



Dame Alice Owen's School
The Dame Alice Owen Foundation - 1613

WHOLE SCHOOL SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL & CULTURAL POLICY (SMSC)

Policy agreed by the Chair of the Curriculum Committee
To be reviewed (every 2 years)

Autumn 2024
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To be monitored by the Chair of the Curriculum Committee on behalf of the Curriculum Committee

1. Introduction

Dame Alice Owen's School recognises that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) element of students' education is crucial to their development as an individual, allowing them to take their rightful place in their community as a local, national and global citizen. SMSC is about the values students are encouraged to hold, their attitude towards learning, knowledge and society. SMSC is fundamental in preparing young people for society and at Dame Alice Owen's School, students are helped to develop positive attitudes and beliefs by being given opportunities to:

- Develop spiritual values and reasoned personal and moral values.
- Consider the pluralistic nature of society; developing their understanding and respect for those with different religions, beliefs and ways of life.
- Value everyone equally.
- Develop personal relationships, based on trust, self-esteem and mutual respect.
- Become active, responsible citizens in a democratic society.
- Develop an appreciation of human achievements and aspirations.
- Develop an understanding of the world in which they live and the interdependence of individuals, groups, nations and the environment.

At Dame Alice Owen's, SMSC permeates the life and work of the school. Through SMSC we seek to develop attitudes and values that will enable students to become responsible and caring members of society. We give students the opportunity for spiritual reflection and encourage them to explore the fundamental questions of life, including their own personal existence, journey and purpose. We provide students with a curriculum that will enable them to develop a knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures, particularly those within their own society. We seek to foster an attitude of respect towards those from a culture and background different from their own. They are encouraged to develop an understanding of the world, society and the community and accept responsibility as a citizen as well as the capacity to tackle moral and spiritual dilemmas and to try

to reach independent judgements which reflect universal human principles. Through perception, sensitivity and respect for others as individuals and in groups we would also expect students to develop questioning, enquiring minds and learn how to express their ideas appropriately.

As a school we are aware of our collective responsibilities towards spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and we:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of their role in developing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Ensure the development of self-esteem and prepare students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.
- Ensure we celebrate student achievement, foster a sense of community, explore relevant SMSC issues and involve students as active participants as much as possible.
 - This is demonstrated through a wide range of events such as the annual Celebration of Achievement evening in the Summer visitation when a variety of prizes are awarded to students throughout the school. There are also termly Celebration of Achievement assemblies for all year groups to recognise effort and participation in the life of the school and activities outside Dame Alice Owen's School. The House Points system encourages a culture of success and achievement for all. Older students are also encouraged to contribute to the school by developing their leadership roles as prefects, peer mentors, form and house representatives, etc.
- Ensure students have information about and access to extra-curricular and enrichment activities.
- Ensure that the Personal Development, Form and Assembly programmes provide opportunities for discussion and reflection.
- Build community and business links into the curriculum wherever possible.
- Ensure displays reflect and respect diversity.
- Provide opportunities for all students to discuss issues and to take on responsibility within lessons, extra-curricular activities, trips, visits and enrichment days.
- Our enhanced provision and support for the teaching of languages provides a rich variety of additional opportunities for students in terms of developing aspects of SMSC. Our links with other countries, including student exchange programmes, are particularly powerful in developing their sense of being part of a global community.

To summarise, it is an expectation of all staff at Dame Alice Owen's School to act as role models demonstrating courtesy, mutual respect, positive intent and to be prepared to listen to students' views and encourage them to listen to each other. Staff are equally aware of the opportunities presented every day through curricular and extracurricular activities to develop students' skills, attitudes and understanding.

We seek, through 'opportunities for all' and 'window to the world' to provide an education that develops the whole person, mind, body and spirit. Therefore, the key to Dame Alice Owen's School is the conviction that the education we provide is not only about the acquiring of knowledge, important though this is, but that it is also about the personal development of every student, in its fullest sense. Our mission is to ensure that students are provided with an excellent foundation of experience and knowledge, with opportunities for discussion, reflection and evaluation, so that students are able to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimension.

Finally, although the role of Dame Alice Owen's School in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is clearly one of stimulus and nourishment, the school acknowledges that this can only be achieved in partnership with parents and carers. Our SMSC policy, then, is inclusivity and shared ownership with parents.

2. Spiritual Development

“Spiritual development can be seen as the development of the non-material element of being human which animates and sustains individuals and, depending on their point of view, either ends or continues in some form when they die. It is about the development of a ‘spirit’. Some people may call it the development of a pupil’s soul; others as the development of ‘personality’ or ‘character.’”

R Best, *‘Where are we going with SMSC?’*, School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) Report (1996), ISI Guidance

At Dame Alice Owen's School our spiritual aims can be summed up as seeking to develop in our students:

- An openness to reflect on the deeper questions of life and human existence; to gain an awareness of our own sense of morality and spirituality.
- An increased awareness of the self and a willingness to look beyond materialism.
- A willingness to reflect on and think critically about their experiences, responses and choices.
- A willingness to reflect on and appreciate works of literary, artistic or musical merit.
- A developing maturity to cope with the difficulties and struggles that human existence naturally presents e.g., anxiety, stress, unhappiness, illness, divorce and death etc.

