

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Policy

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Reviewed by: Director for Digital Learning, Enterprise, and Sustainability

The Education Act 2011 encourages schools to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils. Through ensuring pupils' SMSC development, schools can also demonstrate they are actively promoting fundamental British values. Aspects of SMSC are developed through all parts of the curriculum and are evident within the day to day operation and ethos of Bedford Girls' School

Through our programme of activities designed to help the students to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally we aim to foster curiosity, build self-esteem, stimulate creativity and ensure that the girls' school experience contains opportunities for a sense of awe and wonder. The students' personal development is of vital importance to us.

BGS actively promotes British Values

- a) actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
- b)
 - ensures that principles are actively promoted which enable students to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
 - enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law
 - encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely;
 - enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England;
 - assist students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions; and
 - encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010(2);
 - 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;
- c) precludes the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the school;
- d) takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that where political issues are brought to the attention of students;
 - (i) while they are in attendance at the school;
 - (ii) while they are taking part in extra-curricular activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school;

(iii) in the promotion of the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of extra- curricular activities taking place at the school or elsewhere;

they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views.

BGS provides opportunities for students to experience awe

One of the School's objectives focuses on all the dimensions of all students and encompasses their personal and spiritual development. Bedford Girls' School was founded on Christian tradition, and we celebrate our heritage. We respect the views of those of all faiths or none. This includes, for example, an understanding of what it means to be human as we reach out to search for truth and explanations for existence. One aspect is the development of personal beliefs, including an understanding of a variety of religious beliefs.

All students attend two or three assemblies each week. Not all assemblies have a religious theme but still encompass our values. They are reflective in accordance with our key value of 'Reflection' and may include a hymn and prayers although staff and students who lead assemblies will have their own styles. Harvest is celebrated with assemblies in school in October in the Senior School and in the Junior School, Harvest is celebrated in assembly, where the students participate and contribute food to local charities. Carol Services are held for the Senior and Junior School in St Paul's Church at the end of the Autumn Term. Easter services are held for the Senior School in St Paul's Church, and for the Junior School, in the Randle Hall. People from non-Christian faiths are also invited to lead assemblies.

A popular Christian group operates weekly at lunchtimes within the senior school. Xplore (Christian Union) is for the benefit of any student wishing to investigate religious and particularly Christian ideas and values.

Spiritual development is also supported when appropriate opportunities arise across the curriculum. In RS students learn about different religions and in Year 11, the Philosophy and Ethics course which all students follow focuses specifically on spiritual awareness, exploration and development. In A level English, students look at aspects of spirituality as presented in poetry and other texts by authors such as John Donne, Wordsworth and other Romantics, considering the relationship between nature and a higher sense of wonder.

Individuals are encouraged to develop and explore their personal emotional responses to art and music and often use creative writing as a form of expression. Curiosity about nature and how the world works is fostered during co-curricular activities such as junior science club, model united nations, horticulture club and Critique.

Staff also encourage students to explore their responses to global events through art, for example, in response to Holocaust Memorial Day, many students contributed ideas to an art project which was turned into an installation piece.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award encourages students to connect with nature through its expedition section. It also encourages prosocial skills as students must work as a team and care for others in their team to achieve a common goal.

BGS teaches prosocial skills

The tutor group programme and PSHE are areas of the curriculum where prosocial skills are taught. The PSHE curriculum has three strands which run throughout all year groups – sense of self, positive relationships and commitment to care.

PSHE sessions are predominantly taught by BGS staff and visiting speakers are also invited, for example, the Police Liaison Officer, Brook and reformed addicts consider the misuse of drugs and alcohol and the issue of smoking. Within the PSHE programme, consideration of relationships issues, nutrition and eating disorders and management of finances help to ensure that the students develop a positive sense of social responsibility.

The Student Voice Forum, including representatives in the Junior School, gives the students leadership opportunities, the experience of debating issues and of representing their peers in this discussion. In addition, effective use of Circle Time in Junior School encourages students to listen to each other and to explore a range of issues, including the existence of class/school rules, clearly defined and often developed through agreed consensus. The use of responsibilities such as Form Head helps to reinforce such rules. Our rewards system helps to reinforce the importance of good citizenship and caring for others. The Girls' Leadership Group enables students to become confident and positive contributors to their community.

Social skills are also encouraged through the invitation of guests, residents, students and staff from other schools and local community figures to a range of school events. Parents, governors and friends of the school are invited to be involved in school life daily when appropriate, (accompanying trips, talks etc. in the Junior School), and to take part in school assemblies. Social development takes place through the many co-curricular activities, charity fund-raising events, and outreach undertaken in the sixth form.

