

SMSC POLICY

HOW DOES ELMHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL
PROMOTE THE
SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND
CULTURAL
DEVELOPMENT OF PUPILS?



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SMSC Policy (Sept 16)

The SMSC Policy document outlines the ways in which Elmhurst Primary School meets and surpasses the requirements of state-maintained schools to provide for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. In this document, we outline our approach to SMSC and the way in which it informs our vision and philosophy as a school, before exploring in greater detail and specificity how the different elements look in practice. The development of a highly effective SMSC provision is by definition 'work-in-progress' because schools can always do more. As such, this policy will be reviewed annually to reflect changes in our school's SMSC provision as outlined through our regularly maintained SMSC Action Plan.

Introduction

In Elmhurst Primary School, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development is the heart of our school ethos, curriculum, values and vision, as well as supporting us to continuously improve our provision for pupils and the wider school community.

We are an ambitious school that seeks not only to encourage our children to dream big, but we aim to help pupils to understand the tangible steps they can take to realise their aspirations. We have a culturally-diverse and inclusive curriculum that encourages deep enquiry with questions of the past, present and future, and we seek to support pupils to become articulate, confident and analytical individuals who have a reflective and optimistic social conscience. Through our ethos and curriculum, we hope to foster pride, self-discipline and empathy in our pupils as they take their place in society.

We benefit enormously from being a culturally diverse school community in which children, parents and teachers bring with them a wide range of cultural, religious, social, pedagogical and spiritual outlooks, and we seek to foster more than just a tolerance of difference; we want to move beyond mere 'toleration' towards a respect and curiosity about people and experiences that differ from our own.

Our aspirations for pupils are limitless, and through ongoing and effective partnerships with parents and guardians, we can support our pupils to achieve at the highest levels academically whilst becoming well-rounded happy people and good citizens.

Every single child in our school has the capacity to hold a love of learning, to be curious, to pursue continual self-improvement and to seek actively to make the world a better place. We feel privileged to be working with the children in our school community, helping them to become educated, responsible, compassionate individuals who can contribute positively to society through their kindness, intellect, optimism and persistence. Through a pursuit of equitability in our practice, and a willingness to adapt our practice to better accommodate the needs of pupils, we can take a dynamic and fluid approach to ensuring the best opportunities for pupils in our school during their time with us.

State-maintained schools' duties towards SMSC

All maintained schools must meet the requirements set out in section 78 of the Education Act 2002 and 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.

Meeting requirements for collective worship, establishing a strong school ethos supported by effective relationships throughout the school, and providing relevant activities beyond the classroom are all ways of ensuring pupils' SMSC development.

Pupils must be encouraged to regard people of all faiths, races and cultures with respect and tolerance.

It is expected that pupils should understand that while different people may hold different views about what is 'right' and 'wrong', all people living in England are subject to its law. The school's ethos and teaching, which schools should make parents aware of, should support the rule of English civil and criminal law and schools should not teach anything that undermines it. If schools teach about religious law, particular care should be taken to explore the relationship between state and religious law. Pupils should be made aware of the difference between the law of the land and religious law.

Through their provision of SMSC, schools should:

- *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 of England;*
- *encourage students to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely;*
- *enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England;*
- *further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling students to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures;*
- *encourage respect for other people; and*
- *encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic processes, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.*

Department for Education (November 2014) – ‘Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools’

Spiritual Education

For Ofsted, the definition of spiritual development is where pupils 'are reflective about beliefs, values and more profound aspects of human experience, using their imagination and creativity, and developing curiosity in their learning.' In Elmhurst, spiritual development is about encouraging the kinds of deep thinking about universal questions which enables pupils to think in new ways and to look at issues through different lenses and perspectives to those they bring with them to school.

Spirituality is like a bird: if you hold it too tightly, it chokes: if you hold it too loosely, it flies away. Fundamental to spirituality is the absence of force.

(Rabbi Hugo Gryn (1992) in Westminster SACRE's guidelines on collective worship.)

Our school curriculum, particularly in the arts and humanities, encourages deep reflection that moves pupils beyond the immediate, and it encourages enquiry and reflection. Our Religious Education curriculum actively fosters spiritual enquiry through an engagement with the perspectives of world religions as a means to explore a range of themes and issues. Pupils in Year 6, for example, explore ideas from a range of religious, non-religious and scientific viewpoints on the nature of death and mortality. Children in Year 4 explore the notion of God, and what 'God' means to children who hold different religious views, or who do not have a religion.

