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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Implementation: It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

Compliance: This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the *Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement*.

“...no one really knows what it is like to be autistic, unless you are autistic yourself. Just like we don’t know what it’s like not to be autistic! Even then, every autistic person is unique, just like you normal guys.... (once you) realise a little more about what our world is like and how hard everyday functions can be for us.

***Perhaps then you’ll be a little kinder to us and give us lots of praise for things we do.
Perhaps then you’ll start to accept us.
Perhaps then you’ll start to respect us”***

Rory Hoy, 2007

2.0 GENERAL

All Students at Options Higford have an autistic spectrum condition (ASC) which is reflected in a Statement of Special Education Needs. The triad of impairments, as illustrated by those with ASC, affects language and communication, social awareness and imagination and flexibility of thought.

The Educational Reform Act of 1988 describes a balanced and broadly based curriculum as one that promotes ‘the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils’. Schools have a duty to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development of pupils (Education Act, 1996, 351 (1) (a)). At Options Higford, we consider the students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to be at the heart of our school ethos and the responsibility of the whole school curriculum. Our ethos is based upon in-depth understanding of the personalised impact of autism upon each of our individual students. Skills of empathy and understanding are crucial to lifelong learning and the holistic development of the individual, yet are classically areas people with autism find difficult.

In forming this policy document particular note has been taken of guidance issued by OFSTED in Promoting and evaluating students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (March 2004).

The aspects of the policy can be defined as:

Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth. 'Spiritual' is not synonymous with 'religious'; all areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils' spiritual development.

Moral development refers to pupils' knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to what is right or wrong.

Social development refers to pupils' progressive acquisition of the competences and qualities needed to play a full part in society.

Cultural development refers to pupils' increasing understanding and command of those beliefs, values, customs, knowledge and skills which, taken together, form the basis of identity and cohesion in societies and groups.

SMSC can be found in 'two closely interwoven strands' namely

- personal relationships – broadly speaking, how people in the school behave with respect to one and another.
- The school's curriculum – the way that what is taught in school will contribute to SMSC.

In addition, the School Inspection Handbook (September 2015) emphasizes that a school will be judged to have serious weaknesses if there are "important weaknesses in the provision for pupils' SMSC development".

The handbook says that 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
- 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

Pupils' **moral** development is shown by their:

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

Pupils' **social** development is demonstrated by their:

- Ability to 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, co-operating 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

Pupils' **cultural** development 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, 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, 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

3.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development is to ensure that the school provides opportunities for students to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. At Options Higford our thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of SMSC development, and within this, the promotion of fundamental British values, are at the heart of the school's work and this helps our students to thrive. At Options Higford we recognise that the interrelated elements of this process can be explored throughout a balanced and broadly based curriculum. All subjects must therefore contribute in the development of their personal values and beliefs, spiritual awareness, standards of personal behaviour, attitude towards other people, whilst encountering, appreciating social and cultural traditions. Additionally, the process is about preparing students for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life, equipping them to be thoughtful, caring and active citizens.

It has been recognised that there is more to life than achieving high standards in academic subjects. The vast majority of people within society want the same things for themselves and their children. Sharing a common citizenship, it is important to work and live together successfully. SMSC development is about creating an inclusive society, local communities which meet the needs of all groups and rising above differences whilst communicating. The aims are:

- To encourage students to develop their own beliefs and values about life and religion.
- To promote an appreciation of alternative individual and shared beliefs.
- To develop appropriate personal and social behaviour in response to other cultures and environments.
- To develop an awareness of oneself in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences and the development of self-respect.
- To recognise and value the worth of individuals, developing a sense of community and the ability to build relationships with others.
- To promote curiosity in order to make sense of the world.
- To encourage a sense of awe and wonder as the students become more aware of deeper meanings in the natural world and their experience of it.

These aims also encompass the fundamental British values of Democracy, The Rule of Law, Mutual respect, Individual Liberty and Tolerance. Our students are expected to learn:

- An understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process
- An understanding that the freedom to hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law
- An acceptance that 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
- An understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination

4.0 CONTENT

We have attempted to define the behaviours, attributes and abilities that we would aspire to see in our students if we were being successful in the delivery of this policy, taking the specific barriers into account that students with autism have to deal with in these areas.

