

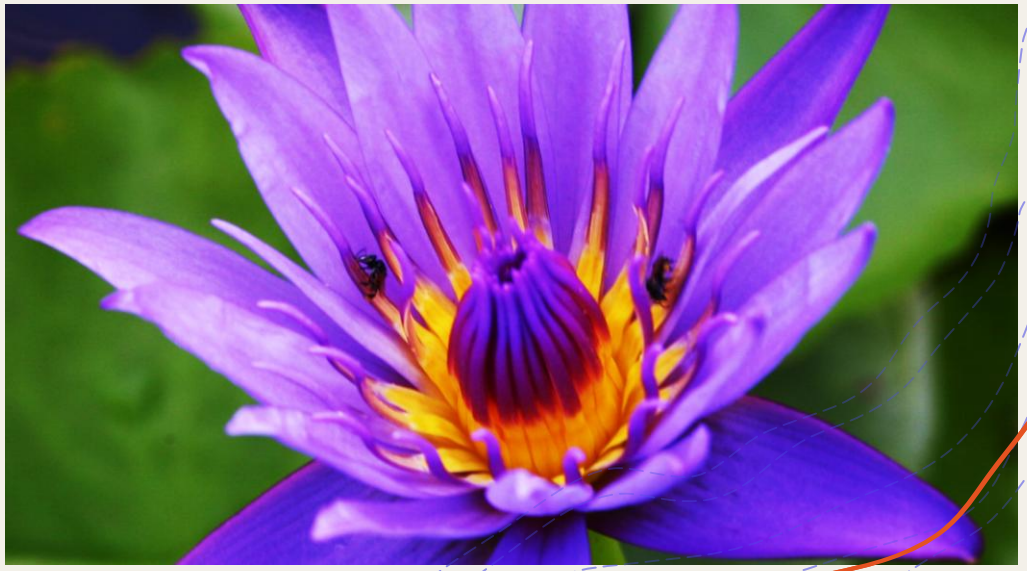
Developing Spirituality

Monday 3rd November 2025

Agenda

- Frameworks and Definitions
- Research and Theory
- St Cuthbert's Common Language
- St Cuthbert's Planning
- What next?





Frameworks and Definitions

SIAMS and OFSTED



SIAMS- January 2024

Inspection Findings

Although spiritual moments are not explicitly planned within the curriculum, activities such as outdoor learning sessions in the forest do offer regular opportunities for spiritual development. The totality of these experiences offers pupils, including the vulnerable, opportunities to flourish. Embed a shared language and shared understanding of spirituality. This is in order to build upon the variety of opportunities for spiritual development already in place.

Leading worship clearly builds their self-esteem and has a positive impact on their own spiritual development and more widely across the school. Support from the diocese, including whole staff training on what spirituality means for themselves and for pupils, has had a positive impact on staff knowledge and confidence. Opportunities for spiritual development within the curriculum are in place, but limited by the fact that a shared language and understanding of spirituality is not consistently embedded.

Areas for Development

Embed a shared language and shared understanding of spirituality. This is in order to build upon the variety of opportunities for spiritual development already in place.

OFSTED

In its subsidiary guidance (January 2012) Ofsted defined what it was looking for when it came to spiritual development. It is a definition that has remained fairly fixed over recent time.

Pupils' spiritual development is shown by their:

- beliefs, religious or otherwise, which inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's feelings 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.



What's our why?

Our School Vision

In our family school, we strive to be the best for today, for tomorrow, for ourselves, for each other, the wider world and for God.

As a Christian family we nurture an understanding that we are all of equal value and infinite worth.

In the safety of our unique family, we will flourish and grow towards being Global Citizens and Courageous Advocates.

('You are now citizens together with God's people and members of the family of God'. Ephesians 2:19)





How well does the school support all pupils in their spiritual development enabling, all pupils to flourish?

Research and theory

David Smith

Liz Mills

Andrew Rickett



David Smith's work for the Stapleford Centre 'Making sense of Spiritual Development' (1999)

David Smith's work for the Stapleford Centre 'Making sense of Spiritual Development' (1999) presented a structure for mapping the progression of spiritual development across the curriculum. He suggested four windows into spiritual development:

- Spiritual Capacities: recognition that all human beings are capable of spiritual growth through capacities such as self-awareness, reflection, empathy, imagination and creativity
- Spiritual Experiences: ways in which pupils can encounter the spiritual dimension of life
- Spiritual Understanding: the need to have developed an understanding to make sense of the spiritual experiences encountered and capacities exercised
- Spiritual responses: how this experience and understanding impacts on our lives and shapes the way in which we live our lives.

