Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education Policy

Status: Statutory

Review: Every 2 years

Delegated to: Education Committee

The purpose of this policy

SMSC is an abbreviation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural. SMSC Education is an important part of our curriculum and also one that includes some important and potentially sensitive areas. We therefore need a clear policy about how we will make choices about the curriculum so that those planning the curriculum have clear guidance within which to work and the protection of a policy which is approved and monitored by the Board of Trustees.
This is not a statutory policy. We have developed this SMSC policy so that staff members, students and stakeholders can understand:

- That our curriculum encompasses a deep and broad coverage of a variety of SMSC themes and issues; this may not be immediately obvious to some given that our formal curriculum is strongly focused on STEM subjects.
- What role religion plays in the life of the school.

- How and why we seek to develop a broad and deep social, moral and cultural appreciation in our students.
- How we will plan the provision of education relating to moral and personal issues including such things as drug use and abuse, abortion and contraception, relationships, sexuality and gender identity.

An introduction: our curriculum and our values

We exist to enable children with a strong interest and high potential in the mathematical sciences to achieve global impact through careers in the mathematical sciences. By preparing them thoroughly and comprehensively for STEM degrees and significant roles both within local communities and the global community of science, technology, engineering and mathematics, our students will be equipped to become tomorrow's industrial and academic researchers, innovators who will address the world's greatest challenges, teachers who will inspire the next generation, wealth creators, entrepreneurs and problem solvers.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 we will ensure that we protect individuals from unfair treatment and promote a fair and more equal society. We will not tolerate infringements of individuals rights: the belief that everyone should be given a fair chance to succeed in order that we can thrive as a society is central to the purpose of our school and a central value in our teaching of SMSC.

While our curriculum is primarily focused on mathematics and associated subjects, we consider SMSC education to be an important part of our role as a school. In their private lives and professional careers, our students will find themselves required to make difficult moral choices and forge new pathways in human knowledge. They will need to understand the cultural and intellectual history of humanity and be able to balance subtle logical arguments alongside scientific and statistical evidence. We want them to understand and embrace their important roles in society, be able to respond to the moral conundrums they will encounter with confidence, benefit from the rich culture that they are surrounded by and be tolerant of the variety of views and attitudes they will experience in society.

We are a secular school and do not promote any religious view of existence or morality, but we will enable those students who wish to pursue a faith to do so; details of this are provided below. We will teach all students to show tolerance and to seek to understand the views of others whilst also encouraging them to examine arguments and evidence carefully, dispassionately and rationally whether they are about mathematics, science, morality, politics or faith.

Our SMSC Curriculum

- Our formal, examined curriculum is firmly scientific but the curriculum we deliver will go far beyond this. Our broader curriculum aims to inspire and cultivate a love of the arts and the humanities. Our students will, amongst other things, be strongly encouraged to read broadly, develop their ability to appreciate music, theatre and art, and to enjoy sport.
- As young people who will grow into influential adults we believe it important that they care about societal context , understand history and take seriously their responsibility to make the world a better place.
- Our mission as a school is more than a utilitarian means to address the shortage of STEM graduates. We respect the value of learning both for its own sake as an enrichment of the quality of our lives as learners, and for its utility to society. We are more than scientific instructors. We will provide an exceptional learning experience that inspires our students to become outstanding mathematical scientists who are leaders in their chosen fields with a well-developed moral purpose and an appreciation of their role in making the world a better place.
- We uphold and 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, and those with none.
- We ask our community to share key religious or cultural events, these are included in Monday tutor time and other linked activities may follow, like celebrating a countries national day for example.

Our SMSC curriculum is delivered in a variety of ways:

1. Through our Personal and Pastoral Education Programme (PPEP) programme which systematically ensures we will equip our students with the personal wellbeing, physical and mental health knowledge and skills they need, and an understanding of key issues in current affairs, politics, economics and related areas.
2. The PPEP programme will also include an extracurricular strand which will enable students to sample creative, cultural and sporting opportunities they may not yet have experienced, including concerts of a variety of musical genres, art gallery visits and theatre visits. We will have visiting speakers from scientific, industrial and artistic backgrounds. (See our visiting speaker sections in this policy and in our Child Protection Policy).
3. Our examined curriculum will include connections to SMSC, and opportunities will be taken where appropriate to explore these crucial themes within subjects.