These behaviours, attributes and abilities are:

Spiritual

Spiritual development is about the development of a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, and the search for meaning and purpose. Depending on your perspective it can be seen as the development of a student's spirit, soul, personality or character.

- Self-knowledge – an awareness of oneself in terms of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences; a growing understanding and acceptance of individual identity; an ability to build up relationships with others;
- Relationships – recognising and valuing the worth of each individual; developing a sense of community; the ability to build up relationships with others;
- Creativity – expressing innermost thoughts and feelings through, for example, art, music, literature and crafts; exercising the imagination, inspiration, intuition and insight; and
- Feelings and emotions – the sense of being moved by beauty or kindness; hurt by injustice or aggression; a growing awareness of when to it is important to control emotions and feelings, and how to learn to use such feelings as a source of growth.

Spiritual development is an important element of a child's education and fundamental to other areas of learning. Without curiosity, without the inclination to question, and without the exercise of imagination, insight and intuition, young people could lack the motivation to learn.

Moral

Moral development is about the building, by students, of a framework of moral values, which regulates their personal behaviour. Moral development is about gaining an understanding of the range of views held by different people, the reasons for those views and forming a personal opinion on views held by others.

Due to the nature of ASC some students could have a lack of empathy for others. This will cause difficulties when discussing emotions, feelings, love and sharing within lessons. However, Moral development includes:

- Responsibilities
- Attitudes
- Interaction
- Recognising differences with others
- Valuing ourselves, others, families, society and the environment.

Moral development is important for students because it is about learning acceptable values and developing skills for decision making, self-control and consideration of others.

Social

Social development is about young people working effectively with each other and participating successfully in the community as a whole. It is about the development of the skills and personal qualities necessary for living and working together and functioning effectively in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society. It involves growth in knowledge and understanding of all aspects of society. This includes understanding people as well as society's institutions, structures and characteristics, economic and political principles and organisations, roles and responsibilities and life as a citizen, parent or worker in a community. It also involves the development of the inter-personal skills necessary for successful relationships.

Social development is about encouraging students to take responsibility whilst in the community, experience social rules and adjust to different social contexts. This might include working within a team and showing respect for people, living things, property and the environment. It is about offering a model for living and working together where students can learn and explore the challenges and opportunities of belonging to a larger group. This provides practical experience of social behaviour and self-discipline whilst in the community.

Cultural

Cultural development is about students experiencing their own culture and other cultures in their town, region and in the country as a whole. It is about exploring cultures represented in the UK, Europe and elsewhere in the world. It is about feeling comfortable in a variety of cultures and being able to operate in the emerging world culture of shared experiences provided by television, travel and the internet. It is about understanding that cultures are always changing and coping with change. Promoting student's cultural development is intimately linked with schools' attempts to value cultural diversity and prevent racism.

Students will:

- Experience personal cultural assumptions and values
- Explore cultural diversity and being in contact with attitudes, values and traditions of other cultures.
- Be encouraged to develop an historical perspective by relating contemporary values to the processes and events that have shaped them.
- Experience the evolutionary nature of culture and the processes and potential for change.

5.0 PROCEDURES & IMPLEMENTATION

It is important to introduce students to key features of culture and tradition; local, national and global. All aims are to be understood and individually interpreted for each student in line with their personal developmental and chronological stage, their level of understanding and communication skills, as a young person with autism and complex needs. For some students this may entail a multi-sensory process supported by the use of concrete objects and visual supports to aid their self-awareness, awareness of others, and reflection. Our approach is supported through implementation of the NAS SPELL framework and Engagement with Learning Profiles (please see Options Higford Teaching and Learning Policy for more information)

All adults will model and promote expected behaviour, treating all people as valuable individuals and showing respect for students and their families. Students should learn to differentiate between right and wrong in so far as their actions affect other people. They will be encouraged to value themselves and others (PSHE).

Christian values, principles and spirituality will be explored in the curriculum within a multicultural context. The integrity and spirituality of other faith backgrounds will be respected and explored. The diversity of spiritual traditions will be experienced and learners will be given access to alternative views (See RE Policy).

