Spirituality in the English curriculum

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Spirituality is about seeking a meaningful connection with something bigger than oneself, which can result in positive emotions, such as peace, awe and wonder. Spirituality enables our children to be happy; to flourish, to succeed and to live life in all its fullness.

Planned opportunities
In English, planned opportunities for spirituality focus on enhancing children's understanding of themselves, their relationships with others, their connection to the world, and their grasp of concepts beyond the immediate and tangible. This holistic approach ensures that English contributes to both intellectual and spiritual growth. Self: English lessons help children develop self-awareness and emotional intelligence. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), learning to read and write involves exploring emotions and personal experiences through stories and characters. For instance, reading picture books about diverse characters allows children to see reflections of themselves, fostering self-recognition and empathy. As they progress, writing personal narratives in Year 6 helps students articulate their thoughts and feelings, promoting self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their own identity. Others: English provides numerous opportunities for understanding and empathy through the exploration of different perspectives. Discussing characters within books allows children to step into others' shoes and consider various viewpoints. In Year 2, reading and discussing stories with themes of friendship and kindness fosters empathy and social awareness. Group discussions and writing projects further develop these skills, encouraging students to listen to and value each other's ideas, thus enhancing mutual respect and understanding. The World: English connects children to the broader world by exposing them to diverse cultures and global issues through literature. Studying texts from different cultures in Year 3 and 4, such as traditional tales and contemporary stories, broadens their worldview and appreciation for diversity. Writing tasks that involve researching global topics, such as environmental issues or historical events, help children connect their learning to real-world contexts, fostering a sense of global citizenship and responsibility. Beyond: English offers moments for deeper reflection and contemplation. Poetry, for instance, allows children to explore abstract concepts and emotions, fostering a sense of wonder and introspection. In Year 6, studying classic literature and philosophical themes can lead to profound reflections on human nature, morality, and the meaning of life. Encouraging students to engage with these big questions nurtures their spiritual development and curiosity about the world beyond the tangible. Overall, by integrating spirituality into English, primary schools can nurture well-rounded individuals who are not only proficient in literacy skills but also spiritually aware and connected. This approach prepares children to engage with literature and language thoughtfully, appreciating the depth and richness of human experience and the interconnectedness of the world.

Below are examples of where spirituality exists within the English curriculum	
Reception	Incorporating spirituality into the Reception literacy curriculum can provide young children with a foundational sense of self-awareness, empathy, cultural understanding, and connection to the world and beyond. Self: children express their thoughts and feelings through storytelling, drawing, and sharing personal experiences. Activities like "All About Me" books or "My Feelings" journals help children explore and articulate their emotions and identity. Stories that involve characters experiencing various emotions and situations. After reading, engage children in discussions about how the characters felt and why, prompting them to reflect on similar feelings they might have had. Others: Read books and stories that feature diverse characters and situations, encouraging children to consider different perspectives. Ask questions like "How do you think this character feels?" and "What would you do to help?" to develop empathy. The World: Reading stories from various cultures and backgrounds. Discuss the different traditions, clothing, and foods shown in the stories to broaden children's understanding of the world. Storybooks about different holidays and customs can be particularly effective. Beyond: Developing a sense of wonder through reading books that incorporate elements of fantasy and magic, sparking children's imaginations. The children engage in creative play and storytelling where children can invent their own magical worlds and characters. By integrating these elements into the Reception literacy curriculum, you can help young children develop a well-rounded sense of spirituality that touches on self-awareness, empathy for others, an appreciation for the world, and a sense of wonder about the mysteries beyond their immediate experiences.

Year 1	Incorporating spirituality into a Year 1 unit based on Paddington Bear's trip to the circus is both enriching and engaging. Spirituality in this context can be understood as a sense of connection to something greater than oneself, which can be fostered through exploration of self, others, the world, and beyond. Self: This is explored through discussion about how Paddington feels at different points during his trip to the circus. Children reflect on and share their own emotions and what makes them feel happy, excited, or nervous. This can help children understand and articulate their own feelings and develop empathy. Others: Through discussion of the importance of being kind and helpful to others, just as Paddington often tries to, children can reflect on their own behaviour toward others. Role-playing activities can help children practice empathy and kindness in a safe environment. The World. Wonder and Curiosity We use the circus setting to spark children's curiosity about the world. We discuss the different acts and performers at the circus, encouraging children to ask questions and explore the world around them with a sense of wonder. Beyond. Imagination and Creativity: We encourage children to use their imagination, just as Paddington does on his adventures. Creative activities like drawing, storytelling, and imaginative play help children tap into their creative potential and explore the idea of possibilities beyond the immediate world. By framing Paddington Bear's trip to the circus within these four dimensions, we help children develop a deeper sense of spirituality that encompasses self-awareness, empathy, a connection to the world, and a sense of wonder and creativity that extends beyond the tangible.

