



St Michael's
C.E. Primary School

Spirituality Policy

Last reviewed on:	May 2024
Next review due by:	September 2027

Our Theologically Rooted Christian Vision

Courage to Flourish in the Love of God

‘I have come that [you] may have life, and have it to the full’ (John 10:10)



[Therefore],

‘Be strong and courageous... the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.’ (Joshua 1:9)

These biblical texts underpin our vision summary, ‘Courage to flourish in the love of God’. Jesus’ words from the New Testament describe his desire for everyone to be a full and flourishing version of their created selves, experiencing life in all its vibrant fullness, individually and in community. Our ambition is for everyone to encounter this fullness through the life and work of the school, whatever their background, beliefs or circumstances. God’s words to Joshua from the Old Testament illustrate how life, and learning, can be challenging, bringing setbacks and discouragement. These words inspire us to keep on going in those circumstances, confident that God watches over us and walks beside us.

The joining of these biblical texts is meaningful for the particular circumstances of our school community. It gives coherence to our aspirational vision that will grow courage and resilience as enablers of ‘life in all its fullness’ for everyone. To support our vision, we have seven overarching Christian values.

Our Core Christian Values

<u>Value</u>	<u>Biblical texts that underpin our values</u>
	<p>Philippians 4:13</p> <p>‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me.’</p>
	<p>John 1:5</p> <p>‘The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.’</p>

	<p>1 Corinthians 13:4-8</p> <p>'Love is patient and kind... it does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.'</p> <p>1 John 1:9</p> <p>'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us'</p>
	<p>Proverbs 3:5-6</p> <p>'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.'</p>
	<p>Hebrews 10:24</p> <p>'Let us be concerned for one another, to help one another to show love and to do good.'</p>
	<p>1 Thessalonians 5:18</p> <p>'Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you'</p>

Our School Statement on Spirituality

At St Michael's, we recognise that developing the spirituality of our pupils and adults is a fundamental aspect of enabling pupils and adults to flourish. Spiritual development differs from person to person and is a very personal experience. For this reason, it is difficult to put into words. Spirituality is not the same as having a religion or faith; a person can be spiritual without having a particular faith. For Christians in Church, spirituality is about developing a deeper understanding of and connection with God. It is about God's way of being with us and our way of being with God. Through this we are able to respond to the loving nature of God as revealed through the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A school is not a Church, but it is a collection of people who come from a variety of backgrounds for the purpose of education. Family backgrounds may be very different and spiritual development must take account of the varied circumstances of staff and pupils.

Therefore, in light of this, we have developed our own definition of spirituality at St Michael's CE Primary School:

*To talk about spirituality is to talk about something which is **beyond words**.*

*Spirituality is linked to big **questions** about the **meaning and purpose of life**; it includes ideas **relating to oneself, others, the natural world and the transcendent**.*

We refer to this as:

The stillness of the mind

The settling of the soul

The uplifting of the spirit

Being at one in the world and finding meaning and purpose in life.

For some, but not all, this will be experienced, expressed or explained through faith or belief.

When discussing this with our pupils, we refer to spirituality as:

*The way **WOWS**, **OWS** and **NOWS** shape me into the person that I am and will become.*

Aims

Through establishing the right learning environment in which spiritual development can be fostered, we aim to support pupils and adults to:

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

- Develop a capacity to value the natural world, a sense of awe and wonder and a commitment to care for creation.

Guiding Principles

Spiritual development contains many facets and it is concerned with a number of areas of an individual's life. Therefore, when developing spirituality in pupils and adults, we, in line with our distinctively Christian vision and our school's definition for spirituality, look at four key areas: self, others, transcendence (beyond), and nature.

Self

- Awareness of feelings: ability to reflect and express.
- Awareness of our uniqueness: happiness with who we are.
- Gratitude for the things we have and the person we are.
- Exploration of personal faith.
- Development of imagination and creativity.

Others

- Empathy and understanding – respect.
- To love and be loved (loving your neighbour).
- Making a difference: responsibility.

Transcendence (Beyond)

- Having the opportunity to encounter/experience God (having a sense of what lies beyond the material/physical).
- Ability to ask and discuss the 'Big Questions' (e.g. about life, death, suffering, nature of God).
- Opportunities for prayer, connecting with God.
- Making sense of the world.

Nature

- Developing a sense of awe and wonder.
- Enjoying the miracles of everyday life.
- Taking time for what really matters.
- Appreciating beauty in art, music, nature, sport etc.