We proactively celebrate a range of world religions through our year-group led themed assemblies, which gives the pupils and parents of our school the opportunity to learn sensitively about the beliefs and stories of a range of



faiths; we celebrate Christmas, Eid-ul-Adha, Eid-ul-Fitr, Diwali, Guru Nanak's Birthday, Holi and Easter and the whole school community is invited to attend.

Through visits to sites of outstanding beauty and significance, we encourage pupils to explore the spiritual elements of human achievement. Pupils enjoy visits to St Paul's Cathedral and to non-religious but breathtaking buildings such as the Shard and Kings College Cambridge, where they are encouraged to soak up the majesty of human achievement. We engage with the spirituality that has inspired others through exploring the creations of master-artists on our Year 6 residential visits to Rome, Amsterdam and Paris. Through carefully chosen texts across the curriculum and across our Reading Canon, we sensitively provide opportunities to explore issues and questions of spiritual significance, such as *The City* (Armin Greder), *The Red Tree* (Shaun Tan), *Once* (Morris Gleitzman) and *My Name Was Hussein* (Hristo Kyuchkov).

Moral Education

Moral education is about making the right decisions at the right time. It is teaching pupils that life will be full of important decisions and when making those decisions, moral and ethical thought processes must come into play. The emphasis is on the concept of cause and consequence: everyone will cause events to happen in life, but these causes will have consequences and pupils need to be wary of these.

Pupils in our school are taught right from wrong in the sense of rules, but beyond this, we encourage pupils to regulate and take responsibility for their own choices, actions and behaviours. We aim to have a clear, simple and effective set of school rules that set the correct context for effective learning – beyond this, we work under the presupposition that pupils have the moral agency to make decisions that are sensitive to the consequences they have upon themselves and other people. Generally speaking, behaviour in our school is exemplary, and in large part, this is a consequence of pupils making positive pro-social moral decisions.



Where pupil behaviour falls below the expected standard, the actions of the school are to orient pupils back towards positive moral behaviours, through the use of such strategies as a Home-School Behaviour Book, through bringing pupils together to share how the pupil's behaviour has affected them, and through providing opportunities for pupils to reflect and adapt their behaviour.

In terms of pupils' wider moral development, we provide regular opportunities for pupils to engage in activities of moral decision-making, through our curriculum, school assemblies and through oracy-focused activities such as debating and speechmaking. Pupils are invited to explore moral issues through rich questioning across the curriculum – pupils in Year 4, for example, explore the issue of stealing and accusation through the first unit of the Literacy and Language scheme, in which a missing games console forces pupils to consider the notions of blame, suspicion and allegation.



Our curriculum is very mature and well developed in the humanities, and it draws from a rich range of ethnographic sources in order to pique pupils' interests and to cause them to think differently about moral questions: children in Y5, in the Global Citizenship unit, explore the question of whether it is morally justifiable for parents in abject poverty in the slums of Mumbai to expect their children to work rather than attend school; children in Y2, when studying the culture and history of Australia, debate the right of tourists to visit Uluru/Ayers Rock, and consider the moral dimensions of such questions.

Our culture of debating provides an additional platform for questions of morality, and through our participation in competitive debate leagues with DebateMate as well as our own annual inter-year group debates, we encourage pupils to debate controversial, challenging and interesting questions from multiple perspectives. In recent years, for example, pupils have debated about the repatriation of artefacts taken from foreign lands, about the use of corporal punishment and about solutions to the refugee crises in Asia and Europe.

Social Education

Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them.

Lev Vygotsky, 'Mind in Society'

Social Development involves learning the values, knowledge and skills that enable children to relate to others effectively and to contribute in positive ways to family, school and the community. This kind of learning is passed onto children directly by those who care for and teach them, as well as indirectly through social relationships within the family or with friends, and through children's participation in the culture around them. Through their relationships with others and their growing awareness of social values and expectations, children build a sense of who they are and of the social roles available to them.

Commonwealth of Australia, 2009

We want for our children to be leaving our school as confident, articulate and sociable young people, and we see part of our role to be helping pupils to remove the barriers that prevent them from becoming this. We have a rich school community made up of staff, pupil and parents who represent a wide range of nationalities, faiths, cultures, languages and experiences, and we seek to maximize the learning opportunities that can abound from such diversity.

