

# Spirituality in Denver School

## A Policy

At Denver VC School our shared Christian vision is to seek to discover and celebrate whatever is good in each individual through the values of

### Discover - Value - Celebrate - Praise



*Let your light shine (Matthew 5:16)*

Our vision influences the ethos of our school and the policies and practices within it. We believe that spirituality is a core thread that runs through our school, and we attach great importance to it for both children's development and for the growth and well-being of all within our school community.

We aim for children, and adults, to grow in their ability to:

- be guided by their beliefs and values, respect others and welcome difference
- 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 awe and wonder 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

*(From David Smith's work on Spiritual Capacities & amended through our discussions)*

### **Our working definition of 'spirituality'**

As a child, staff and governor team, we have agreed on a definition of spirituality in our school community to support us as we talk about spirituality. (Appendix 1)

Spirituality is about making sense of the world and our own experiences. It means:

**Wondering about life's big questions**

**Noticing the amazing things around us**

**Thinking about how we feel inside**

**Spirituality is about:**



Understanding ourselves (an awareness of our thoughts, feelings and what is important to us)



Thinking and caring about others (showing kindness, love, respect and understanding)



Appreciating the world's beauty (feeling awe and wonder at life, nature, art, music)



Thinking about things beyond us (asking questions about meaning, purpose and what might be 'more' than we can see to make sense of the world)

We have been working on developing a shared understanding of spirituality in our school community. Here is a photo of our spiritual space.



**Legal requirements:**

Section 78 of the Education Act 2002 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 SIAMS Schedule 2024 references spirituality in IQ3 'How do the theologically rooted Christian vision and the Anglican/Methodist foundation of the school shape worship and spirituality in the school?' The Church of England Vision for Education has a core desire for 'Life in all its fullness' (John 10:10) which requires educating the whole person.

The OFSTED framework 2024 states that provision for pupil's spiritual development is important as shown by this extract:

344. Inspectors will evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. This is a broad concept that can be seen across the school's activities but draws together many of the areas covered by the personal development judgement.

345. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils includes developing their:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs (religious or otherwise) and perspective on life
- knowledge of, and respect for, different people's faiths, feelings and values
- sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them
- use of imagination and creativity in their learning
- willingness to reflect on their experiences

## We support pupils in their spiritual development:

- through inclusion in collective worship.
- in RE
- in the wider curriculum e.g. outdoor learning
- By capturing opportunities for awe and wonder as they arise
- By providing 'Sacred Spaces' in classrooms, public spaces, outside, and by using the church building, and through the 'Prayer Spaces in School' website. Having a focussed prayer spaces week bi-annually.
- offering pupils opportunities to develop their own spiritual leadership, through leading collective worship and other opportunities

## As a staff team:

- We have a staff understanding of spiritual development.
- We have a culture within our school that recognises the importance of spirituality to individuals, both children and staff.
- We revisit spirituality as an area for consideration in our staff meetings and offer training.
- Our governors monitor the impact of our spirituality focus. They do this through their Foundation Committee Meetings, learning walks, Collective Worship Monitoring, conversations with staff and children
- We seek to provide guidance to support staff in this aspect of our curriculum.
- We ensure new staff are aware of our school policy on spiritual development.
- We use models to support our own thinking in spirituality, such as the 'Windows, Mirrors, Doors, Candle' approach. (Appendix 2)
- We have a variety of spiritual spaces both inside and outside the school building.
- We are aware of spiritual development shown across four key areas of Self, Others, Beauty and Beyond (Andrew Rickett / Rebecca Nye). (Appendix 4)

- We recognise that children will have different ‘Spiritual Temperaments’ or ‘Sacred Pathways, through the work of Gary Thomas (2010) and Myra Perrine (2007). This will influence our planning as we look to nurture spirituality across the curriculum, not just in RE and Collective Worship. (Appendix 3)
- We use the ‘Ricketts Grids’ to support our understanding of progression in spiritual development in these four areas of Self, Others, Beauty and Beyond. (Appendix 4)
- We are actively exploring an agreed language within our community that starts with our definition and nurtures an awareness of spirituality and its importance to support the well-being and development with the children.
- We aim to help each pupil to develop a spiritual understanding in terms of their own cultural context.
- We share with parents, whenever possible, the outcomes of our focus on spiritual development through newsletters, social media, displays and our website.
- We explore spirituality with our benefice and others who can further support our spiritual journey.

