



## Fundamental British Values

It was not until 2014 that the term “British Values” began to be well known in the contexts associated with schools. In order to prepare our children and young people for life in modern Britain the government has issued guidance on how schools can promote fundamental British values (FBV) as part of Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural (SMSC) education in schools. British values are defined<sup>1</sup> as:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty and
- Mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

One could observe that these values are not necessarily exclusive to Britain. Are British values different from French or Sweden? Do we have a monopoly on what values are? Whatever one's opinions are, the relevance and implication for schools is that Ofsted and the independent inspectorates will take the work of schools in this area into account during inspections. These values have been set out earlier in the Prevent strategy<sup>2</sup> and are also referenced in the Teachers' Standards<sup>3</sup>. One of the amendments in the Governor Handbook (2014) stresses the importance of governing bodies' requirement to **promote** 'British Values' in schools. Until now schools have been required to 'respect' these values, but as a result of changes brought in last year all schools must now have a clear strategy for embedding these values and show how their work with pupils has been effective in doing so. In the latest Governors Handbook<sup>4</sup> (2015), this area is further highlighted when it outlines that Governing bodies are able to suspend a governor for acting in a way that is contrary to the ethos of the school, and this would include undermining fundamental British values.

How can Governors really ascertain the level of their schools activities in promoting these values? Two questions that governors need to ask are:

- how can they support schools on improving the SMSC development of pupils and ensure young people leave school prepared for life in modern Britain and
- how can the governing body ensure that this ethos is reflected and implemented effectively in school policy and practice?

### Improving SMSC Development of pupils

If you think that SMSC is not yet articulated within your school an audit of what you deliver in terms of provision may be useful as a starting point. There are many audit tools available online, on completion schools may be surprised to know that they do indeed nurture and provide elements of SMSC but it may not be recognised as such or planned for in a holistic way. SMSC can be developed through virtually all parts of the curriculum and schools need to understand their obligations in promoting this, as areas of focus do you as a school:

- Promote the values of democracy in lessons and wider school life?  
*In primary schools pupils will need to be introduced to the concepts from when they start school; e.g. 'People that help us', school councils etc. In secondary schools this area could be delivered via the citizenship curriculum.*
- Get your pupils to appreciate that living under the rule of law protects individuals and is essential for their wellbeing and safety?  
*In secondary schools this will be evident as part of the citizenship curriculum*
- Promote the importance of identifying and combating discrimination?  
*Curriculum areas such as RE, Citizenship, PSHE, drama*

<sup>1</sup>“ Improving the SMSC development of Pupils,” Departmental advice, DfE, Nov 2014

<sup>2</sup> The Prevent Strategy 2011: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-strategy-2011>

<sup>3</sup> Teachers' Standards: Guidance for School leaders, School staff and Governing Bodies, DfE, Updated 2013

<sup>4</sup> 'Governors' handbook. For governors in maintained schools, academies and free schools', Jan 2015

- Provide opportunities for pupils to understand that the freedom to choose and hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law?
- Promote tolerance between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of their own and other cultures? Do you as a school encourage respect for other people?<sup>5</sup>

*Curriculum areas such as RE, assemblies, out of school activities, involving the community that acknowledge our multicultural society*

### **School policy and practice**

Governing bodies are the key strategic decision-making body of every school and it is their role to set the school's strategic framework and to ensure all statutory duties are met. In terms of FBV what does this look like?

- The governing body should ensure that the schools vision/values/mission statement is visible, e.g. the School website, school rules etc
- Having a robust framework for setting priorities, creating accountability and monitoring progress. Realising the school's vision can be seen in the school policies e.g. Equality, SMSC, Community Cohesion and the School Development Plan
- Set and safeguard a school ethos of high expectations of everyone in the school community, this could be linked into the PREVENT agenda, some schools have policies on combatting extremism (these are not statutory)
- Ensuring the school's ethos promotes FBV through teaching and learning, through SMSC,

### **How can schools evidence their provision in preparation for inspection?**

Inspectors will look for:

- Climate and ethos (enabling personal development)
- Range of opportunities (developing self-esteem)
- Development of social skills

Evidence will be gathered of the impact of the curriculum on developing aspects of SMSC. This may be through:

- lesson observations where subjects promote aspects of SMSC provision; RE, art and music are obvious examples but discussion with pupils and staff will provide an important insight as to how SMSC is planned as part of the curriculum in other subjects
- observation of other activities that indicate the extent to which there is a coherent approach to promoting SMSC set out by the school and implemented through activities such as tutorials, citizenship, PSHE programmes and discussions with pupils about their work
- evaluation of opportunities created by the school for pupils to take part in a range of artistic, cultural, sporting, dramatic, musical, mathematical, scientific, technological and, where appropriate, international events.
- All schools should be promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and suitably preparing pupils for life.

General advice would be that schools should be selective and succinct in outlining their SMSC activities, there is no need to present a detailed analysis of the school's promotion of each of the four components of pupils' SMSC development. The recent RSA Schools with Soul<sup>6</sup> report found that the requirement of schools to develop the broader human qualities of their pupils has become side-lined due to the overwhelming pressure placed on them to deliver better examination results. The report also concluded that too many schools took a 'scattergun approach' that risked provision being 'everywhere and nowhere'. In conclusion the report argues that despite an increase in school autonomy, deeper thinking about how to equip children

<sup>5</sup> Paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010

<sup>6</sup> 'Schools with Soul: A New Approach to SMSC Education', A. Peterson et al, RSA, 2014

and young people with the skills, attitudes, values and capabilities are needed in order for our children and young people to succeed in the modern world.

As for FBV, pause for thought:

*“Being British is about driving in a German car to an Irish pub for a Belgian beer, then travelling home, grabbing an Indian curry or a Turkish kebab on the way, to sit on Swedish furniture and watch American shows on a Japanese TV.”*

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