

Argyle House School

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education Policy

Policy updated February 2025

Introduction

At Argyle House School, we place great emphasis on providing a broad and inclusive education, in a nurturing and supportive environment, whilst striving for excellence in all that we do.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education is integral to the life of the school in helping us meet each of our aims.

In celebrating each student for the unique qualities they bring to our community, we encourage individuals to explore and develop their interests, gain confidence in themselves and in their abilities, and seize the rich opportunities life offers. We seek to prepare all our students for a life of learning and fulfilment, and to be responsible, active, and compassionate global citizens in the fast-changing world of the 21st century

SMSC education helps students develop personal qualities such as truthfulness, honesty, respect for difference, moral principles, independence and self-respect. The fundamental British values of democracy, the rules of law, individual liberty and respect/tolerance are promoted through our day-to-day activities, as well as being taught formally in lessons, and special regard is given to the protected characteristics when teaching about respect and equality.

Guidance

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to:

- The Education Act 2002
- DfE (2014) 'Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools'

Expectations of Staff

All staff throughout the school, whatever their role, are involved in promoting and developing SMSC education and are expected to lead and strengthen this provision, At such a crucial time in students' development, it is vital that a strong pastoral support system is in place alongside high-quality academic provision. Students become well-known to their teachers and form staff as individuals. Students readily talk to staff, not just about matters academic, but about the other areas of their lives.

Staff are aware (through, for example, the Curriculum Policy and regular staff meeting reminders) that personal beliefs must not be expressed in ways which exploit students' vulnerability or might lead them to break the law and they must not encourage support of a particular political viewpoint.

Spiritual Development

The school seeks to help students to become more aware of the spiritual dimension within them by providing opportunities to question and reflect.

'Spiritual' is not synonymous with 'religious' although it does extend to an awareness or religious beliefs and the diversity of religious belief systems.

The school's ethos and values as well as the explicit teaching and learning aim to provide students with the knowledge to develop, explore and respect the spiritual dimension of their lives and the lives of others. We foster the spiritual development through:

- Promoting an environment where every student is given the scope to reach their potential regardless of their gender, race, disability or any other equality issues
- Providing a school ethos which is tolerant, non-judgemental and respectful
- Providing information and support to those who wish to pursue their own religious and spiritual development
- Proactively exploiting in the curriculum, opportunities to explore issues
- Using assemblies, enrichment and co-curricular opportunities to allow the exploration of spirituality

Moral Development

At Argyle House School, moral development is concerned with enabling our students to build a framework of moral values, aligned with the law of the land, which regulate their personal behaviour. It is concerned with fundamental judgements and precepts about how people should behave and about the reasons for such behaviour.

We aim to develop an understanding of society's shared and agreed values while at the same time developing a capacity to reflect on these and evaluate them for oneself. It is also about understanding that society's values are in continuous evolution in response to social and cultural change, and that there are many issues over which there is disagreement. It is about respecting others, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 (see Appendix for the list of protected characteristics); respecting their needs, interests and feelings; being ready to explore and discuss one's own views and those of other people; and understanding the need to review and reassess one's beliefs, preconceptions and conduct in the light of experience. At Argyle House School we try and foster this moral development through:

- Maintaining an ethos which is characterised by mutual respect and tolerance and modelling this behaviour within the community
- Giving students opportunities, both in the curriculum and where appropriate in co-curricular activities to explore and develop moral concepts and values such as rights and responsibilities and justice
- Encouraging student to be actively involved in supporting charities, fundraising events and activities
- Granting students a degree of freedom and self-regulation that is often greater than they have experienced previously, in order that they may develop their own autonomous moral values and understanding in a manner appropriate to their age, and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own moral decisions when working together.

Social Development

We also encourage students to develop the skills required to become active citizens so that they can participate responsibly in the community. This includes co-operation, teamwork, initiative, responsibility and collaboration.