Our awareness and understanding of spiritual development will enrich what we offer to the children and to all in our school community. As part of increasing our understanding of spirituality we will develop a vocabulary which will assist our community to articulate our thinking as clearly as possible. We also acknowledge that sometimes there are no clear answers to some questions, and we will support children in dealing with this ambiguity.

Other related policies:

- RE
- Collective Worship
- Teaching and Learning
- Behaviour
- RSHE & citizenship
- Outdoor Learning
- All subject specific curriculum policies

This policy will be monitored by the governors as part of their monitoring schedule and will be shared in our wider community with parents, carers and our benefice. A key feature of the policy is that we will defend the right to be different in our beliefs, acknowledging that spirituality will be different for each person depending on their life experiences, cultural heritage, religious beliefs for example, all of which will enrich what we can offer to the children and all members of our school community.

## Appendix 1

At a staff meeting we explored what we thought Spirituality might be so we can use these ideas to develop our school definition.

Spirituality is about:

- Who we are?
- Light bulb moments
- Learning it is okay to make mistakes
- Being yourself
- Challenging prejudice and stereotypes
- Like standing on a beach looking out at the vastness of the ocean.
- Finding our place in the world
- Exploring how we fit in?
- Understanding why terrible things occur in the world?
- Opportunity to step out of the ordinary & look at the bigger picture
- Denver School's New Year resolution for 2025 is "Be creative in our thinking"
- Awe & wonder
- Mysteries
- Open mindedness
- Questioning & challenging
- Seeking a unique perspective
- Finding common ground

We developed a draft definition:

*"Spirituality is like standing on a beach looking out with awe and wonder at the vastness of the world. It is the exploration of who we are and how we can be ourselves: secure in uncertainty; thinking creatively; seeking common ground; exploring new perspectives and being open to*

*difference. In demonstrating our spiritual awareness, we will question and challenge ideas; seek and recognise 'light bulb' moments and be fearless in defending the right to be different."*

Once the draft definition and policy were developed staff worked with children to develop their understanding of the spiritual. At the end of this document there are several pages capturing the children's ideas which were then incorporated into our definition.

## Appendix 2: Model for the Spiritual Journey

### A Spiritual Journey

*'We touch on spirituality when we encounter an experience on life's journey that causes us to reflect on the deeper things in life, its meaning, and our purpose within it, and as a consequence our lives are transformed.'* Jon Westwood

#### Candle

**The starting point - Reflection and elicitation:** Thinking about current beliefs and practises.



#### Window

**Learning about - Encounter:** The 'learning about life in all its fullness'.

Opportunities to look out at the world to learn, to gaze, to wonder and become *aware* of the world in new ways; to wonder about life's 'WOWs' (things that are amazing) and 'OWs' (things that are worrying or upsetting).



#### Mirror

**Learning from - Reflections:** The 'learning from life' by exploring their own insights and perspectives, and those of others.

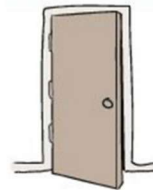
Opportunities for children to look inward and reflect on their experiences, to consider some of the BIG questions of life and consider some possible answers. To explore their own insights and those of others.



#### Door

**Transformation - Putting thoughts and ideas into action: and becoming Inspiring Change-makers** The 'learning to live by putting into action what you believe'.

Opportunities for children to respond, to DO something, to go through the 'door' of a creative expression of their own thoughts and convictions. The aim is to develop and nurture children who have the confidence to truly believe that they can make a difference in the world. To foster in them a spirit of agency and engagement with the world.



