



## Spirituality Policy

Luke 2:52 states that Jesus, the example and inspiration for Christians, '*grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and all the people*', as he developed as a young man. This verse suggests he developed the academic wisdom of his mind, his physical body and also as a social and spiritual being. At the Trinity Federation we strive to develop the body, mind and spirit of young people to enable them to become fully rounded individuals.

### 1. Spirituality: The Law

The realm of the *spiritual* is referred to in many educational documents.

- The 1988 Education Act describes a balanced and broadly based curriculum as one which 'promotes the *spiritual*, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils'.
- Worship is defined as a "*spiritual activity*" in Circular 1/94. This guidance is still Statutory in 2011 (although the religious education has been updated)
- The 1993 National Curriculum Council discussion paper "Spiritual & Moral Development" (adopted also by QCDA) remains the latest guidance on definitions related to the *spiritual*. It describes aspects of *spiritual* development, steps to *spiritual* development and characteristics of *spiritual* development. It also recognises the valuable part played by the *spiritual* dimension of school life. This is recognised in OFSTED and central to Church Inspection (SIAMS).
- All religious education agreed syllabuses refer to the spiritual dimension and its value. In our own Aided Schools Document (2006), one of the three Attainment Targets for Religious Education is "Personal Understanding and Response" - for pupils to be enabled to understand their own *spirituality* and uniqueness, and be encouraged to respond to ultimate questions and values in relation to Christian faith in God.
- Although the 2003 government 'Every Child Matters' agenda – Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a positive contribution, Enjoy economic wellbeing, left out the *spiritual area of learning*, (the rational being that the spiritual permeated all other areas) the Diocese have encouraged schools to include it explicitly. Our Christian perspective puts *Be Spiritual* as the first of six priorities, with the Christian value 'belief' emanating from it.
- *Spirituality* should be managed, articulated and accounted for in the life of the school community. A written policy is best practice to articulate set boundaries within the spiritual dimension, so that the spiritual health and safety of our pupils is assured.
- ***Spirituality* is always contained within the boundaries of the Christian faith in a Church school, which legally complies with the school's Trust Deed.**
- The Christian faith values the child as unique, created in the image of God. We believe that God is good, God is light and God always overcomes darkness. The life work and teaching of His son Jesus showed us the way to live and gave us hope through His resurrection for eternal life through faith in Him.
- ***NB Any organisation wishing to use school premises must also adhere to the school's Trust Deed. This means that activities which have their root in New Age spiritualities, Satanism, the darker side of life where control & hiddenness may be prevalent, Eastern religion or any belief that does not acknowledge God through Jesus Christ are NOT appropriate on Church school premises.***

## 2. Spirituality: A Rationale

*Spirituality* has to do with us as people - body, mind and spirit. Within *spirituality* lies the heart of all religious expression and belief. It is not generally bound by any agreed definition, but in our Church schools we set boundaries within the exploration of Christian spirituality. In order to communicate, we use language to try to describe it:

- It is 'the development of that awareness that there is something more to life than meets the eye, something more than the material, something more than the obvious, something to wonder at, something to respond to" (Terence Copley)
- It manifests in the following aspects:
  - beliefs
  - a sense of awe, wonder and mystery
  - experiencing feelings of transcendence
  - a search for meaning and purpose
  - self-knowledge
  - relationships
  - creativity
  - feelings and emotions.
- The notion that pupils will develop spiritually raises the expectation that this is an area in which pupils make progress. **All this is set within the boundaries of Christian experience in a Church school.** Steps to spiritual development might include:
  - recognising 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
  - empathising with the experiences of others
  - applying the insights gained with increasing degrees of perception to one's own life and the lives of others

### 3. Spirituality in the Classroom

a) The spiritual development of pupils implies the need for a variety of learning experiences which provide opportunities for pupils to:

- discuss matters of personal concern
- develop relationships with adults and peers
- develop a sense of belonging to a church school community, with its distinctive ethos
- be challenged by exploring the beliefs and values of others, the school's identity, whilst deepening their knowledge and understanding of their own faith or beliefs
- discuss religious and philosophical questions in a respectful way
- understand why people reach certain decisions on religious and moral issues, and how those decisions affect their lives
- understand how the school's Christian character determines its values and expectations
- experience what is aesthetically challenging
- experience silence and reflection
- develop a reverence for God and the school's rituals and practices which honour God through Jesus Christ

b) The very recognition of pupils' unique *souls* and *spirits* is sufficient to enable the exploration of the spiritual area of experience to take place, thus fostering spiritual development.

