



St Nicholas CE (VC)
First School

learning and believing, growing and achieving

Understanding Spirituality at St Nicholas CE First School

At St Nicholas CE VC First School we believe that spiritual development is not necessarily or exclusively religious but is a 'concern to foster the growth of the human spirit'. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is part of the National Curriculum expectations. We consider that spiritual development is about helping children to develop academically but more importantly personally so that they become well rounded and ready to take their place in society fulfilled, happy, spiritually aware and socially and emotionally engaged.

We believe that spirituality is essential for personal happiness. No child is complete without spiritual engagement, be it through art, music, literature, nature etc. One of the ways spirituality can be expressed is through the awareness or understanding of the value of silence and reflection. We therefore actively provide opportunities for our children to reflect and give them time to think more deeply about things to fully appreciate the world around them and to consider the contribution they can make to it.

Parents may think of Spirituality using the work of the Stapleford Centre in the nineties which still resonates true today at St Nicholas. Please see below:

David Smith 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.

This work was later taken by Liz Mills who again working with the Stapleford Centre developed the concept of the Spiritual Ring Doughnut.



The Doughnut represents the Whole Child. The outer ring is the tangible (Mind and Body), the hole represents the intangible (Spirit) but if there was no hole it wouldn't be a doughnut. This remains perhaps the best definition of spiritual development; it is the exploration and development of that hole in our centre that makes us whole.

Liz also took David Smith's work a stage further by refining the windows concept into a 'Windows Mirrors Doors'. Three openings for spiritual development that can be easily mapped across the curriculum and any planning document for that matter!



Windows: Opportunities to look out on the world to gaze and wonder: The Wow and Ows moments. The things we find amazing and bring us up short.

Encounter: The learning about life



Mirrors: Giving opportunities for children to reflect, to look inward to consider some of the big questions of life: To explore their own insights and those of others.

Reflection: The learning from.



Doors: Giving opportunities to children to respond, to do something to go through the door of a creative expression of their own thoughts and convictions.

Transformation: The learning to live by putting into action what they believe.

It is often said that Spirituality will only happen when we are open and willing to go deeper. At St Nicholas CE First School we try to develop spirituality by being creative and engaging, by enabling our pupils to connect with stories, by empowering our children to ask and respond to questions, by promoting play and creativity and by developing relationships, by providing a sense of belonging and by the use of prayer and symbols. Our school is set in beautiful surroundings which help our children to appreciate the world around them from the very beginning of their school journey.

There are many opportunities for parents to share spiritual activities with the school including church services and worship sessions in school.