



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

WHOLE SCHOOL MORAL AND SPIRITUAL POLICY

Policy agreed by the Governing Body Curriculum Committee
To be reviewed
(reviewed every 2 years)

Spring 2020
Spring 2022

To be monitored by the Governing Body Curriculum Committee

1. Introduction - Mission & Ethos Statement

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), 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 moral and social issues, equipped for the 21st Century. Here academic excellence is achieved in surroundings where relationships are based on care, trust and respect.

2. The rationale of the Moral and Spiritual Policy

We seek to provide an 'education for life' which means the development of the whole person, mind, body and spirit. Key to Dame Alice Owen's School, then, is the belief 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.

At Dame Alice Owen's School, we also set out to encourage respect for other people paying particular regard to the characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act.

It is the task of this school 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 and moral dimensions.

3. Partnership with parents

The role of Dame Alice Owen's School in promoting the moral and spiritual development of students is one of stimulus and nourishment. The school, however, accepts that it cannot do this by itself and must engage with parents.

4. Students Moral Development and how it is being achieved

“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 a student's knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to what is 'right' and 'wrong' human behaviour. Moral development, then, is concerned with fundamental judgements, precepts and ideas about how people behave and act and reasons for such behaviour.

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

- A sense of self-discipline and responsibility not only for their own actions, but also for their responsibilities towards others.
- An awareness of, and pride in, their own unique gifts, talents and privileges and a rejection of all forms of prejudiced perception of others on the basis of class, race, gender, sexual orientation or religion.
- An appreciation of the importance of honesty and integrity.

- A sensitivity and tolerance towards the beliefs, rights, feelings and needs of others.
- An appreciation of the importance of being kind to others and a clear rejection of unkindness, cruelty and bullying.

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

- Acquire self-discipline and make responsible use of their talents.
- Distinguish between right and wrong and take responsibility for their own actions.
- Recognise, when appropriate, the moral dilemmas, which may occur in particular social contexts and develop moral literacy and a developed sense of conscience.
- Recognise moral and ethical guidance presented by different faith systems in addition to non-faith systems.

As autonomous moral agents, the intention is that students will not only explore the place of reason in ethical matters, but will also acquire value systems that are their own, together with an understanding that their behaviour and actions should be derived from a moral set of beliefs and values. It is crucial for the school to expect high moral standards from all members of its community. In the classroom situation, in consistency with the purpose of developing student autonomy and personal responsibility, education is underpinned by clear expectations in terms of conduct and values.

5. Students' Spiritual Development and how it is being achieved

“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 their own sense of morality and spirituality.
- An increased awareness of the self.
- 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.
- Understand that quality of life is influenced through an interaction with other people, nature, the arts and sciences.
- 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.
- Reflect on nature as a source of inspiration.

The potential for spiritual development is open to all students and is by no means restricted to the development 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 which build up the school's distinctive ethos.

1. Implementation of the Moral and Spiritual Policy

Although some areas of school life may have a greater part to play in the moral and spiritual development of students, it does not fall to any one Department's curriculum scheme of work. The formation of beliefs, values and a 'spiritual nature' is about the development of character and cannot be attained by formulae or curriculum organisation.

In this respect, personal meaning, beliefs and value which constitute a person's spirituality, are built up steadily across all areas of the school, not just the Religious Studies Department, through the ongoing process of how we relate to each other as human beings. This process began before students came to Dame Alice Owen's School and will continue after they have left. It should also be added that the so-called 'hidden curriculum' is also of immense importance and aids development. Nevertheless, this Moral and Spiritual policy is implemented through a number of 'channels', some of which include:

The Curriculum

All subject teachers can, and do, contribute to moral and spiritual development by the way they interact with students.

In particular, the Religious Studies Department makes an important contribution to spiritual development throughout the school whether it is through philosophical reasoning about the existence of God or an experience of awe and wonder through creation stories etc. However, all Departments provide opportunities to allow students to express their creativity and imagination; reflect upon their own beliefs and values and create an atmosphere that allows students to speak freely about their beliefs. The school approach to learning and teaching promotes teaching styles that encourage a spirit of enquiry, asking 'who?', 'when?', 'why?', 'how?' and 'where?' as well as 'what?'.

Assemblies

Assemblies, by what they applaud, celebrate and encourage, make a highly significant contribution to the moral and spiritual values of the school. They are an important feature of the 'hidden curriculum' where the whole school benefits e.g. cultural appreciation and diversity themed assemblies including Black History Month, Eid and Yom Kippur etc. Assemblies are also designed to be more inclusive of British Values. For example, assemblies have a clear British link, eg Remembrance Day, St George's Day, St Andrew's Day, St David's Day, and St Patrick's Day etc.

The Lower and Upper School assemblies are frequently led by a member from a religious community, charity organisation or a member of staff. The school has

introduced themes when it comes to staff assemblies e.g. growth mind-set. The school has also encouraged more student ownership over assemblies. Examples include assemblies led by the Senior Prefect Team and School Council; or assemblies led by other students especially when sharing experiences from an international school visit. In doing so, reflection, creativity and an opportunity to express 'feelings about the world' are encouraged.

Pastoral Care and Specialist Staff

In addition to all teaching staff, there are a number of specialist staff including Counsellors, Teaching Assistants, Nurses and Paramedics etc, who also have a key role in working closely with students to assist them in dealing with the world. In this respect, these key members of the school community facilitate reflection, enquiry, self - awareness, tolerance and respect etc.

School Trips

A wide variety of residential visits, trips to theatres, concerts and international foreign language exchanges etc are organised across the school. International adventures to distant parts of the world are also organised by the RS, PE and Science Departments, eg to Africa, Asia and South America etc. These events not only provide opportunities for awe and wonder, but also promote an awareness of others and a need to be respectful for diversity in terms of culture and belief.

John Johnstone
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