

SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL POLICY

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Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to employees of Benenden School (Kent) Limited and its subsidiaries (collectively 'Benenden' or 'the School')." It has three aims:

1. To explain how the ethos and education provided by Benenden enables the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
2. To note the contributions that specific aspects of school life make to this development.
3. To enable the school to more readily review the SMSC provision.

Introduction

At Benenden we believe that fostering our pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is intrinsic to their personal development and the roles they will go on to play in society. This principle is infused into the ethos and education of day-to-day school life. Benenden's philosophy of 'A Complete Education' strongly affirms the importance of SMSC to our community: its elements are encompassed in the diagram below:



Being part of a boarding community has a significant role to play in this regard for our pupils. Our House structure enables pupils to appreciate diversity and understand the importance of compromise, while also encouraging pupils to look far beyond the school gates. The school ethos and values underpin our SMSC programme: throughout their time at school, we nurture our pupils to be confident, courageous, compassionate and courteous. This supports our long-term aim for our pupils of developing positive, responsible and community-minded citizens.

Legislation and Fundamental British Values

This Policy was produced in accordance with the 1988 Education Act and the [DfE's Independent School Standards- Guidance for Independent Schools](#) (April 2019) which supersedes previously published DfE guidance on Part 2. It was written with reference to this guidance and previous guidance, including [Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools](#) (November 2014), the DfE's [Character education framework guidance](#) (2019) and the Equality Act, 2010.

As a key part of pupils' SMSC development, Benenden actively promotes the fundamental British values of:

1. Mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, including the need to actively challenge and combat discrimination
2. Individual liberty
3. Democracy, including how to influence decision making through the democratic process
4. The rule of law
 - a. Including how living under the rule of law protects citizens and the fact that religious freedom is protected by law
 - b. Including an understanding of the separation of powers, democratic accountability, and judicial independence.

Taught Curriculum and the Prevent Duty

Benenden recognises that all subjects directly contribute to the development of SMSC, not simply in terms of content but also through the skills and values that are taught and modelled in lessons, such as thinking critically and respecting difference. The school is fully committed to preventing the political indoctrination of pupils as well as the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject. It does this through staff training, regular lesson observations as well as the scrutiny of both departmental schemes of work and pupils' work and through pupil feedback. We also recognise that SMSC forms a key part of our Prevent duty, as described in our Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy. These aspects of SMSC are part of the taught curriculum for PSHE, and are also discussed in other taught subjects, such as Politics and Government, and through the wider whole school approaches outlined in this policy. Visiting speakers are thoroughly checked and vetted to ensure a balance of considered perspectives and are not left alone to work with pupils.

The open and enquiring culture that exists within Benenden is also a significant contributory factor in preventing the dissemination of partisan political views, in challenging prejudice and in ensuring a culture where bullying and exclusion, on any grounds, are not tolerated. We expect and encourage our pupils to be actively anti-discrimination, as outlined in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. This is reinforced through taught PSHE lessons (through which RHSE is taught), alongside the wider pastoral and cultural life and ethos of the school.

Spiritual Development of Pupils

Spiritual development is understood by the school to mean the appreciation and understanding of the non-material elements of human experience. It encompasses the development of a sense of identity and self-worth, personal insights, meaning and purpose. For some, it may include faith, religion, or specific philosophical beliefs, whilst for others it may be defined by an absence of these things, or a questioning mindset. The development of the spirit may also be referred to as the soul, personality, or character, depending on different contexts and perspectives. Spiritual development is embedded within the Mind and Spirit aspect of a complete education and is key to our pupils' sense of fulfilment, self-worth and purpose.

Pupil's spiritual development can be shown by their:

- ability to be reflective about their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their perspective on life;
- 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.

Spiritual Development and the Chaplaincy

Benenden has an Anglican tradition and the fundamental principle of loving our neighbour is at the heart of our shared life as a boarding school. The school's religious ethos is to be fully inclusive and welcoming of people from all faiths and none. We encourage an open, honest and friendly dialogue, where all views are respected in a spirit of generous hospitality and mutual learning. The school Chaplains provide an important pastoral role, in addition to offering spiritual support and guidance, and are there for all members of the school community, irrespective of faith and belief. Similarly, the Chapel is a place for reflection and prayer for all. Its physical location at the heart of the school reflects its purpose as a quiet sanctuary for our community.

The spiritual life of the school is fostered through the Prayers (Assembly) programme: all members of the School attend Prayers and it is an important part of Benenden community life. Through Prayers, pupils are encouraged to consider different aspects of SMSC, including morality, faith, global perspectives, different cultures and many other topics. It takes place four times a week and is managed through the Chaplaincy with input from staff, pupils and visiting speakers. There are also occasional services at the Parish Church and opportunities to attend other places of worship organised through the Chaplaincy. If pupils have a particular faith need (the observance of Ramadan, for example), the Chaplain is also on hand to facilitate and support this.

The pupil Christian group, Bread, explores the Christian faith in an informal and relaxed way and meets weekly. Meetings include a variety of lively speakers and games and all are welcome. Bible Study is also held weekly in the Chapel. This is an opportunity to explore a particular passage from scripture in more depth and discuss its implications for our own lives. Pupils also have the opportunity to take preparation classes for Anglican confirmation whilst at school. Catholic students are prepared for Confirmation together with their Anglican contemporaries and receive some extra tuition from the Catholic Assistant Chaplain.

