

Stoke By Nayland CofE Primary School



Spirituality Policy

Prepared by:	<i>Headteacher</i>
Approved by:	<i>(Local Governing Body/Committee)</i>
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Introduction:

Stoke By Nayland Primary is a Church School that is committed to encouraging the exploration of the Christian faith and values, while being open to other faiths, beliefs and values. 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 feeling 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.

Vision:

As a church school our school vision is deeply rooted in Christian narrative, the story of the Good Shepherd (John 10) and the Parable of The Lost Sheep (Luke 15, Matthew 18). The story encapsulates perfectly what we think is special about our school – just as the Shepherd gives his all to secure the safety of every last sheep and helps them to thrive, so our staff give their all to create a safe and loving environment for every child so that they can be the best that they can be. We prepare our children to go out into the world equipped with everything that is good for the good of all. We are an inclusive school, welcoming all children with respect, understanding and dignity. We have a duty of care to the children and will demonstrate the compassion and understanding that allows all children and adults within our school family and local community to flourish. In the context of this policy, this means that we aim to provide a safe and secure environment, in which children's individual needs are catered for and supported. It also means that we endeavour to provide children with the knowledge and skills they need to keep themselves safe. We recognise the moral and statutory responsibility placed on all staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children. We use our values of **Love, Courage, Compassion** and **Truth** to support our teaching.

1. Aims

Our school aims to:

The Individual (Self):

- To develop self-awareness, confidence, sense of worth, an understanding and application of personal values and beliefs, the ability to handle feelings and personal creativity.

Relationship to Others:

- To develop openness and awareness to differences, empathy and the individual's awareness of their place within the wider group and community.

Relationship to the World & Universe:

- To develop a sense of wonder and awe, appreciation of the beauty and variety of nature and our inheritance through various cultures.

The Exploration of Ultimate Questions:

- To develop an awareness and ability to explore issues around questions of life and death.

Building Blocks of Spiritual Development:
The "building blocks" of Spiritual Development are;

a) **Self Awareness or Self Knowledge.** All humans need to be aware of, and acknowledge, their own inner life of thoughts, feelings and emotions. What does it mean to be human? This is an important part of developing self-respect, a sense of identity and self worth. In turn, this enables us to value and respect others. Pupils will be given a range of opportunities to reflect upon and discuss their beliefs, feelings and responses to personal experiences.

b) **Forming Relationships.** An important part of personal growth is being able to develop relationships with others, recognising them as people of worth and value. This includes developing a sense of community and building social relationships. Pupils will be given the opportunity to develop an understanding of both their individual and group identity and to form and maintain worthwhile and satisfying relationships.

c) **Asking Ultimate Questions.** This is the search for meaning and purpose in life. It involves asking questions such as "Why me?" in times of suffering, or "What happens when you die?" The youngest children often ask the most profound questions of this type, and deserve to be taken seriously when they do so. We believe that it is important that this area of reflection and challenge is encouraged, not stifled. Ultimate questions are not limited only to RE and collective worship, but can arise at any time.

d) **Awe and Wonder.** In historical and spatial terms each individual is insignificant. An awareness of one's place in the world enables a person to live with natural doubt and uncertainty and encourages the search for meaning in life. When faced with eternity and infinity, or the wonders of the natural world and human achievements, feelings of awe and wonder are also a natural response. For some this may include experiencing feelings of transcendence which give rise to belief in the existence of God. It may also encourage a belief in ideals and possibilities of rising above one's present experience of the world (e.g. by adopting and supporting specific causes or issues). Pupils will be given opportunities to reflect on, consider and celebrate the wonders and mysteries of life and to experience moments of stillness and reflection, for example in Collective Worship and in Forest Schools

e) **Beliefs and Values.** This is the search for, and development of, personal beliefs and values which may or may not be shared with other members of the community. This naturally may include the development of religious beliefs, and as a church school we seek to be a supportive environment in which people can explore and clarify their own beliefs.

f) **Creativity.** This is the exercising of the imagination or intuition and insight so as to express one's innermost thoughts and feelings, especially through the creative arts. Creative work can be an important tool for exploring some of the other areas of spiritual development, including the Creative Curriculum, Music, Art and opportunities beyond the traditional classroom setting. We encourage all children to participate in these opportunities and ensure there are opportunities to reflect on what they create.

g) **Feelings and Emotions.** The sense of being moved by kindness or beauty, or being hurt by hatred and injustice. This should bring a growing awareness of when it is important to control feelings and emotions. Pupils will be able to foster their emotional life and express their feelings in the community of the church school, knowing themselves to be accepted and loved as unique individuals. Our work around feelings and emotions is supported by our THRIVE practitioners and our belief that all feelings are valid and we need to learn to regulate our emotions effectively.