Spirituality and our Christian Vision

Our Christian vision of 'Courage to Flourish in the Love of God' serves as a powerful driver for spirituality within the school community. By embracing the uniqueness of each person as fearfully and wonderfully made in the image of God, the school vision sets the foundation for individuals to explore their feelings, express gratitude for their blessings, and develop a deep sense of self-awareness. This courage to embrace one's uniqueness and personal faith aligns with the school's ethos of strength and resilience.

Moreover, the principles of spirituality outlined above resonate with the school's vision of enabling individuals to flourish in the love of God. Encouraging individuals to reflect on their personal faith, engage in acts of kindness, and explore the 'big questions' about life and the divine, fosters a sense of spiritual growth and connection to something beyond the material world. This aligns with the school's aspiration for everyone to experience life in all its fullness, individually and in community, guided by the unwavering presence of God.

By intertwining the principles of spirituality with the school's vision of strength, courage, and flourishing in the love of God, the school community is empowered to navigate life's challenges, embrace their unique selves, and cultivate a sense of purpose and belonging. Through a holistic approach to spirituality that encompasses self-awareness, empathy, transcendence, and an appreciation for the wonders of nature, individuals at St Michael's CE Primary School are equipped to thrive spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually in a nurturing environment that embodies the school's core values and ethos.

The WOWS, OWS and NOWS of Life

In our school we recognise that the ups and downs of life cause chinks and cracks that continually transform us; challenging, changing and growing us into a flourishing version of our unique selves. To make conversations about spirituality more accessible to every member of our school community, we have chosen to follow ideas developed by the Education Department at the Diocese of Gloucester. We talk about these as the WOWS, OWS and NOWS of life.

This language of spirituality begins from a Christian understanding that everyone is a valued creation, individually and uniquely made by God, like pots made by a potter (Isaiah 64:8). Yet, in life things happen that impact on the physical 'pot' of life and create cracks that provide a glimpse of something 'beyond' the tangible. Christians would view this as an opportunity to relate to the Divine Creator God.

Cracks may be caused when something so good and breath-taking happens that the pot expands and cracks – the wows of life.

Cracks may happen when something challenging happens and threatens the comfort of everyday – the ows of life.

Cracks can also happen in the stillness and ordinariness of everyday – the nows of life, when a moment of stillness, a pause or prayer creates a crack in the normal, physical everyday.

In these special moments there is a spiritual opportunity. Kintsugi, the Japanese art of mending broken ceramics with golden joinery or glue, creates something that has been broken into something even more beautiful. Using this metaphor, the wows, ows and nows of life offer the possibility of cracks that are filled with gold and make the pot even more beautiful. The gold in the cracks reflect a little of the wonder of spirituality.

St Michael's uses this language and the concepts of wows, ows and nows to explore relationships with ourselves, others, the wider natural world and beyond, and offering the invitation to relate to God.

Spirituality in Collective Worship

Collective Worship is the beating heart of St Michael's. It provides the opportunity for our school community to share experiences, ideas and understanding. It is the context in which the language of spirituality, which we use as a school, is regularly and explicitly shared.

Collective Worship provides the opportunity for pupils to become aware of the importance of reflection and how our positive and negative experiences can be formative. It also provides a real sense of being present (now moments) which are often linked to invitations to pray.

Through daily Collective Worship, pupils are offered a space and a place for hearing the Christian story. They are offered an understanding of worship by being invited to participate in, or observe, Christian spiritual practices such as: prayer, reading and reflection on the Bible and liturgy, and are introduced to different musical traditions.

Opportunities to reflect on the wows of life such as beauty and joy of the world are given, as well as time to reflect and empathise with the ow moments of disappointment or pain. Pupils are given time to consider their responsibilities to others and to grow in love and service. Time is given for

celebration, both for the accomplishments of pupils and to mark seasonal Christian festivals and celebrations in the calendars of other faiths. In this way pupils are offered time to be able to contemplate and develop spiritually. Collective Worship at St Michael's is invitational, inspirational and inclusive.

For further information, please refer to our school [Collective Worship Policy](#).

Space Makers

For our Class Worship, we use the resources from Space Makers. Space Makers is designed to embrace some of the ancient wisdom of the Christian tradition. Worship is based on five contemplative practices: stilling, noticing, dwelling, mending and blessing. These exercises are designed to normalise the contemplative within the lives of children. Instilling a love of contemplative practice can see children flourish as human 'beings': finding peace and hope, realising their dreams and finding deep fulfilment.