Year 2	Self: Personal Reflection and Emotions: We discuss Lila's emotions throughout the story, especially her determination and hope. We encourage children to reflect on times when they have felt determined or hopeful and share these experiences, helping build self-awareness and emotional intelligence. Inner Strength and Resilience: We highlight Lila's inner strength in her quest to bring rain to her village. We engage children in activities that help them identify their own strengths and discuss how they can use these strengths to overcome challenges in their lives. Others: Empathy and Compassion: We explore the relationships in the story, particularly Lila's concern for her family and community. We discuss with children the importance of caring for others and how they can show empathy and compassion in their daily lives The World: Understanding Different Cultures: We use the African setting of the story to introduce children to different cultural practices and traditions. We discuss the importance of respecting and appreciating cultural diversity, fostering a sense of global awareness and interconnectedness. Beyond: Connection to Nature: We highlight the deep connection between Lila and the natural world, particularly her interaction with the rain. We encourage children to spend time in nature, observing and appreciating its beauty and discussing how they feel connected to the natural environment. Imagination and Wonder: We emphasize the elements of magic and wonder in Lila's story. We encourage children to use their imagination in creative activities such as drawing, storytelling, or drama, helping them to explore a sense of wonder and the possibilities that lie beyond their immediate experiences. By using "Lila and the Secret of Rain" to explore these four dimensions, we help children develop a holistic sense of spirituality that includes self-awareness, empathy, cultural understanding, environmental consciousness, and a sense of wonder and imagination. This approach not only enriches their understanding of the story but also fosters a deeper connection to themselves, others, the world, and the mysteries beyond.
Year 3	A Year 3 English unit writing a persuasive leaflet to reduce plastic pollution provides rich opportunities for spiritual development, focusing on self, others, the world, and beyond.

	Self: Writing a persuasive leaflet empowers students by developing their voice and sense of agency. As they learn to craft compelling arguments, they build confidence in their ability to influence and make a difference. Reflecting on their own habits and the impact of plastic pollution on their environment helps them develop personal responsibility and a commitment to positive change. Others: This unit promotes empathy and social awareness by encouraging students to think about how plastic pollution affects people and wildlife. Collaborative brainstorming sessions and group discussions help students appreciate diverse perspectives and understand the collective effort needed to address environmental issues. Peer feedback on their leaflets fosters a supportive learning environment where students learn to value and respect each other's contributions. The World: Writing about plastic pollution connects students to broader environmental issues, fostering a sense of global citizenship and responsibility. Researching the impact of plastic waste on oceans, wildlife, and communities around the world helps students understand the interconnectedness of global ecosystems. This awareness inspires a commitment to stewardship and sustainable living, as students realize their actions can contribute to a healthier planet. Beyond: The unit provides opportunities for deeper reflection on humanity's relationship with nature. Exploring the long-term effects of plastic pollution and the concept of sustainability encourages students to think about the ethical implications of their choices. Creative tasks, such as imagining a future with reduced plastic waste or writing reflective pieces on the beauty of a clean environment, invite students to consider the broader impact of their actions on future generations. In conclusion, a Year 3 unit on writing a persuasive leaflet to reduce plastic pollution integrates spirituality by fostering self-awareness, empathy, global understanding, and deep reflection. This approach not only enhances students' persuasive writing and research skills but also nurtures their spiritual growth, preparing them to engage with environmental issues thoughtfully and empathetically.
Year 4	A Year 4 English unit on "Shackleton's Journey," focused on writing a persuasive speech to convince people to join his fateful crew, offers rich opportunities for spiritual development, considering self, others, the world, and beyond. Self: Writing a persuasive speech about joining Shackleton's expedition helps children develop self-awareness and confidence. As they delve into Shackleton’s leadership qualities and the bravery of his crew, they reflect on their own values and strengths. Crafting persuasive arguments encourages them to articulate their thoughts clearly and assertively, boosting their self-esteem and communication skills. Reflecting on themes of courage and resilience in Shackleton's story helps children identify and develop these qualities within themselves. Others: This unit fosters empathy and understanding through the exploration of the relationships and teamwork demonstrated by Shackleton’s crew. Children work collaboratively to research and write their speeches, learning to value and incorporate different perspectives. Role-playing exercises, where they present their speeches to their peers, help them practise active listening and provide

