Department for Education

Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools

Departmental advice for maintained schools

November 2014

Contents

Summary 3

About this departmental advice 3

Expiry or review date 3

Who is this advice for? 3

Main points 3

Introduction 4

Fundamental British values 5

Examples of actions that a school can take 6

Accountability 7

Enquiries 8

Summary

About this departmental advice

This is non-statutory advice from the Department for Education. Maintained schools have obligations under section 78 of the Education Act (2002) which requires schools, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society. This guidance relates specifically to the requirements to actively promote fundamental British values in schools and explains how this can be met through the general requirement in the 2002 Act.

Expiry or review date

This advice is valid until amended or withdrawn.

Who is this advice for?

This advice is primarily for:

- headteachers and other staff of maintained schools who are responsible for curriculum matters, and governing bodies

Main points

The main points of this advice are to make clear:

- that maintained schools should promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development;
- what is expected of schools in promoting fundamental British values; and
- how this aligns with schools' duty to promote SMSC.

Introduction

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.

Fundamental British values

Schools should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs[1]. This can help schools to demonstrate how they are meeting the requirements of section 78 of the Education Act 2002, in their provision of SMSC.

Actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values. Attempts to promote systems that undermine fundamental British values would be completely at odds with schools' duty to provide SMSC. The Teachers' Standards expect teachers to uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school. This includes not undermining fundamental British values.

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.

The list below describes the understanding and knowledge expected of pupils as a result of schools promoting fundamental British values.

- 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;

[1] The Prevent strategy 2011: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-strategy-2011

- 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.

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.

Examples of actions that a school can take

The following is not designed to be exhaustive, but provides a list of different actions that schools can take, such as:

- 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 that 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;

- use teaching resources from a wide variety of sources to help pupils understand a range of faiths, and

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

Accountability

As part of a section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors must consider pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development when forming a judgement of a school. However this advice should not be read as guidance for inspection purposes. Ofsted publish their inspection framework and handbook, which set out how schools are assessed in relation to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Schools should refer to Ofsted's documents to understand what inspectors look for in assessing this.

Enquiries

Any enquiries about this advice, or issues raised by it, should be sent to: mailto:registration.enquiries@education.gsi.gov.uk.

Associated resources

- Prevent Strategy
- Teachers Standards
- Equality Act 2010 Advice for Schools

Department for Education

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