



## **British values and spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development: Requirements for schools**

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### **Origins**

1. The term *fundamental British values* (FBV) entered policy discourse in 2011 as a component in Home Office deliberations about the nature and prevention of violent terrorism; entered then the world of education in 2011-12 with the publication of a statement about teachers' standards which came into force in September 2012; and in 2014 became well-known from 9 June onwards following a speech in the House of Commons by the then secretary of state for education in England, Michael Gove.

### **Origins**

2. The purpose of the Home Office definition of extremism was to explain how the government would decide in future whether or not to talk to, work with and fund certain organisations and individuals, particularly in its relationships with Muslim groups and communities. The Home Secretary wrote:

... We will respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism and the threat from those who promote it. In doing so, we must be clear: the ideology of extremism and terrorism is the problem; legitimate religious belief emphatically is not. But we will not work with extremist organisations that oppose our values of universal human rights, equality before the law, democracy and full participation in our society. If organisations do not accept these fundamental values, we will not work with them and we will not fund them.<sup>1</sup>

3. It was in order to elaborate on this intention that the Home Office provided a definition of extremism. In its entirety the definition was as follows:

Extremism is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty

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<sup>1</sup> HM Government, *Prevent Strategy*, p. 2  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf)

and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.  
We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.

### **Teachers' standards**

4. In 2012 the Department for Education adopted most of the phrases in the Home Office definition of extremism as a basis for establishing the standards required of professional teachers. 'A teacher is expected,' it said, 'to demonstrate consistently high standards of personal and professional conduct'. It then provided three statements defining 'the behaviour and attitudes which set the required standard for conduct throughout a teacher's career', the first of which was 'Teachers uphold public trust in the profession and maintain high standards of ethics and behaviour, within and outside school, by ...'. There then followed five bullet points, the fourth of which was:

- not undermining fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

5. In 2013 the term FBV appeared in documents providing advice on spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development in academies, free schools and independent schools.<sup>3</sup>

6. On Monday 9 June 2014 it featured prominently in a speech in the House of Commons by the secretary of state for education in England, Michael Gove, and in media coverage about this speech. The context was a statement about Ofsted reports on, as it had become known, the Trojan Horse affair in Birmingham. Mr Gove said:

We already require independent schools, academies and free schools to respect British values. Now we will consult on new rules that will strengthen this standard further, requiring all those schools actively to promote British values, and I will ask Ofsted to enforce an equivalent standard on maintained schools through changes to the Ofsted framework.

7. Six days later (15 June) there was an article by the Prime Minister in the *Mail on Sunday*. Entitled 'British values aren't optional, they're vital'. It began as follows:

This week there has been a big debate about British values following the Trojan Horse controversy in some Birmingham schools – about what these values are, and the role they should play in education.

I'm clear about what these values are – and I'm equally clear that they should be promoted in every school and to every child in our country.

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<sup>2</sup> Department for Education, *Teachers' Standards in England from September 2012*, p.10

<sup>3</sup> Department for Education, *Improving the SMSC Development of Pupils in Independent Schools*, November 2013

The values I'm talking about – a belief in freedom, tolerance of others, accepting personal and social responsibility, respecting and upholding the rule of law – are the things we should try to live by every day. To me they're as British as the Union flag, as football, as fish and chips.

Of course, people will say that these values are vital to other people in other countries. And, of course, they're right. But what sets Britain apart are the traditions and history that anchors them and allows them to continue to flourish and develop. Our freedom doesn't come from thin air. It is rooted in our parliamentary democracy and free press.

Our sense of responsibility and the rule of law is attached to our courts and independent judiciary. Our belief in tolerance was won through struggle and is linked to the various churches and faith groups that have come to call Britain home. These are the institutions that help to enforce our values, keep them in check and make sure they apply to everyone equally.

8. A week later, the DfE launched a consultation. It indicated that 'not undermining British values' and 'encouraging pupils to respect British values' had been changed to 'actively promoting British values'. Further, it stressed that 'actively promote' includes 'challenging pupils, staff or parents expressing opinions contrary to fundamental British values'.

### **Revised standards for spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development**

9. On 4 September 2014 the revised standards for SMSC were published for free schools, academies and independent schools, and on 27 November the DfE issued non-statutory advice on SMSC for maintained schools. There is an extract from the September document in Box 2. The terminology is almost the same in both documents, except that the learners in some kinds of school are known as pupils but in others as students. The legal basis for the new standards, however, is not the same. In free schools, academies and independent schools there are *requirements* relating to SMSC but in the various kinds of maintained school there is *non-statutory advice*. So some kinds of school 'must' follow the government's line but other kinds of school 'should'. All kinds of school, however, whatever their legal status, are required to promote pupils' SMSC development and are inspected by Ofsted.

