



**ST JAMES'**  
Church of England  
Primary School



## Spirituality at St James' CE Primary

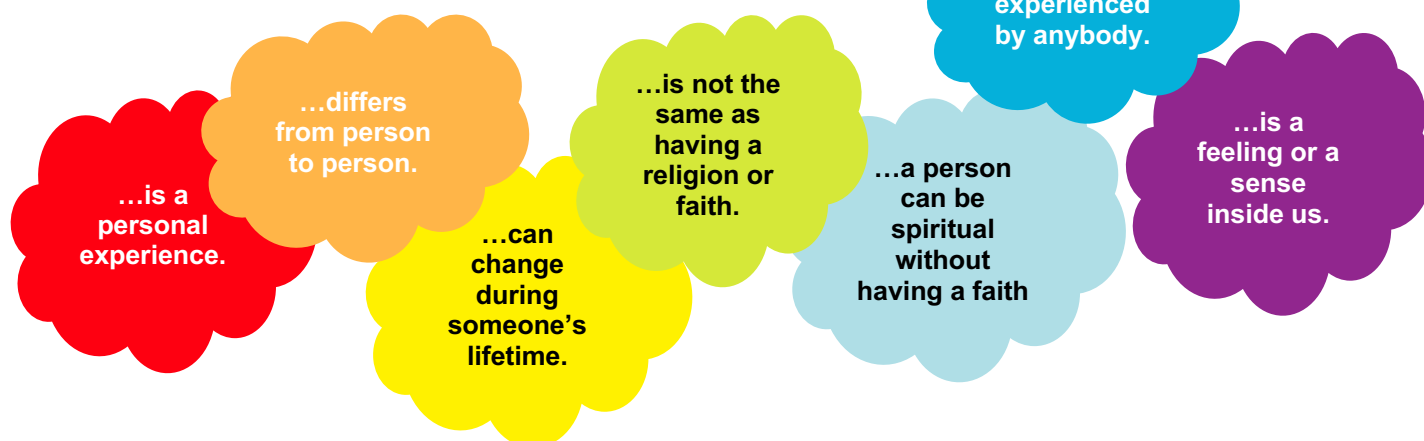
Date: Spring 2025

### Introduction

St James' CE Primary's vision is to be a happy and healthy place to achieve and believe. Developing spirituality plays a key role in achieving this for our pupils and our staff, enabling them to flourish.

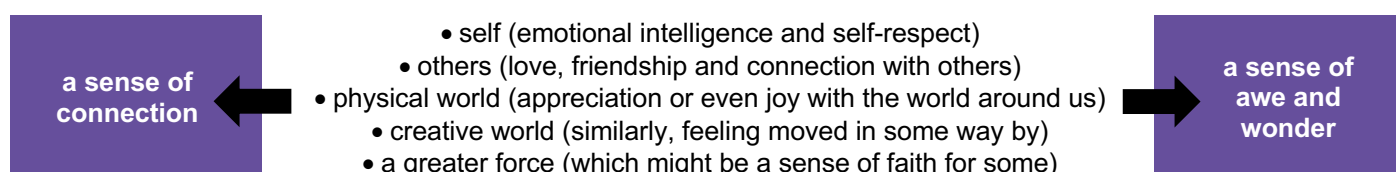
### What is spirituality?

It's difficult to put into words what 'spirituality' actually is because of its intangible and abstract nature. There's no one agreed definition. Here are a few ideas...



Spirituality is not something we can see; it is something we might feel inside ourselves. It includes moments of awe and wonder, asking questions, inspiration and being aware of something 'bigger' outside of ourselves.

