

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO SPIRITUAL MORAL SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, BRITISH VALUES, PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND COUNTERING HATE CRIME

Since September 2014, school inspection in England explores and judges the contribution schools make to actively promoting British values. These recommendations were given a tighter definition by Ofsted in 2015 following the Duty to Prevent Violent Extremism contained under Section 26 of the "Counter Terrorism and Security Act" (February 2015). In July 2016 the Home Office announced an action plan to tackle hate crime, the first of the key areas in this action plan includes educating pupils to tackle hate and prejudice.

RE can make a key educational contribution to pupils' explorations of British values, and excellent teaching of RE can enable pupils to learn to think for themselves, feel confident within their own beliefs, content to allow others to hold different views and can build resilience against pressures that might make them vulnerable to the draw of groups that perpetuate hate and extremism.

It is hard to understand how a school or academy can deliver spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSCD) and British values as outlined in the Ofsted framework without ensuring an investment and commitment to RE.

Religious Education offers opportunities to build an accurate knowledge-base about religions and beliefs which can offer children and young people a shield and counter narrative against extremist views. This in turn supports children and young people so that they are able to move beyond attitudes of tolerance towards increasing respect, so that they can celebrate diversity.

Values education and moral development are a part of a wider focus to contribute to the wellbeing of each pupil and of all people within our communities. The RE curriculum focuses learning in some of these areas, but pupils' moral development is a whole-school issue.

Clarification about Religious Education's contribution to SMSCD and British Values

The current Ofsted guidance offers a distinction between the spiritual and social aspects and the moral and cultural aspects.

Spiritual and Social development are to do with pupil's attitudes, values and dispositions:

*The **spiritual development** of pupils is shown by their:*

- *ability to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life and their interest in and respect for different people's faiths, feelings and values;*
- *sense of enjoyment and fascination in learning about themselves, others and the world around them;*
- *use of imagination and creativity in their learning;*

- *willingness to reflect on their experiences.*

*The **social development** of pupils is shown by their:*

- *use of a range of social skills in different contexts, for example working and socialising with other pupils, including those from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds;*
- *willingness to participate in a variety of communities and social settings, including by volunteering, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively;*
- *acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; they develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.*

Moral and Cultural development provide the intellectual foundation that informs pupil’s developing attitudes and dispositions. Hence the terms ‘understand’, ‘apply’, ‘investigate’ and ‘knowledge’:

*The **moral development** of pupils is shown by their:*

- *ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong and to readily apply this understanding in their own lives, recognise legal boundaries and, in so doing, respect the civil and criminal law of England;*
- *understanding of the consequences of their behaviour and actions;*
- *interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues and ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.*

*The **social development** of pupils is shown by their:*

- *use of a range of social skills in different contexts, for example working and socialising with other pupils, including those from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds;*
- *willingness to participate in a variety of communities and social settings, including by volunteering, cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively;*
- *acceptance and engagement with the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs; they develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.*

This implies that, in an educational context, attitudes and values are not developed in a vacuum but in relation to the knowledge and experience gained within and beyond the curriculum. This makes RE indispensable to schools’ promotion of SMSCD as a whole.

For example in order for a child or young person to come to... “respect other people’s faiths and values” (spiritual) and be able to... “show respect and tolerance for those with different beliefs” (social), they have to have the

opportunity to learn to... “understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on moral and ethical issues” (moral) and... “develop an understanding of different faiths and cultural diversity” (cultural).

Important Caveat

Religious Education contributes to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, British Values, preventing violent extremism and countering hate crime, *but is not synonymous with that agenda and that should not be all that RE becomes.*

Supporting material

[North Somerset publication: Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development.](#)

[Checklists for Headteachers and Governors.](#)