

# Drifffield Church of England (VC) Infant School



*'Learn to let your light shine'*

*Matthew 5: 14-16*

## Spirituality and Spiritual Development Policy

## Statement of intent and ethos

Driffield CE Infant School welcomes all God's children and their families and is a place where children of all faiths and none flourish and are inspired by the Christian character and values of our school and learn to love God, one another and themselves (Mark 12:30-31) in order that they can 'Live life in all its fullness' (John 10:10)

It is this ethos underpinned by the words from Matthew 5: 14-16 'Learn to let your light shine' that underpins our approach to spiritual development for the whole school community.

### What is Spirituality?

Delight in all things

Being absorbed in the present moment

Not too attached to 'self' and eager to explore boundaries

of 'beyond' and 'other'

Searching for meaning

Discovering purpose

Open to more?

Spirituality is like a bird; if you hold it too tightly, it chokes; if you hold it too loosely, it flies away. Fundamental to spirituality is the absence of force.

Rabbi Hugo Gryn

Spirituality is a common natural feature of most children's lives and is initially an awareness of the sacred quality to life experiences. This awareness can be conscious or unconscious, but in both cases can affect actions, feelings and thoughts as children become more aware of their relationships beyond themselves, i.e. with others, with God (or the transcendent), with the environment or to a deeper sense of inner self and exploring experiences beyond the everyday. Spiritual learners search for meaning in their very existence and their place in the greater scheme of things.

Children's Spiritual development should not be 'the icing on the cake' but should thread through everything we do, it is a basic necessity for children to flourish and be the very best that they can be. It is defined as a right in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)

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 fascinations in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, including the intangible,

- Use of imagination and creativity in learning
- Willingness to reflect on their learning and experience
- Ability to ask 'Big Questions' that may have no answer.

We also believe that it is vital that all adults in school also see the need to develop their own spirituality for their own wellbeing and good mental health, and so that they can effectively support and help our children and each other.

### **Our Aims**

Our aim is to support children and adults in school to explore four key concepts of spirituality.

#### ***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. To see themselves as a unique individual.

#### ***Relationships with Others:***

- To develop openness and awareness to differences, empathy and the individual's awareness of their place within the wider group and community. Spiritual learners reflect on how their values and principles affect their relationship with others.

#### ***Relationship to the World and Universe:***

- To develop a sense of wonder and awe, appreciation of the beauty and the variety of nature and their ability to respond emotionally to the wonder of the natural world and the results of human creativity. Spiritual learners explore their understanding of beauty and the effect this has on their perception of and relationship with the world.

#### ***Exploration of Ultimate Questions***

- To become increasingly aware of the concept of the beyond – a growing relationship with the transcendental and the ability to explore experiences and ask questions that pertain to beyond the everyday. Spiritual learners search for meaning in their very existence and their place in the greater scheme of things.

Each of these concepts is explored through three lenses:

1. **Encounter:** learning about life; providing openings for spiritual development and a growing appreciation of the
2. **Reflection:** beyond, a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions.
3. **Transformation:** Learning to live life, responding as a means of expressing the need to understand the purpose of life.

## 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 and 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, it 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 both of their own 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 we believe that they deserve to be taken seriously when they do. We believe that it is important that this area of reflection and challenge is encouraged, not stifled. Ultimate questions are not limited to RE and Collective Worship, but can arise at any time and all classes have ‘Big Question Books’ where children can record their questions for discussion at an appropriate time.
- d) **Uncertainty, 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 a natural doubt and uncertainty and encourages a search for the meaning of life. When faced with eternity and infinity, or the wonders of the natural world and human achievements, feelings of awe and wonder are a natural response. For some, this may include the 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 for example by supporting specific causes or issues through social action. Pupils will be given the opportunity to reflect on, consider and celebrate the wonders of the mystery of life and to experience moments of stillness and reflection, for example in Collective Worship.
- e) **Beliefs and Values.** This is the search for, and development of, personal beliefs and values which may or may not be shared by other members of the community or their own family. This naturally may include the development of religious beliefs, and as a church school, we seek to be a supportive environment in which people (children and adults) can explore and clarify their own beliefs.
- f) **Creativity.** This is the exercising of the imagination so as to express one’s innermost thoughts and feelings, especially through the creative arts. Creative work can be the innermost tool for exploring some of the other areas of spiritual development, including the Creative Curriculum, Music, Art, Dance and the opportunities offered beyond the traditional classroom setting such as outdoor learning and visits.
- g) **Feelings and Emotions.** The sense of being moved by kindness or beauty, or being hurt by hatred or 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 our church school, knowing themselves to be accepted, valued and loved as unique individuals.

