



# GUIDANCE ON PROMOTING FUNDAMENTAL BRITISH VALUES IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES IN THE DIOCESE

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## Preamble

In 2011 the Government launched the 'Prevent Strategy' in order to challenge any form of extremism. The Secretary of State said, "There have been allegations that a minority of independent faith schools have been actively promoting views that are contrary to British values, such as intolerance of other cultures and gender inequality." The strategy proposed that "working with the DfE, Ofsted will ensure that inspectors have the necessary knowledge and expertise to determine whether extremist and intolerant beliefs are being promoted in a school and then to take the appropriate action."

In the 'Prevent Strategy' document the British values are listed as "democracy, rule of law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and the rights of all men and women to live free from persecution of any kind."

The DfE published guidance in November 2013: '*Improving the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils: Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools*'. In this document the British values are listed as 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs'.

In his report on the 'Trojan Horse' affair in Birmingham in 2013/14, Peter Clarke stated that there was no evidence of terrorism, radicalisation or violent extremism but did find that there were a number of influential people in the schools inspected who sympathised with or failed to challenge extremist views. He recommended that "Ofsted should consider whether the existing inspection framework and associated guidance is capable of detecting indicators of extremism and ensuring that the character of a school is not changed substantively without following the proper process". Following Peter Clarke's report the Secretary of State ensured the House of Commons that requirements for schools to promote fundamental British values would be strengthened.

It must be noted that none of the schools inspected in the 'Trojan Horse affair' were Catholic.

In November 2014 the DfE published the document '*Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools*'.

## Introduction

The focus on promoting fundamental British values in Catholic schools in this Diocese is not new and schools have always focussed on values-based education and overall have made an excellent job of it.

This guidance assumes that our schools are models of good practice in promoting fundamental British values and its aim is to bring together various sources of advice and to introduce two further sections pertinent to the Catholic school i) Gospel values and ii) teaching other religions and faiths.

## The Fundamental British Values

- Democracy
- Rule of Law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

## Requirements by Ofsted

In the proposed State-funded school inspection toolkit, 2025, there are two references to promoting British Values in Personal development and well-being.

The following are extracts from paragraphs relevant to British values and are not necessarily complete paragraphs.

“Inspectors focus on gathering evidence relating to the factors that statutory and non-statutory guidance, research and inspection evidence indicate contribute most strongly to personal development and well-being....

- developing and deepening pupils’ understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs...

In gathering evidence about the personal development programme, including pupils’ SMSC development, inspectors consider the extent to which...

- their understanding of the protected characteristics and the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.”

## Using Resources

It is not the intention of this guidance to go into detail on what the school could do in terms of curriculum planning. There are a number of guidance documents available to help schools which suggest some good activities to help promote fundamental British values. Schools should have:

- ‘Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools’- DfE – November 2014 [Promoting fundamental British values through SMSC - GOV.UK](#)
- ‘Catholic Values and British Values: Practical Advice from the Catholic Education Service’ – CES - February 2015 [6791b70156f7e792eac03de5\\_British\\_Values\\_Practical\\_Advice\\_Feb\\_2015.pdf](#)
- Some schools have a section on their website dedicated to promoting fundamental British values. These are presented in a variety of ways from a short statement of intent to a detailed explanation of how the values will be promoted in each subject area. As a minimum the CES recommends *‘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. Our curriculum is designed to enable every pupil to discern their vocation and to be 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) 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’*

## Promoting Fundamental British Values

*‘Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools; Departmental advice for maintained schools’* – DfE – November 2014 states, “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." (Page 5).

The requirement to uphold fundamental British values does not apply solely to pupils. "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." (Page 5).

It is not expected that there should be a blind adherence to the letter of the law and that there can be debate whilst still promoting the Fundamental British values. In the document above it is stated "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." (Page 6). As Catholic schools we would go further than not promoting discrimination but to challenge vigorously any form of discrimination against people or groups who hold different beliefs and opinions and from different backgrounds.

- In participation in the democratic process, it is acceptable to discuss the right to peaceful protest, as allowed in law, in an age-appropriate way.
- Respect for the rule of law is not necessarily synonymous with knowing what is right and what is wrong. Application of laws tell us what is lawful and what is not lawful. Even if there are laws that some people or groups do not agree with it is paramount to respect that there are other people or groups who do agree the same laws and their right to that must be respected.
- It is important that in Catholic schools, pupils must be taught about the teachings of the Church in an age-appropriate way.

## Gospel Values

Gospel values are at the heart of the Catholic School and are part of its distinctive nature. The Gospel values are compatible with fundamental British values but add an extra dimension to the formation of pupils. The fundamental British values will enable pupils to make a positive and worthwhile contribution to modern Britain as they grow. The Gospel values will support them in their individual faith journeys so the contribution they make will be as Catholic people, faithful to the Church, in all works of life. For example, politicians, industrialists, business leaders, trades people, bankers, academics, educationists, trade unionists, sports people, entertainers and homemakers. In this way we hope to respond to canon 795 "Education must pay regard to the formation of the whole person, so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society. Children and young persons are therefore to be cared for in such a way that their physical, moral and intellectual talents may develop in a harmonious manner, so that they may attain a greater sense of responsibility and a right use of freedom, and be formed to take an active part in social life." The Code of Canon Law.

