

Spirituality Guidelines

Lichfield Diocese Board of Education

2015

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 spent on this will also affect inter-personal relationships within the classroom and as a result contribute to the positive ethos of the school. 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 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

The art of the teacher is 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. Fortunately, 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:

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 also need to 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 should 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 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, 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 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) may be given space in classroom collective worship, for example, or a curriculum RE unit on 'Prayer' or 'Inner Journeys' where such experiences may be shared. **It is worth noting, however, that in a Church school it is important that the focus for reflection and meditation in a worship setting, where we are seeking to enable pupils to respond to God through Jesus Christ, is Christian.**

A '**Diary of Reflection**' may be an excellent written response to such reflective activities. The following preface to such a diary produced by Michael Beesley gives credence to the children's spiritual search in a positive, educative way.

Your "Diary of Reflection" is an opportunity once a week to stop your busy life for a few moments and think about some of the things which make us happy, sad, sorry, grateful, hopeful, amazed, ambitious, proud, concerned and inspired. If you believe in God, you may like to reflect that, through these weekly thoughts, God may be helping you to discover the most important directions and values for your life. If you do not have a belief in God, you may like to see how these thoughts can build up a picture of the things that are really important to you and are helping to shape the kind of person you are becoming.

(Stilling 2003 Salisbury Diocese)

Thus all our 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.**

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. Stories such as "The Bogleweed" by Helen Cresswell (Puffin) 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 in our Church Schools

Church Schools provide us with even greater opportunities for spiritual development because of their link with a worshipping community. The following list describes principles to ensure the school ethos and its distinctive Christian character are fostering spiritual growth.

- The whole ethos of the school should reflect 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 should be 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 should be 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.
- The school should be 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.
- The school should act 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.
- The school should provide 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.
- The school should provide a link between the church and the community so that spirituality is not seen as separate from the social context.
- A church school should 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.
- 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.

Practically speaking these can be worked out through 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 a church school must 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 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

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)

5. Spirituality in Inspection.

In the consultation paper for the framework for the Inspection of Schools we are given the following criteria for evaluation of a pupil's spiritual development. It should be judged in terms of his/her response to:

- collective worship
- opportunities for discussion of and reflection about philosophical and religious questions
- and the nature of spiritual experience
- opportunities for aesthetic experience

Evidence is drawn from:

- observation and discussion with pupils about their beliefs, understandings, feelings and values

Inspectors will also be judging the nature and quality of the school's provision of collective acts of worship, religious education and support for pupils, and opportunities in the curriculum for reflective and aesthetic experience and the discussion of philosophical, spiritual and moral issues.

It is striking that judgments made by inspectors fall within the affective domain, concentrating on responses to the spiritual dimension found within certain experiences provided by the school.

It would be all too easy to set up benchmarks of development assuming every pupil travels the same pathway, without ensuring space was left for the affective aspects and responses to the transcendent, the touch of God, the Holy Spirit or a sudden revelation of God through Jesus Christ or through the natural world, which may well change the pathway overnight. In other words, if we could contain the spiritual we might end up by losing it. So let us rejoice that this area of experience is:

*a different way of **knowing***

*a different way of **becoming***

and enable pupils to grow in their awareness of this "something more", ever open to other possibilities of the transcendent, revelations of God and, for some, commitment to Christ, where all good Christian education points.

SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) reflects these issues in its framework for inspection and its **Evaluation Schedule Sept 13** (go to the National Society website www.natsoc.org.uk for all documents related to inspection). It is acknowledged that church school inspection will always contain an element of subjectivity, based on an inspector's analysis of school documentation (essentially the school SEF- self-evaluation form), ability to form quality relationships with the school very quickly on the day of the inspection, and inevitability on the way the inspector applies his/her previous experience of pupils and church schools to the inspection in hand. However, there are **grade descriptors** which allow for a best fit judgement to take place for the four key areas in a SIAMS inspection:

- the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school
- the quality of collective worship on the whole community (a discrete spiritual activity)
- the effectiveness of religious education (at its heart the spiritual search of mankind)
- the impact of the distinctive Christian character of the school in meeting the needs of the learners (of which their spiritual, personal and learning needs are paramount)

Worship judgements are made on the pupils' attitudes, their ability to be inspired, affirmed and to grow spiritually from what is offered in worship and their ability to engage with the worship of the parish church. Indeed this is quite a challenge for our Church schools, where the nature of worship is by law Christian with an Anglican denominational focus. Christian belief in creation, the incarnation, the resurrection and in Jesus as God's son and God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Trinity) and its expression in worship is a vital link to be made. Prayer should be central to the life of the school – the air it breathes.

