

Spiritual Development Policy



At St Mary's Birchley R.C. Primary
School

Written November 2008
Reviewed 2014
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Mission Statement

Our vision is for St Mary's School to be a safe and happy place, where we follow Jesus by living, loving, learning and working together

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Our school family aims to understand and follow the example set by Jesus.

We will achieve this by:

- Using the Archdiocesan syllabus to underpin all school policies and practices.
- Developing self respect and respect of others.
- Setting good examples of positive behaviour.
- Encouraging and rewarding honesty and integrity.
- Listening to each other.
- Enabling all to contribute.
- Enabling all to recognise their actions and resulting consequences.
- Providing quality opportunities for silent prayer and/or reflection.
- Facilitating opportunities for helping others.

Our school family aims to fully develop the potential of everyone within our school community.

We will achieve this by:

- Providing a broad, balanced and creative curriculum, accessible by all.
- Having rigorous and robust assessment procedures which drive teaching and learning.
- Seeking enrichment opportunities.

- Celebrating success and achievement at every level.

Our school family aims to work together with our families and parish to be an integral part of the wider community.

We will achieve this by:

- Actively seeking out opportunities to promote the school as part of the wider community.
- Actively seeking out opportunities to enrich the local and wider community
- By encouraging links with the parish and families
- Involving local community in school/parish events.
- Making effective use of visitors to enhance the children's learning.
- Developing means of communication e.g. newsletters, reports, questionnaires, parent evenings and websites.

Aim

In preparing our children for their journey through life we aim to promote every child's innate capacity for wonder, awe, reverence and imagination for the spiritual. We aim to effectively utilise opportunities for spiritual development that occur at times in order to enhance aspects of the curriculum. R.E. and worship have a central place in the whole of our curriculum and within R.E. we invite an active response in life and worship - such activities provide children with an active means of exploring their feelings more freely and deeply than through words.

Objectives

We will meet this aim by:

- encouraging children to reflect upon their personal existence through discussion and personal reflection
- providing daily opportunities for prayer and reflection on the presence of God
- providing a variety of stimuli to aid reflection and thoughts
- following our Collective Worship Policy
- using opportunities as they arise during learning activities throughout the day to develop a sense of awe and wonder in the world
- providing good role models by 'wondering' aloud at things which create awe

Opportunities for Spiritual Development within the curriculum

Opportunities for Spiritual Development are in every aspect of school life.

Within our delivery of the National Curriculum pupils are encouraged to:-

- * reflect on values, experiences and attitudes of others
eg in discussion of History/Geography/Environmental issues
in English through story
during P.E. - attitudes/fairness
during P.S.H.E – particularly through circle time activities as well of course as through R.E. lessons
- * understand and reflect on the physical world of God's creation
eg through R.E., Art, Science, Geography, P.E., Maths, D.T. as well as during Assemblies and Collective Worship
- * to explore their own feelings and express them in their work.
eg through poetry, musical composition, creative arts, dance, R.E. - prayers
- * to recognise God's presence in their work and in their lives
eg give thanks to God for their gifts and talents, celebrate and appreciate one another's abilities and achievements - good work assembly. R.E. and prayer times.

The Role of the Teacher in Spiritual Development

As teachers we are helping to develop the ‘whole person’ to live in a modern day society. As an educational establishment we are concerned with the academic side of development, but as a Catholic School offering a Christ centred curriculum we are concerned with much more than only academia.

We as teachers believe that we have a vital role in the spiritual development of our children through our questioning techniques, the times we offer for reflection, the environment we create and our planning.

Questioning Techniques

We aim to answer questions about the world truthfully and appropriately, to lead children in the direction of open-ended enquiry, to lead them to a sense of awe and wonder and in some cases to allow them to draw their own conclusions when they are older.

Times for Reflection

Reflection is an important part of the daily life our school. Children are invited to reflect during whole-school and class times of collective worship; in R. E. lessons, circle times and thinking time at the end of the day.

Imaginative thinking forms part of the curriculum through a variety of subjects, eg English, Dance, Drama, Art etc.

Environment we Create

The environment we create comes under two headings - the relationships within school and the physical environment.

We hope to always create a warm and welcoming environment that lives out our mission of appreciation and encouragement of every member of our school family.

To create a warm, caring and loving environment we have to have ‘respect’ between all members of the school community.

The staff lead by example by working together as a team, children are encouraged to be caring and sensitive to the needs of others and to take responsibility for their actions.

Within the physical environment of the school, we aim to provide a stimulating environment which displays and values children’s contributions and work. Each classroom has an area for worship and reflection. The hall also has a focus for worship that is changed regularly according to the R.E. topic or Church season.

The superb location of our school is regularly brought to the attention of our children and work is being undertaken to improve it even more.

Planning for Spirituality

In our planning we will, when appropriate, make particular reference to spiritual development. We will always be ready to be spontaneous and develop any ideas that come unexpectedly during a lesson, particularly from a child.

Monitoring

Teachers will acknowledge children's own response to a moment, idea, work, natural phenomenon etc by an appropriate verbal response. This may be noted to be used for assessment purposes later and commented on in the child's report. During monitoring activities by the SLT well-used opportunities for spiritual development will be commented on and fed back to the teaching staff. From September 2018 we will aim to "capture" from the children some of their responses, experiences and reactions and record these in individual class Learning Journals.

Liturgy and Worship to promote Spiritual Development

(Please refer to school's policy on Collective Worship)

Prayer is central to the life of our school and we offer children many and varied opportunities through -

Liturgy

eg Masses, Services of Reconciliation, school prayer times, Stay and Pray.

Celebration of the Sacraments

Children are prepared in partnership with home and the Church for the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist and celebrate with the whole school and parish community

Personal Prayer and Reflection

Children are encouraged to develop their own personal prayers as well as the more traditional prayers of the Church.

Children of all ages are invited to share spontaneous prayers with their classmates by passing round a candle or any other object.

Reflective and imaginative prayer is also used within whole school and class prayertimes. Within our reflections we aim to direct children to a deeper understanding of themselves and how God works in their lives, always endeavouring to link faith with life.

Provision for Special Needs Children

As with all other areas we offer an equality of opportunity for all children through differentiation and age and development appropriate activities.

Opportunities for Assessment

When teachers and children assess a piece of work they must always be respectful of individuality and encourage original thinking.

Assessing the spirituality of a child is of course a difficult task, but children can be encouraged to assess themselves with regard to the acquisition of attitudes, and teachers can provide opportunities and devise strategies for them to do so, such as observing the children's ability

- ~ to listen
- ~ to ask relevant questions
- ~ to respond to questions
- ~ to be still and reflective
- ~ to understand
- ~ to remember
- ~ to appreciate

Above all, we must respect individuality and encourage original thinking.

We will use the Standards for Primary Religious Education – the standard *Engagement and Response (learning from)*.