

Spirituality policy

SMSC Guidance



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'If the spiritual 'is properly and fully addressed, the moral, social and cultural will fall into place more easily'

Alan Brown formerly of The National Society

SMSC: Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural.

Section 78 of the Education Act 2002.²⁹ states:

The curriculum for a maintained school or maintained nursery school satisfies the requirements of this section if it is a balanced and broadly based curriculum which: (a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and (b) prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The Expert Panel advising the Government on the National Curriculum review (published December 2011) affirmed these aims (page 14).

The most recent Ofsted inspection framework (January 2012) places SMSC as a central part of the judgement of a school's overall effectiveness. To be outstanding a school should ensure:-

The school's thoughtful and wide ranging promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to thrive in a supportive, highly cohesive learning community.

To be judged good a school should ensure

Deliberate and effective action is taken to create a cohesive learning community by promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It should be noted that in each of these statements the key word is promotion. Ofsted is seeking to review and establish Provision and Promotion of SMSC (the seriousness with which the school takes this aspect of the curriculum) rather than attempting to judge development of pupils.

The definitions of Moral, Social and Cultural development are fairly well understood in most schools, but the definition of Spirituality is much more open to debate. In its subsidiary guidance (January 2012) OFSTED attempt to define what they are looking for:-

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.*

In a church school it can be reasonably expected that spiritual development would be a considerable strength. Therefore the approach should seek to be at the very least 'deliberate and effective' but ideally 'thoughtful and wide ranging'. The guidance offered to schools on the next few pages seeks to help schools achieve these aims.

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Spiritual Development in Schools

The past few decades have seen considerable research on spiritual development in schools. What follows is a selection of perhaps the most influential in terms of impact on school practice and certainly in terms of development of diocesan policy.

The work of researchers like Rebecca Nye and David Hay helped establish the significance of spiritual development in educational policy but the academic debate didn't always translate into classroom practice, although it remains hugely significant in RE.

For many in schools spiritual development was a term that was limited to what the RE department did a lot of, (especially in that difficult Attainment target 2 bit), and what collective worship at its best did. There was a recognition that occasionally there were examples of 'Awe and Wonder' across the curriculum but these were ad hoc and notable for taking staff by surprise.

Approaches such as Michael Beesley's 'Stilling' became popular and helped establish a practical link in teacher's minds between spiritual development and improving teaching and learning (particularly pupil behaviour).

David Smith's work for the Stapleford Centre 'Making sense of Spiritual Development' 1999 helpfully presented a structure for mapping and 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.

His work was taken by teachers and applied to classrooms; perhaps most notably 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.

Using this approach, identifying and auditing provision becomes far easier. All teachers need to do is add a window, mirror or door symbol to their planning. (You can even buy little stamp blocks to make this easy or to annotate pupil work.)

However this only gives you an overview of what is provided ad hoc across the curriculum, you may be able to identify gaps but that is about all. To use Ofsted words this might be '*deliberate and effective*' but is it enough for '*Thoughtful and wide ranging*'?

Building on the best practice seen in schools Andrew Rickett, an experienced SIAMS inspector working with the diocese of Salisbury, has developed a series of grids to help not only with provision and promotion of spiritual development but with progression in experience as well.

This approach seeks to map opportunities for spiritual development across the curriculum based on the idea of 4 concepts of spirituality:-

- Self
- Others
- Beauty
- Beyond

The definitions of these terms may and indeed probably will vary from school to school. A church, for example, school might want to be more specific with the 'Beyond'. They may want to talk about concepts about God or maybe use terms like the Divine. This may be too strong for a community school. Whatever terminology is used the process that follows is the same.

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The starting point is the pupils own BIG questions about life. These feature in the Reflection section of the grids. Those questions printed are adapted from the work of Celia Morgan who as part of her Farmington Fellowship research gathered questions from Children and young people. They are a useful starting point but ideally schools might survey their student's big questions to use. These questions can then be structured in an age appropriate way to ensure progression.

With these reflection questions identified the school can then plan a series of encounters or openings for spiritual development, Windows if you prefer, that open up the possibility of reflection on the students big questions. This may be done at individual subject level or at a whole school level.

The transformation line may be left open to record some of the expressions of spiritual development that the students come up with. This may be Art work, written work or it may be actions such as supporting charities etc that students may take.

This approach not only gives Provision mapped but is *thoughtful and wide ranging* in its promotion of opportunities of spiritual development. It also builds in an element of progression in spiritual development.

Further Reading

Creating a Multi Sensory Spiritual Garden in your School: Shahne Vickery published by Jumping Fish Diocese of Gloucester 2009

Opening Windows: Spiritual Development in the Primary School; Published by 'The Stapleford Centre' 2002

Shaping the Spirit; Policy and Practice for promoting spiritual development in the educational context; ASK (Advisory Service Kent) 2009

Making sense of Spiritual Development: David Smith published by the Stapleford Centre 1999
Spiritual Development; the doughnut and the Hole: Liz Mills
www.crackingre.co.uk/htdocs/crackingre/secure/teachSupp/donut.html

Stilling: A pathway for Spiritual Learning in the National Curriculum; Michael Beesley : Available from the Salisbury Diocesan Board of Education Tel: 01722 428425 Fax: 01722 328010 Email: derek.holloway@salisbury.anglican.org

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