Liz Mills: Growing together? Spiritual development in schools and communities

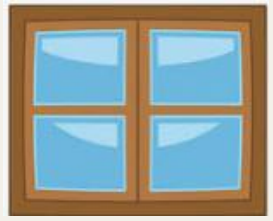
Over the course of this piece of research many practical answers to this question were offered, which over time, began to group themselves into three main ideas:

- 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')
- 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.

Windows, Mirrors and Doors

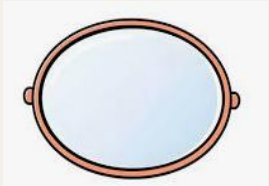
Windows

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

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 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

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.



The Importance of Spiritual Styles.

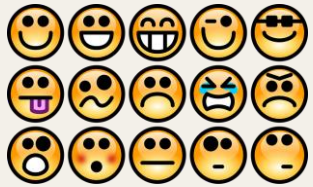
Words

Some find spiritual expression and understanding best through words, through loving the structure and clarity that well-crafted words can offer.



Emotions

Others find the freedom of spontaneous emotional expression empowering and enabling.



Symbols

Others are captured by the simple but multilayered depth and mystery of symbols.



Actions

Others find themselves most naturally energised by the practical everyday expression of faith in actions.



Making Sense of Spiritual Development by David Smith

David Smith notes a number of human capacities commonly identified as related to spiritual development.

Spiritual Capacities - which include children's ability to:

- Be guided by their beliefs and values and be willing to take a stand to defend them
- Be self-aware and empathise with the experience of others in the school and wider community
- Love themselves, care for themselves, believe in their potential to achieve, and find inner strength and resilience when facing challenges
- Exercise imagination and creativity, appreciate beauty in the world and be alive to experiences of awe and wonder

- Be intrigued by mystery and be open to an awareness of the transcendent in the whole of life
- Be comfortable with stillness and silence and open to engage in reflection/meditation/prayer ·
- Be ready to say sorry when mistakes are made, to forgive themselves and to forgive others
- Be willing to take risks and to reflect, learn and grow following experiences of failure as well as success
- Demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness when exploring life's big questions
- Appreciate and be thankful for what is good in life like friends and family, and show generosity towards others

Recognising Spiritual Development in the Primary School

Spiritual Capacities	Experience Window	Reflection Mirror	Growth Door
Reception & Year 2 Be ready to say sorry when mistakes are made, to forgive themselves and forgive others.	Playtime: A Y2 child in my class caused a child in Reception to be upset by something that he said to her. This was unintentional on his part. I gently brought the matter to his attention, pointing out that the Reception child was now in tears.	The Y2 child went home that evening and (completely independently) wrote a little story book. The subject of the story was unrelated to the incident in question, but he made the Reception child the main character in the story. The next morning, he asked the Reception teacher to suggest a time that he could say sorry and read the story to the child.	The Reception child and the Y2 child are now good friends and can often be seen on the Buddy Bench chatting together at break times. They have learned a lot about what it means to give and receive forgiveness.
Year 2 Love themselves, care for themselves, believe in their potential to achieve and find inner strength and resilience when facing challenges.	Forest School: The children had been learning about the way that fire can be used to cook and keep warm in the outdoors. They were using fire starters to create sparks and start a fire. Certain children were struggling to create sparks with the fire starters. Some of these children were individuals of higher academic ability and were unaccustomed to failure. They were finding it difficult to persevere.	Children who were able to use their fire starters well, talked together and decided to go and help the others.	Being able to offer help to children who often seem to succeed at everything was very empowering to the helpers. It built their self-esteem and made everyone realise that we all need one another

Spiritual Capacities	Experience Window	Reflection Mirror	Growth Door
Year 3/4 Demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness when exploring life's big questions.	Royal Wedding celebration: Interest was generated by a royal wedding in why people choose to marry and what makes two individuals decide to commit to one another for life.	Whilst making bunting for the school celebrations a discussion took place about the promises that are made when people marry and the values that would be needed within a relationship to enable both parties to keep the promises. They also reflected about why some people want to be married in a religious ceremony and others prefer another type of ceremony.	Whilst this discussion was initiated by a wedding, the children reflected more widely about the values which are important in all long-lasting relationships. It showed that they were able to apply our school's Christian values to life outside the classroom.
Year 5 Be guided by our beliefs and values and be willing to take a stand to defend	Literacy – persuasive writing: Children wrote speeches on environmental impact, having watched David Attenborough's 'Blue Planet' documentary.	It was during the process of writing and discussing the speeches that children decided that using plastic straws was unsustainable. One child said, "God gave the world to us as a gift and we are destroying it."	The class put in a recommendation to the school council that all straws (paper and plastic) were unnecessary and should be banned from the school premises.