The importance of regular school evaluation on the four main aspects of being a Church school cannot be under-estimated. The 'voice' of the pupils, staff, parents and governors needs to be heard, so that development planning is accurate and spiritual growth maximised.

6. Spirituality in Documentation

Having a policy which clearly defines the school's approach to spirituality, its rationale and management of this area of experience is vital for coherent implementation in the school. This policy can be in the same format as other school policies, and needs to have sections on:

- Legal requirements (section 1)
- Links to the general principle / mission statement of the school
- School's rationale for spirituality / aims of spirituality*
- Current practice (a whole school task)
- Management of this dimension (a whole school task)
- Monitoring of spirituality (a whole school task)
- Areas for development (these may align to the latest SIAMS inspection report)

* These could be selected from the following:

- to foster the spiritual development of each pupil, regardless of age, ability, sex or cultural background
- to foster reflection and stillness
- to foster a reverential attitude to God
- to encourage imagination, creativity and a sense that there is 'more to life than meets the eye'
- to foster empathy with others as feeling, thinking individuals
- to show how important beliefs are to adherents and the influence they have on behaviour and lifestyle
- to foster a sense of meaning, purpose and direction in life
- to affirm the value of Christian spirituality as an expression and revelation of God
- to share the Christian story
- to encounter the Christian witness of believers
- to respond to Christian festivals, rituals and symbols
- to provide a context of faith, security and loving relationships to foster each child's spiritual search
- *to affirm the value of Christian belief*

As so many of these areas are whole-school in nature it is important that time is given so that everyone in the school community owns this policy and is clear on their professional responsibility to deliver it

Appendix 1

Policy Statement on New Age Thinking for Church of England Schools & Academies

Preamble: Church Schools and Academies as both Distinctively Christian and Inclusive

In considering an approach to New Age philosophies it is first important to remember the purpose of Church of England schools. This is to deliver an excellent education within a context that is both distinctively Christian but also inclusive of the community within which they are situated.

Church schools must be inclusive. They were founded to provide an education for all in the neighbouring locality. The Church of England parish system means that church and school can work together in serving and reaching out to all in the local community, not only Christians, but also those of other faith or of none.

There are many areas of shared values and beliefs between faiths and worldviews that can provide a starting point for understanding and contact. Our schools should be positive in the way in which they relate to the diversity of faith and culture that now characterises much of our society, seeking to build bridges of mutual understanding, and so help to develop cohesive communities in which the school plays an important part.

Being inclusive does not, however, mean compromising on key Christian teaching and belief. Jesus Himself, while seeming to accept and teach all that He met, did not condone the misuse of the Temple or the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but rather reacted with anger. Christians, in following His example, should always continue to show His love and acceptance to the people with whom they come into contact, but not to accept beliefs or behaviours which are directly opposed to their own core beliefs. Schools must be distinctive in the way they teach and reflect the Christian faith, as it is this that distinguishes them from others. The foundations, ethos statement and trust deeds, which determine church school status, state that the school should preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church at parish and diocesan level. While the school aims to serve its community by providing education of the highest quality this should be done within the context of Christian belief and practice. The school should encourage an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promote Christian values through the experience and example it offers all its pupils, while not seeking to indoctrinate or force its beliefs on anyone.

The fundamental distinctive Christian belief is that in a triune God. This is summarised on the Church of England's own website (www.cofe.anglican.org) as

God understood and known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Father	God is love, caring for creation and for every human being as God's beloved child.
Son	God is as he has revealed himself to be in the historical person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' life, death and resurrection holds the key to knowing and loving God, and to making sense of life, before and after death.
Holy Spirit	God is alive, loving and active today, inspiring faith, justice and truth, sustaining the life of the world, giving spiritual gifts to the church and bearing his spiritual fruit in the world - changed lives and a transformed society.