In planning our SMSC curriculum we will observe the following principles:

1. We will uphold and promote the fundamental British values; i.e. we will

a. enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
b. enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
c. encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely;
d. enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;
e. further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;
f. encourage respect for other people;
g. encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

2. We do not promote or denigrate any religion, political view, type of sexuality, gender identity or any other aspects of personal identity whether it be of our students, our staff or anyone else.
3. We want our students to feel safe and accepted in school.
4. We can research, criticise and debate arguments for and against economic, political, metaphysical, theological and scientific theories. This does not mean that we are debating or questioning the worth or the value of any person who may support, promote or deny such theories. We debate the argument, not the person. Where points of view are potentially offensive or threaten to undermine the rights of others we will give our students a clear view about the limits of acceptability within the context of a school and British civil life.
5. We will support our students to engage in constructive debate on difficult, subtle and sensitive issues. We will want them to consider a range of challenging topics carefully and be fully informed about them in order that they can fulfil their roles as influential adults.

Curriculum relating to gender identity and biological sex

- Science relating to biological sex will be explored in PPEP lessons, alongside issues around gender stereotypes, sexism and equality.
- Beliefs about gender identity may be discussed in relevant subjects (e.g. PPEP) but will not be presented as scientific fact or a moral obligation.
- We will make it clear that students who prefer not to conform to gender stereotypes are welcome in this school and must be treated with respect and kindness.
- All students will be encouraged to explore nuanced or controversial concepts with openness, respect and generosity. We are a school for intelligent young people where

students should expect to have the opportunity to reason about and discuss a range of interesting and important topics that go beyond the A-Level specifications we teach.

In planning the curriculum and the support we provide for students we will strive to balance multiple priorities.

- We know that our students are subject to a high level of emotive and sometimes inaccurate information about this and many other issues through social media. They may, therefore, need us to provide them with relevant true, factual information to help them to develop a fuller understanding of the nuances of this area.
- We are committed to fostering an environment where all students feel safe, accepted, and free from bullying or coercion; all respectful contributions to discussions about sex and gender should be listened to and considered without prejudice.
- We know that our students often feel inhibited from discussing certain issues or expressing their own views because of the risk of being "cancelled" or rejected if their views are not deemed politically acceptable, but we want to foster a culture in which students and staff agree that we do not all need to share the same views in order to be friends and have respect for each other.
- Inclusive language may be used in context where appropriate, but will not be prioritised over biologically accurate terminology where this could affect clarity or truthfulness.

Visiting Speakers

In deciding which people we invite and allow to speak to students or visit the school we will observe the following principles and aims:

1. The safety and wellbeing of our students is paramount in any decision we take.
2. We seek to provide our students with exceptional opportunities to be inspired and informed by great experts and interesting and informative speakers.
3. We will seek to ensure that we present a variety of ways of interpreting data and evidence to our students and help them to understand that science is a process that relies on high quality, respectful debate.
4. The school is politically neutral and does not wish to support, or be seen to support, politicians of any party.
5. The school is secular and does not wish to promote, or be seen to promote, any faith-based views.

Our approach, therefore, will observe the following measures:

- We will invite high quality, well respected speakers who are experts in their fields, particularly where those fields are strongly linked to the school's formal curriculum including the PPEP.
- We will **not** invite speakers in to present views which, in the view of the school's leadership team, are intentionally controversial. Whilst we appreciate the value of

considering obscure or unpopular views, we will prioritise pragmatic and the best use of our students' time, in keeping with school's goals and ethos.

- We will expect speakers to be able to present sound evidence and valid arguments for any views they might present to our students; where those views are value judgments or not based on reasoning or evidence we will expect that to be transparent in the way the views are presented to our students.
- We will not normally invite or allow religious speakers/ ministers/ preachers to speak to our students unless they are speaking about areas other than religious belief (e.g. telling students about a charity they are involved in, or research they have done). This does not mean that religious belief will not be considered as part of the PPEP or that students will be discouraged from discussing any religious faith they might have. An exception to this could be made where we are able to provide a full range of religious and non-religious views to students as part of a thorough exploration of the spectrum of metaphysical and moral beliefs.
- We will not normally invite or allow politicians or electoral candidates, including serving ministers, to speak to our students or to use a visit to our school as part of electoral/ political campaigning. An exception to this could be made where we are able to provide a full range of political views and arguments to students through either inviting representatives of a range of parties or enabling our students to challenge the visitor on their political arguments/ views.
- Where issues are sensitive (for example, around such themes as terminal illness, abortion, sexuality) and/or there is a risk of students being personally affected by the subject matter, we will choose speakers carefully, ensuring that they have the tact, skills and understanding to present such issues sensitively and enable the students to develop a mature and well considered understanding of the issues involved. We will also be aware of individuals we may need to speak to beforehand if the subject matter will have a close personal impact.

