

## Spiritual development at Monksmoor Park

### *What is spiritual development?*

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There have been many different attempts to define spiritual development. Whilst some have similarities, common themes, many differ. This may be because spirituality looks different in different people and can be expressed in different ways. Gary Thomas (Thomas, 2010) talks of nine sacred pathways<sup>1</sup> as he explains a level of understanding which meets the needs of all, where ever they are on their journey. Whilst Thomas roots these in biblical narrative, it is important to note that being spiritual does not necessarily mean having a relationship with God.

### *Why is spiritual development important for our children?*

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It would be impossible to succeed in our vision of 'Nurturing all to flourish and aspire' without careful consideration of our children's spiritual development. Our children will develop a healthy relationship with themselves, the people and the world around them. They will have a sense of curiosity and use this to engage in a range of opportunities that enrich their lives. They will grow together, developing not in isolation, but learning from and with each other.

Our children will have started their life-long journey of spiritual development, which will enable them to be reflective, thoughtful individuals who will flourish in today's demanding landscape.



Being confident in one's own spirituality to allow the children who we look after the space and the room and the stillness to find and develop thier own

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix 1

## What does spiritual development look like at Monksmoor Park?

At Monksmoor Park, we value each individual as well as the school community as a whole. Although some of the best spiritual opportunities cannot be planned for, we recognise that spiritual development should be deliberately encouraged and celebrated so opportunities from a range of pathways will be provided and planned for throughout the academic year. In this way, we can be sure we avoid spiritual narrowness.

<b>Naturalists</b>	<b>Sensates</b>	<b>Traditionalists</b>	<b>Ascetics</b>	<b>Activists</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Forest School</li> <li>* Natural objects in the classroom</li> <li>* Outdoor learning</li> <li>* Looking after wildlife</li> <li>* Time to appreciate and enjoy outdoors and nature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Use of a candle in collective worship</li> <li>* Wide range of music used throughout school</li> <li>* Visual environment</li> <li>* Holding cross in every classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Clear routines and procedures</li> <li>* Big books</li> <li>* Celebration of festivals and ceremonies</li> <li>* Understanding of the Church year</li> <li>* Strong sense of belonging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Quiet reflection in collective worship</li> <li>* Reflection area in each classroom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Supporting named charity with a deeper understanding</li> <li>* Strong support for local community</li> </ul>
<b>Caregivers</b>	<b>Enthusiasts</b>	<b>Intellectuals</b>	<b>Contemplatives</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Sending messages to peers when poorly</li> <li>* Welcoming environment</li> <li>* Welcoming community groups into school</li> <li>* School star</li> <li>* Community lunch</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Wide range of music used in collective worship</li> <li>* Adults and children join in singing together</li> <li>* Encouraged to show enjoyment in music</li> <li>* Celebration events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Children encouraged to think about wider issues and discuss</li> <li>* Picture News</li> <li>* Wide selection of books in the school library to provoke thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Space in the school day to sit and think</li> <li>* Understanding Christianity</li> <li>* Flexibility to change timetables</li> </ul>	

Throughout our curriculum, there will be many planned occasions to develop the children's spirituality. These will be identified using the work of Liz Mills<sup>2</sup>; Windows, Mirrors, Doors (and Traffic lights). A progressive framework<sup>3</sup> will help to support teachers to make experiences in year six deeper than in year two (Andrew Rickett, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Appendix 2

<sup>3</sup> Appendix 3



## References

Andrew Rickett, S. R. D. H., 2012. *Diocese of Bristol*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.bristol.anglican.org/news/2012/02/28/spiritual-development-progression-in-spirituality/> [Accessed 13 January 2020].

The Church of England, 2019. *Spiritual Development - Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom*, s.l.: Church of England.

Thomas, G., 2010. *Sacred Pathways: Discover Your Soul's Path to God*. Revised ed. Michigan: Zondervan.

## Sacred Pathways

### **Naturalists:**

#### **Loving God outdoors.**

They are moved by creation, particularly being outside but also through the use of the Psalms and other writings about God as creator and his creation. Naturalists love to surround themselves by what God has made.

### **Sensates:**

#### **Loving God with the senses.**

They are often moved by sights, sounds and smells. They often love incense, beautiful architecture, liturgy and many forms of music. Visual imagery for Sensates is often particularly powerful.

### **Traditionalists:**

#### **Loving God through ritual and symbol.**

They love the historic aspects of faith such as symbols, sacraments and ritual. Sometimes this can be misunderstood as following rules, but it is about love of pattern, structure and discipline.

### **Ascetics:**

#### **Loving God in solitude and simplicity**

They like to be left alone e.g. to pray, contemplate, reflect. They do not want anything to distract them. Silent retreat is valued by ascetics.

### **Activists:**

#### **Loving God through confrontation.**

They want to bring about justice and often take up a cause. Activists want to influence and bring about change in the community.

### **Caregivers:**

#### **Loving God by Loving others.**

They love serving others, particularly those who are poor and needy. They give time and energy to supporting and caring for others. Mother Teresa is a good example of a Caregiver.

### **Enthusiasts:**

#### **Loving God with Mystery and Celebration.**

They love to celebrate. They want to be 'cheerleaders' for God - shouting, dancing, singing. They value experiencing God's power.