Christians believe that this God existed before, and still exists separately from, his creation although he chooses to be actively involved within it. The earth is part of this creation and humans are unique in that they are made in God's own image, and therefore able to have a personal relationship with him. This gives each individual particular worth. The rest of creation is of great value, and humanity has a God-given responsibility to care for it. The Bible is recognised as the key resource for understanding and teaching about the reality of this life in a relationship with God and explains God's objective standards for right and wrong on which church schools can build their ethos and values.

It is within this context of inclusivity but also distinctive Christian ethos that church schools should approach New Age teaching.

The New Age Movement

The New Age Movement is not one unified faith but encompasses a number of ideas, beliefs and philosophies. The name derives from the belief that the new millennium coincides with the end of the astrological Age of Pisces, equated with Christianity: and the beginning of the Age of Aquarius, an age of harmony, light, love and understanding, a period of universal truth. New Age followers believe that established authority, including that of the Christian church, has often failed to deliver hope, peace and prosperity, and so alternatives are needed. Ideally the New Age will be a utopia in which there is an end to wars, disease, hunger, pollution, and poverty. Gender, racial, religious and other forms of discrimination will cease. People's allegiance to their tribe or nation will be replaced by a concern for the entire world and its people.

New Age philosophies are very diverse, although there is considerable mutual understanding between groups. Most incorporate the belief that the spiritual is present in all living things. This spiritual is derived from a single source of divine energy that may be identified with Mother Earth, who nurtures all those who exist on her planet, although there may be other spiritual beings that guide, support or hinder. This belief leads naturally to the concept of the divinity of the individual, meaning that all are in some way gods. God is not revealed in a sacred text or found in a remote heaven; but rather can be discovered within the self and throughout the entire universe. All humanity - indeed all life - is thus spiritually interconnected, participating in the same energy. This gives great importance to the need for people to unite to preserve the health of the planet, and take ecological responsibility, as humanity's fate is inextricably linked with that of the Earth's.

New Age teaching combines aspects of most world religions, including Christianity, especially the Celtic tradition. Many accept the importance of reincarnation, meditation and personal karma, drawn from Hindu and Buddhist thought, as well as strands of Chinese and Japanese

philosophy. Indeed, a fundamental belief is that, since all is god, then only one reality exists, and all religions are simply different paths to that ultimate reality. This anticipates the evolution and acceptance of a new synchronised universal religion that contains elements of all current faiths. New Age beliefs and practices do not only derive from within the plurality of established world religions, but also draw on ideas that originate in cosmology, astrology, esotericism, alternative medicine, freemasonry, paganism and the occult. Many relate closely to the mystical Gnostic teaching common in the early centuries of the Christian era.

New Age spirituality is characterized by an individual approach, and is closely tied with the post modern philosophies which now pervade society. One key aim is the attainment of the highest individual human potential. Achieving this places importance upon a holistic approach which seeks the harmony of body, mind and spirit, looking to itself to find truth and meaning. Many New Age practices revolve about the search for personal wellbeing and wholeness. Because each individual is seen to be of such importance, the views of each person are held to be of great value. The human mind is believed to have deep levels, which may be expressed through dreams and psychic experiences, sometimes heightened by drug use. Through personal transformation believers hope to develop new potentials within themselves, the ability to heal themselves and others, and a new understanding of the workings of the universe. Right and wrong are not absolutes, but alternate sides of truth, as in yin and yang. This means that values and morals are subjective, and actions are judged by the effect they have on others. Great importance is given to love, the ideal state in which individuals co-exist in perfect harmony. Ultimately every interpersonal relationship is believed to have the potential to be a helpful experience in terms of each individual's own growth. The only reality is seen as existing through life in different forms, although there may be spiritual laws such as the principle of cause and effect (karma). Death is not the end; rebirth does not punish, but teaches the individual and ensures that the life force continues.

New Age teaching has already had a significant effect on modern society and its way of thinking, including its attitudes towards education. The focus on the individual and the drive for personal fulfilment seems to be at the heart of what schools are aiming to achieve, and would appear to be a very positive goal.

The Response of Church of England Schools to New Age Thinking

In our church schools we share many of the aims of the New Age movement. We want every pupil to build self-esteem and independence, to achieve their full potential and live a worthwhile and fulfilled life. We also hope that they will be independent spiritually, aware that there is more to life than the mental and physical. We want them to conserve and nurture the world around them, taking responsibility for its future. We long for an end to divisions within society, and we hope for peace and good government. These are very important objectives that we share with those who follow New Age philosophies.

