

The National Church of England Academy approach to spirituality

MITRE approach to spirituality

We define Spirituality as:

- Exploring the meaning of life and developing a sense of awe and wonder for the world we live in and beyond.
- Exploring of our unique nature, developing our minds, bodies and souls, and celebrating our sense of self within the context of our local and global communities.
- Having opportunities to ask 'what if' questions, to challenge our own thinking and consider the views of others.
- Spirituality is not dependent on a religious belief but is a part of what it means to be human.
- Spirituality is not confined to a single subject or activity; it is spread across the curriculum and encompasses all aspects of school life.

Academy Vision

Our approach to spirituality is driven by our Christian vision of 'Life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

What is spirituality?

Spirituality relates to fundamental questions about the meaning and purpose of life. It is not dependent on religious beliefs. It includes the universal search for individual and communal identity. Spirituality is an innate human capacity. It is not about becoming more spiritual in a measurable sense. It is about realising or becoming more aware of our natural, innate spirituality. Students do not reach a finished state of spiritual development but participate in the ongoing process of spiritual realisation.

According to Rebecca Nye, author of 'Children's Spirituality: What it is and why it matters', spirituality can be defined as relational awareness. That means awareness of your relationship with:

Self (being a unique person and understanding self-perception)

Others (how empathy, concern, compassion and other values and principles affect relationships)

World and Beauty (perceiving and relating to the physical and creative world through responses to nature and art)

Beyond – (relating to the transcendental and understanding experiences and meaning outside the 'everyday')

Spiritual development of students is not the specific responsibility of RS. There are opportunities for enhancing the spiritual well-being of learners in every aspect of school life. There are four areas which support the spiritual development of our students:

- Our school ethos, driven by our Christian vision and ARCH values
- Collective worship
- The whole curriculum (including, but not reliant upon RS)
- Our pastoral support system

Definition for students and website

Spirituality is about thinking about big questions, like **Why are we here?** and **What is the purpose of life?** It is not just about religion—people can be spiritual even if they don't follow a religion. Spirituality also means trying to understand **who we are**, both as individuals and as part of a group or community. Everyone has the ability to be spiritual naturally. It is not something you can measure. Instead, it is about becoming more aware of these thoughts and feelings over time. You don't reach a final stage where you are "fully developed" spiritually. Instead, you are always learning, growing, and thinking more deeply about life.

Approach to developing spirituality at National Church of England Academy

As a Church of England school, we aim to develop spirituality within our Christian vision and ARCH values. It is an integral part of our SMSC policy. As Alan Brown states in 'Teaching not just facts, but values: Letter to Church times 3rd October 1997', if the 'spiritual is properly and fully addressed, the moral, social and cultural will fall into place more easily'.

Our school ethos

- We encourage students to live out our ARCH values of achievement, respect, charity, humility, service and wisdom.
- We encourage students to admit mistakes, say sorry and show forgiveness to others.
- Our annual 'Big Questions' week gives students the opportunity to explore questions such as 'is the Bible relevant today?', 'who can I trust?', 'how can I make a difference in the world?'
- There are displays around the school that celebrate and encourage reflection and spirituality.

Collective Worship

- Collective worship themes are planned an academic year in advance, based on our Christian vision and values but can be adapted as required as specific needs arise.
- Our Academy Chaplain is available to discuss issues of spirituality with students and staff.
- We offer a range of collective worship opportunities, including year group acts of worship, smaller encounter services, thought for the day and end of term services.
- We have a range of special services throughout the year, such as the Y7 welcome service, Y11 celebration service and Y13 leavers service.
- We offer regular opportunities for prayer and reflection.

The whole curriculum

- We aim to have an inspiring and motivating RS curriculum.
- We encourage educational visits to develop spirituality. Recent examples include, RS places of worship visit, Battlefields, London, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Geography field work to local geographical places of interest, Yorkshire Wildlife Park.
- We track how subjects develop spirituality through our SMSC tracking system. All subjects are responsible for planning for spiritual development through their curriculum areas.

Pastoral support system

- Our Academy Chaplain is an integral part of our pastoral support system.
- We encourage students to reflect on their actions.

- We promote the importance of relationships. We explain that how we talk to and relate to people is vital.
- We see all students as 'individuals, who are unique in the eyes of God.