Students at Options Higford will find the abstract concepts of their spiritual development difficult to understand. Expressing their own feelings and recognising others' feelings will also present problems as emotions are difficult, both expressively and receptively for people with ASC.

The spiritual dimension at Options Higford has been developed to meet the needs of our students, to build on their experiences and to develop their spiritual development:

- It will have to be meaningful, relevant, practical, age and developmentally appropriate and realistic.
- The focus for teaching will be on a concrete basis, commencing with the student and their experiences of life e.g. belonging, celebrating, exploring, sharing, feeling, loving, caring and developing whole personalities and will be reflected in the appropriate schemes of work.
- Excitement, generosity of spirit, reflection, creativity, enthusiasm, happiness, wonder, imagination, exhilaration, pride and a sense of awe and wonder will be promoted throughout the curriculum.

6.0 MECHANISM FOR DELIVERY

At Options Higford, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development is promoted through the school ethos and climate of the school. It is also developed through all curriculum areas, the school behaviour policy, extra-curricular activities and in whole school gatherings, which provide opportunities for awe and wonder, time for reflection and celebration of personal and group achievements. Our bi-weekly whole-school assemblies are clearly structured and utilise visual supports and multi-sensory props in order to support meaningful participation, reflection and celebration.

Thematic work across the Curriculum (See Curriculum Policy) provides a rich resource for exploration and discovery of values in terms of appreciating the wonder of diversity, pattern, design, colour, sound, etc. and can aid students to focus on cause and effect and the interdependence of all creation. Students are encouraged to develop a questioning, investigative approach to life and the world around them. PSHE provides appropriate opportunities to discuss personal, topical and general issues, such as personal, family and peer group concerns.

Our students access the world of emotions and feelings in creative and challenging ways appropriate to their individual needs as learners with autism who's social and communication problems are likely to result in a lack in the intuitive and automatic attribution of mental states or to have difficulties with contextual awareness.

Extra-curricular activities including school visits and visitors, therapy sessions, sports events and after school activities planned by care practitioners (including youth club, use of leisure facilities etc.) promote a sense of belonging to a group, outlet for emotions and tolerance towards others.

Opportunities for Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development are given by encouraging students to:

- Develop self-regulation strategies to cope with anxieties arising out of the autism. Issues arising from poor executive function are supported through our use of structure and visual supports
- Learn how to identify and discuss their feelings and beliefs openly;
- Explore open-ended issues involving opinions and listening to the views of others;
- Express themselves in a variety of ways including art, dance, drama and project work;
- Foster a sense of respect for the integrity of others, regardless of personal feelings;
- Respond to the wonder and beauty of the natural world;
- Have opportunities for reflection and silence.

Awareness and understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters are also promoted through:

- the quality and content of school displays
- selection of resources and highlighted programmes of study
- positive relationships between students, staff
- celebratory meals in the Bistro
- staff development opportunities

At Options Higford, we offer students opportunities to reflect on their own identity, to develop self-respect and a sense of community. We provide opportunities to reflect not only on their own experiences but also the experiences of others. We encourage personal insight and work with our students to support their developing understanding as to cause and effect, action and consequence.

Any exchange between any members of the school community has the possibility of promoting SMSC across the school. Clearly the starting point for the promotion of the school's ethos is the adults involved in the school – teaching staff, non-teaching staff, helpers and guests.

In the selection of new staff, the school is mindful of the need for the successful candidate to adopt the school ethos and values of the school. New staff will be made aware of the ethos and values of the school as part of our in-depth induction programme. Existing staff are aware of the school's ethos and values. It is important that staff become explicitly aware of them, to the point that the ethos is the product of the feelings of the whole staff. Staff have the opportunity to reflect on this aspect of SMSC during the staff meetings. All staff need to be explicitly aware of the ethos and values of the school and endeavour to incorporate SMSC in the content of their lessons.

7.0 EVIDENCE & MONITORING OF POLICY

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development will be recognised, evidenced and monitored through:

- Opportunities in the curriculum,
- The general life of the school and residential home
- The example set for students by adults in the school as role models, with high expectations of staff behaviour.
- The quality and relevance of the acts of collective worship

8.0 LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

- Single Equality Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- RE Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Curriculum Policy