**Soul** is a person's emotions, desires, personality, traits, intellectual abilities, sensualities.

**Spirit** is that inner instinct, that innermost being which searches for meaning beyond the material and can be in relationship with God

As spiritual development cannot be seen in isolation from personal development, time is spent on this so that it will also affect inter-personal relationships within the classroom and as a result contribute to the positive ethos of each of the schools. For *spirituality* is not only about Christian prayer and worship; it is also about knowing and being ourselves, being aware of and caring for others, and about knowing the world around us. Thus ***spiritual development in the Trinity Federation means being concerned with a child's inner growth, with his/her emotional growth, his/her understanding of and acceptance of himself/herself.*** Spiritual growth always results in the positive growth of the whole person.

c) As in any other area of the curriculum, children need to **acquire skills, explore experiences and sensitivities and assimilate knowledge within the spiritual area.** This will be integral to the learning process and delivered in a variety of methodologies:

- cross-curricular in a topic web
- themed through the creative curriculum
- as the focus in some acts of collective worship
- as a dimension in RE

Trinity Federation teachers aim to be aware of potential spiritual experiences without always insisting that they are verbalised or written down - lest they are killed stone dead!

### ci) Skills

To gain access and respond to these experiences, children need to acquire certain **skills**

- Reflection
- Stilling and silence
- Inner awareness
- Listening to oneself
- Questioning, searching for meaning
- Ability to communicate and express feelings and spiritual sensitivities
- Interpretation of feelings and behaviour
- Empathy for others as feeling, thinking people
- Awareness of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Skills take time to acquire and need to be practised. At the Trinity Federation of schools teachers ensure most of these skills can be practised throughout the whole curriculum provided the teacher gives recognition to their value and allows them space. For this reason, to map certain of the reflective skills in a particular curriculum content ensures that time and space will be found.

#### For example:

Opportunities for Classroom Collective Worship on a weekly basis is an excellent setting for a quiet, reflective approach to the spiritual experiences of prayer, worship, ritual and communication with God. This can be explored in such a way as to value the individual's response and give space for their spirit, his/her inner awareness, their capacity to intuit, feel and recognise the sacred, the holy, the divine. *'It's OK to be me'* is a guiding principle, so that each child can be affirmed in his/her personal, spiritual search and the following spiritual rights of every child are valued:

- **Initiation** into the spiritual heritage of the culture in which one is born.
- **Expression** of one's own spiritual belief without discrimination.
- **Choice** to deepen, doubt, alter one's spiritual commitment.
- **Support** complementary to one's spiritual development.
- **Protection** from spiritual damage and disability.

### cii) Spiritual Sensitivities and Capacity

Teachers in the Trinity Federation also foster the **spiritual sensitivities and capacities of their pupils**

- A sense of awe, wonder and the mysteries of life
- A sense of transcendence and an awareness of there being something more to things than meets the eye
- A sense of Creator God
- An imaginative approach to the world
- A reflective attitude to the natural world
- A sense of transience and change
- A sense of pattern, sequence and order
- A spirit of enquiry and open mindedness
- An awareness that life involves moral choices between good and bad
- An awareness of paradox and unease
- A sense of life's joys and achievements
- A sense of meaning, purpose and direction
- An awareness of the dark side of life, of suffering, pain, decay and loss

- An awareness of community - its demands, values, rituals and celebrations
- A sense of others as feeling, thinking persons
- An increasing ability to empathise with others
- The capacity to empathise and respond to religious activities such as worship, prayer, communion, sacrifice, pilgrimage
- The capacity to empathise with the faith dimension of religious adherents responding to the working out of that faith in the way adherents' lives
- The capacity to be still
- The capacity to be aware of one's own inner life and to reflect
- The capacity to be aware of one's own uniqueness, of the worth of one's self and of one's identity
- A sense of the sacred, the holy, God
- A sense of the Trinity – God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- An increasing awareness of God in one's own life and in the life of others
- The increasing ability to question one's beliefs and actions, and those of others, in a search for meaning
- The ability to communicate responses and feelings with increasing confidence and self-esteem