'*Christ at the Centre*' – Marcus Stock – CTS – 2012, aligns the Gospel values to the qualities of a disciple in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount:

Blessed are the poor in spirit: ***Faithfulness and Integrity***  
Blessed are those who mourn: ***Dignity and Compassion***  
Blessed are the meek: ***Humility and Gentleness***  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst: ***Truth and Justice***  
Blessed are the merciful: ***Forgiveness and Mercy***

Blessed are the pure in heart: *Purity and Holiness*  
Blessed are the peacemakers: *Tolerance and Peace*  
Blessed are those who are persecuted: *Service and Sacrifice*

## Community Cohesion

Community Cohesion was a focus a few years ago and although not referred to so much by name now it remains an important part of the Catholic school. Schools' commitment to community cohesion is a commitment to the common good. British values can be promoted in a number of ways although they might not sit neatly with those on the list. An important part of community cohesion is helping those who are in need of help:

- Commitment to supporting worthy causes locally, nationally and globally. The answer to the question, - "Who is my neighbour?" - is, - 'Anyone anywhere in the world who benefits from what the school has done.' - Pupils can then learn about the lives of the people they are helping and bring those people into the school community through prayer and liturgy.
- Commitment to providing service to those in the wider community, for example, putting on Christmas parties for senior citizens, working with a local food bank, Christmas hampers and toys for families in need.
- Commitment to connecting to projects within the local community that are in keeping with the mission of the Catholic school. For example, joint community events (carol singing) to help the local hospice, developing a play area for use by local children.
- Commitment to projects aimed at enhancing citizenship development for pupils, for example, taking an active part in the local youth parliament, taking an active part in parish and deanery youth work.

## Teaching about Other faiths

Teaching other faiths has been a strength of the Catholic school for many years. Teaching about other faiths is an integral part of promoting the British value of respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

In teaching about other faiths, it is important to keep in mind that it is not always teaching about people who are 'out there' as many of our pupils will be members of other faiths. A number of our pupils will be in families where a parent or other family members will be followers of another faith. It is possible that there will be more than one other faith in the family unit.

There are ample resources schools can use in the teaching of other faiths as well as accessing the support and CPD put on by the Education Commission. There are a few key documents which inform how we teach about other faiths:

- 'The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions: Nostra Aetate (In our Age)' - the Vatican - 1965. This document teaches that as a Church we should look for what we have in common with non-Christian religions, "The Church therefore urges her sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture." (NA 2). The document ends with, "The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, colour, condition of life or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to 'maintain good fellowship among the nations'." (NA 5).

- 'Meeting God in Friend and Stranger' – CBCEW – 2010. This teaching document by the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales is an excellent resource for schools by providing further discussion on 'Nostra Aetate' and how we can put its teaching into practice in this day and age. The document gives a very good teaching and understanding multi-religious prayer which will be useful to schools where there are pupils from different religions. (Paragraphs 135-152). The document is very helpful in supporting schools to promote respect and tolerance and goes further than the requirement of the British value to respect and be tolerant to those of other faiths and beliefs by suggesting participation. "Catholics should also welcome opportunities for collaborating with members of other religions in fields where they have similar concerns and values. They should be able to engage in activities which protect human life from conception to death, in working for justice and peace and in issues concerning the good of our world as created by God. This kind of collaboration does not require a complete agreement on all matters of faith or morality." (Paragraph 30).
- Religious Education Curriculum Directory – To Know you More Clearly – 2026. All schools should be familiar with the components regarding teaching about other faiths in the document.

### Protecting Pupils from the Risks of Extremism and Radicalisation

As stated previously, Ofsted inspectors will look to see how the school is protecting its pupils. The definitions for these are found in the 'Prevent Strategy' ([Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)).

- **Extremism** is vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty 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.
- **Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.
- **Terrorism** is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

Schools have a duty to keep pupils safe from a range of risks including extremism and radicalisation. It is very rare for extremism or radicalisation to begin in a school. When it does happen, it is highly likely that it is brought into the school by a pupil or someone using the pupil to do so.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, enacted on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015, places a duty on all maintained schools, fee paying independent schools, academies, further and higher education institutes to have due regard, in the exercise of its functions, to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The emphasis on the statutory duty is that schools and colleges will take a more proactive stand in implementing this measure. Further Education institutions must provide the relevant monitoring authority with any information that is requested in the discharge of this function. The relevant monitoring authority is the Secretary of State or any person to whom this duty is delegated.

Under this Act the Secretary of State has the power to direct schools and colleges to act in a way prescribed by her if it is the opinion of the Secretary of State that the school or college is not carrying out its statutory duty to the standards expected of them.

There is a lot of excellent practice in our schools. The following are some suggestions which schools might want to consider. The list is by no means exhaustive.