We recognise that these areas of experience are common to most people - they are the “third dimension” of existence alongside the physical and the mental. All the above experiences may be explained and explored in both religious and non-religious terms and demonstrates our commitment as a church school open to those with other faiths and beliefs.

Spirituality- Across the Curriculum including Collective Worship.

When planning, staff consider such things as;

- a) The careful selection of individual and class reading books so as to encourage discussion of issues. Story often helps express the inexpressible; stories may challenge, help children to understand particular experiences or encourage empathy. Story is a verbal symbol which has long been used to challenge or nurture - as in the parables of Jesus.
- b) Investigate which stories are popular with pupils and which they love to revisit at various levels. What positive viewpoints and messages do these offer? Do they stretch the imagination and promote ideas and questions? A central list of particularly useful books is being developed.
- c) Setting aside time in PSHE and SMSC to actively value individuals e.g. use of Circle Time as a valuable tool for the expression of thoughts and feelings. Build regular slots into the school day for reflection.
- d) Science and environmental issues can raise ultimate questions about creation and the role of humankind. “Why is the world like this?” Ethical questions are an integral part of the modern scientific world. The study of natural forces is a tool for awe and wonder and a stimulus to creativity. An awareness of order and pattern in the world is formed.
- e) English, music, art and drama are all highly creative areas of the curriculum and will also be used to explore important issues of many kinds.
- f) Religious Education and collective worship allow time for reflection, empathy, exploration of value and belief systems, and the exploration of community. In collective worship children will be given the opportunity to be active worship leaders e.g. writing prayers, selecting hymns and music.
- g) History and geography give the opportunity to empathise with others of different times and cultures. They may raise moral questions e.g. child labour in the Victorian period. History can provide “heroes” and “villains” to study or cautionary tales.
- h) PE helps people to explore their own capabilities, develop positive attitudes towards others and experience co-operation and teamwork. Pupils have the opportunity to deal with both success and failure.

- i) Community work will promote a concern for the common good, other people and the environment.
- j) Timetabled opportunities for stillness and reflection are provided. There is a quiet time in the day when everyone has time to read or think.
- k) The children are involved in decision making and taking responsibility so that they can see they are of value in the community. The School Council and Faith Council are an important way of ensuring that all children potentially have a voice in whole school issues.

As children's spiritual awareness develops we aim to see some or all of the following characteristics:

- a set of values, principles and beliefs, which may or may not be religious, which inform their perspective on life and their patterns of behaviour
- an awareness and understanding of their own and others' beliefs
- an ability to understand the notion of community and to see themselves in relation to a variety of communities
- a respect for themselves and for others
- a sense of empathy with others, concern and compassion
- an increasing ability to reflect and learn from this reflection
- an ability to show courage and persistence in defence of their aims, values, principles and beliefs
- an appreciation of the intangible – for example, beauty, truth, love, goodness, order – as well as for mystery, paradox and ambiguity respect for insight as well as for knowledge and reason
- an expressive and/or creative impulse
- an ability to think in terms of the 'whole' – for example, concepts such as harmony, interdependence, scale, perspective
- an understanding of feelings and emotions, and their likely impact, and an ability to talk about feelings

In encouraging our pupils' spiritual development we will;

- give pupils the opportunity to explore values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and the way in which they affect peoples' lives
- where pupils already have religious beliefs, we will support and develop these beliefs in ways which are personal and relevant to them
- be a listening school where everyone matters
- be a supportive environment in which each and every individual feels themselves to be an important part of the school
- encourage pupils to explore and develop what animates themselves and others
- encourage pupils to empathise with others
- encourage pupils to reflect and to learn from reflection
- give pupils the opportunity to understand human feelings and emotions, the way they affect people and how an understanding of them can be helpful
- develop a climate or ethos within which all pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected

- accommodate and celebrate difference, and respect the integrity of individuals
- provide pupils with the opportunity of working for a greater cause - peace, justice, and care for the earth

Our School promotes teaching styles which:

- value the whole child as a person of infinite worth and untold potential
- encourage and value pupils' questions, and give them space for their own thoughts, ideas and concerns
- create opportunities to listen, to reflect and to puzzle
- enable pupils to make connections between aspects of their learning
- encourage pupils to relate their learning to a wider frame of reference – for example, asking 'why?', 'how?' and 'where?' as well as 'what?'
- open up deep questions about the meaning and mystery of life, change and death
- encourage creativity and creative responses
- explore and value diversity and difference, yet challenge prejudice
- monitor, in simple, pragmatic ways, the success of what is provided

The place of spiritual development in relation to other policies: This policy should be read in conjunctions with the RE Policy, PSHE and RSE Policy, Collective Worship Policy, Behaviour Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy.