POLICY FOR THE SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS (SMSC)

At the core of the ethos at Skipton Girls' High School is a commitment to creating an educational environment in which students are encouraged and stimulated to develop academically and personally, and to grow into themselves as confident, thoughtful and considerate people who are ready to move on to the next stage of their lives. Fostering the personal development of our students is a key element of the school's aims and ethos.

As a school, we have no particular religious affiliation and our student body is made up of young women from a variety of backgrounds, cultures and faiths. We enjoy and value this mix and diversity; and we aim to help our students to develop a set of core values and beliefs that will sustain them throughout their lives.

We aim to help our students to develop a reflective approach to themselves and to the world around them, one that is based on an informed understanding, tolerance and acceptance of others. These values are central to our school ethos.

Aims and principles

- To enable students to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- To enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- To encourage students to assume responsibility for their behaviour, to show initiative and to understand how they can make a positive contribution within their local community and to society more widely;
- To enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- To help students respect and appreciate their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different faiths, beliefs and cultural traditions;
- To promote actively the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;
- To encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 (see Appendix for the list of protected characteristics);
- To ensure that extremist or discriminatory opinions and behaviours have absolutely no place in any aspect of our school life;
- To encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;
- To ensure that we preclude the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in school, and to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that, where political issues are brought to the attention of students, a balanced presentation of opposing views is given. This should apply whether students are in attendance at school or taking part in extra-

curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school. It should also apply in any promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra-curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere.

Outcomes

The application of these aims and principles should result, among other things, in students developing:

- An understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process;
- An appreciation that living under the rule of law protects individual citizens and is essential for their well-being and safety;
- An understanding that there is a separation of power between the executive and the judiciary, and that while some public bodies such as the police and the army can be held to account through Parliament, others such as the courts maintain independence;
- An understanding that the freedom to hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law;
- An acceptance that people having different faiths to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour;
- An understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination.

Spiritual Development

Spiritual development is associated with attitudes, feelings, beliefs and emotions rather than that which is experienced through the physical senses. The spiritual dimension of life at Skipton Girls' High School is derived from our shared ethos – perhaps to be defined as a set of values, attitudes, expectations and reflections which help us to gain direction and meaning in our lives.

'Spiritual' is, of course, not synonymous with 'religious' though it certainly extends to an awareness of religious belief and of the diversity of religious belief systems. And, though as a school we have no particular religious affiliation, we fully recognise that some students will wish to express their spiritual awareness in religious terms.

We aim to foster the spiritual development of our students through:

- Promoting an environment where every student is given the scope to reach her full potential regardless of gender, race, disability or any other equality issues;
- Providing a school ethos which is tolerant, non-judgemental and respectful of the individual beliefs and values of every member of our community;
- Modelling this ethos in the relationships established between staff and students and within the staff community;
- Providing information and support to those who wish to pursue their own religious and spiritual development more actively, for example through participation in local societies, church, synagogue, mosque, etc;
- Demonstrating that there are many different legitimate belief systems and ways of celebrating and that all deserve understanding and appreciation;

- Proactively exploiting opportunities provided within the taught curriculum to explore issues relevant to spiritual development. This may well be more appropriate in some subjects than others, but is far wider than in RS alone. Most humanities and social sciences provide plentiful opportunities; the creative arts have strong associations with spirituality in its various expressions; and the interface of science and religion/human spirituality is also fertile ground for exploration and discussion;
- Encouraging students to explore and develop that which animates and inspires them and others through debate, discussion and reflection, both in class and through other opportunities that present themselves both in and outside school;
- Taking advantage of our vertical tutor groupings and personal tutor-student relationships to foster a climate in which aspects of spirituality may be discussed actively, frankly and openly without undue embarrassment or self-consciousness;
- Using the enrichment and extra-curricular activities programmes to allow the exploration of spirituality, for example through the Gatherings and thought-for-the-week programmes;
- Creating a coherent and cumulative programme of Personal Development.

Moral Development

Moral development is concerned with enabling young people to build a framework of moral values, aligned with the law of the land, which regulates their personal behaviour. It is concerned with fundamental judgements and precepts about how people should behave and about the reasons for such behaviour.

It is about developing 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.

Not least it is about respecting the needs, interests and feelings of others; 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.

We aim to foster the moral development of our students through:

- Maintaining an ethos which is characterised by mutual respect and tolerance throughout our school community;
- Defending these core values as the context in which moral understanding develops and modelling them in staff attitudes and behaviour;
- Providing a clear framework of values and behaviours which is promoted consistently through all aspects of school life;
- Operating an effective and explicit system of consequences and rewards which is based on reason and fairness;
- Giving students opportunities across the curriculum and, where appropriate, in extra-curricular activities to explore and develop moral concepts and values, such as right and wrong, justice, personal rights and responsibilities;

- Offering 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;
- Combining this sense of freedom with secure and effective support and monitoring mechanisms, in order that students may receive whatever support and guidance may be necessary as they develop their own moral awareness and values;
- Ensuring a prompt, decisive response to any expressions of discrimination, bullying or abuse;
- Encouraging conflict-resolution based on co-operation, discussion and agreed responses;
- Addressing moral issues through debates, gatherings, enrichment programme and the Personal Development programme;
- Encouraging students to get involved in supporting charities and fundraising events and activities.

Social development

Social development refers to the abilities and qualities that young people need to acquire if they are to play a full and active part in society. It is about acquiring the skills and personal qualities necessary for living and working together in harmony with others and making a positive contribution to the school community and to the wider society. It also involves the development of the inter-personal skills necessary for successful relationships.

Social development has wider implications, however, also involving the ability to function effectively in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society and developing into a tolerant and responsible human being. It involves a 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.

We aim to foster the social development of all of our students through:

- Developing a student community that is anchored in shared values of respect, co-operation, self-discipline and friendship;
- Developing links between staff and students characterised by concern for individuals, open discussion and consultation and encouragement of individual personality and talents;
- In classroom settings, ensuring the practice of respectful listening to others and encouraging individuals to contribute with confidence;
- A preference for promoting co-operation and self-motivation, rather than hierarchy and imposed discipline;
- Providing a range of opportunities for larger scale group activities (tutor-time, gatherings, sporting, musical, and dramatic events) to foster a sense of community amongst the whole student body;
- Ensuring that all students have a voice that is actively heard and taken into consideration (for example, through the Student Executive and Council forums);
- Teaching students about public institutions and services;

- Providing positive and effective links with the world of work and with the wider community (for example, through the Careers education programme, and external speakers);
- Providing opportunities for students to learn about, and to engage in, local and national democratic processes;
- Providing activities which promote awareness of the wider world, for example gatherings, talks given by members of staff and visiting speakers, trips, extra-curricular clubs and activities, etc;
- Encouraging students to develop valuable personal qualities such as thoughtfulness, honesty and respect by acting as exemplars and through the medium of a structured programme of Personal Development;
- Encouraging students to work co-operatively and providing opportunities for students to work in a variety of social groupings;
- Providing effective pastoral care and, where necessary, helping students to resolve any tensions and conflicts that may arise within school fairly, respectfully and considerately;
- Encouraging students to support nominated charities through school events;
- Encouraging students to develop pastoral awareness and support for one another, for example through the systems of vertical tutoring, head girl teams and house captains, student mentors and buddies for new students;
- Encouraging tolerance for individual, cultural and other differences. This, coupled with a zero-tolerance approach towards bullying, helps to create an atmosphere in which students feel secure and form strong friendships which often span year groups, nationalities and cultural backgrounds.

Cultural development

By cultural development we mean the development of a knowledge and understanding of differing cultural beliefs, customs, traditions and 'ways of doing things' which, taken together, form the basis of identity and cohesion in societies and groups.

At its heart lies the need to develop a sense of rooted personal identity while at the same time acquiring an understanding and tolerance for other cultures and their traditions. Students at Skipton Girls' High School develop an ability to recognise and understand their own cultural principles and values (and their dynamic and developmental nature) and to appreciate the influences which have shaped their own cultural heritage, whether music, drama, art, science, poetry or history, alongside an ability to appreciate cultural diversity and accord dignity and respect to other people's values and beliefs.