Staff spirituality

As part of our vision, we offer staff opportunities to engage with spiritual development. Examples include:

- Prayer time in meetings
- Staff prayer meetings
- Wellbeing sessions as part of the CPD package
- The Academy Chaplain and wider members of the chaplaincy team are available to discuss spiritual issues.
- Time for reflection

Our shared language of spirituality

WINDOWS – Understanding the world

- What are the key facts and perspectives on this issue?
- What do I find challenging or difficult to understand about this?
- What stands out to me as important or inspiring, and why?

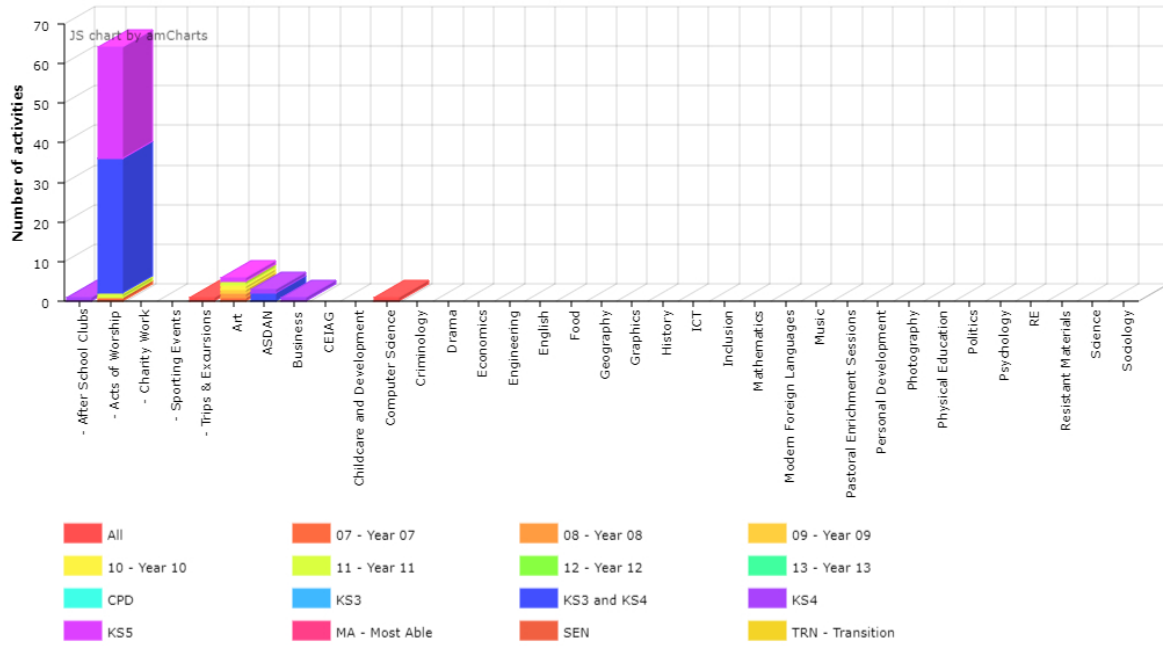
MIRRORS – Reflecting on my thinking

- What do I actually think about this, and why do I think that?
- How does this make me feel, and what might be influencing that reaction?
- How do my experiences, beliefs, or background shape my opinion?
- What can I learn from other people's viewpoints, especially those different from mine?

