



Innovation, Aspiration and Excellence

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Policy

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1. Policy Aims & Principles

Learning and undertaking activities in Personal, Health, Relationship and Sex Education (PSHRE) contribute to transforming learning experiences at Houlton School and excellence in the achievement of the curriculum aims for all young people to become:

- Successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve;
- Confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives; and
- Responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

PSHRE is described in two new interrelated programmes of study for both Key Stages 3 and 4: one for personal wellbeing and one for economic wellbeing and financial capability. 'Personal wellbeing' draws together personal, social and health education, including RSE, the social and emotional aspects of learning, while 'economic wellbeing' draws together economic understanding, careers education, enterprise, financial capability and work-related learning.

PSHRE education is at the heart of the personal development and character curriculum at Houlton School with its emphasis on the acquisition of personal, learning and thinking skills. Houlton School will embed a cross-curricular dimension in areas such as healthy lifestyles, identity and cultural diversity, and sustainable futures and the global dimension. The active promotion of British Values is also an essential part of SMSC and forms a large part of the schools' personal development programme.

PSHRE education also makes a major contribution to the statutory responsibilities on schools to:

- promote children and young people's wellbeing;
- achieve the whole curriculum aims;
- promote community cohesion;
- provide effective CEIAG
- provide sex education;
- actively promote British Values.

2. Rationale

Personal wellbeing helps young people embrace change, feel positive about who they are and enjoy healthy, safe, responsible and fulfilled lives. Through active learning opportunities pupils recognise and manage risk, take increasing responsibility for themselves, their choices and

behaviours and make positive contributions to their families, schools and communities. As pupils they learn to recognise, develop and communicate their qualities, skills and attitudes, they build knowledge, confidence and self-esteem and make the most of their abilities. As they explore similarities and differences between people and discuss social and moral dilemmas, they learn to deal with challenges and accommodate diversity in all its forms. The world is full of complex and sometimes conflicting values. Personal wellbeing helps pupils explore this complexity and reflect on and clarify their own values and attitudes. They identify and articulate feelings and emotions, learn to manage new or difficult situations positively and form and maintain effective relationships with a wide range of people.

Education for economic wellbeing and financial capability aims to equip pupils with the knowledge, skills and attributes to make the most of changing opportunities in learning and work. Through their learning and experiences inside and outside school, pupils begin to understand the nature of the world of work, the diversity and function of business, and its contribution to national prosperity. They develop as questioning and informed consumers and learn to manage their money and finances effectively. Education for economic wellbeing and financial capability improves motivation and progression by helping pupils see the relevance of what they learn in school to their future lives. It expands their horizons for action by challenging stereotyping, discrimination and other cultural and social barriers to choice. It helps pupils to aim high. Pupils build a positive and realistic view of their needs and capabilities so that they can make effective learning plans, decisions and transitions. They become aware of changing career opportunities and develop the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about which learning programmes to take. Pupils learn to be enterprising. They develop the ability to handle uncertainty, respond positively to change and create and implement new ideas and ways of doing things. They learn how to make and act on reasonable risk/reward assessments and develop a 'can-do' attitude and the drive to make ideas happen.

PSHRE also has freedom from curriculum constraints, as schools have a considerable amount of choice regarding the topics of learning which can compose a balance PSHRE programme of study. The PSHRE curriculum at Houlton School is reviewed annually and is designed, with consultation, to provide the most effective and engaging way in which pupils can develop as people and demonstrate the core aims detailed within this policy.

3. The PSHRE Curriculum

PSHRE education at Houlton School currently is reflected in the following strands:

- discrete curriculum time teaching PSHRE including LORIC skills
- through and in other subjects/curriculum areas where appropriate, such as RE, Science, Drama, History etc.
- through PSHRE whole school activities, such as Anti – Bullying, E Safety, ‘Who am I?’ Project and Drop Down Day and Young Warrior Day
- specific projects – ie, tutor programme / College activities
- through involvement in the life of the school and wider community – i.e. pupil leadership, College activities, World Class Schools work and PiXL Edge pupils leadership
- through pastoral care and guidance;
- appropriate visits / visitors.

