numbers, formulae and equations.

In Science:

- Wonder as the basis of science.
- Questions of beginning, creation and evolution.
- Discovering the limits of experimentation.
- Birth, life, death and renewal.
- The universe and beyond.
- Beliefs in science and the faith of scientists.
- The impact of scientific achievements.



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In ICT:

- The wonder of worldwide instant communication.
- The speed of the growth of knowledge.
- The accessibility of knowledge and contact with other people worldwide.

In Geography:

- Wonder at the diversity of environments and people.
- Questions about the care of the environment.
- The beliefs behind particular causes and campaigns.
- World (economic) development.
- Land formation.
- Empathy with people from other parts of the world.

In History:

- Being in touch with past people, things and ideas.
- Being part of history.
- Influential events and people.
- The commitment of significant people in history.
- War and peace.
- The nature and importance of invention and exploration.
- Empathy with people from other times in history.

In Physical Education:

- Being a team member.
- Pushing yourself to the limits.
- Extremes of skill, endurance and achievement.
- Emotion in sport such as those evoked through success and failure
- Personal limitation and acceptance that others may perform better
- Sportsmanship.

In Design and Technology:

- Discovering how something works.
- Appreciating ingenuity.
- Beauty in design.
- Perseverance to solve problems.
- Personal achievement.
- Learning from others and nature.

In the Creative Arts (Art, Music, Drama and Dance):

- The work of creative artists from a variety of times and places.
- Expressing, interpreting and exploring deep feelings and profound beliefs.
- Artistic creativity.
- The effects of the arts on emotions and senses.
- Personal response and preference.
- The sense of fulfilment.