### Appendix 3: Spiritual Temperaments

1. **Naturalists:** *Communing with God Outdoors* - Naturalists feel closest to God when surrounded by what He has made.
2. **Sensates:** *Communing with God with the Senses* - Sensates feel closest to God when in services and activities where they are using all of their senses.
3. **Traditionalists:** *Communing with God through Ritual and Symbol* - Traditionalists feel closest to God when participating in spiritual activities that involve rituals, symbols, and liturgy.
4. **Ascetics:** *Communing with God in Solitude and Silence* - Ascetics feel closest to God when experiencing and enjoying God alone.
5. **Activists:** *Communing with God through Confronting Injustice* - Activists feel closest to God when standing up for His justice by confronting sin and social evil.
6. **Caregivers:** *Communing with God by Loving Others* - Caregivers feel closest to God when ministering to and serving the poor, sick, suffering, and grieving.
7. **Enthusiasts:** *Communing with God through Celebration and Joy.* - Enthusiasts feel closest to God when celebrating God and his love in their favourite form of worship.
8. **Contemplatives:** *Communing with God through Adoration* - Contemplatives feel closest to God when participating in prayer, adoration, and reflection on God's love.
9. **Intellectuals:** *Communing with God through the Mind* - Intellectuals feel closest to God when reading, studying, and learning something new about Him.

## Appendix 4: Ricketts Grids

### 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: Learning about life: providing openings for spiritual development through an exploration of identity and personal values.</b>			
RE – Being special <i>Exploring puzzling questions through persona dolls</i>	SEAL 3: Say no to bullying. SEAL 1: New beginnings RE – Myself <i>Engaging in Godly Play: I wonder questions.</i>	SEAL 5: Good to be me – understanding emotions and controlling them. <i>Stilling activities such as 'Problem in a Puddle' from Stilling</i>	SEAL 4: Going for goals – identifying strengths and weaknesses. Resilience – recovering from mistakes. <i>Creating spiritual pictures: e.g. entering Spirited Arts competition</i>
<b>Reflection: Learning from life: understanding an inner meaning of self and identity – critical reasoning and big questions.</b>			
What makes me happy? What do I do in my spare time that I like? What things do I value?	Who am I? What am I worth? What is right and wrong? How do I decide what is right and wrong?	What are feelings? Don't we deserve to be happy? What should I do about right and wrong? What do I deserve in life? Who should I look up to? What type of person do I want to be? What difference does being loved make? Is belief in something important? What rights do I have?	Should you respect yourself over all other things? Where does your identity come from? Does more mean being happier? Is my understanding self a selfish concept? Are the opinions of my friends important to me? Are my beliefs important?
<b>Transformation: Learning to live life: responding as a means of expressing an idea of self: developing a personal set of beliefs.</b>			
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 shape 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			
RE - Being special	SEAL 2: getting in and falling out – building successful relationships. SEAL 6: Relationships RE – Belonging <i>Engaging in Godly Play: I wonder questions.</i>	SEAL 2: Developing positive behaviour towards others. SEAL 7: Changes – how influence can be both positive and negative. The importance of decision making. <i>Engaging with parables and the teachings of Jesus i.e. Good Samaritan/ Sermon on the mount</i> <i>Reflection on stories such as If the world were a village</i>	SEAL 4: Going for goals – understanding other peoples' views. Learning to get on with different types of people. SEAL 7: Changes – learning to accept different opinions and beliefs. <i>Stilling activities such as The conflict from Stilling</i> <i>Exploring the role of Christian reformers in combating slavery in the past (and today).</i>
<b>Reflection:</b> Learning from life: understanding an awareness of the affect of others – a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
What makes a good friend? Why are my friends important to me? What do I like in my friends? How do my friends make me feel? How do I look after my friends and family?	Why do people bully others? How do I treat others? Do I treat other people in the same way? Should I treat everyone in the same way? Should I treat my friends differently to others? Why do we fight and argue? Should we always be loyal to our friends? How can I demonstrate compassion?	Why do people ignore others when they need help? Is being a good friend easy? Why do we sometimes hurt the feelings of our friends? How sincerely can I care for those who may be in need but I have never met? Why should we care for them? Will we ever live in a world without fighting? What responsibilities do I have for others?	Is it better to please oneself first; or others? Why do people have to suffer? What is pain? Is there such a thing as a bad person? What is worth striving for? Why isn't life always fair? Is being fair always that right thing to do? Does more mean being happier?
<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 of 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			
Art Music Science RE: What makes a special place? <i>Collect and make a creation table of natural objects found outside</i>	Art Music Science Geography RE: Have people spoiled a good earth? <i>Engagement with creation stories from Christian and other traditions</i>	Art Music Science Geography <i>Exploring diversity within the created world environments; Natural world DVD</i>	Art, Music, Science Geography <i>How have we made Gods world ugly? What can we do? Explore through stories like The man who planted trees by Jean Giono</i> <i>Plan and design a spiritual garden for the school</i>
<b>Reflection:</b> Learning from life: reflecting on experiences of beauty – a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
What types of weather do you like the most and why? What is your favourite colour and why? What sounds do you like to listen to? What makes you afraid? What is your favourite time of day/season?	Do different colours have different moods? What gives them these moods? What is the most beautiful thing in the world? Why should I care about animals and plants? How/why does the weather affect our mood?	How do we know we've found all the colours in the world? What season do you feel most reflects your personality What is the difference between hearing and listening? Should we try to tame nature? What does it mean that beauty is in the eye of the beholder? What would it be like without seasons?	What is a perfect world? Why is there ugliness in the world? Can you love something that is ugly? Why do you like certain types of music? What response do you get when you look at a piece of art? Is beauty something that you can learn, or do you just have to feel it? What is the point in being creative?
<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