Bedford Girls' School students represent a wide diversity of cultural and ethnic traditions, and the school actively promotes an appreciation of such diversity and awareness that enriches our community and furthers tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. We take steps to ensure that students appreciate racial and cultural diversity and avoid and resist racism. Cultural issues include factors such as custom, traditions, dress, and food from historical and contemporary perspectives, are considered in a range of curricular areas, in assemblies and in the schools', meals celebrating a variety of festivals and traditions throughout the year. The school held its first cultural festival in July 2022 and again in 2025, where students, staff and parents participated in cookery demonstrations, exhibitions of cultural dress, showcased crafts, and supervised a variety of stalls. These all enable students to gain insight into the origins and practices of their own cultures and into those of the wider community. Through the curriculum we aim to develop an understanding of other people's values and beliefs, openness to new ideas, and willingness to participate in, and respond to, a variety of artistic and cultural experiences. In assemblies Christian and non-Christian festivals are celebrated.

BGS helps students to develop meaning and purpose

Moral education is developed through the school curriculum, through PSHE sessions, by the example set by members of staff in the way that they deal with their students and through the assemblies which are delivered. Our key value of 'Boldness' is incorporated into the moral development of students through encouragement of moral courage and moral integrity.

Discussion on moral issues takes place during the PSHE sessions and visiting speakers are often invited into school to give the students an alternative perspective. Lessons and discussions on friendship, kindness, and fairness help students to be considerate and tolerant in their dealings with others.

Bold

Imaginative

Reflective

The principles of respect for the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, are actively promoted through Year 9 Politics lessons, RS lessons and PSHE. In PSHE we explicitly look at British values in Year 7, we consider individual liberty throughout the programme in our “sense of self” strand, we consider discrimination and tolerance in Year 11 and democracy in Year 12. The teaching of Politics precludes the promotion of partisan political views, and students are offered a balanced presentation of opposing opinions.

We liaise with local police officers who lead PSHE sessions on crime and the law. Students are left with a clear picture of the right and wrong way to lead their lives in this respect. Visits from local MPs, the Mayor of Bedford and local councilors have helped to develop the students’ understanding of the Parliamentary system. Current affairs and the responsibility to vote when eligible, based on an informed choice, are discussed with the older students in a variety of contexts in PSHE, form time and assemblies. Students in the Sixth Form have an opportunity to become more involved through the Politics Society and are given opportunities to visit places of political and constitutional relevance. In Year 9 Politics lessons, students consider British values of democracy and international politics. In all these areas students are given a balanced presentation of opposing views. Mock elections are held in school that coincide with general elections. The democratic process is explained to the students, who are given the opportunity to listen to the different political views and vote in their own school elections.

We actively promote principles which enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England, and to respect them and their importance in a modern civilized society. Students know how public institutions (e.g. Parliament, the police force, the Post Office) and services (e.g. healthcare, welfare services and education) operate. Students are taught to understand how public services have evolved - especially if their role is best understood in a historical context - and how they relate to the daily lives of students and their families. Activities such as educational visits to the Magistrates’ Court, and work-shadowing or work experience in relevant organisations, enhance our students’ experience in this area.

Principles are promoted through lessons, assemblies and educational visits to encourage 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 or beliefs 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.

All students are expected to exercise self-discipline for the good of others in the community. They are encouraged to express their feelings in a sensitive way, to be assertive without being aggressive. All are expected to be respectful of the views of others. Staff act as positive role-models in their dealings with the students and with one another. All are encouraged to be imaginative in accordance

with our key values in coming to an understanding of and empathy with others' positions and opinions.

The school's values underpin the reward system with house points being awarded to students for demonstrating our three values: bold, reflective and imaginative. Students receive house points for modelling good behaviour both in and out of the classroom.

Relationships and Sex Education aims to develop an awareness of moral issues including responsibilities within a relationship, unplanned pregnancies, and the impact of teenage pregnancies. The school nurses and outside agencies may deliver sessions on contraception and sexually transmitted infections and the importance of taking responsibility for our behaviour. Students are encouraged to accept their own and others' sexuality and to enjoy age-appropriate consensual relationships based on mutual trust and free from any abuse.

BGS provides opportunities for service learning

In the Sixth Form, we run a CAS programme which actively encourages students to contribute to the local community, for example, many Sixth form students support younger pupils with their learning at local primary schools. Sixth Formers, as part of their GLG role, are encouraged to lead global campaigns, which often focus on the global rights of women.

Speakers from a variety of charitable organisations also deliver assemblies from time to time to heighten the awareness of the students on the plight of others globally and locally.

Bedford Girls' School carries out a developing charities and service programme progressing from action to advocacy through to leadership.

The school commits to focusing on one local and one global charity at a time, with a vision to take on the commitment for a minimum period of five years. This enables deepening relationships to be built between the school and the charities, as well as encouraging a longer-term awareness of the charities amongst the staff and students. Students plan a variety of fundraising events throughout the year.