

What is my child being taught in SMSC?

SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL and CULTURAL education

Content

All schools, regardless of type, are responsible for promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils. This includes meeting requirements for collective worship and RE, establishing a community ethos, developing effective relationships and providing extra-curricular activities. SMSC provision should also enable students to show initiative, accept responsibility, and demonstrate respect for others. In 2014, 'British values' was added to SMSC provision in response to concerns about extremism and the radicalisation of young people.

Values

Schools are now required to teach about democracy and the rule of law as part of British values. In July 2014 the Ministries for Equalities and Women were combined, led by Nicky Morgan who is also Secretary of State for Education. British values were additionally deemed to include consideration of the Equality Act 2010. Although the Act defines a number of protected characteristics, the new combined Ministry singled out only 'policy on sexual orientation and transgender equality' as a core responsibility. Ofsted embarked on a vigorous series of inspections based on a poorly defined British values agenda which encompassed all of the above.

It is also now recognised that a system which promotes academic success at the expense of nurture is causing significant harm. Character education is currently a 'big issue' although still seen by government as a means of increasing academic, and therefore economic, success. Values are taking to the stage of learning; they are widely discussed even though discussion of itself achieves nothing. Values need to be lived out in people's lives to become virtues, and no amount of classroom discussion will foster good character in students unless they see virtues lived out through relationships on a day to day basis and choose to practice those virtues for themselves.

'Values need to be lived out in people's lives to become virtues'

Christian perspective

To contribute effectively to the ongoing discussion about national identity, we need to have, and to raise our children with, a clear sense of our Christian identity. God calls us to be holy because He is holy (Leviticus 11.44-45; 1 Peter 1.16). Our lives are 'hidden with Christ in

God' (Colossians 3:3) and we are 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession' chosen for a purpose – 'that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Peter 2:9).

As well as having a clear sense of our Christian identity, we are also, as parents, responsible for nurturing godly character in our children. This is one area where we can find common ground with most other people in society. The Message translates the apostle Paul's

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thoughts about the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) like this:

'But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance

about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely' Galatians 5:22—23 (The Message).

As Paul points out, against such things there is no law, whatever the arguments against expressions of Christian faith in the public square.

For more information:

SMSC

- Christian Values for Schools <http://christianvaluesforschools.com>
- The Jubilee Centre for Character and Values <http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk>