



Love, Inspire, Flourish, Embrace

At Stanion Church of England Primary School we have recognised the importance of supporting our children to grow and flourish spiritually. We have looked at specific ways that we can support the spiritual growth of our children and we began by considering what spirituality means to each of us. Defining spirituality proved challenging for all of us! However, we all agreed that spirituality involved an awareness of something greater than ourselves. We also recognised that it involved moments and experiences of awe and wonder in our own lives and in the wider world, and involved connection and reflection. We shared some definitions of spirituality, as well as attempting our own:

What on Earth is Spirituality?

I think that spirituality is to try and see light in the dark and see the light clearly and expand the light until it overpowers darkness. Hope is the roots of Spirituality and what you believe strengthens your understanding.

It is the experiences we have had that have had an effect on our lives, and the values that we live by.

Spirituality is often hard to explain but my definition is that it is a belief in something beyond ourselves. This can be linked to Religion and God but also the 'Awe and Wonder' of the natural world.

It is a feeling or a belief that we are part of a wider community. It is the way we view life and the relationships we have with different people. It is how we link with and explore and understand nature.

The feeling or sense that there is something beyond the self. A connection to nature and the world around. An awareness of self and our connections.

It's about believing and loving everything around you not necessarily what you can see but what can come on the inside as well

"I think spirituality makes you calm and peaceful. To me, it means taking a moment to think about what you have."

Spirituality

To me, Spirituality is quiet time to myself to think about the important and special moments.

Spirituality

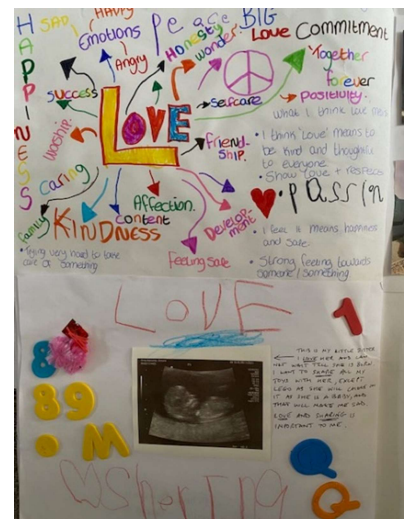
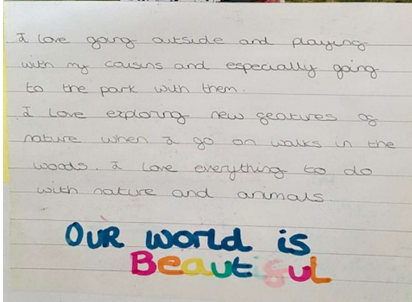
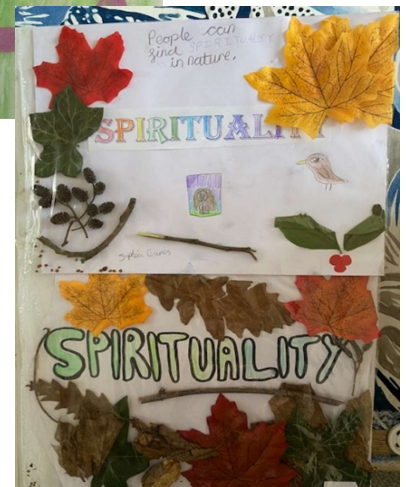
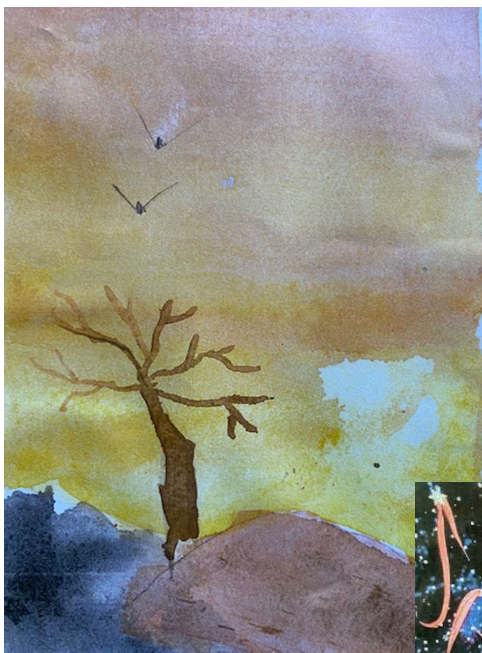
This means to me that everyday life there could be a special moment that makes you go NOW.

