

The New School at West Heath

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Policy

Introduction

The school vision asserts that we seek to “rebuild young lives through education”. The development of whole person, mind, body and spirit is built on a clear set of values which assume that as human beings we can take responsibility for making choices that will lead to happy and fulfilled lives for ourselves and those to whom we relate. These values are also expressed as an underpinning for the mission statement and are as follows;

- Everyone has the potential to change
- Everyone can succeed
- Success build self esteem
- Poor behaviour is learned and is often a defence mechanism
- Failures and mistakes are learning opportunities

These values are consistent with the Christian world view but are not dependant its faiths beliefs. They easily translate to other religions and indeed humanists and those without a personal religious faith.

The manifestation of the above in our day to day work can be seen in a number of strands that together ensure the development of the whole person.

The first strand relates to integrity and commitment where adults and young people are encouraged to value and be true to the highest ideals.

The second strand relates to personal relationships, and concerns adults and young people aiming to set, and be entitled to expect good caring standards of behaviour characterised by respect, responsibility, openness and honesty.

The third strand relates to discipline and is concerned with critical openness. Discipline is not unthinking obedience but rather the development of positive attitudes to oneself and others that result in self induced responsible behaviour.

The final strand relates to developing all young people to their fullest potential. This means encouraging and challenging as well as supporting and enabling young people to value themselves to the point that they may be surprised by the level of their achievement.

Partnership

We recognise that the school cannot fulfil such a role in isolation and that parents and carers play a vital role in the education of their children. There is then a real sense that the school is engaged in partnership with parents and carers so that the values described above may be seamlessly communicated

to the young people. The contribution of the wider family, the local community and society at large will also contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Strategies

Students' Spiritual Development

This area of development is not based upon a particular religion but centres on the need to help students' move from relative shallow thinking centring on self to deeper thinking which appreciates the needs of others. Spiritual development therefore rests upon the encouragement to think, explore and discuss. It is concerned with how personal beliefs and values are acquired; whether life has purpose, and the basis for personal and social behaviour.

Spiritual development is also concerned with the development of feelings and emotions as well as an appreciation of music art and literature. The curriculum is designed to support students in developing and satisfying their intellectual curiosity about such matters. In particular the self science curriculum plays a large part in helping students understand themselves and their reactions to others.

Spiritual Aims

- A willingness to reflect on religions from all over the world
- A recognition of the rights of others to hold their own opinion and respect for those who hold a different view.
- A willingness to look beyond materialism
- A willingness to reflect on and think critically about their experiences, responses and choices
- A developing sense of awe and wonder in the universe
- A willingness to reflect on works of art, literature or musical pieces
- A growing ability to cope with suffering generated by human life such as stress, anxiety, unhappiness, illness, relationship breakdown and death.

Students' cultural development

Cultural development refers to students' increasing understanding and command of those beliefs, values, customs, knowledge and skills which combine to form the identity and cohesion in groups. This area of development is principally concerned with the students' understanding and appreciation of the music, art, drama, poetry, science and technology of the society in which they live.

The cultures of all students at the New School will be respected, valued and celebrated. We recognise that we have a responsibility to include all cultures that are represented in our school in our efforts to meet the cultural development needs of all students.

Cultural Aims

- To provide students with the knowledge of the nature and roots of their own cultural traditions and practices, including historical, social, religious, aesthetic, ethnic, and political perspectives.
- To develop an understanding of the diversity of religious, social, aesthetic, ethnic and political traditions and practices within their society.
- To encourage a personal response and range of achievements in cultural fields which might include poetry, literature, music, sport, art and design.

Students' moral development

Moral development is concerned with student's knowledge understanding behaviour attitudes and intentions in relation to what is right and wrong. The intention at the New School is to ensure that students 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. Students are encouraged to understand that any social grouping depends for its continued existence on the broad acceptance of rules and laws.

Moral Aims

- A developing sense of self discipline and responsibility not only for their own actions, but for their responsibilities to others
- A developing awareness of , and pride in, their own unique gifts and talents
- A rejection of prejudice on the basis of class, race, gender, religion or nationality.
- A sensitivity to the feelings, needs and rights of others.
- An appreciation of the importance of honesty, truthfulness and the development of personal integrity
- An appreciation of the importance of being kind to others and a rejection of unkindness cruelty and bullying
- A developing and mature sense of self confidence and self worth

Students' Social development

Social development refers to the acquisition of the skills and qualities needed to play a full and active part in society. It is a vital part of our work that students are helped to be aware of their identity and take responsibility for the impact they may have on the thoughts and feelings of others. This is particularly challenging for some of our student with a diagnosis of Aspergers Syndrome and or associated communication and interaction difficulties. Students are therefore supported in a wide variety of social contexts so that they might learn in a safe and controlled environment.

Social Aims

- To utilise the skills of the Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT) to provide opportunities for students to work and play in groups and pairs in a variety of social roles.
- To provide opportunities for teamwork
- To provide opportunities for students to exercise leadership and take responsibility
- To provide opportunities for students to respond to the initiatives of others and to share a common purpose.
- To provide opportunities for students to be involved in a decision making process which involves democratic participation.

Achieving the Aims

The moral, spiritual, social and cultural development of students cannot be related solely to the curriculum. The formation of character, beliefs, values and a spiritual centre is the development of character and cannot be attained by formula. Personal meaning, beliefs and values which constitute a person's spirituality, and the qualities of character and value from which morally good and socially responsible action proceed, are built up steadily, slowly, continuously in the ongoing process of how we relate to each other as human beings.

The school provides an ethos in which all of the above can be achieved through good role modelling, acceptance of individual need and most importantly of all and unconditional positive regard for our students.

The interaction necessary for all of the above aims to take place is supported in the following;

- The curriculum where all subjects contribute to the personal; development of the students as does the manner in which adults relate to young people.
- Assemblies are a feature in providing opportunities for celebration, appreciation of others, cultural differences, religious differences and an enjoyment of the environment
- The tutor system ensures that each student has a place to be, somewhere they belong with a team of adults who have their best interest at heart.
- The mentoring scheme ensures students have the opportunity to share their concerns and fears with a peer and practise their responses to threatening situations.
- Extra curricular activities and in particular outdoor activities are designed to provide opportunities for team work and personal challenge.
- Partnership with schools in Kenya and Mongolia provide students with opportunities to be involved in voluntary work and fund raising

- The life coach and connexions adviser have a role to play in helping students appreciate the diverse nature of the world beyond school

This policy whilst outlining the school's response to the moral, spiritual, social and cultural development of students cannot hope to capture the huge energy commitment and enthusiasm that exists within the staff group to strive for the very best for each student. It is this combined effort that really enables students to develop into active citizens and it is therefore a collective responsibility to ensure that it is maintained.

Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural Education	
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies: Curriculum, Sex & Relationships Education	
Appendices:	
Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of: The Senior Leadership Team	
Lead responsibility:	Vice Principal – Student & Staff Welfare
Relevant Legislation:	To be detailed in the next release
Annual Policy Review Required:	Yes / No
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