Spiritual Capacities	Experience Window	Reflection Mirror	Growth Door
Year 6 Be self-aware and empathise with the experience of others in the school and wider community.	Forest school: Children were asked to use items from forest school to create a waterproof boat that would float. Great care and attention to detail was invested in this project and children were very proud of their boats. Children tested their boats in front of their peers. Some floated but others sank or fell apart	During this process children reflected on why some designs were successful and others were not.	The activity demonstrated that children were aware that some children felt sad that the boats which they had carefully made, had been destroyed when put in the water. They were respectful and sensitive when discussing why this might have happened. The children concluded that the activity showed that a great deal can be learned from 'mistakes'.
Whole School Be comfortable with stillness and silence and able to engage in reflection/meditation/prayer.	Whole school worship: The children had heard a poem about the time that Jesus visited the home of Martha and Mary (from Roots & Fruits 2 *). (Mary sat down to spend time with Jesus, but Martha was too busy.) The children were then invited to spend some time in meditation imagining that Jesus was visiting their home.	Children had some perfumed candles to create a special atmosphere of welcome. They used our normal mindfulness breathing awareness and stilling exercises to prepare for the time of meditation. The children either focussed on the candles or closed their eyes. We asked a few simple questions to guide the children's reflection (Who might be in your home when Jesus arrived? How could you welcome him? How might you spend the time together?) We then left two or three minutes of silence.	After the meditation, the children spoke about how thinking about Jesus in their own homes made him much more real to them than when they just heard stories about him. They said the time went very quickly. We discussed the idea that 'prayer' for many people includes the practice of spending time with Jesus in their imagination.

Andrew Rickett

+From listening to children talk about spirituality through their stories, they focus on four aspects: self, others, beauty and questions about something beyond the country of the body. The children seemed to focus on fours aspects:

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.