At the same time, we recognise that not all of England is like Newham, and in fact, not all of Newham is like Upton Park! We are very outward looking, and we encourage our pupils to engage with, experience and explore the world outside of their immediate surroundings.

We are fortunate enough to be a Teaching School, and through the Elmhurst Teaching School Alliance, with its core values of 'Knowledge, Collaboration, Community', our pupils are afforded many opportunities to meet with children from across our hyper-diverse borough. Our pupils collaborate with peers across the borough through debating, Spelling competitions, Geography competitions, Maths competitions, through sports, through participation in the Shakespeare Schools Festival and in 2016-17, our pupils will also be taking part in a creative writing retreat with children across other Newham schools. This form of working gives our pupils opportunities to learn together, and to meet people whose backgrounds, values and experiences differ from their own.



We look also beyond Newham for opportunities for our pupils to meet other people. Many classes have been involved in pen pal projects, writing to children overseas and sharing their experiences, photographs and

stories; one class, for example, has been communicating with pupils in Palestine. Closer to home, we recognise the flagrant difference within England itself, and our pupils have been involved in class exchanges with pupils from Brant Broughton Church of England Primary School in rural Lincolnshire; our pupils had the chance to make friends with children from a tiny Christian school in the countryside, whom we visited and with whom we explored the fields and farms of Lincolnshire.

Within school, we have a culture of respect between pupils and staff, and pupils and teachers all understand the need to be polite and respectful in their interactions. The good manners of our pupils are often commented on by external visitors, and it is a source of pride for us.



Where pupils require additional support with their social development, we provide additional opportunities for them. Speech and language groups allow for focused intervention on social skills development for those pupils whose struggles with peer interaction inhibit their friendships and happiness. Other interventions include a specific Social Skills Group, led by Mr Colthrust, who works on collaborative projects (which in 2015-16 included an engineering-focused one in partnership with Rolls Royce and Cirque du Soleil) designed to promote teamwork, mutual respect and cooperation.

Cultural Education

Culture, which is the study of perfection, leads us... to conceive of true human perfection as a harmonious perfection, developing all sides of our humanity; and as a general perfection, developing all parts of our society.

Matthew Arnold (1869) Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism

Cultural education is about knowledge and appreciation of diverse cultures. The term 'diversity' is key here. Understanding the historical significance of diversity and the impact it has had on the shaping of Britain today is fundamental. Pupils need opportunities to build an understanding of others' culture so that when encountering those from other cultures, such as when visiting other countries, they can show an inherent understanding and respect for the way other people have been moulded.

We are a non-denominational school that proudly draws upon the rich cultural and religious heritages of our whole school community. We have a diverse leadership team, teaching staff, support staff, pupil population and parent community, and we strive to celebrate all the richness that this can bring.

We are religiously sensitive and religiously literate, aware of the significance of the different rituals and festivals practiced and celebrated within our school community; through our whole-school assemblies, written and performed by different year groups, we celebrate as many of these as we can across the year.

We work analytically to ensure that our curriculum does not suffer from unconscious cultural biases, and where we find them, we rectify and re-plan. So, for example, whilst we celebrate Black History Month and do so in creative and innovative ways (such as through our recent whole-school focus on local hero Walter Tull), we are keen to ensure that our main curriculum is not disproportionately focused on white male history. Our Year 5 unit on Ancient Egypt, for example, includes lessons that explore problematic contemporary representations of Ancient Egyptians, and looks at the academic debates surrounding the sources of evidence on race.

Elmhurst's SMSC Provision

Spiritual

- A rich and challenging curriculum for Religious Education
- Specific themes and topics of study within the RE curriculum designed to prompt spiritual enquiry, such as the Year 6 unit on Death.
- Regular secular collective worship in classrooms, framed around key spiritual themes and ideas that are of significance to people of all faiths and none.
- Annual celebration assemblies to coincide with religious celebrations from a range of world faiths, including Christmas, Easter, Eid-ul-Adha, Eid-ul-Fitr, Guru Nanak's Birthday, Diwali and Holi.
- Reflective 'Big Questions' built into our Literacy and Language curriculum
- Engagement with the work of artists, sculptors and painters across the Art and Design curriculum
- Multimodal literacy projects from Year 2 – Year 6 which prompt spiritual enquiry (such as Mirror by Jeannie Baker, The Arrival by Shaun Tan and The City by Armin Greder)
- Annual visits to different places of worship across all year groups
- Visits to buildings with incredible architecture, such as Kings College Cambridge, St Paul's Cathedral and The Shard

