

Burnhope Primary School

Policy on Spiritual, Moral, and Cultural Development

Spiritual Development

Spiritual development is emphatically not another name for religious education, although there are close connections, and spiritual development may be both an aim for religious education and an outcome of it. Religious education certainly seeks to increase pupils' awareness of ultimate questions surrounding existence. It is; therefore, right to expect religious education to play a major part in promoting pupils' spiritual development. However, spiritual development is a responsibility of the whole school and of the whole curriculum, as well as of activities outside the curriculum.

Spiritual development, on any account, deals with what is supremely personal and unique to each individual. While the other aspects of pupils' development relate to matters of collective well-being and how we relate to others, the spiritual draws attention to aspects of human nature which may give meaning and purpose to human existence. We can all agree on the importance of asking who you are and where you are going, and on the development of feelings and emotions.

Teachers can identify the importance of encouraging intellectual curiosity, if pupils are to seek answers to life's great questions. If the spiritual dimension is to do with seeking answers to life's great questions, then all teachers should be leading pupils in the direction of the open-ended enquiry and inviting them to take increasing responsibility for themselves and their work. If we did not do this we would be contradicting whatever efforts we made in other fields. We must play a part in encouraging such reflection and exploration. Thus, although spirituality is a unique personal characteristic, its development, for many individuals, depends in part – as does much of education – upon human interaction.

In this school we shall attempt to encourage such development:

- Through the values and attitudes the school identifies, upholds and fosters;
- Through the contribution made by the whole curriculum;
- Through religious education, acts of collective worship and other assemblies;

Through extra-curricular activity, together with the general ethos and climate of the school.

As a result, pupils ought to be able to demonstrate at an appropriate level to their age and ability;

- Knowledge of the central beliefs, ideas and practices of major world religions and philosophies;
- An understanding of how people have sought to explain the universe through various myths and stories, including religious, historical and scientific interpretations;
- Beliefs which are held personally, and the ability to give some account of these and to derive values from them (here the link to moral development is a close one);
- Behaviour and attitudes which derive from such knowledge and understanding and from personal conviction, and which show awareness of the relationship between belief and action;
- Personal response to questions about the purpose of life, and to the experience of e.g., beauty and love or pain and suffering.

Spiritual concepts can be explored in subjects such as history and questions of life and death are encountered in English and other literature. Other subjects may make similar contributions.

It has already been stated that religious education has a major role to play in spiritual development and there are separate curriculum guidelines for this subject.

Moral development

Moral development refers to pupils' knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to what is right or wrong. The word 'moral' is concerned with fundamental judgements and precepts about how we should behave and act and the reasons for such behaviour; it includes questions of intention, motive and attitude. 'Right' and 'wrong' as matters of morality need to be distinguished from related usages, such as legal terminology.

In this school we will try to provide pupils with a moral framework within which to operate and, as they mature, by helping them to decide what they hold as right and wrong, why they do so, and how they should act - that is, that they should behave well, in accordance with a moral code. The key terms (right and wrong, good and bad) are not unique to morality.

Not only is it important to distinguish ethical from legal usage; we also need to note that 'right and wrong' are applied to mathematical solutions or to statements of fact; similarly, 'good' and 'bad' feature, as the most basic English words of commendation and disapproval, in a host of different contexts.

Questions about what morality consists of and the nature of moral judgements and values must be addressed, particularly 'what values' and 'whose values'.

Teachers must take care not to impose their own values. Nevertheless, they must take a consistent stand on questions of morality through the ethos and tone of the school, especially on issues where there is a high degree of agreement within society.

In this school our policy on acceptable values will be:-

Values will include:

- Telling the truth;
- Keeping promises;
- Respecting the rights and property of others;
- Acting considerately towards others;
- Helping those less fortunate and weaker than ourselves;
- Taking personal responsibility for one's actions;
- Self discipline.

Values will reject:

- Bullying;
- Cheating;
- Deceit;
- Cruelty;
- Irresponsibility;
- Dishonesty;

Pupils should be able to move from the taught morality which is characteristic of the very young, and an essential pre-requisite of moral development, to a position where their values and judgements spring from internal sources and allow them to be decision-taking and responsible individuals.

A basic proposition is that moral development is to do with understanding the principles lying behind actions and decisions and not just with behaviour itself.

Whether all pupils or even most pupils will reach this stage by the time they leave this school is debatable but it is an aim nevertheless.

The values the school sets and exhibits through all its structures, and, not least, on how the curriculum and teaching seek to develop the knowledge, as well as the skills of analysis and decision-making will support moral behaviour and understanding.

As a result, pupils ought to be able to demonstrate at an appropriate level for their age and ability:-

- Knowledge of the language and ideas of morality and, increasingly, how these differ from, e.g., legal or political usage, or from other kinds of statement (logical or factual, for example);
- Understanding of the nature and purpose of moral discussion, with the desire to persuade, combined with respect for, and listening to, others' viewpoints;
- Personal values in relation to:
 - The self

With reference to such aspects as:

Self awareness; self confidence; self esteem; self control;
Self-reliance; self-respect; self discipline; responsibility.

- Relationship with others

With reference to such qualities as:

Tolerance; respect for persons and property, truthfulness;
compassion; cooperativeness; sensitivity, love.

