Ashford CE Primary School

Spiritual Development Policy

Signed: _____L Bowman_____

Approved: September 2026 Chair of Governors

Updated Policy: September 2026 to reflect changes to LDBS model policy

To be reviewed: **Summer Term 2029**

Spiritual Development Policy

Our School Vision

We are a caring Christian community where everyone adopts an "I can" attitude; everyone feels valued, safe and loved by God. We celebrate our God-given individuality, achievements and talents and we aspire, with God's help, to become the best that we can be. We believe that each one of us has the ability to achieve our highest potential, living and learning in the fullness of God.

I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

Philippians 4v13

How is this policy a reflection of our theologically rooted Christian vision?

Through our school vision, ethos and Bible verse, 'I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.' Phil 4:13, we encourage all within our school community to know that they can find God's strength in all things. Our values teach children to respect and value individuality, show compassion and forgiveness, develop perseverance and courage and be thankful for all that God has provided for us. This allows our children to spiritually appreciate the unique relationships we have with others, the world around us and the greater presence.

Introduction

The Church of England Vision for Education is rooted in Jesus' desire that we should have 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10). As our spiritual nature is such a fundamental part of our humanity, spiritual development is a key part of this holistic view of education:

"*Our vision embraces the spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people. We offer a vision of human flourishing for all, one that embraces excellence and academic rigour, but sets them in a wider framework."* [1]

As Derek Holloway writes, spiritual development is intrinsic to every part of our work:

"I would strongly contend that in all schools, and certainly in Church schools, that spiritual development is not something you should hide away in a couple of curriculum boxes or treat as an afterthought. I must be something that should influence all areas of education as it does all areas of life.[2]

We believe that spiritual development is a core thread that runs through our school, and we see it as vital for the flourishing of all within our school community. In Acts 17:28, the Apostle Paul says that in God "we live and move and have our being"; becoming more aware of our innate spirituality is a life-long journey and it is our desire that all at Ashford CE Primary School move forward on that journey during their time here.

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[1] The Church of England Education Office, *Church of England Vision for Education: Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good.* (The Church of England Education Office 2016)

[2] Derek Holloway et al*, Spiritual Development: Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom (*The Church of England Education Office *April 2019)*

Aims

Our aim is to establish the right learning environment to enable the spiritual flourishing of all pupils through the following objectives:

- Develop an appreciation of their uniqueness and value as a child made in the image of God.
- Develop knowledge and understanding of the school's Christian values and the Biblical teaching that underpins them, as well as the context, language and symbolism of the Christian faith.
- Develop an awareness of and respect for other people's beliefs and faiths and the ability to articulate their own.
- Foster self-awareness and encourage pupils to make informed decisions.
- Develop an appreciation of what it means to be a part of a community (e.g. using their gifts in the service of others), understanding the value of difference and diversity through involvement with others.
- Develop the skills and language required to enable them to reflect upon the big questions and mysteries of life, and upon experiences of awe, compassion, beauty etc.
- Begin to understand and make sense of their own feelings and emotions around certain encounters and events that occur in their life, including an awareness that experiences of disappointment, failure and loss may be occasions for spiritual growth.
- Encourage curiosity, creativity and imagination.

These objectives will enable the pupils to have a quality of life that encompasses respect, awareness, compassion, curiosity, and understanding, and relationships that reflect order, reason, balance, and integrity within the context of Christian faith.

As over-arching aims, our approach to spiritual development will:

- Reflect the school's Church of England status.
- Reflect and strengthen the school's Christian vision and ethos.
- Take place within a school environment which enables pupils and adults to flourish.

Legal Requirements

The importance of spiritual development in schools is recognised in legislation.

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.

Section 48 of the Education Act 2005

Spiritual development is a particular focus of Church school inspections under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (SIAMS) which asks:

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

How is collective worship enabling pupils and adults to flourish spiritually? How is spiritual development an intrinsic part of the curriculum?

In the context of the school as a Church school, what do pupils and adults understand to be the meaning of spirituality? How does this enhance and enrich collective worship and individuals' spiritual development?

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

In The Ofsted School Inspection Toolkit (2025), the evaluation area of personal development and well-being considers:

'pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, which can be seen across the school's activities'.

To meet the 'Expected standard' in this area:

'A coherent and appropriate programme of personal development extends across the taught curriculum and wider opportunities and experiences. It makes a positive difference to pupils and enables them to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.'