Moral

- A clear, simple and effective set of behavioural expectations which are well communicated to pupils for their guidance
- An expectation that pupils and staff display politeness and good manners in their interactions with one another.
- Where behaviour falls below an acceptable standard, and if in-class guidance has not helped, the school seeks to support pupils to modify their own behaviour through the use of a Home School Behaviour Book, which encourages parents and teachers to work together to support the child to make better decisions.
- Pupils are taught to value the importance of fairness and the political ideals of democracy; each class has a full democratic election to select a Class Councillor to serve on the school council.
- The School Council meets at least fortnightly, and is the voice of pupils, with direct access to members of the leadership team. Through this process, pupils can come to understand the different forms of social action and protest, as a means to defend moral positions.

- Pupils encounter moral dilemmas through fiction – both in literacy lessons and through texts shared by their class teachers. Examples include ‘Once’ by Morris Gleitzman and ‘The Sad Book’ by Michael Rosen.
- The Geography curriculum has been developed through the principles of global citizenship and hopemongering, which encourage pupils to become informed and morally accountable for their actions on the planet.
- Debating encourages moral enquiry where suitable through topic choice, such as when exploring issues such as child labour.
- Through drama, and particularly through Shakespearean performance, pupils encounter tales of moral quandary, such as Hamlet, Richard III and As You Like It.

Social

- Our whole school policy on Partner Talk, which is maintained and embedded from the Foundation Stage through to Year 6, encourages active learning-focused discussion between pupils, teaching the skills of speaking, listening and respectful talk.
- We celebrate the wide range of social, cultural, national, religious and linguistic backgrounds that make it up. We do so through events such as European Day of Languages and Black History Month, and from 2016-17, we shall also be engaging with the UN International Day of the Girl Child and UN International Mother Language Day.
- We continually consider the presence of cultural biases within our curriculum in order to prevent it from presenting a ‘single story’; we seek to build a responsive and responsible curriculum that values the importance of seeing events from multiple perspectives, and which does not prioritise one dominant worldview over all others.
- We encourage and support children to become confident in social interactions with each other and with those around them.
- Where pupils struggle with this, we have the ability to put in place interventions such as Speech and Language Groups and Nurture Groups, which are focused on developing pupils’ ability to interact with each other.
- As regularly as possible, we encourage pupils to see the world outside of their immediate environment, through building partnerships with other schools locally and further afield, and through forging partnerships with institutions with the capacity to widen pupils’ mindsets, such as the Royal Festival Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Tate Museums and the Museums of the

University of Cambridge, with whom we have a sustained link over five years.

- We put together events and opportunities that are designed specifically to support the social development of those pupils who would benefit from additional help; these include the Year 5 Camping trip.

Cultural

- Regular assemblies led by different year groups which celebrate the cultural and religious richness of experience within our school community.
- A culturally-inclusive curriculum that seeks to expose pupils to knowledge, ideas and achievements from across different cultures; coordinators with the flexibility to adapt existing units to ensure provision is equitable and socially just.
- Annual celebration of Black History Month, coupled with an equitable main curriculum, with coordinators collaborating to ensure different foci each year (Theme 2017 – Visibility is Power).
- A wide offer of cultural development and enrichment for pupils; all children study music and all children in Year 5 and Year 6 receive small-group tuition in a musical instrument, free of charge; each year, the school puts on a Shakespeare play; children read and study texts from the classical canon as well as a more diverse range of excellent contemporary writers, from a range of cultures and writing about a range of themes.
- Pupils gain a well-rounded and analytical understanding of what it means to be British through the History curriculum, through which they learn about the multifaceted history of the country, from a range of perspectives and standpoints. The school comes together for major national celebrations such as the Olympics, World Cup and Jubilee.
- Pupils develop a well-rounded and critical understanding of British society through school visits to sites of national and social interest, such as through visits to the elite universities, Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace.
- From 2016/17, a renewed focus will be on developing a pride and respect for mother languages within the school, encouraging pupils to develop their bilingualism and to encourage pride in their polyglot abilities; a key strand of this will involve parents, and it will launch on the International Day of Mother Languages 2017. Nearly all of our thousand pupils have English as an Additional Language, and we should

celebrate pupils' achievements as bilingual pupils and develop this further.