Cultural development should result in an ability to appreciate and operate within the emerging world culture of shared experiences provided by television, art, theatre, travel and the Internet. It is also about understanding that cultures are always changing and coping with change.

Promoting students' cultural development is intimately linked with the value we place on cultural diversity and on a firm rejection of all forms of discrimination.

We aim to foster the cultural development of our students through:

- Cultivating a harmonious, well-knit student community which is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. We are fortunate to have a mix of students of different nationalities and cultures and we value the richness and diversity, and the opportunities to learn from one another, that this gives to our school community;
- Tackling any issues of discrimination or prejudice directly, and doing so in a way that ensures that any such occurrences become useful learning experiences for those involved and for others around them;
- Encouraging expressions of cultural diversity, for example in the creative arts, languages and social sciences, through clubs and activities, through food and language, and through the curriculum;
- Providing opportunities for students to participate in literature, drama, music, art, and other cultural events and encouraging students to reflect on their significance;
- Giving students the opportunity to explore different values, beliefs, and cultures through a variety of approaches, including discussion and debate, in order to gain a broader cultural understanding;
- Developing partnerships with outside agencies and individuals to extend pupils' cultural awareness (regular visits to theatres and galleries and to other organisations such as manufacturers and technology-based industries, through student exchange programmes, participation in Euro4science and other innovation projects);
- Trips abroad give students extended and direct experiences of other cultures;
- Maintaining an effective equal opportunities policy and practice.

Promoting SMSC at Skipton Girls' High School

The development of students' character, personality and values is not something that can be pinned down to a timetable or targets; rather it needs to happen over their school career, organically, and as a result of an exposure to that consistent set of beliefs, attitudes, expectations and experiences that is part of the daily life of our community.

Much happens as part of the formal curriculum, especially in PD and RS, but far more is also absorbed through the daily modelling and implementation of the values we all share.

Our ethos

The ethos at Skipton Girls' High School encourages open communication and mutual respect; it values and fosters individuality and diversity within a strong and tolerant community; it relies less on a multiplicity of formal rules and consequences and more on fostering a growing sense of personal responsibility; and it places a strong emphasis on tolerance and consideration for others.

The Curriculum

Every subject on the curriculum has its part to play in developing the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural aspects of student development. Certainly, some subjects such as Personal Development, Geography, History, Biology, Psychology, Philosophy, English and RS have, by their nature, more obvious opportunities for exploring these issues; but the less overt contribution of other subject areas should not be underestimated. Art explores cultural diversity and encourages discussion about the moral and spiritual aspects of life as a product of student investigation into the work of particular

artists; ICT / Computing classes have tackled issues of e-safety; Maths investigates the use and misuse of statistics; Drama allows for personal exploration, discussion and reflection, enabling students to develop their own judgement and to compare this with other people's different opinions; it encourages respect and nurtures artistic talent, vision and creativity, developing a strong degree of individual and group responsibility to each other, the work and the audience.

Gatherings

The regular weekly gatherings for all students in Years 7-13 give staff and students the opportunity to address a very wide range of significant issues. There are high participation rates in the delivery of gatherings from the student body. Gathering themes can be very powerful in what they promote and in what they reject. Recent themes have included 'diversity', 'extremism', 'anti-bullying', 'Remembrance', 'natural disasters', 'e-safety', 'International Women's Day', 'Fairtrade Fortnight', etc.

Extra-Curricular Activities

These can be powerful opportunities for personal development. The school has a busy and diverse programme of clubs, activities, trips and events, as well as a Duke of Edinburgh award programme.

Creating leadership opportunities

These are offered in a whole variety of contexts such as membership of the Student Executive (Years 8-13) and Head Girl team (Sixth Form) providing opportunities for students to develop leadership roles in which they gain valuable life skills and experience.

The Pastoral System

Skipton Girls' High School has a strong system of pastoral support and guidance. The strong relationships that are established between staff and students have a lasting influence on students' personal development.

APPENDIX

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.

This policy will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis in line with government legislation and at least on a yearly basis.

Policy updated April 2016   Author: Mrs Andrea Wade: Deputy Headteacher

Next Review due: April 2019