One idea about spirituality is that it can (and should) lead to two things: a **sense of connection** and a **sense of awe and wonder**, and different (related) contexts for spirituality:



Pupils' spiritual development might be shown by their:

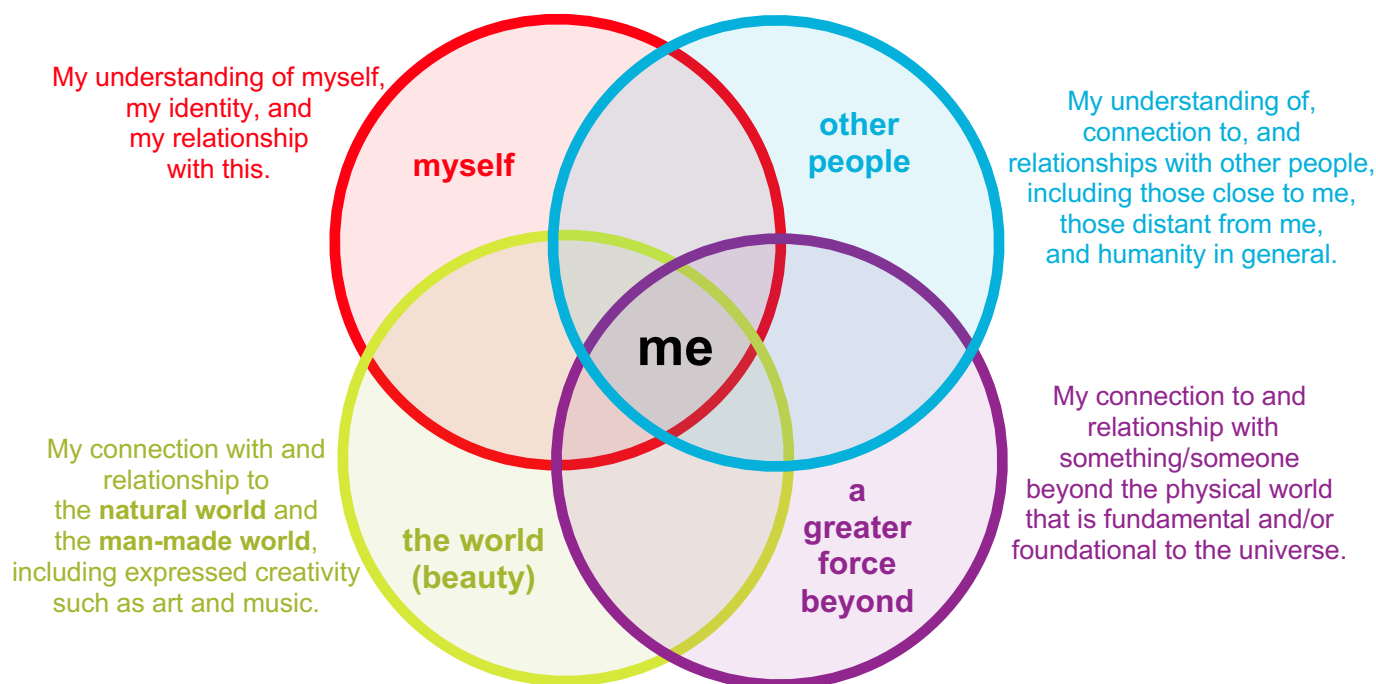
- beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feeling and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them, including the intangible
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

### Why do we value spiritual development?

We believe that a person's spiritual development is an integral part of their personal development – fundamental in

- fulfilling our vision to be a happy and healthy place to achieve and believe
- enabling our pupils and staff to flourish

The sense of connection, awe and wonder helps to shape our identity:



We may experience and express our spirituality in different ways, but we are all spiritual in some way – though we may not recognise or acknowledge this.

The following comes from [Spiritual Development: Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom](#) (Church of England Education Office 2019):

<p><b>Self</b></p> <p>Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of self – the inner person and the way that this shapes an individual's perception of themselves as a unique human being.</p> <p>Spiritual learners reflect on the relationship that they have with their sense of being a unique person.</p>	<p><b>Others</b></p> <p>Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of others – a growing empathy, concern and compassion for how to treat others.</p> <p>Spiritual learners reflect on how their values and principles affect their relationships with others.</p>
<p><b>Beauty</b></p> <p>Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of a physical and creative world – a growing relationship with beauty through the ability to respond emotionally to experiences of the wonder of the natural world and the results of human creativity.</p> <p>Spiritual learners explore their understanding of beauty and the affect this has on their perception of and relationship with the world.</p>	<p><b>Beyond</b></p> <p>Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of the beyond – a growing relationship with the transcendental and the ability to explore experiences beyond the everyday.</p> <p>Spiritual learners search for meaning in their very existence and their place in the greater scheme of things.</p>