The contribution to the spiritual aspect of each student's development is achieved through opportunities to:

- Learn about and engage with different beliefs and views, and to develop the student's ability to express their own views in an informed and unprejudiced way.
- Appreciate that spirituality is expressed in many diverse forms and is not just restricted to religious practice. For example, reflecting on nature as a source of inspiration that provokes a sense of awe and wonder about the world we live in. This is a spiritual experience shared by both religious and non-religious people alike.
- Recognise and value the intrinsic worth of everyone's contribution to the whole school community, by living out the values of trust and mutual respect.
- Express themselves creatively within the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
- Encounter and experience a spiritual dimension to human experience through reflection.

The potential for spiritual development is open to all students and is by no means restricted to the knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs. The spiritual dimension of life at Dame Alice Owen's School is seen as the set of beliefs, values, attitudes, experiences and reflections by which individuals give direction and meaning to their lives.

Spiritual development is also concerned with the promotion of the development of feelings and emotions, as well as identifying the importance of intellectual curiosity. It is concerned with deepening appreciation of music, art and literature. These areas, as well as those traditionally understood as religious, seek to explain what life is about and students are invited and encouraged to explore them. The broad and balanced curriculum and wider educational opportunities provided at Dame Alice Owen's School allow students to grow to their full human potential. The methodology adopted is that of discussion, exploration and reflection through what is taught in the curriculum, participation in music, drama and artistic activity all of sorts build up to make the school's distinctive ethos.

Student spiritual development is shown by their ability to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values. Spiritual development, then, is concerned with how a student develops:

- Personal values and beliefs.
- A willingness to reflect on their experiences.
- An ability to communicate these beliefs in discussion and behaviour.
- An understanding of the value and role of faith and religion in societies.
- An understanding, appreciation and respect of differences amongst people.

Spiritual development is personal and unique to each individual. It is about the meaning in life, truth and ultimate values. It includes imagination, inspiration and creativity. It also includes an awareness of self-identify and self-worth. Dame Alice Owen's School promotes spiritual development as part of student personal development though:

- School Rules - the Positive Achievement system/House system.
- Personal Development Programmes e.g., Learning to Learn and Learning for Life.
- All subjects of the curriculum.
- Assemblies.
- The ethos of the school - values, attitudes and expectations which encourage imagination, inspiration and contemplation.
- Opportunities to develop their understanding of spiritual issues.
- Opportunities for reflection on aspects of their lives.
- Wonder at the natural world and human achievement.

3. Moral Development

“Moral development is about pupils building a framework of moral values which regulates their personal behaviour; developing an understanding of society's shared and agreed values; understanding that there are issues where there is disagreement and that society's values change; developing knowledge of a range of views on moral and ethical issues, the reasons for the range and their own response to the different views.”

R Best, 'Where are we going with SMSC?', School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) Report (1996), ISI Guidance

Moral development is concerned with students' knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to right and wrong within the accepted codes of practices of society. Their knowledge and awareness of values and attitudes of individuals and society as a whole and socially acceptable code of behaviour is important. The quality of relationships that students experience, the standards of behaviour in the school as well as the values promoted by the school's code of conduct will form the basis of any judgement on moral development as well as the extent to which students show:

- An understanding of the difference between right and wrong and readily apply this understanding in their own lives and, in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England.
- Respect people, truth and property.
- A concern for how their actions may affect others demonstrating understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and actions.
- An interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and an ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.
- Personal conduct which demonstrates that they take responsibility for their own actions.
- Personal behaviour that shows appropriate actions due to principles rather than fear of punishment.
- A knowledge of standards of morality.

Parents and Carers

Dame Alice Owen's School is a social organisation and its functioning depends on the broad acceptance of rules, codes of conduct and a behaviour and discipline policy based on a clear set of moral principles. The school has a clear set of aims, values and expectations which are shared with parents/carers, staff and students including:

- Telling the truth and appreciating honesty and integrity.
- Respecting the rights and property of others.
- Being considerate towards other people.
- Taking responsibility for one's own actions.
- Self-discipline.
- Respecting the beliefs and practices of others in a multicultural society.

The essence of moral behaviour is to build a framework of values which regulate personal behaviour through principles rather than fear of punishment or reward. These values provide the framework for students to develop their attitudes and understanding of morality and develop the self-confidence to hold to this code of values against a variety of pressures. Moral development is about understanding the principles and social values behind actions and decisions. At Dame Alice Owen's School, then, we reject:

- Bullying and cheating
- Cruelty
- Irresponsibility
- Dishonesty

- Obscenity
- Intolerance including racism and any forms of harassment

At Dame Alice Owen's School, we promote moral development through a range of activities and opportunities both within and outside the classroom such as:

- Working with teachers, form tutors and the pastoral team.
- Learning for Life Programme.
- Assemblies.
- Awarding house points and sanctions.
- Welfare and guidance.
- Through all subjects of the curriculum.
- Through foreign exchange programmes and visits.

4. Social Development

Social development is concerned with the skills and personal qualities necessary for individuals to live and function effectively in society. Social development is based on the acceptance of group rules and the ability to see oneself in a wider context. The quality of relationships in school is crucial in forming students' attitudes to good social behaviour and self-discipline so that they develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain. Spiritual development is therefore concerned with how a student develops their:

- Use of a range of social skills in different contexts, including working and socialising with pupils from different religious, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Willingness to participate in a variety of communities and social settings, including by volunteering, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively.
- Acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect of those with different faiths (or without) and beliefs.

The school helps prepare students to live in British society by providing knowledge and understanding of society, its institutions, structures, characteristics, political, non-political and economic organisations. The school systematically plans for social development of students through a range of teaching and learning activities including:

- Classroom management including student grouping and opportunities for group work.
- The school code of conduct.
- School council.
- School productions.
- Residential trips, social and international trips.
- The Learning for Life Programme.
- Extra-curricular activities.
- Foreign exchange programmes.
- Student Leadership opportunities which support students in the school community.

5. Cultural Development

A student's cultural development refers to an increasing understanding of those values, beliefs, customs, knowledge and skills which link groups together and give people a sense of identity. At Dame Alice Owen's School, we seek to develop in students:

- Understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and that of others.
- Understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain.
- Knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain.
- Willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, sporting and cultural opportunities.
- Interest in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity, and the extent to which they understand, accept, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their tolerance and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socioeconomic groups in the local, national and global communities.

The school curriculum provides experiences of all aspects of culture and diversity for students through all areas of the curriculum, not simply Art, MFL, Music and Drama. For example, through Maths, Literature, Technology, Science, Politics, Economic and Religious Studies etc.

There are equally opportunities for cultural visits and exchanges including:

- Creative and performing arts for all students.
- European exchanges.
- Cultural visits abroad.
- Visits to centres of cultural interest.
- Extra-curricular activities.

6. Delivering SMSC and British values at Dame Alice Owen's School

As a multicultural school, we promote the basic British values of democracy; the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for those of different faiths (and for those without faith) and beliefs. This ensures young people understand the importance of respect and leave school fully prepared for life in modern Britain. We deliver our SMSC curriculum and discuss the importance of British values through formal subjects including the learning for life curriculum, trips, assemblies, speakers or representatives who visit the school, extra-curricular activities and special events.

Examples of the understanding and knowledge students learn include:

- An understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process.
- An understanding that the freedom to hold to a variety of faiths and beliefs is protected in law.

- An acceptance that people having different faiths or beliefs to oneself (or having none) should be accepted, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour.
- An understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination.

Examples of actions we take to promote British values are to:

- Include, in suitable parts of the curriculum - as appropriate for the age of students - material on the strengths, advantages and disadvantages of democracy, and how democracy and the law work in Britain.
- Ensure all students within the school have a voice that is listened to, and demonstrate how democracy works by actively promoting democratic processes such as a school council.
- Use opportunities such as general or local elections to hold mock elections to promote fundamental British values and provide students with the opportunity to learn how to argue and defend points of view.
- Consider the role of extra-curricular activities, including any run directly by students, in promoting fundamental British values.

SMSC and British values are further promoted through:

- A 'whole student' curriculum throughout every subject.
- A wide variety of extra-curricular activities.
- A wide range of trips across the UK and abroad.
- Services for student wellbeing, including reflection spaces [pastoral rooms] and prayer rooms [A15] etc. These areas provide a quiet, private, safe and welcoming space for students.
- A strong House system, creating a rewarding culture throughout the school.
- Student council and student voice - allowing students' opinions to be heard through democracy and providing an opportunity for leadership.
- Student mentoring - allowing all students to have someone they can talk to about both their school work and wider lives.
- A whole school rewards system focusing on positive behaviour.
- Charity work across the school supporting local and international charities.
- Opportunities to lead within our school as ambassadors.
- Opportunities to consider the views of others and our school community.
- A wide range of assemblies, external speakers, activities and workshops, designed to support and encourage students to further develop their awareness of SMSC and British Values.

7. Conclusions

At Dame Alice Owen's School, we provide an inclusive education which is both challenging and fulfilling, equipping students with all the essential skills for life. Our school has a long tradition of working within the ethos of British Values and students of all faiths and none are warmly welcomed at the school.

We interpret British Values as including individual liberty; belief in personal and social responsibility; the rule of law and its observance; tolerance and respect for diversity (including

different faiths and those without faith), beliefs and lifestyles. We seek to instil in students a sense of belonging, not just to the school community, but also to the wider community.

We aim for every young person to realise their full potential regardless of ability and to develop into a mature, well-rounded adult with a real understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues, equipped for the 21st Century.

Here, academic excellence is achieved in surroundings where relationships are based on care, trust and respect.

Although some areas of school life may have a greater part to play in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, it does not fall to any one department's curriculum. The formation of beliefs, values, identity and spirituality is about the development of character and cannot be attained by formulae or curriculum organisation. This is a whole school endeavour as seen by the 'Owen's Way'.