### ciii) Whole Curriculum

**Pupils in Trinity Federation assimilate relevant knowledge from the whole curriculum**

#### Religious Education and Worship

For some people the terms 'religious' and 'spiritual' are synonymous. This would lead them to think that doing RE is doing the spiritual. In the same way 'worship' having expression in many religious rituals also is the spiritual. In one sense this is true. For the spiritual search is at the heart of all religious experience and activity. The Trinity Federation practice the experiential approach to teaching Religious Education reflects this in its three basic principles:

1. to take seriously the inner experience of the religious believer
2. to enable pupils to have a practical and humane understanding of the religious impulse
3. to encourage increased respect for personal inwardness and awareness.

Thus all areas of the religious and worship curricula should be permeated by a search for personal understanding and response, so that pupils are "enabled to understand their own spirituality" (Attainment Target 1- Lichfield Diocese RE handbook 2006).

However Trinity Federation recognise that the spiritual is not only expressed in religious terms; it has much wider boundaries which can permeate all human experience and understanding. So response to the spiritual can be seen in:

- a heightened awareness of a sunset
- a feeling of inner space
- a celebration of worthwhile activities in school
- a feeling of loss or sadness at some tragic news
- an identification with nature's life pulse

- a motivation to a life of caring for others as well as a religious interpretation such as an act of adoration to God
- a response to a covenant relationship with God
- a commitment to a religious order
- belonging to a Church community
- adherence to religious rules and standards of behaviour

In our work at the Trinity Federation with children an open response to the spiritual is necessary so that a child's integrity is not damaged. This does mean that there is the possibility of the whole realm of good and evil being addressed. Undoubtedly children will bring into the classroom good and evil experiences and the latter need careful handling so as to alleviate fear and enable positive reflections as a counter balance. In an atmosphere of trust, children will share their darkest thoughts. This can only be helpful in their search for truth and a faith to live by. Not allowing space for this will only push it into the background, where it may find expression in practices which we would find morally and spiritually offensive. Reflection and Meditation (a strategy for handling the whole realm of spiritual experience) is given in whole school and classroom collective worship.

The Trinity Federation's work in Religious Education may contribute to spiritual growth and brings a more religious content to spirituality.

**Religious Education** can show children the many ways people have 'met' God and how they have responded to that meeting.

**Worship** should foster a child's sense of God or at least of there being an 'otherness' to life. But for that to happen we need to ensure we are:

- **Providing good experiences of public and collective worship** either in church or in school.
- **Teaching techniques of relaxation and stilling**, including breathing and posture, so giving children the skill of creating quiet and space for God and within themselves.
- **Teaching techniques of meditation / contemplation**, of giving attention to candles, flowers, Christian icons, to show children that it is possible to find God in the world.



- **Expressing a concern for others** by the way our prayers are outward looking and by the way we seek to involve children imaginatively in the concerns of others, so deepening their sensitivity to others.

### **We also need to help pupils:**

- **To be able to help them think about God** and explore religious ideas about God.
- **To give practice in praying**, and composing their own prayers.
- **To give to children experience in a variety of prayer techniques and forms, such as the liturgy.**

At the Trinity Federation we want them to explore the spiritual for themselves, to have the skills to work out what suits them, not simply to follow a single pattern. This means giving careful thought to class prayers as well as collective worship and ensuring that they experience a variety of approaches and techniques.

### **The Whole Curriculum**

All sorts of curriculum areas foster spiritual growth. This was recognised by the Dfe when it identified spirituality as a cross-curricular dimension. The following section contains material drawn from 'Spirituality, Prayer and Worship' (Durham Diocesan Board of Education)

### **The Artistic and the Spiritual**

RE has often been linked to the humanities, and viewed as the study of yet another dimension of human experience, alongside history, geography, moral education or personal and social life skills. But RE has, or ought to have, closer links with the creative and imaginative subjects of the curriculum, with art, music, drama and English, and this is particularly true with the 'spiritual'. If we want children to have an awareness of the world around them, to be aware of beauty, pattern and design, to experience moments of awe and wonder and to be able to respond to and reflect on those experiences of God's creation, then art provides a tool to achieve this. It can provide a language, or rather techniques for expressing feelings, and it can provide examples of how others have conveyed moods, feelings and reactions.

Faith is concerned with the inner life, and attempting to make that inner life visible and the creative process contributes to spiritual development by enabling children to pay close attention to the world. Through a sharpened visual sense they learn to see much more and to see with greater insight than they otherwise would. For them, trees which were rather generalised perceptions become objects of close observation and significance; they become personal and special to the child as viewer of them. The flight of a bird, the form of a sea shell, or twisted roots of a tree, all have aesthetic qualities which visual literacy makes it possible to experience. Part of becoming visually aware is for children to discover the enjoyment of being able to see with the eye of the artist who is awake to the appearance of the surrounding world. By developing the ability to see in far more specific ways, children can begin to disregard what is merely superficial and allow themselves to become attentive to the more subtle qualities and changes of form which are present in everything their eyes and minds rest on. *And we might add "and so allow themselves to become more attentive to God".*

Art can also contribute by looking at, and involving children in, the artistic outpourings of religion.

- The study and painting of icons.
- The detailed examination of 'great masters' for the beliefs expressed.
- Calligraphy is important in Islam and has been important in Judaism and Christianity.

## English and Spirituality

### Creative Writing

English contributes through creative writing and perhaps particularly through poetry, through enabling children to explore their own feelings, to respond to these and to the world around them. Story can help them enter into the worlds and minds of others, and into situations which the children might not otherwise be able to explore, and so contribute to the understanding of, and empathy for, others. English techniques offer ways of exploring and finding the truth in parables, riddles, folktales, simile, metaphor and poetry. All these can open children's eyes to the importance of 'non-scientific truth' and non-cognitive ways of knowing.

### Poetry

Poetry often requires the same close and careful observation of objects as does art - a point made many times by writers on children's poetry.

### Fiction

The use of imaginative fiction and writing to stimulate children's imagination also feeds spiritual development. It opens children's eyes to the possibility of the transcendent, and to an awareness of there being something more to things than meets the eye. A variety of stories used in English point children to mystery and the unexpected in the world, and carry the message that we need to be open to the world and to its many possibilities and to its hiddenness!

## Emotional Growth and Spirituality

It has been suggested that personal friction is necessary for spiritual growth that we grow as people only through the problems and difficulties of relating to others. So that the work that goes on in school exploring relationships, offering children skills in communication of thoughts and ideas, coping with aggression, helping children to properly assert themselves, enabling them to listen to others with attention, and above all helping them to be aware of and able to communicate their own feelings - all these help children to develop emotionally, to develop a sense of their own self-worth and develop their ability to relate to others.

## Moral Growth and Spirituality

Many of the traditional implicit RE themes, such as carers, helpers, etc. contribute to the growth of a sense of responsibility towards others.

## Science and Spirituality

The exploration of the world through science, the observation of familiar materials and events in their immediate environment could be undertaken coldly and factually. But we could and should also seek to engage the children imaginatively and evoke from them their personal response rather than simply requiring a scientific reporting of what is observed. What, for instance, would be an adequate description of a rainbow? One which listed the colours of a rainbow? One which spoke only of the refraction of light? Or one which also spoke of its beauty and power to evoke wonder?

Similar links with **Geography, History, Technology and Maths** can also be made. In **PE** we can celebrate the wonder of our human bodies and sense of achievement when a new skill is learnt. Other languages enable us to perceive the variety and complexity of world-wide communications and cultures. What happens in school can only be a beginning and we can only point children in the right direction and take them a little way towards maturity and be alongside their own spiritual journey. But hopefully they will have acquired ability to look at life, the universe and everything in it as a means to finding God for themselves if they wish it.



## 4. Spirituality and Trinity Federation

The Trinity Federation enables everyone to have even greater opportunities for spiritual development because of their link with a worshipping community. The following list describes principles that the Federation adopt to ensure the school ethos and its distinctive Christian character are fostering spiritual growth.

- The whole ethos of the school reflects mutual care and concern between staff, pupils, parents and governors, and so on. In this sort of environment pupils are encouraged to grow in self-awareness and have no need to be defensive.
- The philosophy of the school is grounded in the gospel, a deliberate attempt being made to link the concerns of the Christian gospel with the life of the school.
- The total curriculum is concerned with the spiritual development of the child. It is not just the concern of RE teachers or of RE lessons. The spiritual element of the curriculum can be likened to the cement in the walls of a building, holding everything together.
- Each school within the Federation is a centre of distinct excellence, an excellence that does not just relate to what is academic but to all aspects of the school's life.
- Each school acts as what the National Society's Green Paper "A Future in Partnership" calls '**an ecumenical nursery**' which builds a sensitivity to difference and the faiths of others.
- Each school provides varied opportunities for experiencing awe and wonder, and joining in celebration, and thankfulness. This is not restricted to acts of worship but can be part of the pupils' experience across the curriculum.
- Each school provides a link between the church and the community so that spirituality is not seen as separate from the social context.
- As church schools they present worship not just as a human activity carried out by believers but also as a divine activity in which God is present and communicates with His people.
- The Trinity Federation believe that not only should the whole curriculum be concerned with the spiritual development of the pupils **but the teachers themselves should be aware that they too are on a spiritual journey** and share the challenge and excitement with the pupils.

At The Trinity Federation these aspects are worked through by ensuring:

The RE curriculum is known by all the school community and highlighted and given time in INSET planning with the appropriate resources.

The acts of daily collective worship are valued in their variety to provide for spiritual growth through the fostering of sensitivities, capacities and skills relating to the spiritual area of experience. Worship traditions are valued and explored as appropriate to the children's backgrounds, interests and abilities, starting with a living witness to the 'Christian faith'.

The spiritual dimension, giving recognition to affective responses in the learning process, is mapped in topic themes, across the curriculum, so that there is 'space for 'the spirit'.

The 'hidden' curriculum of the school (school ethos) bears witness to the fact that education cannot and must not be value-free. The Christian value of each of our church schools are be seen in practice through staff relationships, pupil/staff relationships, relationships with the community, through standards of behaviour within the school, through an integrated approach to the learning processes by which the curriculum is delivered.

The professional development offered to our teachers heightens their awareness that the development of spirituality across the curriculum is fundamental to the development of the complete child.

The curriculum supports and gives legitimacy to:

- the exploration of feelings
- the development of attitudes
- the development of ideas
- the inspiring of the imagination
- the faith witness of believers
- the spiritual search

In the learning process:

- each subject area asks pupils to consider specific questions about values
- pupils are asked to question how they receive impressions, e.g. visually, logically,
- linguistically (what defects or limitations are there in vision, logic and language?)
- pupils are encouraged to think about the process of habit formation, good and bad
- pupils' inner experiences (feelings, intuitions, responses) are dealt with in ways which give them value and legitimacy
- pupils are led to question assumptions about what a person is and what gives a person value
- pure observation is encouraged so that pupils are not always looking for "the answer" but sometimes simply looking
- stillness and silence are encouraged and given value as well as activity
- children are encouraged and given support for innovation and creativity

It is the Trinity Federation belief that if these principles are borne in mind, and made real in practice, pupils will experience religion in its proper context of caring and love, and in so doing grow spiritually in a positive and supportive environment.

If God is everywhere, and only has to be looked for, then we must help children to look. If God dwells wherever man lets Him in, then our task is to help children to find God in every part of life so that they can, if they wish, let Him in

**In addition** pupils will be acquiring integrity of **personal values**, having explored those presented to them via the many relationships that make up school life. It is possible to articulate some **personal characteristics typical of spiritually developed people**:

**Gentle:** They display a sensitive, thoughtful, caring approach to other people, to their own needs and to the cosmos in general. They are opposed to a ruthless, exploitative, careless approach to life. They act firmly but with kindness and have a due sense of what is possible and needed. Gentleness does not imply weakness.

**Loving:** For many, the key spiritual characteristic in the New Testament, summarised in 1.Cor.13, in which it is stressed that, whatever else we may be, or do, without love we are nothing.

