

Catholic Values and ‘British Values’

Practical Advice from the Catholic Education Service

February 2015



PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

In guidance for maintained schools,¹ issued by the Department for Education in November 2014, a list was provided that describes the understanding and knowledge expected of pupils as a result of schools promoting fundamental British values. This is given below:

- 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 wellbeing 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 choose and hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law;
- an acceptance that other 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; and
- an understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination.

The Department for Education has also provided following examples of the actions schools could take to promote British values:

- include in suitable parts of the curriculum - as appropriate for the age of pupils - material on the strengths, advantages and disadvantages of democracy, and how democracy and the law works in Britain, in contrast to other forms of government in other countries;
- ensure all pupils within the school have a voice that is listened to, and demonstrate how democracy works by actively promoting democratic processes such as a school council whose members are voted for by the pupils;
- use opportunities such as general or local elections to hold mock elections to promote fundamental British values and provide pupils with the opportunity to learn how to argue and defend points of view; and

¹ *Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools*, Department for Education, November 2014

- consider the role of extra-curricular activity, including any run directly by pupils, in promoting fundamental British values²

Schools may also wish to highlight other things they do which promote these values. We have provided some examples below:

Democracy

- Having a school council
- Taking part in debating competitions (internally or with other schools)
- Highlighting the development of democratic ideas in history lessons
- Allowing pupils to vote for Head Boy/ Head Girl/ House or Sports captains
- Ensuring all pupils are listened to by adults
- Inviting MPs and other speakers to the school
- Visiting parliaments, assemblies and local councils
- Holding mock elections
- Participating in the UK Youth Parliament

The Rule of Law

- Classes creating “class rules”
- Having a clear behaviour policy that is explained to all
- Organising visits from the police service to reinforce the message of right and wrong
- Highlighting the rules of the Church and God in the RE curriculum, for example the 10 commandments and the Precepts of the Church
- Teaching about the development of the Rule of Law in English Law, a legal system created uniquely in a Catholic England, inspired by Christian values and becoming a major influence across the world

Individual Liberty

- Encourage students to be independent in their learning
- Provide students with opportunities for reflection as they take responsibility to discerning their vocation

² *Guidance on promoting British values in schools*, Department for Education, 27 November 2014

Mutual respect

- Having a mission statement that is inclusive
- Constantly promoting respect for others as good manners
- Reinforcing the value of everyone's opinions in class debates
- Having an effective anti-bullying policy
- Emphasising in RE and PSCHE lessons that every person is unique and "created in the image of God"
- Having active educational links with other schools
- Supporting charitable works

Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

- Highlight how Religious Education provides pupils with a deep understanding of their own faith as well as awareness of the faith and traditions of other religious communities as a basis for understanding and respecting them³
- Show how Jesus encouraged tolerance in stories such as The Good Samaritan and The Women at the Well

Other Suggestions

1. The School Information (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 states that **schools' websites must provide information on the "content of the curriculum followed by the school for each subject"**. When doing this they may wish to highlight times at which particular Catholic and British values are emphasised.

2. Schools may consider **including a statement on their website** which outlines the values they promote within a broad and balanced Catholic curriculum. For example,

'This is a Catholic school which seeks to live out the values of Jesus Christ. We promote these values by our words and deeds, and Catholic doctrine and practice therefore permeates every aspect of the school's activity. We provide a Catholic curriculum, which is broad and balanced, recognising that every pupil is unique and is created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Our curriculum is designed to enable every pupil to discern their vocation and to be

³ *Religious Education Curriculum Directory*, Department of Catholic Education and Formation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, London 2012, p.6, point 4

well-equipped to follow it as active citizens in service to the world. Catholic Religious Education is the “core of the core curriculum” (Pope St John Paul II)⁴ and the foundation of the entire educational process. We also provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities and strong pastoral support. We incorporate democratic principles, value the rule of law, support individual liberty and foster a community in which different faiths and beliefs are respected.”

Here is an example of one school website <http://www.allhallows.org.uk/about-us/catholic-education/british-values-and-our-catholic-ethos/>

3. Catholic schools may wish to **elaborate further what a “broad and balanced” means in their context** and give more specific examples of how this is achieved in their school.

⁴ Address of His Holiness John Paul II to the bishops of Great Britain on their *Ad Limina* visit, 26 March 1992

Myth Busting

1. Catholic schools must 'actively promote' other faiths

This legislation provides that schools must “*actively promote respect and tolerance for people of different faiths and beliefs*”. This is not the same as promoting other faiths or any beliefs that are contrary to Catholic teachings. Schools are expected to encourage their students to respect the right of people who have a faith or belief system that is different to theirs. Government guidance states, “*It is not necessary for schools or individuals to ‘promote’ teachings, beliefs or opinions that conflict with their own, but nor is it acceptable for schools to promote discrimination against people or groups on the basis of their belief, opinion or background.*”⁵ Encouraging tolerant attitudes to others’ beliefs is not the same as promoting those beliefs or religious views.

2. Schools will be forced to downgrade religious festivals such as Christmas so as not to offend those of other faiths.

This is untrue. Schools need to promote respect for people of different faiths and beliefs. This in no way diminishes their right to celebrate religious festivals. Catholic schools provide their students with opportunities to worship together throughout the liturgical year and this will not change.

State-funded schools are required to provide a daily act of collective worship. In Catholic schools this is required to be in accordance with the requirements of the Catholic Church, and in schools without a religious character the law normally requires that this should be “*wholly or mainly of a Christian character*”.⁶ The promotion of ‘British values’ does not change this obligation.

3. This means that schools must 'actively promote' same-sex marriage.

We expect Catholic schools to teach factually about civil marriage alongside the promotion of the Catholic understanding of marriage. This must always be done in an age-appropriate way and with respect for the dignity of each individual.

Before the ‘British values’ agenda was advanced by the government, Catholic schools were already required to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act and, as public bodies, specifically with the Public Sector Equality Duties. These are set within the context of the freedoms that apply to schools with a religious character.

4. The Trojan Horse affair shows why ‘faith schools’ are a bad idea.

⁵ *Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools*, Department for Education, November 2014

⁶ *School Standards and Framework Act 1998, s.70 and Schedule 20.*

None of the schools that were investigated by Ofsted, or by Peter Clark, were Catholic schools or indeed were designated as schools with any religious character. As the Archbishop of Canterbury has commented recently, the “commentary around ‘Trojan Horse’ has made it sound as if schools with a religious character are a problem. That’s simply not true and that fact seems to need a lot of repeating: no church schools or faith-based schools were caught up in ‘Trojan Horse’”.⁷

⁷ *Reconciliation in action*, speech by the Archbishop of Canterbury to church school leaders and Chairs of governing bodies, 7 November 2014