Moral Development of Pupils

Moral development enables pupils to tell right from wrong, understand the importance of individual conscience and build a framework of their own values to take forward into their adult lives. It is informed by the law, school values and individual contexts and perspectives. Part of moral development is the ability to appreciate the complexities and nuances inherent in moral issues and that people's values can change over time. We aim for our pupils to recognise shared and agreed values, including the intrinsic value of every individual and life; valuing the connections between us, both in society and relationships; the value of truth, justice, democracy, and the rule of law; the value of individual liberty and respect for individual choices; and the value of the environment and our duty to take care of it.

Pupils' moral development can be shown by their:

- Ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong and to readily apply this understanding in their own lives;
- Ability to 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.

Social Development of Pupils

As a boarding community, relationships are of vital importance at Benenden, both in terms of individual growth and happiness, and also for community cohesion and to foster social responsibility. We nurture our pupils to understand the value of connections between people, and their role as positive citizens in the wider world. Benenden acts as a microcosm of society in how it fosters social development; we are a diverse community where each individual is valued for who they are, and in turn, pupils are expected to contribute to the wider good.

The social development of pupils can be 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.

Cultural Development of Pupils

As a school, we are proud of our distinct culture, informed by our values, our history and our pupils. The Benenden community comes from all around the world, and brings a wide range of perspectives, beliefs, and cultural influences into our school. These different cultures are celebrated and explored throughout the year, alongside explorations of other cultures and perspectives. By emphasising the importance of culture, we aim to celebrate difference and the varied contributions communities and individuals make to human life. We also foster a sense of enjoyment and fun through cultural exploration and expression, for example through music, dance, food, sport and different cultural events across the academic year. Politically, we aim for our pupils to be informed and active citizens who feel able to express their views through democratic means and appreciate the development of democracy as part of British culture and values.

Pupils' cultural development can be shown by their:

- understanding and appreciation of the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and that of others;
- understanding and appreciation of the range of different cultures in the school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain;
- ability to recognise, and value, the things we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic and socio-economic communities;
- knowledge of Britain's democratic parliamentary system and its central role in shaping our history and values, and in continuing to develop Britain;
- willingness to participate in and respond positively to artistic, musical, sporting and cultural opportunities;
- interest in exploring, improving understanding of and showing respect for different faiths and cultural diversity and the extent to which they understand, accept and respect diversity. This is shown by their respect and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups in the local, national and global communities.



Whole School Approaches

We seek to develop our pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness throughout a complete education, both in taught curriculum lessons, structured talks and societies, and informal events and activities. Consequently, our overall strategy to promote these values, as well as to raise awareness of political issues in a balanced and developmentally appropriate way, includes a wide range of different elements, some of which are described below:

- Prayers (assembly) and services
- The work of the school Chaplaincy
- The PSHE Curriculum, through discussion on values, mental health and awareness, purpose, and perspectives.
- Visiting speakers and the school lecture programme: these range from politicians, to writers, to scientists, to representatives from charities.
- Wellbeing activities like House dog walks, yoga and mindfulness
- Curriculum Philosophy and Religion
- Electives and other taught lessons
- House and tutor discussions
- Form Order
- The wide array of musical, dramatic and sporting opportunities open to all our pupils
- Student positions of responsibility, such as Peer Listeners, Big Sisters and committee representatives
- Extension activities such as the school Debating society and the Law Society.
- Responsive talks following to global events, such as seminars on the war in Ukraine
- Formal recognition for qualities and contributions relating to character, including pink slips and end of year prizes given at Speech Day.
- Personalisation of dorms and Houses to reflect individual identities
- The work of the Grey Jumpers (the school prefects) in their specific roles
- The work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion committee
- Student led and staff led societies such as Prism (our LGBTQIA+ society), Noodle Soc (our Asian cultural society) and Bread (our Christian Society)
- Creative clubs and events such as Word Factory (the creative writing magazine), the dance show and live lounges.
- Specific events and celebrations, including Cultures Week, Nigerian Independence Day, Lunar New Year and Neurodiversity Celebration Week
- Raising awareness of national and international causes and events, such as Holocaust Memorial Day, Pride and International Women's Day, and aligning these with the PSHE curriculum and Prayers topics.
- The outreach, partnerships and volunteering programme, which has strong links with many parts of our local community including Benenden Primary School, the Grange and Sissinghurst Castle Garden and with other local schools.
- The Weekend Programme, and its wide range of fun, cultural and social events.
- Opportunities for pupil voice, such as the Pupil Forum, Food Committee and House Councils
- House events and activities designed to create a sense of House culture, identity and community
- The Benenden Arts Festival

Taken all together, Benenden's SMSC provision aims to enhance the self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence of all pupils. It enriches our pupils lives and reinforces our school values. Through celebrating diversity, we aim to reinforce the principles of respect for others, particularly in relation to the protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act of 2010, and respect for British democratic institutions and processes. Pupils are encouraged to see the value of contributing both to school and wider society, as well as the importance of taking responsibility for their actions and having a strong moral compass.



Related Policies

- Safeguarding 5- Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- PPD Policy
- PSHE Education Policy
- RSHE Policy

Government Guidance

[Independent school standards- guidance for independent schools](#)
[Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools](#)
[Character education framework guidance](#)
[Equality Act, 2010](#)