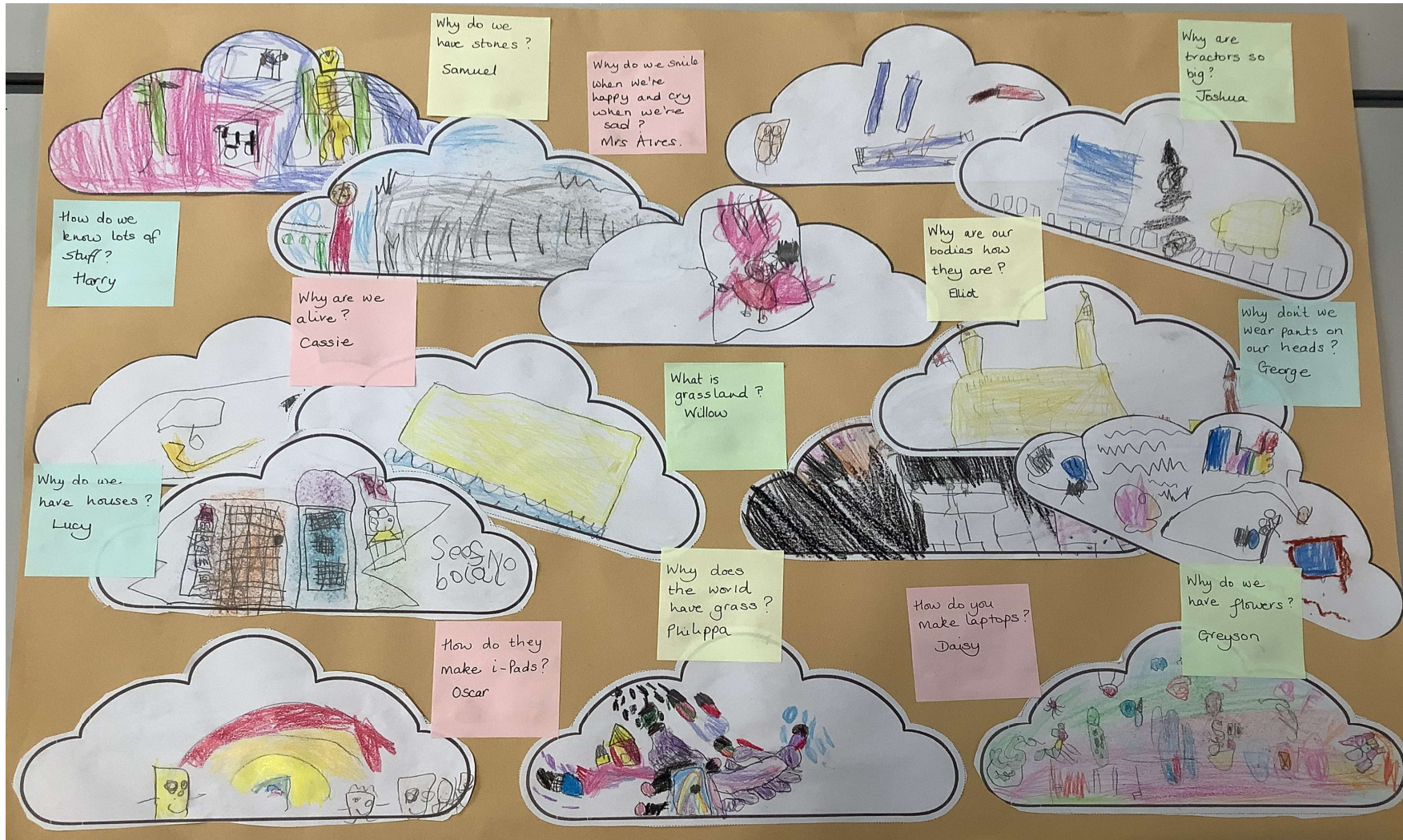
Spiritual learners become increasingly aware of the concept of the beyond – a growing relationship with the transcendental and the ability to explore experiences beyond the everyday. Spiritual learners search for meaning in their very existence and their place in the greater scheme of things.

