

Spirituality Policy

'Let all that you do, be done in love' 1 Corinthians 16:14

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 St Leonard's we strive to develop the body, mind and spirit of young people to enable them to become fully rounded individuals.

Within *spirituality* lies the heart of all religious expression and belief. In our church school it manifests in the following aspects:

- Beliefs
- Prayer
- A sense of awe, wonder and mystery
- Natural beauty
- A search for meaning and purpose
- Self-knowledge
- Relationships
- Creativity – the arts
- Feelings and emotions

In the Classroom

The spiritual development of our pupils is very important, here at St Leonard's we intend to:

- 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 Distinctiveness determines its values and expectations
- Experience silence and reflection
- Develop a reverence for God and the school's rituals and practices which honour God through Jesus Christ
- Ensure our church school links with St Leonard's Church, Dunston remain strong

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 at St Leonard's means being concerned with a child's inner growth, with emotional growth, understanding of and acceptance of oneself.*** Spiritual growth always results in the positive growth of the whole being.

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
- Themed through our creative curriculum
- As the focus in some acts of collective worship either inside or outside the school and the church
- As a dimension in RE

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 St Leonard's 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 example

Opportunities for Classroom Collective Worship on a twice weekly basis are 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, 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

Spiritual sensitivities and capacity

We foster the **spiritual sensitivities and capacities of our pupils**

- A sense of awe, wonder and the mysteries of life
- A sense of transcendence and an awareness of their being something more to thing 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 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

Whole Curriculum

Pupils at St Leonard's assimilate relevant knowledge from the whole curriculum, our pupils will:

- **Be able to think about God** and explore religious ideas about God
- **Practice in praying** and composing their own prayers
- **Have the experience in a variety of prayer techniques and forms, such as the liturgy**

At St Leonard's we want children 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.

Monitoring Spirituality

The staff and Local Academy Council recognises the importance of monitoring the quality of provision to promote spirituality. We use the SIAMS framework to assess ourselves against and to identify areas where spirituality provision can be enhanced. The LAC reviews our school evaluation 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 Hollows), 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 America 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 disturb 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.

Reviewed by: Miss C. Phillips

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