

Spirituality at Bishop Wordsworth's School:

'Inspiration: breathing life in in all its fullness'

In seeking to crystallise our understanding of spirituality at Bishop Wordsworth's School, we consulted a number of different models, reports and authors¹. Some of these documents are over 30 pages long and we rejected them because:

- we felt they were too complicated to gain reach and traction in a school community. We wanted whatever definition we used to be understood and recognised, owned and valued by all staff and students.
- As one long document ironically puts it: *"To talk about spirituality is, essentially, to talk about something that is beyond words"*². Over-defining spirituality is futile and potentially counter-productive if it becomes too theoretical.

We therefore decided to return to basics: to the Biblical root of the word spirit and to the rich, inclusive word "**Inspiration**" for our understanding of spirituality.

The word Spirit comes from the Hebrew word, *ruach*, that can be translated as the eternal 'breath of wind', sweeping across the waters at Creation and later sent at Pentecost (Acts 2). In Genesis, God breathes into the first human and this is what gives life: *"man became a living soul"* because of it (Genesis 2:7). Just as respiration is breathing, and expiration is when breathing and life stops, so *inspiration* is breathing life in.

At Bishop's, as a Church School we are not just concerned with academic results, or measuring success by material gain, but with helping all who belong to our community to **breathe in life in all its fullness**. We are committed to all students, of Christian faith, other faiths or no faiths coming to recognise that inspiration is as natural and as life-giving as our breathing.

The dominance of Salisbury Cathedral Spire over our school makes us look up and beyond, to recognise that there is something beyond. It inspires us. So does the grandeur of the Cathedral when we are together in our regular services, or when we take Year 7s on a trip up the Cathedral tower and allow them to see how small school looks from above. So does BWS adventure, as boys go out at midnight under a starlit sky at Great Yews, or deep underground at Pencelli. So does singing a Mozart Mass, working tirelessly on an Art piece over months. So does reading and discovering inspiration in a poem, in a historical figure or the complexity of the cosmos in Physics or the wonder of the Fibonnaci sequence. Spirituality for us is enabling every student, every member of our community, to constantly bump into inspiration, to name it and be changed by it. Spirituality for us is doing that alongside each other, so that as our theologically rooted vision states, we 'grow together' (Ephesians 4:25).

¹ Church of England, (2019), Spiritual Development: Interpretations of spiritual development in the classroom; Diocese of Norwich, (2022), Spirituality in Schools; Diocese of Guildford, (2022), Thinking about RE and your school's Christian vision: Windows, Mirrors, Doors
Spencer, M (2012) What is spirituality. Royal College of Psychology

² Diocese of Norwich (2022), Spirituality in Schools, p.2.