Our children considered what spirituality means to them by engaging in activities, experiences and reflection at home, at school and at church. The children responded with such creativity and thoughtfulness, and engaged in conversations with their families as well as their friends, teachers, governors and our vicar. It felt important that they had the opportunity to share their responses, so these were put together in a book for all to enjoy.

We agreed that Spirituality can involve those 'wow' moments of awe and wonder but that sometimes 'ow' moments can also lead to spiritual growth as we strive to mend things to make them stronger and more beautiful. We all recognised the importance of being present 'in the moment' - times that we refer to as 'now' moments.

Spirituality also involves increasing our understanding of ourselves and our connections with others, as well as seeing and relating to the physical and creative world. We also recognised that it involves relating to, and increasing our understanding of, those experiences that are outside the 'every day'.

No wonder it was hard to put into words! Many of us expressed our spiritual understanding in pictures and together our responses have enabled us all to show a greater depth of understanding of what it means to grow and develop spiritually. Our shared family and community responses have been collected together in a book for all to share. Here is a small selection :



"To me, Spirituality means beauty and calm."

"I think LOVE is at the centre of being Spiritual."

The school continued to work in close partnership with the Church of St Peter's and the vicar, Heather Lowe. Heather talked to the children about spirituality during Collective Worship, and explained the significance of a range of activities that the children would experience within the church building, with the focus on spiritual development.

Every class of children enjoyed some very special activities within the church building, and they had the opportunity to experience spirituality in so many different ways.

We could try all the activities- or focus on just a few. The important thing was that we had the opportunity to experience wow moments, ow moments and now moments- and reflect on the impact of all of these in enabling our spiritual growth.

Heather's thoughtful planning ensured that the spirituality became more relevant and meaningful for everyone- adults and children.

"After going to church I felt calm and peaceful. It made me think that spiritual moments happen in everyday things, like watching things grow and looking at nature."

"I felt that I have more understanding of how to be calm, and to think of things that would help me if I am feeling a bit worried."

"I enjoyed all the activities and they all made me think of things in different ways. It made me think of bigger things than me."

As adults, we were also encouraged to think about spirituality in so many different ways:

"Spirituality is very personal to each of us and we have all been on a very special journey. Our time in Church and in School has enabled us to immerse ourselves in the experiences planned by Heather and Sandy, rather than focussing on an outcome; being able to enjoy the 'Now' gave the children the opportunity to reflect and come up with some very insightful comments and questions. Our children make me proud every day and although we haven't come up with a specific definition of Spirituality, we have learnt that there is no right or wrong answer. We have all grown spiritually through the process, deepening our awareness and understanding. A truly special experience!" (Amanda de Choisy, Chair of Governors)

Heather herself was so impressed with the way that the children responded, and used some of their responses within the Sunday sermon that week. She also confirmed the positives of such close church-school partnerships for all involved.

"It was a wonderful opportunity to have the children in the church and for them to have some time pondering prayer and spirituality in different ways."

"The children and staff have thoroughly enjoyed our Spirituality project and have gained a deeper understanding of Spirituality. Having spoken with the children, they all value the experiences offered to them both in church and in school. Revd Heather, Sandy Ettridge and the ethos committee have all worked hard to provide memorable learning opportunities for our children to grow and develop their appreciation of our wonderful world." (Wayne Jones, Head Teacher)

Some of the activities are outlined below:

PLANTING SEEDS

'Keep them warm and in the light. Keep them damp. What do you hope for as you watch them grow? How does it make you feel?'

Responses from the children included:

"There is something wonderful about watching things grow. As I planted seeds I wondered about what they would be. I felt curious. I always feel thankful for plants and flowers."



REFLECTION

As well as planting seeds, the children took a paper bulb to write on:

'Take a paper bulb to write on. Ask God to help someone you know or a country where you know people are struggling. You can ask God to make things better or make you better. Sometimes prayers take a long time to be answered. Sometimes they may not be answered as we would like. But God is always with us as well as with the person we are praying about. Give your request to God by planting it in the sand.'

We let the sand run through our fingers as we 'planted' the bulbs. This made us feel calmer and more peaceful, "It felt like God was listening."

CELTIC KNOTS

Celtic knots are special shapes, created using just one thread. You can't tell where the knot begins and ends. This reminds us that God has no beginning and no end.

'With your finger see if you can trace the patterns. You will see that the designs are continuous and also complicated.'

"This activity showed me that God's love goes on and on and on."

"God's love goes on for ever. It never ends."

"It made me feel happy and calm inside. It's really good to feel loved, and to know that God loves me all the time."



FEELING THANKFUL, FEELING CONNECTED

The children wrote onto colourful flowers, sharing all the things that they were grateful for. They folded in the leaves and placed the flowers on water. They watched as the petals opened:

"Our flowers opened up and our thank yous went to God."

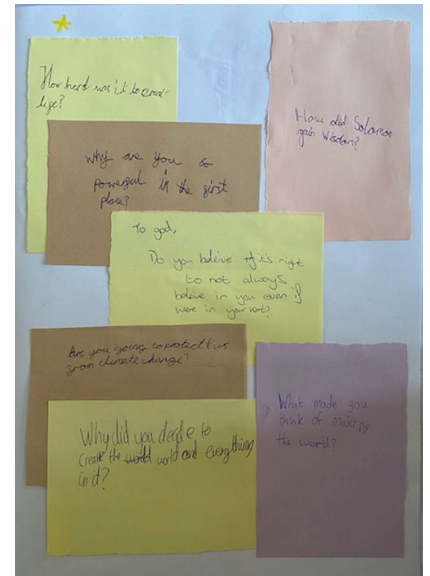
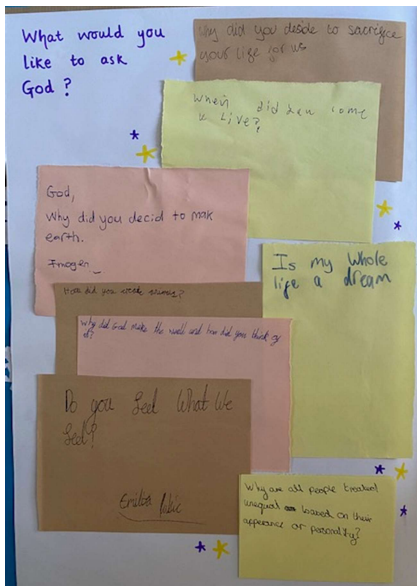
"It made me think about how important it is to say thank you."

"I felt lucky to have so many things to say 'Thank you' for. It's lucky because all the things I love most are with me every day. Sometimes you just forget to notice."



WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK GOD?

The children thought about questions that they would like to ask God if they had the chance:



BEAUTY IN NATURE

We had all recognised the importance of appreciating the beauty of nature as part of our spiritual growth. In this activity, the children looked specifically at the beauty of snowflakes. The children were reminded that the beauty of nature is unique and special, with every snowflake a beautiful crystal- and no two the same. As the children made their own snowflakes, they reflected on the amazing patterns in nature.

"If everything was the same it would feel ordinary."

"Each and every snowflake is unique. That is so interesting and incredible."

"It's like us. It shows we are all different and that we are all special and unique."

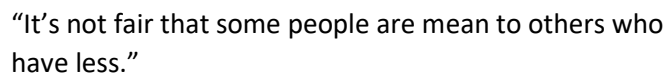
"I love finding patterns in Nature. Sometimes we forget to see the amazing things that are all around us."



