

## **PROMOTING BRITISH VALUES**

The key guidance on this for schools can be found in the government document “Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools” and can be found online here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/380595/SMSC\\_Guidance\\_Maintained\\_Schools.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf)

In my attempting to highlight key points from this document please be aware that you would find the original full document valuable as a cross-check and this may prompt further discussion.

The core of what the government ask schools to pay attention to is referred to as Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development in pupils (SMSC). In our own curriculum this mainly falls under Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), and Humanities, which incorporates Religious Education. In asking schools to promote British Values the document shows that if successfully addressing SMSC then it is very likely that a school is doing this.

The areas they refer to in the document which I think it helpful to draw attention to are shown below, with examples and descriptions of our approach beneath each one.

### **Collective worship**

The Nursery, Primary and Secondary elements of the school all meet for collective worship via our assembly programme every Friday afternoon (GC students hold their own separate assembly at the same time). Along with this, every class uses the registration period of every day to reflect on more implicit elements of spirituality and to continue to develop their relationships with their peers and the adults in their class. The Humanities curriculum gives a fuller description of this, along with explicit RE teaching across the school.

### **School ethos**

We have a very strong and very long-standing set of values driving the ethos of the school and which break down into aims and which are always revisited with all staff at the start of every year. Our Values and Aims also form the basis of our introductions to the school for Open Mornings, and have most recently been talked through with the governing body via a presentation in June 2014. In an extremely brief summary the core values can be summarised as:

- All pupils are of equal worth
- Their education should be stimulating
- Staff should hold high expectations of all pupils and be highly motivated
- The school should be structured yet innovative
- We should foster understanding and positive attitudes towards our pupils in the wider community

### **Effective relationships**

We refuse to segregate our pupils according to disability, and all children are placed in Family Groups of peers of the same age band. By providing a consistent team of adults to work with them across the whole year we create the environment for carefully teaching our pupils to develop relationships with others, and our pupil-staff ratios enable us to have great success with this. It is noticeable that the later a child joins us in the school the harder it is for them to generalise this skill.

### **Relevant activities beyond the classroom**

We have an extensive and carefully structured range of activities taking children off-site, and we invest heavily in maintaining this and ensuring that it is always fully accessible to all pupils. For residential trips we start with just one night, local to the school, steadily moving further away for longer periods, including a balance of city cultural and rural adventurous content, right up to our 16 year olds who go abroad and experience a new culture with a foreign language (we have settled on Barcelona for lots of reasons, having previously been to Brittany, the Dordogne, Brussels, Florence, Rome and Krakow). Our post-16 students take on the task of organising their own, fully self-catered trip, alternating between one based in London and one in Cornwall.

Our day trips are prioritised for those classes of children too young to stay away overnight, but in practice virtually all classes do additional day trips even if they also have a residential trip. These vary from visits directly connected to curricular work (those would be the most common), to theatre trips, sports events and workplace visits.

It is also extremely important to mention that all classes from our Nursery to our 10th Family Group (16 year olds) have weekly half day visits to a linked mainstream school to work with their peers. One again, all of our pupils are included in this, none would be left behind due to concerns about mobility difficulties, lack of cognitive skills to engage, or issues such as behavioural challenges. We consider regular inclusion to be crucial for our pupils' overall development and having maintained this for more than 30 years now we believe it to be justified to state that this is an invaluable tool in not only broadening our own pupils social awareness and building their self-confidence, but that it has a very significant influence on developing the tolerance and understanding of difference amongst the mainstream school children with whom we work. At the moment we have links with 8 mainstream schools (3 of which host 2 of our classes each), and through 3 of our pupils having additional individual inclusion we work with a further 3 mainstream schools.

### **Respect and tolerance for other faiths, races and cultures**

Starting from our principle of grouping children by age and not disability, we focus on developing their ability to acknowledge the presence of each other, learning to share and take turns, and being encouraged at every moment to interact with the other children in their class, irrespective of that child's physical and intellectual needs, their race, colour, verbal skills, social background, sex, or any other aspect of possible difference. Along with explicit taught lessons about common elements of religions, our pupils are always picked up on any comments they might make or behaviours they demonstrate which indicate that they either hold prejudiced views, or may be exposed to such views. In the past 6 years there have only been 3 recorded racial incidents; these all related to using an abusive term verbally, were all from the same pupil, and although the pupil is still in the school, there have been no further incidents since the last one in 2012-13.

### **Understanding right and wrong, and the rule of law**

Our pupils and students are taught in a very explicit way about those behaviours which are acceptable and those which are not, and we have very well established systems to ensure that all adults are consistent with all pupils in operating this (we write Individual Management Plans, signed off by the parent, class teacher and Head). Moving beyond the everyday behaviour of the classroom, our lessons include learning about the purpose of organisations such as the Police, right through to more subtle recognition of aspects of right and wrong such as the expectations in a workplace of timekeeping, completion of tasks, even dress codes where appropriate, and managing interpersonal relationships and how to cope with some common problems such as arguments with a friend or colleague.