### **What is SMSC development?**

10. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is about everything we do in schools that supports children and young people to be confident and resilient, and develop the skills and positive attitudes they need to be happy and successful in the diverse and changing country they are growing up in.
11. All schools are required, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum, to promote the SMSC development of pupils.

12. Good and outstanding SMSC provision not only reflects the aims, ethos and values of a school. It also makes a vital contribution to relationships in the school, the climate for learning and the skills that pupils need to be successful learners.
13. SMSC development is not an extra 'add-on'; it lies at the heart of school improvement and strategies to close gaps and improve outcomes for everyone.
14. Inspectors must evaluate the effectiveness and impact of provision for pupils' SMSC development before making the final judgement on the overall effectiveness of a school. Provision for pupils' SMSC is key to obtaining good outcomes under the Ofsted framework for school inspections, including the judgements for leadership and management, behaviour and safety, and safeguarding.

### **Statutory requirements for maintained schools**

15. All maintained schools must meet the requirements set out in section 78 of the Education Act 2002. This states that the curriculum for a maintained school satisfies statutory requirements if it is a balanced and broadly based curriculum which:
  - (a) *promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and*
  - (b) *prepares pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.*

### **Statutory requirements for independent schools, including academies and free schools**

16. Independent schools (including academies and free schools) must meet the standard for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils contained in the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. This standard was revised in 2102 with effect from January 2013.

### **Defining SMSC development**

17. The Ofsted school inspection handbook<sup>4</sup> provides instructions and guidance for inspectors conducting inspections under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The handbook provides a detailed explanation of each aspect of SMSC, in relation to evidence of pupils' skills, attitudes and personal development.
18. 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

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<sup>4</sup> Ofsted (2015), *School inspection handbook*  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook)

- 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.

19. The moral development of pupils is shown by their:

- ability to recognise the difference between right and wrong, readily apply this understanding in their own lives 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 being able to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues.

20. The social development of pupils is shown by their:

- use of a range of social skills in different contexts, including working and socialising with pupils 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; the pupils develop and demonstrate skills and attitudes that will allow them to participate fully in and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.

21. The cultural development of pupils is 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 within school and further afield as an essential element of their preparation for life in modern Britain
- 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, 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, respect and celebrate diversity, as shown by their tolerance and attitudes towards different religious, ethnic and socio- economic groups in the local, national and global communities.

### **The SMSC standard for independent schools, including free schools and academies**

22. The SMSC standard that independent schools, including free schools and academies, must meet also provides guidance on key aspects of SMSC.

Standard 5(a): actively 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.

Standard 5(b):

- i. enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self confidence.
- ii. enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England.
- iii. encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality in which the school is situated and to society more widely.
- iv. enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England.
- v. further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.
- vi. encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- vii. 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

### **Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC**

23. All schools are now expected to actively 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'.
24. Current guidance for schools from the DfE emphasises that promoting British values will help schools to meet the requirement to provide for SMSC development.
25. Approaches towards promoting British values should be consistent with the school ethos and values, as well as rooted in the core statutory duty to provide for pupils' SMSC development and the public sector equality duty requirement to 'foster good relations', through tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
26. At heart, this is about helping pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to become responsible citizens who respect others and are able to challenge prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour. School leaders and governors should consider ways to promote British values with care and sensitivity, taking into account the school's context and the local community it serves.
27. It is important that activities linked to British values are inclusive and promote unity between pupils, parents and communities. Activities should be meaningful and relevant to pupils, and help them develop positive skills and attitudes.

## **The role of governing bodies**

28. A core function of school governing bodies is to ensure clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction. The DfE governors' handbook states:

*'Every effort should be made to ensure the school's ethos promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs; and encourage students to respect other people, with particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010.'*

29. As part of inspecting SMSC development, Ofsted will look for evidence that governors take an active role in ensuring they and the school promote tolerance and respect for different faiths and cultures and that the school is preparing children and young people positively for life in modern Britain.

## **Key guidance**

Department for Education (2013), *Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils: Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools (2013)*

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-smsc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-smsc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools)

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

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/promoting-fundamental-british-values-through-smsc)

Department for Education (2014), *Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils: supplementary information - Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools*

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-smsc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-the-smsc-development-of-pupils-in-independent-schools)

Ofsted (2015), *Inspecting safeguarding in maintained schools and academies: Briefing for section 5 inspections*

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-maintained-schools-and-academies-briefing-for-section-5-inspections](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-safeguarding-in-maintained-schools-and-academies-briefing-for-section-5-inspections)

Ofsted (2015), *School inspection handbook*

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-handbook)

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