However, although the goals are the same; for Christians the motivation for achieving them is very different, and so it should be for church schools. At the heart of New Age thinking is the belief that god, or spiritual forces, exist within the world and all living things. There is no clear distinction between the divine and creation, as god is found within rather than outside of what he has made. If the world is divine, having created itself through evolution, then it can continue to improve and develop into something better without the need for an independent god. Christians, on the other hand, believe that God is the creator. He existed before and

apart from his creation and is still active in caring for it, although he gave humanity the task of looking after the earth he had made. The variety and beauty of the world tells of the power and originality of its maker. Church schools should offer opportunities for pupils to reflect upon, appreciate and care for creation, and to understand that Christians believe it reveals something of God himself.

At the same time schools should help pupils to recognise the special role of humanity within creation. New Age thinking does not allow for this, as all life is sacred. Christianity gives value and worth to every individual, not because that individual contains something of the divine within itself, but because God created it 'in His image' as a friend whom He loves. This special relationship is heightened by the fact that God chose to take on human form in the person of Jesus. Church schools must embed the premise that every child matters, not only to the school but also to God, because He has created a huge diversity of personality, experience and talent within its pupils and these should be celebrated. Schools should avoid adopting a form of rigid egalitarianism, inspired by New Age thinking, which attempts to deny any distinctions such as faith, gender, ability and culture and so does not celebrate the unique contribution offered by each individual.

The belief in a Trinitarian God, which accepts that Jesus was God revealed in human form, is unacceptable to New Age philosophy because, if true, it gives Christian beliefs an exclusive place within world religions, an idea incompatible with the teaching that all faiths are equal paths to truth. Many are willing to accept that a historical Jesus was an inspired teacher and prophet, but not that he was God incarnate. Gnostic philosophies with beliefs very similar to those of the New Age were common in the first centuries after Jesus lived, and early Christians were active in writing and preaching against their ideas. The Christian creeds and canon of New Testament books emerged as part of the attempt to agree orthodox beliefs in the face of Gnostic interpretations. Such orthodoxy opposes the New Age belief that all faiths are equal and individuals can therefore select their own truth from the various beliefs on offer. This idea also results in New Age practices that unite elements of Christian belief with non-Christian ideas. For example Reiki channels 'self healing' to create wholeness and wellbeing, using Reiki symbols alongside Christian exorcism designed to remove forces which are seen as harming or hindering the development of an individual. Schools should ensure that they are explicit in sharing and modelling Christianity in a way that does not compromise the concepts at its heart. Use of the Bible, liturgy such as traditional prayers and creeds, and working in partnership with the local church can give practical support in this. While it may be appropriate for secondary age pupils to be aware of the pressures from New Age thinking within society and to debate their impact, this should always be done in a way that ensures that the Christian viewpoint is clearly stated as that preferred by the school leadership.

For New Age thinkers the search for truth begins with the self, while for Christians truth is found by looking beyond the self for God. Christians the spiritual is not found by seeking a nebulous force or power, but by responding to a loving God, still active in the world today, through the work of the Holy Spirit. This Spirit is not innately part of an individual, but is God's way of working through the person in order that they can live in the way that God intended and so achieve meaning and purpose in life – true wholeness. Christians accept that authority and the church have often failed to bring the peace, love and hope that Jesus came to deliver, but recognise that this is because people have constantly failed to live by God's standards and follow Jesus' example. There is indeed much that it can learn from the enthusiasm and positivity of the New Age movement. Christians have no place for pride in their own achievements, but should demonstrate an unselfish reliance on God, rather than their own efforts.

Christians would agree with New Age teaching that a sense of the spiritual is something found in all humans, regardless of age, gender, race, (dis)ability, cultural identity or religious belief, and that our schools should avoid valuing the intellectual and physical while marginalizing the spiritual needs of the learner. The challenge for all educators is to help pupils to recognise, value and develop their spiritual self, by offering opportunities for reflection, empathy and imagination. Church schools should be proactive in helping pupils to experience the spiritual, giving opportunities for awe and wonder, reflection and worship throughout the school day and across the curriculum. Reflection and stilling can be powerful ways of helping individuals communicate with God. However, meditation that is solely introspective, encouraging pupils to find stillness and inner healing within themselves is inappropriate. Within Church schools the focus of reflection should be the Trinitarian God known by individuals, not as a remote force, or something within themselves, but through the wonder of creation, the example of Jesus and by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible suggests that we should 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10)