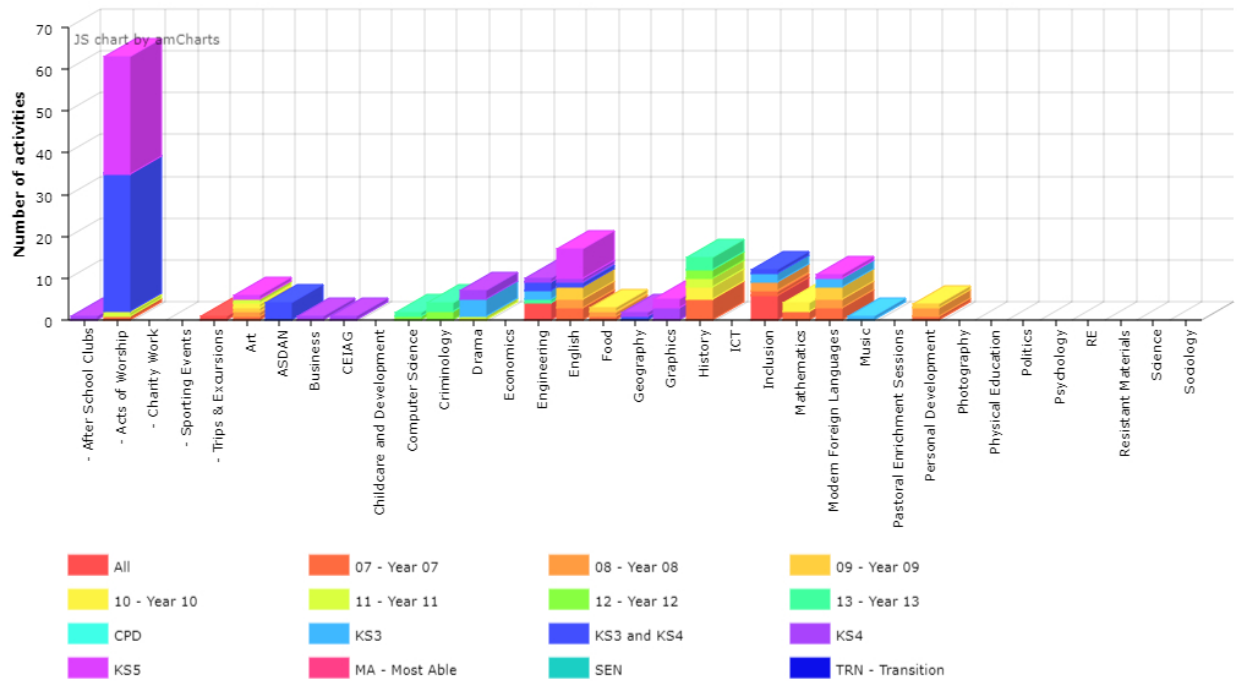
DOORS – Taking action

- What have I learned that I can take forward from this?
- How could I respond in a thoughtful or responsible way?
- Where can I go to find more reliable information or different perspectives?
- What is one realistic action I could take this week to apply what I've learned?

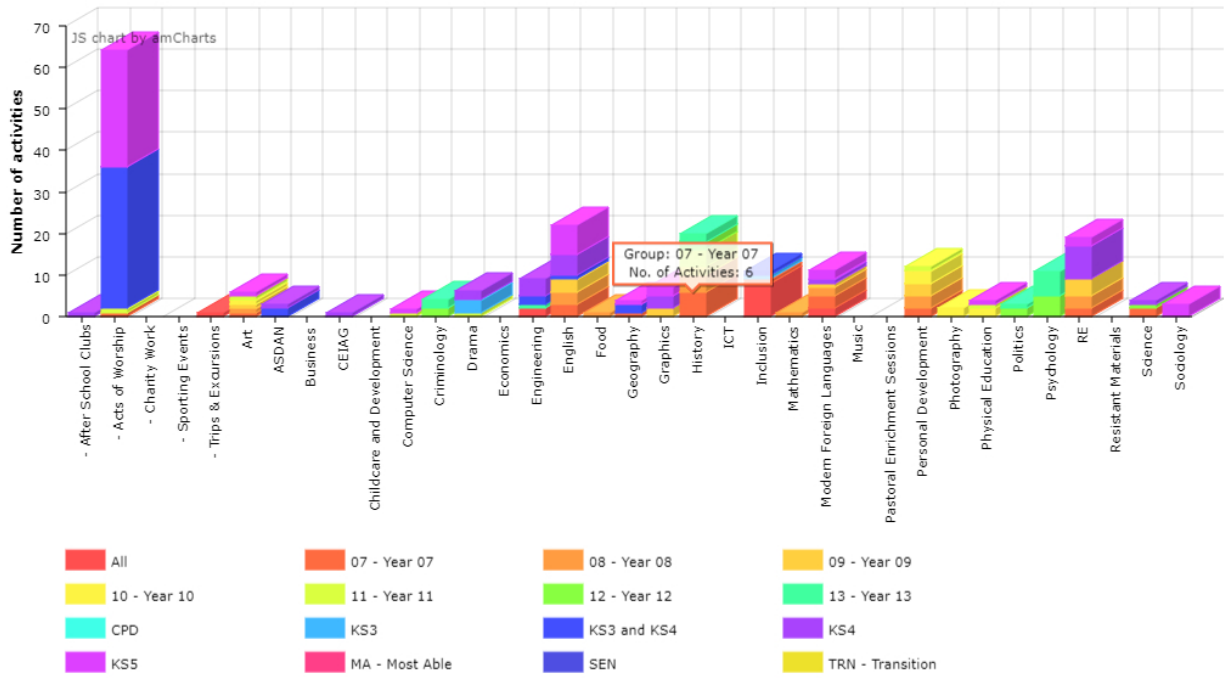
SPIRITUAL: Respecting different people's faiths, feelings and values