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			
Art Music Drama <i>Becoming aware of worship through collective worship in school.</i>	RE – Beliefs <i>Engaging in Godly play : I wonder questions.</i> <i>Visiting local church; exploring the senses of worship in church touch, colour, smell sound, stillness.</i>	Science – life processes <i>Exploring children's stories that deal with death i.e Heaven by Nicolas Allen / Badgers Parting Gifts by Susan Varley</i> <i>Explore Symbolism of The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe.</i> <i>Visiting different churches comparing senses of worship.</i>	RE - Easter RE - Beliefs and questions RE - Journey of life and death: what difference does belief in life after death make? <i>Creating Spiritual pictures to express ideas about God. i.e entering Spirited Arts competition</i> <i>Reflecting on Death rituals connected with Christian and other traditions</i> <i>Visiting Salisbury Cathedral exploring senses of worship.</i>
<b>Reflection:</b> Learning from life: reflecting on the beyond – a search for meaning, critical reasoning and big questions			
What are the stars for? Why do we have rainbows? How big is the sky? What is the smallest thing there is? Why are people different? What does God look like?	Where is God? What might heaven be like? Is there such a thing as an angel? If you can't see something, is it still real? What is true happiness? When have you experienced moments of awe and wonder?	What is the purpose of the earth? Is God alive now? Why is there illness? Why do destructive things, like earthquakes, have to happen? Which is stronger – love or hate? Is it good that scientists can't explain everything? Why are there religions? What is beyond the universe?	Do we come back after death as a different being? Is there life after death? Where do our spirits go when we are dead? Do we have a soul? If so, what happens to it after death? Why do we love? What lasts forever? What is unknowable? What else is there to discover? How do we know what we don't know? What is worth dying for?
<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

## Appendix 5: Relevant reading

- Church of England Education Office (CEEO) [Spiritual Development – Interpretations of Spiritual Development in the Classroom \(2019\)](#)
- [Understanding Your Spiritual Temperament - Gary Thomas](#)

# Class 1 Views on Spirituality







I think spirituality means to have a very strong belief about some thing.