- Teaching pupils through the curriculum or through specially arranged events the dangers of extremism and radicalisation in an age-appropriate way;
- Training for staff;
- Workable ICT integrity policy with relevant monitoring systems;
- Having a robust social media policy that applies to pupils and staff that includes the dangers of cyber coercion or bullying and what the school does when it is discovered or disclosed;
- Ensuring there is a policy in place for visitors to the school. (The Education Commission has produced guidance for schools on visitors to Catholic schools in the Diocese). The 'National Association of Teachers of Religious Education' (NATRE) has produced guidance: '*Religious Believers Visiting Schools.*';
- Ensuring there are procedures in place for checking any unsolicited materials sent into schools and procedures for authorising or agreeing materials sent out from the school by any party;
- Maintaining good relationships with the local authority Prevent Strategy representative and community police officer.

If there is any concern regarding extremism or radicalisation relating to pupils then it could be a safeguarding matter and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) should be contacted immediately in the first instance unless the school believes there is the possibility of imminent danger to a person or property in which case the police should be called.

### **Some Questions and Answers**

**Does the duty to promote fundamental British values mean that Catholic schools would be discriminating against pupils of other or no faiths by giving priority to Catholic children for admission to the school?**

No. The 'Schools Admissions Code' produced by DfE which applies to maintained schools and academies states clearly that schools having been designated with a religious character by the Secretary of State may give priority of admission to pupils who are of that faith and in so doing must have regard to any guidance issued by the religious authority, in our case, the Archbishop. All of our maintained schools and academies are designated as having a Roman Catholic character. The Diocesan guidance on admissions states that priority must be given to children baptised or received into the Catholic Church. This includes children baptised in the Roman Catholic Church or an Eastern Catholic Church in union with the See of Rome (Eastern Orthodox Churches are not in union with the See of Rome).

**Would it be discrimination for a Catholic school to advertise for a member of staff who must be a practising Catholic?**

No. The 'School Standards and Framework Act (SSFA)' 1998, the 'Discrimination on Grounds of Religion and Belief Regulations' 2003 and the 'Equality Act' 2010 allow schools with a religious character to give preference to persons of that religion in appointments to posts in the school providing there is a Genuine Occupational Requirement (GOR). The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in the 'Memorandum on the Appointment of Teachers to Catholic Schools' 2012, require all Catholic schools to appoint only practising Catholics to the posts of headteacher or principal, deputy headteacher or vice principal and the co-ordinator or head of Religious Education. Schools may apply the GOR for other posts such as lay chaplain.

**Do Catholic schools now have to teach other religions in the same way as they teach the Catholic religion?**

No. Promoting respect and tolerance for people of other faiths does not require the school to promote the other faiths. As stated earlier there is not a requirement for schools or individuals to promote teachings, beliefs or opinions that conflict with their own but it is a duty to ensure that there is no discrimination against people or groups on the basis of their belief, opinions or background.

**Will our schools be forced to stop putting on events such as the Nativity play or the Passion play so as not to offend those from other or no faiths?**

No. The duty on the school to promote respect and tolerance for those of other faiths and beliefs does not diminish the right for our schools to celebrate religious festivals and follow the liturgical calendar.

**Will Catholic schools have to actively promote, for example, same sex marriage?**

No. Catholic schools can promote the Church teaching on and understanding of marriage. All schools have a duty to teach about civil marriage factually. This must be done in an age-appropriate way. The school has a duty to ensure that in applying Church teaching it does not promote discrimination against those who hold other beliefs.

**Will the Catholic school have to revise how it teaches Religious Education?**

No. The Instrument of Government for voluntary aided Catholic schools, a document required in English law, states, "Religious Education is to be in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, discipline and general and particular norms of the Catholic Church." There is a similar requirement for Catholic academies.

**Will acts of worship have to give the same prominence to other religions as it does to the Catholic religion?**

No. Acts of worship in Catholic schools can be inclusive in celebrating similarities in other religions within the context of the school and Catholic teaching and can be affirmative and edifying for all pupils including those in the school of other or no faith. The Instrument of Government states: "Religious worship is to be in accordance with the rites, practices, discipline and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church."

**Myth Busting**

None of the schools that were investigated by Ofsted in the 'Trojan Horse' affair was designated with a religious character.

Our schools are diverse with students and teachers from a range of cultures and religions.

**References**

*The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions: Nostra Aetate (In our Age)* - the Vatican – 1965 [Nostra aetate](#)

*Prevent Strategy* [Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales \(accessible\)](#) - GOV.UK

*Meeting God in Friend and Stranger*. CBCEW 2012.

*Religious Education Curriculum Directory* – [45011\\_P00i\\_253.indd](#)

*Christ at the Centre*. Marcus Stock CTS 2012.



*Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the 'Trojan Horse' letter (Clarke Report).* By Order of the House of Commons July 2014.

*Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Department advice for maintained schools.* [DfE November 2014.](#)

*Catholic Values and British Values: Practical Advice from the Catholic Education Service.* CES February 2015

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