



# Spiritual Development and Well-being

## Governance through a human lens

### **A Metaphor to hold in mind**

**What if a school is more than a system to be optimised but a place where people learn what it means to be human?**

Schools shape inner life whether they intend to or not. Long before any program or policy is named, assumptions about meaning, worth, pressure, success, failure, and care are already at work. Boards rarely set out to form these assumptions directly. Yet through their tone, pace, priorities, and what is treated as important, governance does participate in that formation.

This characteristic invites boards to notice what they may already be teaching the wider school community about life, purpose, and resilience not through words, but through decisions.

## Governance through a spiritual and human lens

Spiritual development, in this context, does not mean religious instruction or shared belief. It points instead to meaning, belonging, moral agency, and the question of what sustains people when performance alone is not enough. Schools can function efficiently while neglecting these dimensions. When that happens, people often cope well for a time. Over longer stretches, however, something challenging tends to emerge: purpose may become procedural, care may become managerial, and exhaustion may be normalised.

Boards do not generate spirituality. But they do shape whether inner life is taken seriously, treated as optional, or crowded out by urgency and growth.

## The 10 facets reframed through a spiritual lens

Facet	What might this facet assume about people?
<b>Role clarity</b>	Do we understand governance narrowly as control and oversight, or broadly enough to notice how decisions affect the human texture of the school?
<b>Strategic vision</b>	Does our vision speak only to outcomes and growth, or does it also name what kind of people this community hopes to form?
<b>Board composition</b>	Do we value reflective capacity, moral judgement, and attentiveness alongside technical expertise, or do those qualities remain invisible?
<b>Financial stewardship</b>	What do our budgets subtly prioritise? How do time, money, and attention suggest that inner life and wellbeing matter or don't?
<b>Risk management</b>	Are we attentive only to legal and reputational risk, or also to slower-burning risks such as exhaustion, loss of meaning, and moral drift?
<b>Succession</b>	When leaders leave, do they leave well? Do we notice strain early, or only once it becomes disruptive?
<b>Transparency</b>	Do our reporting practices make room for complexity and strain, or only for reassurance and success?
<b>Stakeholder engagement</b>	How do we listen when people speak from experience rather than evidence? Do we know how to hold stories, not just data?
<b>Community partnership</b>	Are our partnerships shaped only by function, or also by shared purpose and care for the wider human good?
<b>Board effectiveness</b>	Do we ever pause to ask not just what we decided, but how we were with one another while deciding?

## Prompted inquiry: for your board conversation

1. What do we assume people draw on when things become difficult here?
2. Where, if anywhere, does this board make room for reflection, silence, or meaning making?
3. How do our decisions shape the pace and pressure experienced by staff and students?
4. If someone observed our governance closely, what might they conclude we believe about the human person?

## Practice: a brief interruption

### A simple discipline before a significant decision

Pause the discussion for two minutes. No papers. No phones. Invite each person to consider privately: What is this decision asking of people, not just systems or structures? Resume the conversation without attempting to summarise what emerged. Notice whether the tone or direction of the discussion shifts.

## A final question to take into your next meeting

*What kind of inner life does our way of governing make possible, or make harder, in this school?*