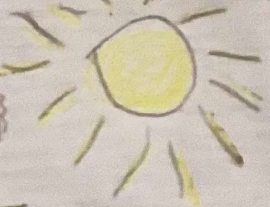
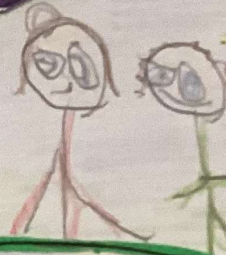
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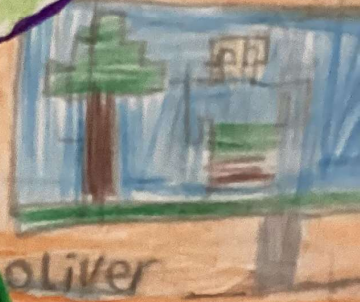
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Libby



OLIVER



LEO

I think spirituality means being happy

I feel inner peace when I'm hugging my older

MATTHEW

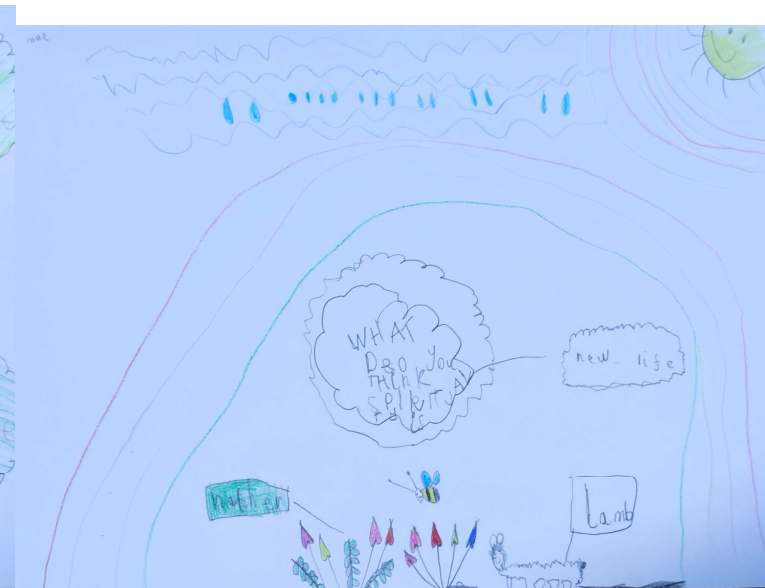
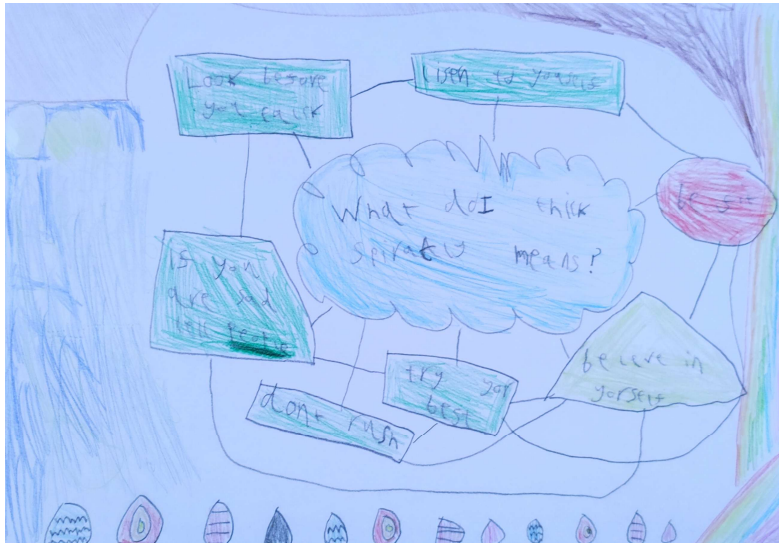
I feel spiritually happy when I am with my mum and my dog Teddy out walking in the fresh air on a lovely sunny day