### **Intellectuals:**

#### **Loving God with the Mind.**

They need their minds to be stirred. They like to study and read about their faith in order to understand it more deeply.

### **Contemplatives:**

#### **Loving God through Adoration.**

They seek to be intimate with God. They want to 'sit at the feet of Jesus'. They seek to love God with a pure, deep love.

## Windows, Mirrors, Doors (and Traffic Lights)

Over the course of this piece of research many practical answers to this question were offered, which over time, began to group themselves into three main ideas:

- the need to become aware of the world in all its wonder but also a sad realisation of its many problems, i.e. to realise that the world is both 'awe-full' but also sadly 'awful' at times too, (to be aware of both its 'Wows' but also its 'Ows')
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- the need to have a chance to reflect or think on this both alone and with others
- the need to apply what has been learnt from this process in some sort of expressive, active way.

Searching for some simple way to summarise this, the images of windows, mirrors and doors evolved while I was waiting at a set of traffic lights. Being forced to stop and then to think before moving on, images of windows and doors emerged as wing-mirror reflections suddenly offered an idea. These 'openings' seemed to offer three useful, powerfully practical images for potential use in schools. Life is full of openings: windows which allow us to look out, mirrors which allow us to reflect and doors which allow us to move on. Likewise, traffic lights allow us time to stop and look, to wait and think and then to move on.

Developing this further:

**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.

## Appendix 3

### Spiritual development - self

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. Spiritual learners reflect on the relationship that they have with their sense of being a unique person.

Reception	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
<b>Encounter:</b> Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development through an exploration of identity and personal values.			
<b>Reflection:</b> Learning from life: understanding an inner meaning of self and identity – critical reasoning and big questions.			
<b>Transformation:</b> Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing an idea of self: developing a personal set of beliefs.			
A growing awareness of knowing what I like and what I don't like both materially and in the way that I want to be treated. Can say what I like and what I am good at.	An evolving awareness of the concept of self as more than purely physical characteristics. A growing realisation that being content with who you are is important for personal happiness. Know how to apologise and to try again. Beginning to recognise mistakes and how to deal with them in a positive way.	The awareness that the growing development of a personal identity is an important aspect of being human. A growing realisation that an emphasis on self alone is not sufficient as a means of living out the self. An evolving sense of the concept of identity as more than purely physical characteristics or our likes and hobbies. Can set goals for my work and behaviour that will help me to progress.	The awareness of the value of reflection to explore deeper responses to thoughts that help shapes the 'inner self'. An understanding that we express our personal values in the way that we approach our relationship with others and the world around us. The ability to express an interpretation of this verbally. Can explain my opinions.

## Spiritual development - others

Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of others – a growing empathy, concern and compassion for how to treat others. Spiritual learners reflect on how their values and principles affect their relationships with others.

Reception	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
<b>Encounter:</b> Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development: recognising the values and worth of others			
<b>Reflection:</b> Learning from life: understanding an awareness of the affect of others– a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
<b>Transformation:</b> Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing an idea of relationship with others: expressing innermost thoughts through words, art or actions.			
Understanding that other people have their own views and opinions and may value different things to you.	A growing appreciation that the views and opinions of others should be listened to with respect whether those views are similar to your own or different.	Acknowledgement and respect for the rights of others to have their own deep thoughts that shape their inner self. A developing ability to enter into discussions with others about their values and opinions.	A growing empathy with the values of others and developing an understanding of the need to appreciate them to build meaningful relationships. A growing ability to express how understanding the value of others is an important part of building meaningful relationships.

## Spiritual development – world and beauty

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. Spiritual learners explore their understanding beauty and the affect this has on their perception of and relationship with the world.

Reception	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
<b>Encounter:</b> Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development: challenging experiences of beauty			
<b>Reflection:</b> Learning from life: reflecting on experiences of beauty – a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
<b>Transformation:</b> Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing an idea of the meaning of beauty: expressing innermost thoughts through words art or actions. Being moved emotionally by beauty.			
Have an instant response to something wonderful/ exciting and awesome happening. Evident in expression and simple phrases. Respond to sensory feelings and be able to show it.	Give a verbal response that explains a reaction to something wonderful/ exciting or awesome. Be seen to respond to a stimulus and begin to explain in simple terms verbally or through body language.	Be able to understand and give meaning to something wonderful/ exciting or awesome. Be able to verbalise their sensory responses and begin to explore their reactions to stimuli. A growing confidence to explore concepts orally.	Be able to explain/ give an emotional response to stimuli and begin to articulate this from a personal perspective. Be able to display shades of meaning when verbalising sensory responses and understand and interpret their reaction. A developing appreciation that some things don't have answers.



## Spiritual development – beyond

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. Spiritual learners search for meaning in their very existence and their place in the greater scheme of things.

Reception	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
<b>Encounter:</b> Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development: a growing appreciation of the intangible – truth, love			
<b>Reflection:</b> Learning from life: reflecting on the beyond – a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
<b>Transformation:</b> Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing the need to understand the purpose of life.			
Have the confidence to ask questions that have no answers.	Have a sense of enjoyment in devising and discussing questions that have no answer. Use imagination to interpret responses to big questions.	Understand what big questions are. Be able to explain imaginative responses to questions of meaning.	Can generate big questions. Begin to express through a personal vocabulary responses to questions of meaning. Begin to be able to use critical reasoning in responding to a big question