	constructive feedback, fostering a supportive classroom environment. By empathising with the crew's experiences and motivations, children gain a deeper appreciation for human resilience and camaraderie. The World: Studying Shackleton's journey connects children to historical and geographical contexts, enhancing their understanding of the world. They explore the harsh realities of Antarctic exploration, fostering a respect for the natural world and the challenges it presents. Researching the expedition's impact on subsequent polar exploration and scientific knowledge helps children appreciate the interconnectedness of human endeavours and the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity. Beyond: The story of Shackleton's journey invites children to contemplate larger themes of exploration, human spirit, and destiny. Reflecting on the crew's determination and Shackleton's leadership prompts children to consider what drives individuals to undertake great challenges. Creative tasks, such as imagining and writing about their own adventurous goals or the legacy they wish to leave, encourage children to think beyond the present and dream about their future aspirations. Discussions on the ethical and moral implications of Shackleton's decisions offer deeper insights into leadership and responsibility. In conclusion, our Year 4 unit on writing a persuasive speech about Shackleton's journey integrates spirituality by fostering self-awareness, empathy, global understanding, and deep reflection. This approach not only enhances children's persuasive writing and research skills but also nurtures their spiritual growth, preparing them to engage with historical narratives thoughtfully and empathetically.
Year 5	A Year 5 English unit on writing a non-chronological report about space offers ample opportunities for spiritual development, focusing on self, others, the world, and beyond. Self: Writing about space allows students to cultivate a sense of curiosity and wonder about the universe. As they research and gather information, they develop critical thinking and organisational skills, which foster a sense of achievement and self-confidence. Personal reflection on their own interests in space and the broader cosmos can help students recognise their aspirations and ambitions, encouraging a deeper understanding of themselves. Others: Pupils are encouraged to share knowledge and ideas, fostering a sense of community and teamwork. Group research activities, peer editing, and collaborative writing tasks help students to appreciate and respect each other's perspectives and contributions. This shared endeavor cultivates empathy and mutual respect, enhancing their social and emotional development. The World: Studying space connects students to the vastness of the universe and their place within it, fostering a sense of global citizenship and interconnectedness. Exploring topics such as the solar system, space exploration, and the potential for life on other planets broadens their horizons and encourages them to think about the collective human pursuit of knowledge. Discussions on the impact of space research on Earth, such as technological advancements and environmental awareness, help students understand the importance of global cooperation and responsibility. Beyond: The vast and mysterious nature of space invites students to reflect on deeper existential questions and the human quest for understanding. Writing about phenomena such as black holes, galaxies, and the origins of the universe can inspire awe and

	contemplation about the mysteries of existence. Creative tasks, such as imagining life on other planets, encourage students to think beyond the tangible and explore philosophical and spiritual concepts. In conclusion, a Year 5 unit on writing a non-chronological report about space integrates spirituality by fostering self-awareness, empathy, global understanding, and deep reflection. This approach not only enhances students' writing and research skills but also nurtures their spiritual growth, preparing them to engage with the universe thoughtfully and empathetically.
Year 6	A Year 6 English unit based on "Letters from the Lighthouse" by Emma Carroll offers rich opportunities for spiritual development, focusing on self, others, the world, and beyond. Self:The story's themes of resilience, courage, and self-discovery resonate deeply with students. As they explore the protagonist Olive's journey, children reflect on their own inner strength and capacity to overcome challenges. Writing personal responses to Olive's experiences encourages self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their own emotions and reactions to difficult situations. Others: The unit promotes empathy and understanding through the relationships and interactions between characters. Discussions about the friendships and family bonds in the book help students appreciate the importance of support and kindness in times of adversity. Group activities, such as role-playing key scenes or writing letters from one character to another, foster collaboration and empathy, encouraging students to consider others' feelings and perspectives. The World: "Letters from the Lighthouse" provides a historical context that connects students to a broader understanding of the world. The setting during World War II and the experiences of evacuees offer insights into the impact of war on individuals and communities. Research projects about the historical period, coupled with discussions on themes like displacement and refuge, help students develop a sense of global awareness and historical empathy. Beyond: The novel's exploration of themes like hope, resilience, and the human spirit invites students to contemplate deeper, universal questions. Reflecting on the characters' struggles and triumphs can lead to discussions about the nature of courage and the enduring power of hope. Creative writing tasks, such as composing reflective essays or poems inspired by the book's themes, encourage students to think about the broader human experience and their place in it. In conclusion, a Year 6 unit on "Letters from the Lighthouse" integrates spirituality by fostering self-awareness, empathy, global understanding, and deep reflection. This approach not only enhances students' literary skills but also nurtures their spiritual growth, preparing them to engage with the world thoughtfully and empathetically.