Opportunities for religious worship

Our timetable features long lunch breaks as well as breaks in the mornings and afternoons and periods at the beginning and end of the day when students are able to be on the school site. These times are suitable opportunities for students to engage in private worship, meditation or simply take some time to think and be alone. Several rooms are allocated as "quiet rooms" in our room allocation and may be used by students as individuals for the purpose of prayer or quiet contemplation. This will be considered normal behaviour for all students, whether or not they have religious belief.

Students who wish to join together for regular prayer or religious or philosophical discussion may speak to a member of the school's leadership team to book a room for regular meetings. The school will be fully supportive of students who wish to do this. Needless to say, students who wish to form other societies are also encouraged to do so.

Students who wish to go off the school site to attend services at a local religious setting may do so at lunchtimes and break times provided they observe the usual procedure for signing in and out. They should not do this during lesson times unless a specific arrangement has been agreed with the headteacher in advance. Where the school has concerns about a child's safety in making such a journey they will ask the student not to make the journey until a suitable way of managing the risk has been established. We are lucky in our setting that we are close to a number of beautiful religious buildings, and our students will be encouraged to visit them either as part of their spiritual life, or simply to enjoy the architecture, art and atmosphere of these wonderful buildings. We are also able to access the facilities in the University of Liverpool Sydney Jones Library, which includes a prayer room which is suitable for a range of religions and students have used this.
If the school has any concern that a child may be making a visit that places them in any danger then the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be observed and all suitable measures taken to ensure the safety of the child.

Roles

- The Headteacher is responsible for establishing and maintaining an ethos of tolerance and respect in which a wide variety of cultures and beliefs are seen as having value and being worth considering and discussing.
- The PPEP coordinator is responsible for planning, and ensuring the effective delivery of, a rich and broad curriculum which enables students to develop their social, moral and cultural knowledge.
- All staff members are responsible for supporting and promoting an ethos of tolerance and respect in which the broad range of human viewpoints can be considered respectfully, reasonably and politely.
- The Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the development of this policy and monitoring the effectiveness of its implementation.

The School Library and other resources

Most books held in the school library will be well known works of fiction or scientific texts which everyone will consider uncontroversial and important parts of our collection.
Some books will need more consideration. In deciding whether or not to keep any book in our collection we will consider the following:
Whether the book promotes views, attitudes or beliefs which are not conducive to the tolerant and respectful ethos of the school or which are unreasonable or incorrect in the considered view of the school's Leadership Team. Many historic texts will reflect the values of the time in which they were written; this does not mean that they cannot be part of our collection: we will need to consider whether the book in question can easily be understood in its historical context. For example, Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* features repeated use of language which would now be

considered highly offensive but, when considered in context, the book is important: its characters use racist language which was entirely normal (and not necessarily much less offensive) at the time. Our view is that our students should be encouraged to read a high quality book like this in order to understand better the history and injustice of racism which is part of the book's message.
Our library may contain books which argue respectfully both in favour of and against different types of religious belief, political views, moral positions etc.. We will not accept books which promote views which are not compatible with fundamental British values.
We will accept book donations but will not necessarily display or even retain every book donated to us. Our aim will be to present to our students a range of books which tempt them to read widely and to challenge themselves to read higher quality and more challenging texts.

How will the implementation of this policy be monitored?

This policy is the responsibility of the Education Committee of the Board of Trustees.
Trustees will monitor the responses of students and parents in the school's annual survey to ascertain whether the SMSC needs of students are being met, and will meet with groups of students regularly to discuss the curriculum and its delivery, including SMSC.
Trustees will also discuss the SMSC curriculum with staff members during Trustees' visits to school and meetings of the Board's Education Committee in order to form judgements about the effectiveness of the school's planning and delivery of SMSC education.

Glossary

PPEP: Personal and Pastoral Education Programme (the school's curriculum for personal, social, health and citizenship education)

STEM: Science, technology, engineering and mathematics