Social development has wider implications, however, also involving the ability to function effectively in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society and developing into tolerant and responsible human beings. It involves developing knowledge and understanding of others as well as an understanding of society's institutions and structures, of its economic and political principles and organisations, and of individuals' roles and responsibilities within it. At Argyle House School we aim to foster the social development of all our students through:

- Developing a student community that is anchored in shared values of respect, cooperation, self-discipline and friendship
- Promoting the practice of respectful listening to others and encouraging individuals to contribute with confidence
- Providing opportunities for group activities such as leading assemblies, sport, music, drama events etc, to foster a sense of community in the student body
- Encouraging students to develop pastoral awareness and support for one another
- Encouraging tolerance for individual, cultural and other differences, as well as a zero tolerance approach towards bullying. This creates an atmosphere in which students feel secure and form strong friendships which often span year groups, nationalities and cultural backgrounds.
- Teaching students about public institutions and services
- Providing opportunities to learn about democratic processes
- Encouraging students to choose, within their Key Stages, and support, nominated charities through school fundraising events
- Developing links within the community for example through the voluntary/community service placements.
- Ensuring that all students have a voice that is actively heard through committees and discussion groups. We encourage students to take on responsibilities and play an active role in school life.

Cultural Development

We encourage our students to develop their own knowledge and understanding of differing cultural belief and customs and the need for tolerance for other cultures and their traditions. It is therefore necessary to develop an ability to recognise and understand one's own cultural principles and values and how they can and have changed over time. Whether through music, drama, art, science, poetry or history it is important to develop this ability to appreciate cultural diversity and accord dignity and respect to other people's values and beliefs.

It is necessary that students recognise now, through shared experiences accessed via travel, television, art and the internet, how culturally diverse the world is and have an understanding that cultures are always changing and coping with change. There is a need to focus on rejecting all forms of discrimination. At Argyle House School we aim to provide opportunities for cultural development by:

- Raising awareness and teaching student through specific topics in curriculum lessons how to appreciate other people's traditions, values and beliefs

- Tackling any forms of discrimination or prejudice directly and so in doing so ensure that students learn from this
- Providing opportunities to participate in cultural events at local and national level
- Participating in visits and trips in Britain and abroad to extend the cultural experience
- Developing partnerships with outside agencies and individuals to extend students' cultural awareness

SMSC education

SMSC education is provided through:

Timetabled PSHEE curricular time: Years 7-13 have allocated timetable time with dedicated schemes of work and lesson plans

Pastoral/tutorial activity sessions: activities that cover key themes, including personal reflection and development as well as for example careers education and guidance.

Assemblies: whole school, key stage, year group and house assemblies provide the opportunity to:

- reflect on the wonder of the world around us
- celebrate success and develop pride in the school and the achievements of its students e.g. sports teams, music awards, competition winners, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme etc.
- have a sense of belonging to the school community
- encourage high standards of behaviour and mutual respect
- foster links with the local community through presentations from representatives of local charities
- develop empathy through hearing from visiting speakers about the difficulties faced by those living in particular conditions
- hear about those who have shown by their lives, great integrity, commitment or compassion
- share in national and international events and participate in national awareness campaigns e.g. Holocaust Memorial Day; the Olympics, International Women's Day, Black History Month, LGBT History Month, Women's History Month, Anti Bullying Week, International Day of Languages, Hidden Disabilities Week, Young Carers, World Climate Day, Children's Mental Health Weeks, World Poetry Day etc.
- reflect upon contemporary social and moral issues such as racial inequality, discrimination, climate change and refugees and give students a platform to encourage others to think about pertinent issues e.g. gender stereotyping, ableism

Specialist speakers and workshops: are used to complement and extend the above programme and are delivered as one-off events at appropriate stages during the academic year, as well as being built into the specially designated programmes.

Provision through teaching and learning in other subjects/curriculum areas: every subject on the curriculum has a part to play in encouraging spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in students.

Further provision across the whole school: prompted through:

- Charity fundraising
- Voluntary/Community service
- Co-curricular activities
- Day and residential trips
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Houses, including senior and junior leadership roles
- Argyle House School Diploma
- Community links

Links with other policies

- PSHEE and RSE Policies
- Behaviour Policy

APPENDIX A: Protected Characteristics

The following are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation.