
Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural Education Policy

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1 Policy Statement

“The term spiritual and moral development needs to be seen as applying something fundamental in the human condition which is not necessarily experienced through the physical senses and/or expressed through everyday language. It has to do with relationships to other people and, for believers, with God. It has to do with the universal search for individual identity – with our responses to challenging experiences, such as death, suffering, beauty and encounters with good and evil. It is also to do with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live.” *SCAA discussion paper*.

At Birkdale we recognise that the personal development of pupils, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, plays a significant part in their ability to learn and achieve. We therefore aim to provide an education that gives pupils opportunities to explore and develop:

- their own values and beliefs
- spiritual awareness
- high standards of personal behaviour
- a positive, caring attitude towards other people
- an understanding of social and cultural traditions
- an appreciation of the diversity and richness of different cultures
- the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

2 Key Principles

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

Christianity and a Christian understanding of human beings underpins all our work at Birkdale and not surprisingly this area of the curriculum is heavily interwoven with the teaching of RE. Birkdale is a Christian community and environment characterised by grace, kindness and love, and the school welcomes pupils of all faiths or none, all of whom are treated with respect for what they believe.

To complement this, Birkdale has five core values which it seeks to encourage in all members of the school community, these are:

- Respect
- Humility
- Integrity
- Courage
- Compassion

Assemblies form a vital part in the life of the school, under-pinning our core values and emphasising the high moral standards expected of all members of the school. The Christian message is presented

from various perspectives, always seeking to show faith as a viable, credible and life-fulfilling option. Assemblies will usually include a reading from the Bible and a prayer.

PSHE education is a central element of the SMSC education pupils receive and this follows a planned programme of learning through which pupils acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to manage their lives. As part of a whole school approach, PSHE develops the qualities and attributes pupils need to thrive as individuals, family members and members of society. Consequently, though there is a dedicated PSHE programme of study delivered by a specialist team, many of the topics within this aspect of the curriculum play an integral part in other curriculum areas and, therefore, it is delivered in a cross curricular structure as well as through the PSHE lessons and the pastoral structure of the school.

To ensure the above, Birkdale School commits to:

- actively promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- ensure that principles are actively promoted which:
 - enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
 - encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the schools is situated and to society more widely;
 - enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
 - further tolerance, acceptance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
 - encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010; and
 - encourage respect for democracy and support for the participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;
- preclude the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school;
- take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

3 Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

With regard to **spiritual development**, pupils will demonstrate independence, critical and reflective thinking skills. They articulate their beliefs - religious or non-religious- and show an interest in and respect for different people's feelings and values. They enjoy work and being challenged by study. In the school, there are strategies to enable pupils to share, reflect on and explore their own and others beliefs, values and experiences.

With regard to **moral development** pupils will understand the difference between right and wrong and are able to evaluate theirs and others' viewpoints. They challenge viewpoints they disagree with in a constructive and inclusive manner but are able to determine discriminatory behaviours, values

and attitudes for example in relation to bullying, homophobia, racism, misogyny and other forms of discrimination. The school has strategies to enable teachers and pupils to recognise and tackle discrimination and the school has strategies to ensure it is an inclusive community.

In respect of **social development**, pupils will have the skills, knowledge and understanding to recognise and deal with challenges and problems. They are resilient and can resist peer pressure and know where to get help and advice. They are able to discuss controversial, topical and sensitive issues and are able to take action on things that matter to them. The school, teachers, parents and the community value the role of the school in promoting the social development of pupils as much as their academic development and understands how this contributes to pupils becoming knowledgeable and motivated citizens.

In respect of **cultural development**, pupils will know about, value and demonstrate how different cultural influences bring benefits to themselves and their community. They discuss aspects of identities including national identity and understand the concept of multiple identities. Across their schooling they explore cultural diversity, engaging with members of their community and beyond. Teachers are inclusive in the language they use with pupils in helping them explore aspects of culture and ensure that all pupils can access learning by careful selection of appropriate resources and learning experiences.

4 Fundamental British Values

Birkdale School recognises the following definitions of the themes that underpin the British Values agenda:

The Rule of Law: The importance of laws, whether they be those that govern the class, the school, or the country, are consistently reinforced throughout each day, as well as when dealing with behaviour and through assemblies. The curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils are taught the values and reasons behind laws, that they govern and protect us, the responsibilities that this involves and the consequences when laws are broken.

Individual Liberty: At Birkdale pupils are actively encouraged to make independent choices knowing that they are in a safe, secure and supportive environment. We educate and provide boundaries for pupils to make choices safely, through the provision of a safe environment and an empowering education. We encourage pupils to see themselves as unique individuals able to make a unique contribution to service in the wider community. Pupils are encouraged to know, understand and exercise their rights, responsibilities and personal freedoms and receive advice about how to exercise these safely.

Mutual Respect: Respect for others is a key value at Birkdale School and is modelled by pupils and staff alike. The school promotes respect for others through our classroom and learning environments as well as through extra-curricular activities such as sport, music and drama. In line with our commitment to democracy, pupils are able to voice their opinions (in the School Council) as we foster an environment where pupils can debate ideas and are safe to disagree with each other. We encourage pupils to substantiate opinions and to realise the value of co-operation and consensus, as well as decision-making through voting. The school develops and encourages virtues such as mutual respect, kindness, courtesy, friendliness and responsibility throughout the curriculum and across the school.

Tolerance of Those of Different Faiths and Beliefs: At Birkdale School this is achieved through equipping pupils with the ability to develop positive values, and to understand their own beliefs and their place in a culturally diverse society. We give our pupils opportunities to experience such diversity

within the school community and within the wider community. Pupils experience a connection with other cultures and beliefs through our curriculum, assemblies, theme days and local, national and international links. The emphasis on working with others and learning other languages directly contributes to the appreciation of others' perspectives on life. Our RE curriculum follows the teaching of the Church in providing a broad and balanced education, which includes an understanding of and respect for people of other faiths or none and other religions, cultures and lifestyles.

5 Organisation and Delivery

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education is delivered/communicated in the following ways;

- PSHE Lessons delivered by a specialist team of staff to form groups
- Religious Education
- School Assemblies (Birkdale staff and visiting speakers)
- Form Time
- Drop-down days
- Integrated into subject areas
- Residential visits
- School pastoral work
- Extra-curricular activities
- Pupil Voice initiatives
- Links to the community

PSHE

The PSHE curriculum is delivered by a specialist team led by the PSHE Subject Lead. At the Prep School the PSHE curriculum follows the 'My Life' scheme of work. In the Senior School, the PSHE programme of study addresses three broad themes – Health and Wellbeing, Living in the Wider World and Relationships and within these focuses on the following 9 overarching concepts:

- Identity
- Sex and Relationships
- A Healthy Balanced Lifestyle
- Risk
- Diversity and Equality
- Rights, responsibilities and consent
- Change
- Power
- Careers

As such PSHE promotes these objectives;

- to promote personal development, to ensure pupils have good self-awareness and positive wellbeing.
- to promote social development in relation to pupil peer groups and within the individual subjects enhancing their relevance in the world.
- to promote an atmosphere of discussion and questioning in which pupils can explore issues across the curriculum with the PSHE tutor or teacher.
- to educate pupils in financial and economic matters.

Religious Education

Although it has no particular denominational emphasis, Birkdale makes no secret of its claim to be a Christian school. An open-ended approach to life themes and to alternative philosophies is encouraged, and whilst full recognition is given to the multi-cultural nature of a society in which many conflicting views of life are evident, we consider it important to point positively towards a whole school Christian world view as a viable and attractive option and as having intellectual and experiential integrity, well worth further investigation.

As such the aims of Religious Education at Birkdale School may be summarised thus:

- To understand the source and nature of religion, and how it handles the fundamental questions of human existence.
- To develop a knowledge and understanding of the broad cultural, religious and spiritual heritage of our community through the study of Christianity.
- To reflect on their experience thereby confirming, deepening or coming to their own understanding of the meaning of life.
- To develop an appreciation of religious faith and the varieties of faith, including those well established ethical and religious traditions that are present in our society.
- To develop an awareness of the spiritual dimension of life and the importance of commitment to a personal faith and to perceive the consequences of religious commitment.