Shared Understanding of Spiritual Development

Philip Sheldrake writes:

"In Christian terms, spirituality refers to the way our fundamental values, lifestyles, and spiritual practices reflect particular understandings of God, human identity, and the material world as the context for human transformation…We shall see that all Christian spiritual traditions are rooted in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, particularly in the gospels and in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Christian spirituality is fundamentally concerned with following the way of Jesus Christ." [3]

As a church school, it is this Christian framework that shapes our shared understanding of spirituality and spiritual development. We recognise the importance of engaging with our linked church/es in determining this shared understanding in the context of our school's Christian vision and values.

To make conversations about spiritual flourishing more accessible to every member of our school community, Ashford CE Primary School has chosen to use the following shared understanding of spirituality and spiritual development:

At Ashford CE Primary, we recognise that spirituality is a unique experience and is likely to differ between us all. Our approach to spirituality focuses on making connections which enables us to explain it to our children in a developmentally appropriate way.

We use the concept of 'Mirrors, Windows and Doors' as we support our children to reflect and ask big questions about life beyond themselves.

We focus on reflection and inwardly connecting with our own sense of self and emotions, illustrated by the mirror.

We look outwards and aim to provide a range of rich experiences to appreciate and connect with the awe and wonder in the world around us, illustrated by the window.

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[3] Philip Sheldrake, Spirituality, A Brief History. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) p.7

We look upwards to explore the feelings and sense of belief that there is something greater than our physical existence, something more than that which we can see, hear, smell, taste or touch. We consider how we can connect with this through prayer and worship and explore how this affects how we live our everyday lives, depicted by the door.

Through our school vision, ethos and Bible verse, 'I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.' Phil 4:13, we encourage all within our school community to know that they can find God's strength in all things. Our values teach children to respect and value individuality, show compassion and forgiveness, develop perseverance and courage and be thankful for all that God has provided for us. This allows our children to spiritually appreciate the unique relationships we have with others, the world around us and the greater presence.

Provision

The school pursues the aims by ensuring:

- The curriculum and all areas of our community life will be driven by the school's Christian vision statement and associated values.
- Opportunities for spiritual development are actively planned into the curriculum and encouraged in all areas of school life.
- Unplanned and spontaneous spiritual opportunities for spiritual development are recognised, acknowledged and/or celebrated by staff and pupils.
- Collective worship celebrates the love of God for every individual and provides opportunities for children to respond and reflect on this.
- A solid understanding of the Christian concept of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; of prayer and of the Bible is nurtured and developed.
- The school building and outdoor environment provides appropriate spaces for silence, stillness, and prayer.
- Pupils' spiritual capacities such as imagination, empathy and insight are fostered through the creative arts and interactive multi-sensory teaching strategies making use of the outdoor environment and relevant educational visits.
- The provision of opportunities to listen attentively and observe carefully, listening with discernment, valuing what is good and worthwhile and making judgements through discussion and exchange of views and ideas.
- Support for learning to live with success and failure for themselves and with others.
- Moral development is linked to spiritual development.
- Pupils are given as many opportunities as possible to explore the wonder of the natural world and to develop an understanding of the Christian belief that creation is a gift from God to be enjoyed, cherished, and protected.
- The delivery and content will be made accessible to all pupils including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Consideration of Early Years curriculum and how the curriculum for younger children can support spiritual development.
- The religious background of all pupils will be taken into consideration when planning teaching.

CPD and Training

This is a complex area and staff should be trained and equipped to provide for the spiritual development of pupils within the context of a Church of England school. We access diocesan-led training for those with a particular role in planning for and evaluating spiritual development.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Spiritual development cannot be measured and continues throughout our lives. However, opportunities offered to pupils for spiritual development will be monitored and evaluated in the following ways:

- Observing and listening to pupils.
- Regular discussion at staff and governor meetings alongside the school's Christian vision and values.
- Sharing of classroom work and practice.
- Ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of what spiritual development means in this school by providing them with induction and development training.
- Evidence from pupils' work, e.g. reflective diary, RE books, SMSC work, creative writing, art.
- Regular inclusion in the SEF.
- CPD opportunities and sharing examples of good practice with other schools.
- Seeking to evaluate, formally and informally, with pupils and adults, activities with a particular focus on spirituality and spiritual development (e.g. collective worship)

Provision for spiritual development is monitored by the Headteacher and nominated governors through scrutiny of work, pupil voice activities and learning walks.

Provision for spiritual development is independently inspected by law under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 (SIAMS).

Opportunities for Spiritual Flourishing of Adults

Under the SIAMS framework, it is also the intention that the spiritual flourishing of adults should be enabled and enhanced by the work of the school. We consider ways in which our routines and practices (e.g. staff meetings, CPD, collective worship, church services, staff retreats) can contribute to the spiritual life of adults in our community.

Evaluation / Review

This policy is reviewed regularly by the Headteacher and/or designated senior teacher and ratified every three years by the Governing Body.