The idea of self-fulfilment and focus on self-esteem within New Age thinking may lead to inadequacy and depression in those who feel that they are not able to achieve, and are unable to attain wholeness and wellness, especially when faced with problems. Christians believe that, despite their special position within creation, human beings are not perfect and do not have the ability to attain perfection however hard they try. Indeed it was because of this failure that God sent Jesus to live as a perfect human, thus giving an example to follow. Moreover his undeserved death and subsequent resurrection not only show Christians how much God loves humanity, but also offers forgiveness and hope. It is through God's grace that people can know and love God and so make sense of life, before and after death. Christians believe that individuals must look beyond themselves, and form a relationship with this loving God. The Holy Spirit can then work through that person to create a whole and fulfilled individual.

Christians agree with New Age thinkers that love is something to aim for, but not love found in perfect relationships between individuals, an ideal that is unrealistic in the light of human failure. Rather, for Christians, perfect and unselfish love is modeled by Jesus' love and sacrifice for humanity. This then becomes the example on which to build relationships with others. Christians believe that God's love is for the whole world, and that Christians everywhere are united by a common faith and purpose. This means that, when building different levels of community cohesion church schools begin from an additional point of contact –shared ethos and values build on something outside the individual school - that can be used to develop links and partnerships.

New Age beliefs are not clear on the boundary between right and wrong, which may be seen as different sides of same reality because actions are judged by the result that behaviour has on self and others. If a person is happy with his or her own actions, and they do not harm others, then the action is acceptable. Christians, on the other hand, believe that God has definite standards of right and wrong, good and evil, and that the Bible gives clear guidance as to what these are. Moreover it clearly states that God is holy, and so cannot tolerate evil, or its consequences in the life of individuals (sin). Morals and values are therefore not subjective or defined by the effect that actions have on others, but are based on absolutes. This means that, within a church school, issues of discipline and inter-personal relationships should be built on these clear Biblical principles. This should also have an effect across the curriculum, influencing the content of subjects such as SRE, PSHE and RE. For church schools the Bible should be central to the life and worship of the school, providing a focus for values and ethos, and for teaching about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Although the sacred writings of other faiths may be respected, studied and shared, for Christians they are not to be considered the Bible's equal. While being distinctive in its values and ethos, the school must not attempt to impose beliefs on others. However, by modeling an alternative to New Age

thinking and demonstrating God's love, forgiveness and strength to pupils, it can offer a choice in lifestyle and motivation.

There is no place within church schools for any New Age practices which involve witchcraft, the psychic, paganism, the occult or Satanism. This would include practices such as astrology, tarot cards and ouija boards as well as more explicitly pagan ceremonies. The Bible forbids these for Christians, stating that God is wholly good, holy, and so totally opposed to things which are wrong, evil or of Satan. For Christians, 'our struggle is ...against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.' (Ephesians 6:12) Christians believe that good and evil are not two sides of the same, but are in direct and uncompromising opposition. This leaves no place for compromise with things that are directly opposed to Christian teaching.

In our church schools we cannot ignore the fact that New Age and postmodern thinking is prevalent throughout much of Western society and has already had a great impact on the English education system, much of which has been positive. In our church schools we share many aims, in that we work to create fulfilled and motivated individuals who are equipped to face adult life with confidence. This should be our vision for every child in our care, as we strive to deliver an excellent and inclusive education. Church schools, like many others, have frequently failed in achieving this and must be willing to learn from others as they strive to move forwards. We should work with others, including those of New Age thinking, to celebrate shared ideas and concerns.

However, church schools should ensure that they maintain a clear and distinctive focus upon the triune God of Christian faith, and the belief that our pupils do not have an innate ability to achieve fulfilment in their own strength. The ideal is that they become God-reliant, rather than self-reliant. While schools cannot force their views upon our pupils, staff or communities, they can offer clear opportunities to teach about Him, respond in worship to God and see the Christian life lived out within the school, we are able to offer pupils excellence in education, confidence in themselves as a unique, valued and loved individual and an awareness that they may turn to God for help, forgiveness, guidance and hope beyond themselves. In this way our schools can offer a full and distinctive education that leads to 'life in all its fullness'. (John 10.10)

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