**Detached:** Having a balanced approach to life; working skilfully with the currents of life in order to achieve spiritual goals.

**Hopeful:** Having an optimistic view of life, seen by many as a vital human response to life.

**Alert to Life's Mysteries:** Being alert and open. Reflection upon the complexity and vastness of reality. Awareness of something beyond what we can at present achieve and explain.

**Holistic Outlook:** Being aware of the interconnectedness of all things, of the unity within diversity; of patterns within the whole.

**Broad Minded:** Able to see things in perspective is aware of, and takes account of, a wide range of relevant considerations that bear on one's thought and behaviour.

**Accepting:** Acceptance can mean submission to the will of God or, in non-religious parlance, accepting situations with good grace. Acceptance is not a spiritual virtue in relation to those things one could or should attempt to modify.

**Energetic:** Having personal qualities to carry through required tasks; action motivated by awareness and insight.

**Courageous:** Having a spirited approach to life. Courage is as basic and important to life as hope.

**Grateful:** Displaying an attitude of joy and humility with respect to the good things in life.

**Integrated:** Integrated in body, mind and spirit and in the various dimensions and commitments of life.

**Aware:** 'Awake', 'enlightened'; striving to achieve insight and deeper understanding. (Adapted from 'Education for Spirituality' Clive Beck, Interchange 17/2, 1986 Ontario)

## Monitoring Spirituality

The Trinity Federation recognises the importance of monitoring the quality of provision to promote spirituality. Each school uses the SIAMS framework to assess themselves against and to identify areas where spirituality provision can be enhanced. The board of governors review the the schools evaluation of their provision termly.

## Appendix 1

### Advice on Hallowe'en

Hallowe'en is the festival which causes most problems for church schools as it has become an increasingly important part of the annual calendar of British young people. The festival has some roots in the Christian Festival of All Saints (All Hallows), but others in the pagan Samhain. In recent years it has grown enormously in significance, partly because of American influence, but also because of its importance within some New Age thinking.

Many festivals, including Christmas and Easter have taken the dates of older Pagan festivals and yet have assumed a focus on the Christian story. Samhain, the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon New Year marked the end of summer and included the use of bonfires to frighten evil spirits and souls of the dead who revisited their homes. It was also a time of divination and fortune telling. In the Middle Ages, when witchcraft was still strong, these observances continued to influence the Christian All Saints, with the belief evil forces would try and stop a festival which remembered all who had lived faithful Christian lives. Eventually Hallowe'en became a night of mischief making, which sometimes even involved praying to the devil for help and good fortune. Following the Reformation many of these ideas died out in England, or were replaced by the anti-Popish festivities of bonfire night. However, early Irish and Scottish immigrants took the traditions to America and the custom of trick or treating gradually evolved, continuing the ideas of mischief making and the reversal of normal moral behaviour.

In recent years the importing of much American culture to Britain has led to the reintroduction of Hallowe'en. It may appear to provide a safer alternative to fireworks and bonfires and celebrations of the religious divisions that set Catholic against Protestant in the past. It also provides a high point for those within the New Age movement who value the psychic, pagan and occult. It may also appear to offer schools an opportunity for a bit of fun half way through the long autumn term.

However, it is not appropriate for church schools to celebrate this festival. Even if spirits and witches are seen as harmless nonsense, paganism is hardly a cultural mainstay of what is best in our society. Within British folklore witches and demons represent moral evil. By encouraging pupils to dress up as witches and write their own spells and charms schools disturbs the polarization of good and bad, right and wrong in pupil's minds and so offer a negative stroke within moral education.

Hallowe'en has links with the least acceptable elements of New Age activities – occultism, witchcraft and Satanism. These can involve elements of sexual immorality, drug abuse, racism and sadism, all of which are particularly associated with Hallowe'en activities. Anything that may awaken the interest of our pupils to such things is to be avoided.

Church schools should explain in a relevant way to pupils and parents why the festival is not marked, but are encouraged to offer positive alternatives. One such would be a light party to mark All Saints Day when we remember people who lived for good and so brought light to the world. Other ideas can be found on the site [www.halloweenchoice.org](http://www.halloweenchoice.org)