Lessons in Spiritual Development: learning from leading Christian-ethos secondary schools

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Ten Leading Schools Research Project

- contributing to the international academic debate on the distinctiveness and effectiveness of Christian-ethos secondary schools

- telling the stories of 10 Christian-ethos secondary schools, to stimulate other schools to reflect on, and improve their own work of spiritual development with their students

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The Research question:
What features of Christian-ethos Secondary Schools contribute to students’ spiritual development?

Leading Schools project focused on the features that young people, teachers, chaplains, senior leadership, governors, parents, and local clergy identify in 10 Leading Christian-ethos Secondary Schools.
Key ideas

Holistic; Flexible; Adapted To School Context; Vocation; Role Models; Chaplaincy; Christian Values; Prayer; Sacred Space; Reflection Time; Emmaus Moments; Collective Worship; Sense Of Belonging; Trust; Reconciliation; Care For The Vulnerable; Made in the Image of God; Faith In Action; Live Life to the Full; Christian Service; Scriptures; Religious And Theological Concepts; Religious Education; Confidence in God.
Young people’s spiritual development: Bricolage in a Fragmented world

The individual’s construction of their own religious identity, from the materials available to them
What do students understand by spiritual development?

- Fulfilling one’s potential
- Belonging to a community
- Developing knowledge and understanding
- Making a connection to God
The key features

- Faith in Christ
- Community: sense of belonging and service to the community
- Hope: Social justice and faith in action
- Dignity and respect for all: pastoral care and inclusivity
- Reflection space and time prayer, sacred space
- Wisdom: Theological and religious literacy
Implications

- Context
- Diversity of approaches
- Active agency of students
- Importance of physical and metaphorical sacred time and space
- Confidence in being a Christian community
- Need for ‘deliberate decisions’
Narthical learning space

Draws on the concept of a church narthex, is not a stepping stone into the Christian faith, but offers a space ‘to look at [life] from a completely different perspective’ and invites the learner into ‘productive otherness” (Roebben, 2009).

It is a safe space to encounter, explore, reflect, a space for spiritual development to flourish.