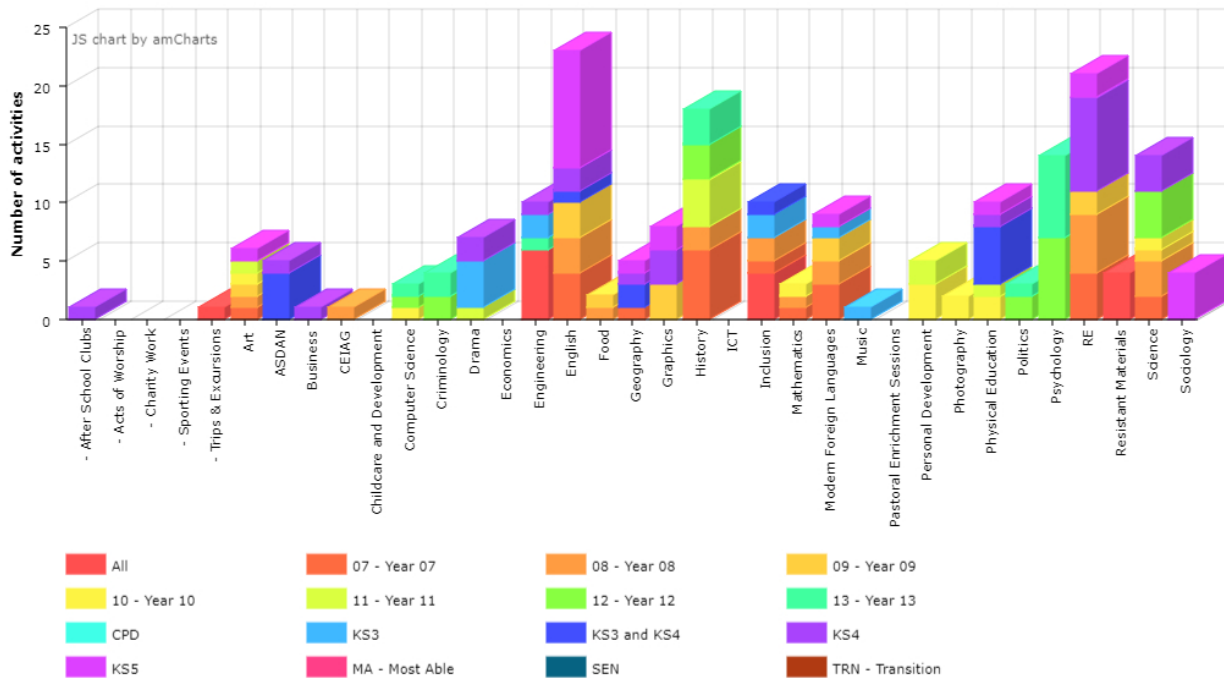
SPIRITUAL: Reflecting on experiences



SPIRITUAL: Reflecting about their own beliefs and perspective on life



SPIRITUAL: Experiencing enjoyment and fascination in learning



How do we know this is effective?

Some of the examples we look for to show that students are developing spiritually are:

- Good relationships throughout the school
- Student voice, e.g. trip feedback / reflections
- Engagement with social action and charity projects.
- Willingness to participate in debates and engage with 'Big Questions'
- Ability to express and understand feelings
- Engagement with times of reflection
- Displays of creativity
- Evidence of enjoyment in learning new skills and concepts
- Use of imagination in learning
- Respect of different faiths, feelings, and values

Review

To review our approach to spirituality, we regularly ask ourselves the questions below, as suggested by Anne Lumb in her article 'spirituality: the oven fabric of school life?'

- In our school, where are learners given the space to wonder and ask questions; to imagine a better world and to think of ways of making it better?
- In what ways are learners developing the skills to live with mystery – knowing there are not always answers to questions and that that is ok?
- What is the balance between 'being' and 'doing'?
- How are learners being encouraged to develop a sense of self and identity which they are comfortable with?
- In what ways are learners able to relate well to others?
- How are learners encouraged to develop a sense of awe and wonder about the natural world which extends to action to protect and nurture that world?
- Where and when are learners given meaningful opportunities to consider the existence of God or a 'divine other' beyond what can be seen?
- In what ways are learners encouraged to 'never stop asking questions'?

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