## **Democracy**

Our Student Council has been running for around 10 years now, and every year each class gets involved in an election process at which those who wish to put themselves forwards make their case and in due course their peers make their views known by voting. As in all other areas, this is open to all pupils, and staff work closely with those who have greater difficulties to enable them to put themselves forwards if they want to. The Council then meet every half term and discuss items of interest and share their minutes, which are produced in a visually accessible graphic format, with all classes and the SLT.

Our post-16 students have been active in joining Local Council meetings and making their views known, especially on issues around disability. They have also provided training for some Council staff to improve their understanding of disability and in the process to raise their awareness of the ability of those categorised as disabled.

This term our post-16 students have taken the opportunity of forthcoming election to invite in the local candidates for the parties which have been granted air time on television to come and meet with them and discuss questions which they have worked on addressing issues close to their hearts. So far they have met with the Conservative candidate, and in coming weeks will meet with those representing Labour, Liberal Democrats, Green Party and Ukip.

## **Rights and responsibilities**

This is given a high priority within our PSHE curriculum, and one of the 3 core aims set out at the very start of this curriculum area states "For pupils to recognise and respect social duties as well as social rights." This is then expanded in the section under the title "Citizenship."

In practical terms this is seen in an example such as how the 8th Family Group are covering the concepts of Rights and Responsibilities in their PSHE work during Spring 2015. The pupils in the class gave a clear demonstration of their grasp of how these work together when they spoke with one of the parliamentary candidates as she toured the school.

## **Making a positive contribution**

This is a fundamental element of one of our 5 principle Values, taking the theme of each pupil being of equal worth through to the belief that each of them have a "unique contribution to make to the life of the school, their family and the community."

We work very hard with our pupils to develop their sense of self-esteem and a belief in their ability to achieve great things. Visitors frequently comment on how confident and self-assured our pupils and students are, and it is not unusual for people who work with similar populations of children (i.e. with severe and profound learning difficulties) to observe that our pupils "seem to be more able" than those with whom they work. Work experience becomes increasingly important by the time students are in our post-16 provision, and with carefully crafted individualised approaches everyone who can benefit from placements experiences anything from one day through to a full week or more, including working the normal hours for the role rather than just school hours.

We employ a specialist to provide Information, Advice and Guidance to our students, and our aim is to enable every student to find a path to reach the highest level of independence possible. For some this means heading into the workplace, some may need additional support in work, and others may be looking towards supported living, but in every case we work with them to give them the skills to make more of their future and to express themselves and their preferences with confidence and as much skill as possible. The structured approach we take to helping children to learn about work is covered in the PSHE curriculum under "World of Work."

Our students achieve nationally recognised accreditation through City and Guilds Entry Level and Level One, and as an example of high expectations and not letting our category of school limit our aspirations for the children here, we worked intensively with one student who left us two years ago so that she is now on a part time degree course at Wolverhampton University, studying Animation.

### **Knowledge and respect for public institutions and services**

Once again, in our PSHE curriculum, in the section called “Citizenship”, we include an area titled “Use of Community Resources.” This covers areas such as health services, transport, politics at local and national levels, libraries and others. In all cases, our pupils and students are encouraged to see themselves as integral to the community, and that they need to be aware that along with rights of access to and support from services such as these, they also have duties and responsibilities towards them.

### **Combatting discrimination**

Our pupils and students are given quite an intense level of skilled support from the adults in their class and the wider group of adults across the whole school, in order to help them learn that acting in a discriminatory manner towards others is not acceptable. Our database allows us to record any incidents where a child might racially abuse another person, or might be perceived to have acted in a bullying manner, and for a school of 106 children our figures are pleasingly low over the past 6 years for which we have been recording these. We have recorded 3 separate racial insults (all by the same pupil, and none since 2012-13), and 4 instances of what we felt should be recorded as bullying, the last being in 2010-11.

Our school ethos ensures that our staff model positive attitudes towards each other and to all pupils, and that we provide explicit and consistent praise and encouragement for all positive behaviours the children demonstrate, while providing explicit management plans to help pupils move away from more negative behaviours, whether those be of a social nature towards others, or simply inappropriate personal behaviours.

Sadly, it is more likely that our children are the victims of discrimination rather than the perpetrators. It is important for them to develop a resilience and self-confidence to manage situations where this may occur, and along with a strong focus on developing their communication skills and their independence (at all levels of ability), we work to teach our pupils and students skills for self-advocacy. This is covered in greater detail in the PSHE curriculum at the end of the section called “Citizenship.”