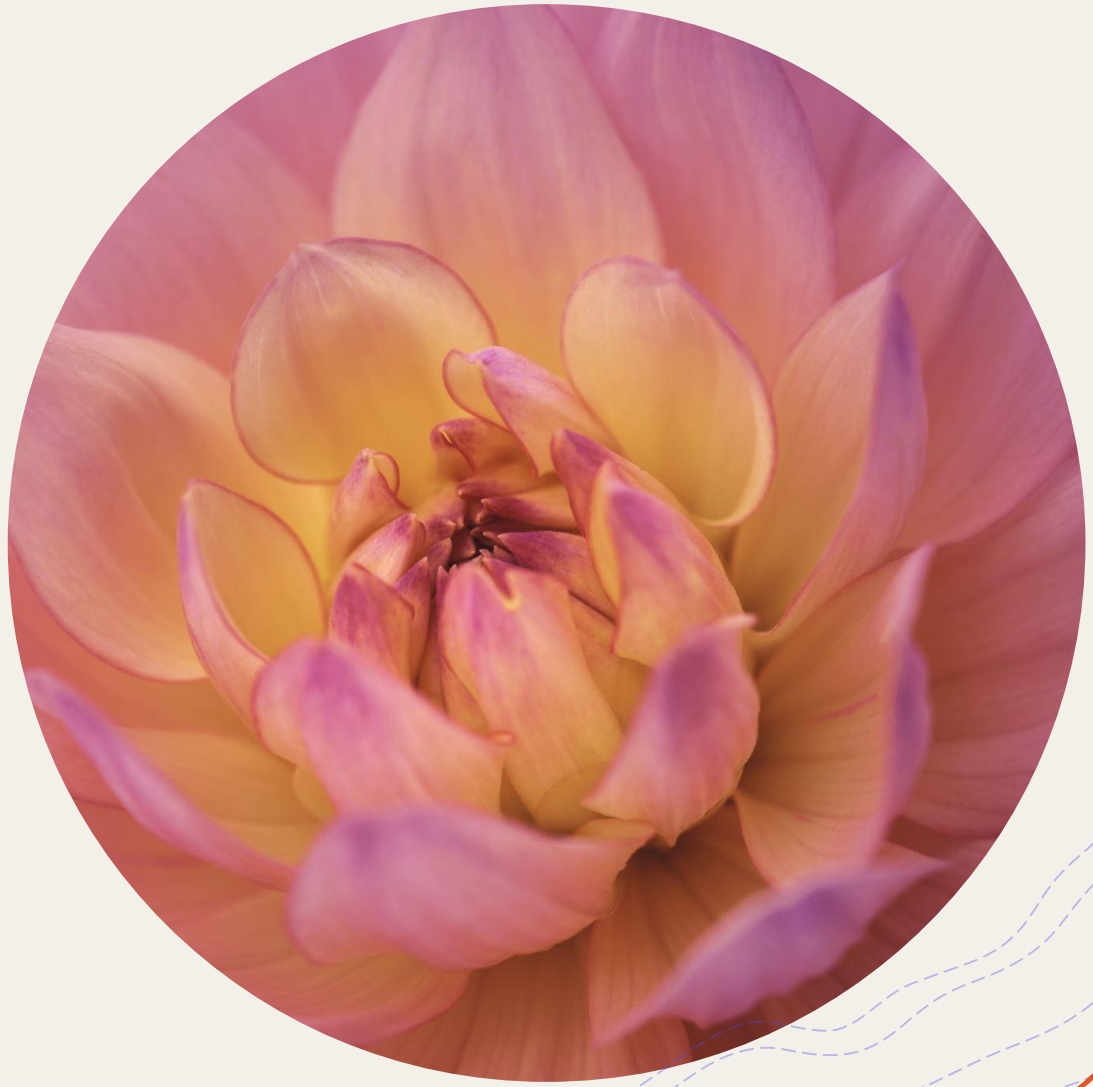
Others

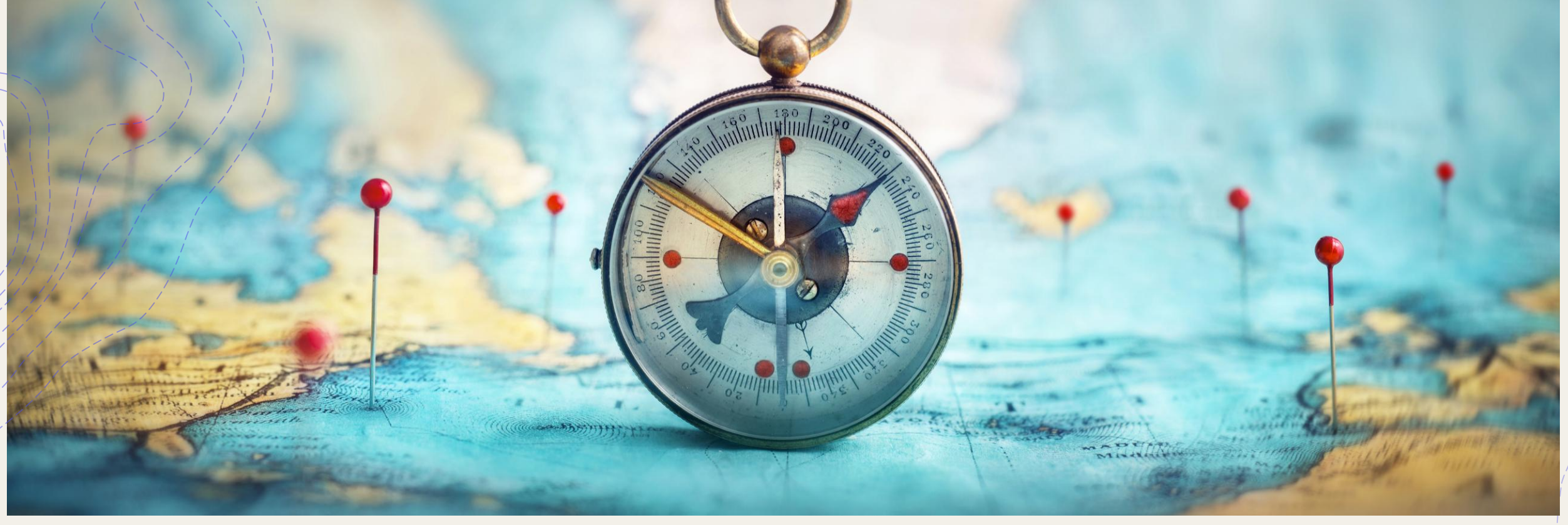
+ Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of others – a growing empathy, concern and compassion for how to treat others. Spiritual learners reflect on how their values and principles affect their relationships with others.



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 of beauty and the affect this has on their perception of and relationship with the world.





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.



Developing a common language



Planning for Spirituality

RE

Mirrors- Reflection on thoughts and feelings.

- Explore the idea that each person has a spirit which can be nurtured.
- Exploring stories from the Bible and World Faiths reflecting on thoughts and feelings, experiencing wonder and joy.
- Consider the impact of worship on self and others.
- Consider impact of spiritual practices on believers and how they influence our own lives.

Windows- Looking out

- Looking out at religious celebrations around the world, noticing similarities and differences across all World Faiths including Christianity.
- Asking 'Big Questions' based on what has been read- See Questful RE.
- Consider impact of worship on believers including events around the World.

Doors- Stepping out into the World)

- Developing our own faith journey- prayer and empowerment to follow own faith.
- Living out fundamental British Values.
- Worship Group leading Worship.
- All children living out our school vision and being the 'best that we can be'.


Thank You