The objectives of Religious Education at Birkdale are:

- To study Christianity. To help pupils to think through the claims of the Christian faith, through studying the central documents of Christianity, the diverse practices of global Christianity today and the moral teaching of Christianity.
- To gain knowledge and understanding of the other major world religions and to develop positive attitudes towards, and a sensitive understanding of, the demands of living in a multicultural society.
- To explore the philosophical side of religion. To enable pupils to think through issues such as the meaning of life, existence of God, death and the relationship between Religion and Science.
- To explore the moral side of religion. To enable pupils to think through such issues as conscience, moral authority, ethical relativism and apply these ideas to real personal, social and international problems.
- To help pupils recognise the link between personal faith and action - personal faith may be any consistent, coherent and ethical religion or life stance, whether theistic or non-theistic.

- To help pupils understand the experiential and emotional aspects of religion and the language of religion.

School Assemblies

Assemblies form a vital part in the life of the school, under-pinning our core values and emphasising the high moral standards expected of all members of the school. The Christian message is presented from various perspectives, always seeking to show faith as a viable, credible and life-fulfilling option. Assemblies will usually include a reading from the Bible, a hymn (Prep School) and a prayer. Beyond Christianity, assemblies will often focus on equality, diversity and inclusion topics or current, relevant societal issues. In all assemblies pupils are encouraged to think about issues from a range of perspectives, accept and understand different life experiences and form their own opinions.

Form Time

Within Form Time participants learn about themselves, about others and about relationships with others. They explore good citizenship, social skills and about their own and others' feelings and emotions. Form Time is also used to explore issues that might arise during the course of a term, such as bullying, reasons for school rules, worries about impending tests or transfer to another school. It is a feature of Form Time that it can react immediately to issues as they arise in the form or school.

Form Time can be used to bolster self-esteem in a child who feels he is not coping or who feels excluded from a group. It is used, in appropriate classes, to deliver and discuss curriculum work such as legal and illegal drugs and to teach strategies for "Saying No". Thus, the aims are mainly concerned with personal and social awareness and developing skills to cope with the world in which the children live. Nevertheless, Form Time is also meant to be fun!

The benefits of Form Time to the individual, the group and the school can be immediate but in general, they should be seen as long-term.

Pupil Voice

The school facilitates and encourages various opportunities for pupils to contribute to the life of the school. Pupil council meetings take place on a regular basis and provide an opportunity for pupils to raise concerns or suggest improvements to school life. Equality and Diversity Committees have been established in each section of the school and specifically provide a space for pupils to meet, discuss and make suggestions to the school about equality, diversity and inclusion issues and how the school can become a more accepting and welcoming place for all. Out of this, the school has developed a number of focus weeks, held throughout the year, which educate and encourage all members of the school community to reflect on the experiences of specific communities and social groups.

Links to the Community

Local – the school provides a community action placement for members of the Sixth Form during which pupils are able to work in local primary schools, care homes or charities. Various speakers from local churches and organisations are invited into school to take assemblies on a regular basis.

National – the school regularly takes part in national competitions such as the European Youth Parliament to provide pupils with an enhanced experience to better understand other cultures.

International – the school has developed strong links with several communities in Nepal, supporting several primary schools and charities in the Kathmandu area. Pupils have the opportunity to visit these communities and develop a better sense of their place in the world.

6 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Policy Committee monitors this policy on an annual basis. This committee reports its findings and recommendations to the full governing body, as necessary.

The Head deputises routine monitoring and evaluation to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) who meets regularly with:

- PSHE Subject Lead
- Head of RE
- Pastoral Committee
- Equality and Diversity Committees and other pupil groups as necessary.

7 Review and Development

7.1 Procedure

This document, together with the effectiveness of its procedures, is reviewed annually by the Policy Committee and Governing Board and as events or legislation change requires.

7.2 Links with other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- PSHE Policy
- RSE Policy