'As we thread the different coloured beads we are going to think or pray about different things or people. We will do this thoughtfully and see what comes into our minds. The bracelet we will make can be used to help us pray today and every day.'

"I like that I can just pray in my head. I don't have to say anything out loud, but it's still a prayer."

Sometimes we can grow spiritually by the way we respond to things that are wrong. We thought about some things that don't seem fair and we wrote these onto the graffiti wall. We thought about the way we could respond to some of things that we have identified.



The experiences in Church led to so many thoughtful responses within school, and adults and children reflected on the impact of our understanding of spirituality within our daily lives. As a school, we planned a range of further activities to enable our children's spiritual growth to continue. We shared the 'wows', 'ows' and 'nows' that we experience within our lives and reflected further about this within school.

Our youngest children looked at the 'wow' of our wonderful environment, and created some wow moments of their own!

WOW...



They created 'magic' pictures for everyone to enjoy and share. We all said 'WOW!' and decided to be more aware of the nature around us- and create some magic pictures of our own.



In Key Stage 1, the children focussed on those 'ow' moments, where our spiritual journey is about healing when things go wrong. We talked about how broken things can be fixed so that they are even more beautiful than before, as in the art of Kintsugi pottery. We also referred to the broken pots in Jeremiah, which looked so beautiful when the light shone through the cracks. Our children created their own beautiful pictures and candle holders from broken and ripped pictures. We think they looked even more beautiful than before.

"Everything can get broken. The important thing is to love each other and help to put things right. Then it can be even stronger and better."

Our children in Years 3 and 4 responded thoughtfully to 'wow', 'ow' and 'now' statements, and thought about their relevance within their own lives. We shared all of their responses within the shared book and within Collective Worship.



"It felt important to think about things that were special in my life right now."

"I thought about ways I could make the world a better place and it has made me think of lots of things I can do to help."

"Small things can make a difference- to us and to others."

"It made me think about the importance of every moment."

"We should always try to make the best of everything that we have."

"We are all unique and special and our world is a unique and special place."



Our oldest children thought about ways to define what spirituality means to each of us, by reflecting on the wow, ow and now moments in our everyday lives. The response of every child showed the depth of their spiritual understanding, and we have shared all the responses in our 'Spirituality' book. We will use these poems, prayers and reflections as part of our spiritual journey within school, and we will share them together in Collective Worship as part of this.

We have combined some of their responses to create a reflective overview of what Spirituality means to us at Stanion Church of England Primary School:

Mysterious God

Most of the time we can explain what happens in the world by science
But sometimes we may see a glimpse of something beyond:
The joy of seeing a sparkling rainbow growing in the sky,
The excitement of going to school every day, wondering what we will learn,
The delight of watching things grow, live happily and flourish.
In these **wow** moments, help us to be aware of something greater than ourselves
Finding understanding through reflection and prayer.

Comforting God,

Most of the time we feel safe and secure
But sometimes life can be difficult and painful
The emotion of knowing that you need to keep going even when you are at your lowest,
The sadness of losing a loved one,
The bravery to step into the darkness and to face your fears.
In these **ow** moments, help us to be brave in the way we look after ourselves
and others,
Seeking support through reflection and prayer.

Constant God,

Most of the time we are busy running or learning or playing,
But sometimes it's good simply to be in the moment,
To think about NOW
The quiet of lying in a field of flowers that never
ends, looking at the evening sky,
The peace of falling snow, lying in my bed under
a blanket of calm.
The chance to help myself and others so that
happiness is everywhere.
In these **now** moments, help us to enjoy each moment,
Finding happiness through reflection and prayer.

Throughout this project we have all enjoyed reflecting, sharing and growing together in our understanding and awareness of the importance of spiritual growth. We have not arrived at a precise definition as we believe that every individual response is valuable. We have arrived at a shared understanding through the depth of the work that we have done within our school and wider community. We all agree that Stanion Church of England Primary School values and supports spiritual growth and that this is an integral part of the flourishing of every member of our community.