I feel a connection to the world around me when I'm in the garden

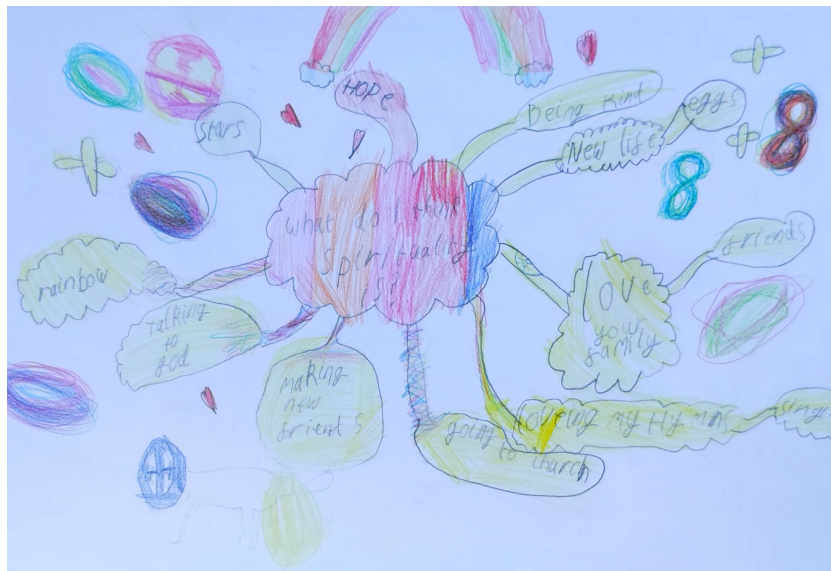
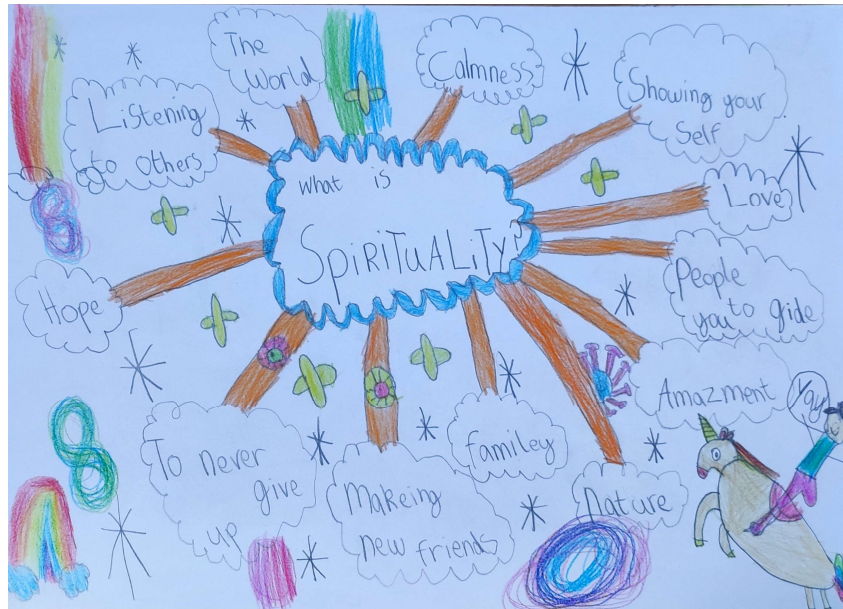
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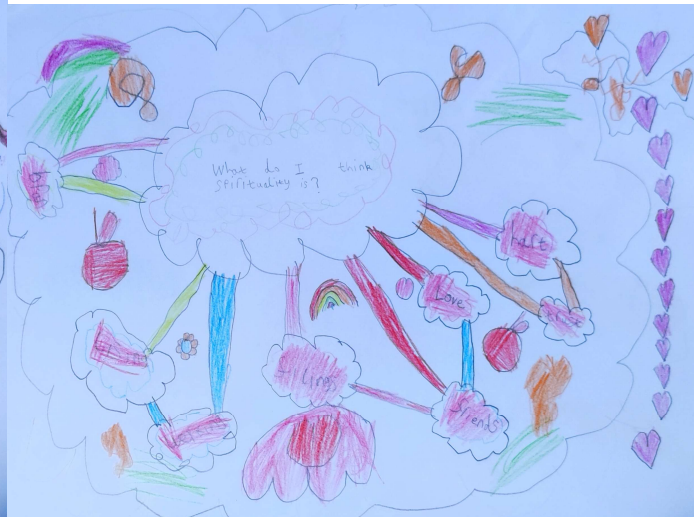
spirituality is like standing on top of the world