Five contemplative practices:

1. Stilling – seeing things more clearly. Settling, using breathing techniques, and becoming aware of oneself and one's surroundings.
2. Noticing – becoming aware of how life can energise or drain us. By noticing the absence of faith, hope and love in moments of unhappiness and difficulty and the presence of faith, hope and love in moments of comfort, children are encouraged to act, choose and seek consolidation – that which energises and inspires.
3. Dwelling – finding meaning in the words of the Bible. Listening to, dwelling with and experiencing how inclusive words, phrases or scenes from the Bible can 'come alive' for us as individuals.
4. Mending – forgiveness and healing. A brief activity using stones to represent life's hurt, pain and sorrows. By forgiving ourselves and others, we free ourselves to be, and to encounter, in a different way.
5. Blessing – focusing on human flourishing and growth. Having received blessing through the other four practices, how do we now bless our families, homes, school and communities? This practice uses the metaphor of a root, producing a shoot, producing a fruit. What fruit might emerge for all to share?

Spirituality in Religious Education

The Church of England's [Statement of Entitlement](#) outlines the aims and expectations for Religious Education in Church of England Schools and guides our school approach to RE and spirituality.

Learning activities in RE provide for the needs of all pupils, offering a safe space to explore their own religious, spiritual and/or philosophical ways of seeing, living and thinking, believing and belonging. They provide opportunities to engage in meaningful and informed dialogue with those of all religions and worldviews, linking these to pupils' ideas of spirituality and the language of wows, ows and nows where appropriate.

For further details, please refer to our school [Religious Education Policy](#) and The Church of England's [Statement of Entitlement](#).

Spirituality Within the Curriculum

At St Michael's, our Christian vision plays a pivotal role in shaping the curriculum design and influencing the spiritual growth of pupils. This theological foundation guides the development of a curriculum that not only focuses on academic learning but also nurtures the spiritual development of pupils.

We seek to find ways in which all areas of the curriculum can contribute to pupils' spiritual development. We highlight opportunities for these by:

- Drawing on the language of wows, ows and nows.
- Asking reflective questions to guide deeper discussions that explore beliefs and values.
- Seeking to foster spiritual capacities, e.g. imagination, insight and empathy.
- Allowing pupils the security and opportunity to explore and express feelings and emotions and to celebrate diversity.
- Providing opportunities for silence and stillness.
- Sharing feelings and experiences that foster hope, joy, reassurance and encouragement.
- Encouraging pupils to develop relationships based on the school's Christian vision and associated values.
- Enabling pupils to make the links between the Church and Biblical teachings, the life of the school and the wider community and how these impact on their own understanding of themselves and their place within the world today.
- Providing an environment that promotes space to reflect, think and wonder.

Spirituality Within the Ethos and Daily Life of the School

Opportunities for enhancing the spiritual well-being of learners are developed in every aspect of our school life. We support the whole school community to share this responsibility and to develop the shared language of spirituality. These opportunities happen throughout each and every day as children deal with delight, disappointment and the chance to be present with themselves. For this reason, every member of the school community is familiar with the school's shared language of spirituality and will respond to pupils appropriately.

Throughout the daily life of the school, including lunchtimes and playtimes, pupils know that their references to wows, ows and nows will be heard and taken seriously. They will be encouraged to reflect on these experiences and be comfortable about talking about the golden glue of spirituality.

Opportunities are available for all to develop spiritually in our supportive and nurturing school inspired by our vision and lived out through our Christian values. Our school features a multi-faith prayer space where pupils of all faiths can come to worship and reflect. We also have a peaceful garden that serves as a sanctuary for reflection. Within this tranquil setting, our Christian values are prominently displayed, alongside a garden of remembrance dedicated to both pupils and a staff member who has passed away.

Recording, Monitoring and Evaluation

Through teaching and learning, the school pursues the aims and objectives 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 pupils 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.

- That 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.
- Opportunities are provided for pupils to listen attentively and observe carefully, to listen with discernment, to value what is good and worthwhile and to make judgements through discussion and exchange of views and ideas.
- Support is provided for learning to live with success and failure for themselves and with others.
- The RE curriculum delivers knowledge and understanding of spirituality from a number of world faith and world view perspectives.
- 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.
- Strategies for positive mental health are promoted.

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 lessons.
- Discussions with pupils.
- Regular discussion at staff and Ethos Committee meetings alongside the school's Christian vision and values.
- Sharing of classroom work and practice.
- Ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of what spirituality means in this school by providing them with appropriate training and opportunities for professional development.
- Evaluating evidence from pupils' work.
- Feedback from the school's Christian Distinctiveness Advisor.
- Feedback from the BDMAT Central Team.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed every 3 years, or more frequently, as required. Our Ethos Committee review the policy in partnership with senior leaders and consider any views expressed by parents, children and staff in order to make any changes or recommendations. Recommendations are fed back to the Local Academy Board and are then actioned as appropriate. Governors ensure that this policy is fully implemented, and that practice is consistent with the school's Christian vision.