*'Exploring spirituality offers a unique opportunity to step back and reflect on why we do what we do in our schools, and also how we do it. It can help us be more intuitive and sensitive. It can connect us more deeply to nature and our precious planet. It can make us more aware of the things we have in common with others despite our differences.'*

SCAA Discussion paper (1995), quoted in Chapter 2 ('Spiritual Development: The journey so far', Derek Holloway) of 'Spiritual Development: Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom' (The Church of England Education Office, 2019)

Furthermore, there is a [growing body of evidence](#) that indicates spiritual development has a positive impact on mental health.

An answer to Why? can also be found in statute. Since 1944, schools have been required by law to provide for the spiritual development of pupils (1944 Education Act). 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.'

The National Curriculum sets out the importance of spiritual development: 'Every state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which: promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.' (National curriculum in England, Department for Education, 2013).

This expectation is expanded by Ofsted: 'Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their: ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life; knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values; sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them; use of imagination and creativity in their learning; willingness to reflect on their experiences' (School inspection handbook, Ofsted, 2024).

## How do we support spiritual development?

To talk about spirituality is, essentially, to talk about something which is beyond words. To make conversations about spirituality more accessible, we use a consistent language of **wows**, **ows** and **nows**. (These stem from ideas developed by the Education Department at the Diocese of Gloucester – content below is taken from their [Model Policy for Spirituality](#).)

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.

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 reflects a little of the wonder of spirituality.

Simply put...



We use the language and concept of wows, ows and nows in planned and unplanned moments (see section below).

## When are there opportunities for spiritual development in school?

If we return to our definition of spirituality (above), it's clear that children's spirituality may be fostered through all aspects of our provision. There is no discrete session dedicated solely to spiritual development.

Perhaps most importantly, teachers are conscious to look out for other moments when we might capture a sense of connection and/or a sense of awe and wonder. For example, this might be when considering nature in a Science lesson, or considering sporting or cultural achievements in PE or Art.

Some events and activities in the school week regularly lend themselves more to spiritual development (such as circle time, collective worship, Religious Education and Philosophy Friday). Such sessions are opportunities for children to think more deeply, and therefore develop a sense of connection.

Similarly, some sessions, like Art, Music, aspects of Reading (such as poetry) and Science, are opportunities for children to form a connection with and relationship to the natural world and the man-made world, including expressed creativity such as art and music.

In addition, the learning sequences of many topics are designed with an interpretation of spiritual development in mind: windows, mirrors, doors. The following comes from [Spiritual Development: Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom](#) (Church of England Education Office 2019):



**Windows** are for looking out onto the world and becoming aware of its wonders, both the 'wows' and 'ows'; things that are 'awe-full' and make us wonder and be grateful and things that are 'awful' and make us wonder and ask questions. The whole curriculum and life itself are full of opportunities to recognise this sensitively.



**Mirrors** are for looking into and reflecting, alone and together, to see things more clearly, for thinking and asking important questions learning from our own and each other's responses. In schools we must allow time for this for individual and group reflection and sharing of perspectives. Some subjects and times allow for this specifically, such as religious education and collective worship but in all subjects, there will be opportunities, unexpected or planned, when things just 'crop up'. Handled sensitively, it is possible to make the most of all these times, if there is ongoing deliberate and corporate staff and pupil support.



**Doors** are for looking through in order to then act or express this in some way in response; for moving on, making choices, and doing something creative, active and purposeful in response. This can simply be done through a change in attitude or behaviour or thinking. It can also be expressed powerfully through music or art or drama or dance and through some form of social action or specific acts of giving.