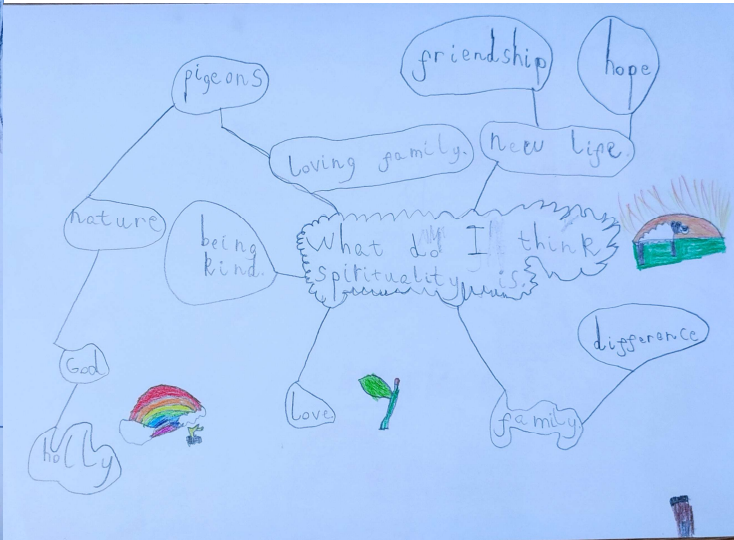
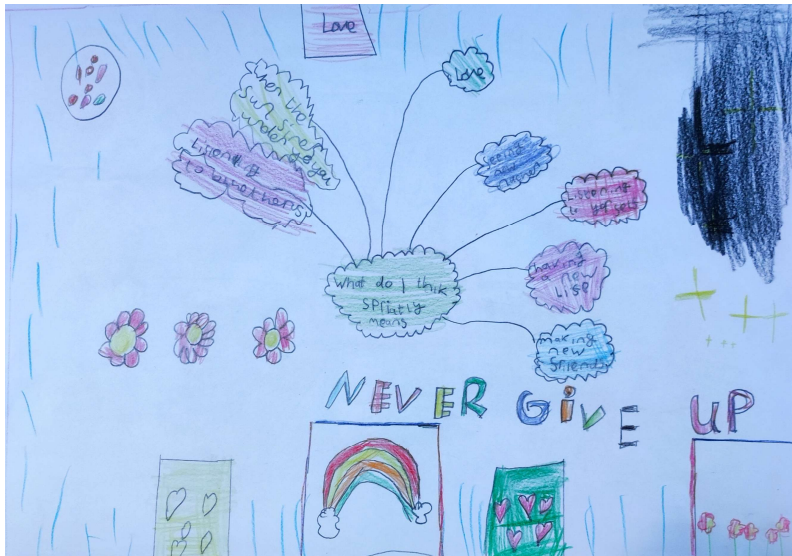
Class 2 Views on Spirituality:











Class 4 held a discussion on Spirituality and elicited the following responses:

The idea of finding things fascinating.

Not just what we see but how it makes us feel.

Our relationships with each other and how we can connect to support others in the world.

Trying to find answers and make sense of the bigger, unexplained ideas and questions.

Why are we here? Were we here to help make connections?