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

## **Spirituality across the Curriculum**

*When planning staff need to consider the following:*

- 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 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) Setting aside time for PSHE to actively value individuals. Circle Time is a valuable tool for the expression of thoughts and feelings. In addition, time is set aside each day for reflection.
- c) 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 and important part of the modern scientific world. The study of natural forces is a tool for awe and wonder and a stimulus to creativity.
- d) English, music, art and drama are highly creative areas of the curriculum and will be used to help explore important issues of many kinds.
- e) RE and Collective worship allow for 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 and leading prayers, selecting songs and music, helping to plan and evaluate
- f) History and geography give the opportunity to empathise with others of different times and places and may raise moral questions.
- g) PE helps children and adults 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.
- h) Community work and social action projects will promote concern for the common good, other people and the environment. Children are encouraged to challenge injustice and work together to come up with ideas to support. This is especially seen through the work of Church School Ambassadors and the Archbishop's Young Leader Award.
- i) There are timetabled opportunities for reflection and stillness in school. All classes have reflection areas in the classroom and a quiet area on the playground. Towards the end of the school year, we hold a whole school 'Spirituality Week' where the children and adults are given lots of opportunities to reflect on their achievements during the year and look forward to the future.
- j) The children are involved in decision-making and taking responsibility so that they can see that they are a value to the community. Our elected School Council is an important way of ensuring that all children potentially have a voice in whole school issues.

### **In encouraging our pupils' spiritual development, we will:**

- give our 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 people matter
- be a supportive environment in which each and every individual feels themselves to be an important part of the school
- encourage pupils to empathise with others
- encourage pupils to reflect and learn from reflection
- give pupils the opportunity to understand human feelings and emotion, the way they affect people and how an understanding of them can be helpful
- develop an ethos in which pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected and 'learn to let their light shine'
- accommodate and celebrate difference and respect the integrity of individuals
- provide pupils with the opportunity of working for a greater cause: peace, justice, a care for the earth.
- Provide the children with opportunities to sing often, especially with others
- Ensure we have regular time for prayer. This can take many forms, but should include being thankful and saying sorry, offering the children the opportunity to open up to and talk to God.

### **Our School promotes teaching which:**

- values the whole child as a person of infinite worth and untold potential
- encourages and values children's questions, and give them space for their own thoughts, ideas and concerns.
- Engages children in learning with a 'hook' to draw them into the topic and a 'landing' to conclude the topic.
- Creates opportunities to listen, to reflect and to puzzle.
- Enables pupils to make connections between different aspects of their learning
- Encourages pupils to deepen their learning by asking 'why?' 'how?' and 'where?' as well as 'what?'
- Opens up deep questions about the meaning and mystery of life
- Encourages creativity and creative responses.
- Explores and values diversity and difference and challenge prejudice
- Monitors the success of what is provided.

### **The place of spiritual development in relation to other policies:**

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Curriculum Policy, RE Policy, Collective Worship Policy, SMSCD Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy, Social, Emotional and Mental Health Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy and the Church of England's 'Valuing all God's Children'.

### **Policy Review**

To be reviewed every 3 years (next review September 2025)