- Local national and world issues

With reference to such issues as:

The individual and the community – right, duties and responsibilities; war and peace; human rights; exploitation and aid; medical ethics;
environmental issues; equal opportunities (sex, race, disability, class).

- The disposition to act and behave in accordance with such values, including the skills of making moral decisions and forming moral judgements.

Developing moral qualities consists in part of providing a basic moral code, of helping pupils to establish their own values, and in part, of helping them to develop the self confidence and resolve to hold fast to those values within that code against peer group and other pressures.

Cultural Development

Cultural development refers to pupils' increasing understanding and command of those beliefs, values, customs, knowledge and skills which, taken together, form the basis of identity and cohesion in societies and groups.

Education is clearly concerned both with developing and strengthening cultural interests which pupils already possess and with exposing them to a breadth of stimuli in order to allow them to develop new interests. Those who only experience classical music at home should be introduced to a range of alternative or popular music. Similarly, those who experience only popular art, advertisements and photographs should be introduced to works of great painters.

Culture is, therefore, a complex concept. Moreover, it is one which itself has developed rapidly, and continues to do so. Cultural development is closely related to, and indeed may incorporate, certain aspects of spiritual, moral and social development.

Cultures grow and change over time. Consequently, pupils need to learn both about those past features which influence and shape the present; and about how the present generations (including themselves) are maintaining, interpreting and re-shaping their cultural tradition.

Children are subject to many cultural influences. We are by no means necessarily the strongest of these, yet we have an immediate impact upon children and a particular contribution to make. We need to introduce pupils to the values and customs held within a nation's culture, and to those of other significant cultures, including those which may be represented in our locality or region. This will imply the recognition of and respect for the right of others to exercise a cultural influence – in particular home, community and religion – and a willingness to co-operate with such groups in working towards educational goals. It follows that we should respect the values, customs and cultural heritage of pupils who belong to faiths or ethnic cultures other than those to which they themselves belong. Equally, we have a responsibility to extend cultural horizons beyond the immediate and the local to, for example, the highest artistic, musical and literary achievements of human beings.

We aim to foster pupils' cultural development both by the ways in which we value and encourage pupils' own cultural interests and achievements, often gained outside school, and in the ways in which we enrich, deepen and broaden their experience of all aspects of culture,

whether aesthetic, mathematical, literary, technological, musical, scientific, political, economic or religious.

In studying the beliefs and values of other cultures it is important that we recognise the – often separate – influences of religion, ethnicity and heritage, and the different aspirations of various social groups within such cultures. Pupils' cultural development consists of both a deepening understanding of their own cultural roots and of a broadening of their cultural horizons and aspirations.

As a result, pupils ought to be able to demonstrate at an appropriate level to their age and ability:-

- Knowledge of the nature and roots of their own cultural traditions and practices, be these religious, social, aesthetic, ethnic or political, and also of the key features of other major cultural groups within their own society;
- Understanding of the diversity of religious, social, aesthetic, ethnic and political traditions and practices – nationally and internationally;
- Personal response and accomplishment in a range of cultural fields. These might include, as a minimum: literature, both prose and verse; music; technology, including information technology; art and design; and physical movement, including dance and sport;
- Capacity to relate what they learn, in school generally and in particular areas of the curriculum, to their appreciation of wider cultural aspects of society, and to evaluate the quality and worth of cultural achievements.

Social Development

Social development refers to pupils' progressive acquisition of the competences and qualities needed to play a full part in society. It is, then, concerned with the skills and personal qualities necessary for individuals to live and function effectively in society. It also involves growth in knowledge and understanding of society in all its aspects; its institutions; structures and characteristics, including economic and political organisation, and principles and life as a citizen, parent or worker in the community.

In this school the knowledge and understanding of most of these aspects will be limited. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the necessary development in future phases.

In this school we aim to complement and extend the functions of the home by helping to prepare pupils to live in society. When children enter this school they join groups larger and more varied than that of the

family. They are, therefore, required to learn the obligations and constraints, but also the sources of satisfaction, that go with membership of a group and a community.

They also need to become more aware of their own identity as individuals, and of the importance of taking account of the feelings and wishes of others.

In these matters, therefore, social development is closely related to the development of moral principles.

Consciously or otherwise, teachers provide an arena for social development through their classroom organisation and management.

Decisions about how pupils are grouped, for example, convey strong social messages. As pupils work in groups and in pairs they experience a variety of social roles, including co-operation and partnership, leadership and responsibility. They learn to respond to the initiatives of others, and what it means to share a common purpose.

Two examples of the way in which these social skills may be acquired are through physical education and team games, and the team work and co-operation which projects in such subjects as technology can foster. As a result pupils ought to be able to demonstrate at an appropriate level to their age and ability:-

- Knowledge of the ways in which societies function and are organised – from the family to the school and thence to wider groupings (local, national, international);
- Understanding of how individuals relate to each other and the institutions, structures and processes of society, and how what is learnt in the curriculum relates to life in society;
- Attitudes which show the capacity to adjust to a range of social contexts by appropriate and sensitive behaviour;
- Skills in taking on, as appropriate, the roles of leader and team-worker, exercising responsibility, initiative and co-operation;
- Ability to make a strong personal contribution to the well-being of social groups and to form effective relationships with them.