4. Learning and Teaching

PSHRE demands up to date knowledge and dynamic delivery. Our aim is for all lessons / activities to be challenging and thought provoking, responding to the new Ofsted framework and above all being relevant to the needs of the learners. All teachers are encouraged to develop a repertoire of flexible, active learning methods and to respond to the demands of the learners in lessons – a prescriptive approach in PSHRE is not always desired but the Houlton non-negotiables will be expected as outlined in the Learning and Teaching policy to ensure lessons are well planned and delivered.

5. Assessment and Reporting

In PSHRE education there are two broad areas for assessment:

- Pupils' knowledge and understanding, for example, information on sexual health.
- How well pupils can use their knowledge and understanding in developing LORIC skills and attitudes, for example, through participating in discussions, group tasks and activities, resolving conflict, making decisions and promoting positive relationships.

The principles of assessment for learning underpin our policy and practice. We aim to improve learning by providing effective feedback to pupils, actively involving pupils in their own learning, adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment, recognising the profound influence assessment has on the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, both of which

are crucial influences on learning and pupils being able to assess themselves and understand how to improve.

Clearly defined learning outcomes based on the National Curriculum programme of study for PSHRE education assist the assessment process. Teachers are encouraged to collect evidence of learning to make a judgement about pupil progress. This evidence might include:

- draw and write a concept;
- mind-mapping;
- display of a community action project, such as at parent's evening;
- presentations;
- observation of a group discussion or group task;
- photographs, films or even video made on a mobile phone;
- web page or blog;
- role play;
- campaigning letters, emails or press releases;
- silent debate - where pupils write down their arguments/opinions;
- written evidence and extended writing.

A record of pupil' progress and portfolios of work will provide evidence for written annual reports to parents on strengths and areas for development in PSHRE education.

6. Actively Promoting British Values

Houlton School promotes fundamental **British Values** and principles which all those living in the UK should respect and support. These values are reflected in the responsibilities, rights and privileges of being a British citizen or permanent resident of the UK. They are based on history and traditions and are protected by law, customs and expectations. There is no place in British society for extremism or intolerance. The fundamental principles of British life that we promote at Houlton School are:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Acceptance of those with different faiths and beliefs
- Mutual respect

Houlton School will actively promote these values through:

- Timetabled PSHRE/ LORIC and RSE lessons
- Tutor time programme
- Pupil Fora and Leadership programmes
- Community Service and values driven personal development activities
- Participation in visits and community activities

7. Religious Education

At Houlton School we encourage our pupils through our programmes of study to engage with, and reflect upon their own religious or non-religious beliefs. We also promote the learning about and from other religious, cultural and philosophical positions with an emphasis on respect and tolerance for other views different to our own. Pupils are supported to think critically about the impact of various ‘truth claims’ on the lives of others, and its impact or potential impact upon their own lives and the fundamental British Values that we promote.

Religious education at Houlton School has the wider aim of actively promoting modern British Values which include: democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and acceptance of those with different faiths and beliefs. These values are explored, expressed and promoted through the religious education programme of study, often explicitly. PSHRE and Religious Education will be taught in bespoke lesson, but in collaboration with one another.

8. Topics areas in Religious Education supporting SMSC

Democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty are fundamental British values which are explored in a number of units including: ‘Big Questions – Why do we have free will?’, ‘What are Civil Rights – Why are they important?’

‘Key Stage 4, GCSE units Crime and Punishment and Rights and Responsibility’. Mutual respect and acceptance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

These fundamental British values are explored in many units including (but not exclusively): ‘Year 7 ‘Introduction to Faith and Commitment?’, ‘Year 8 – What can we learn from Islam? And also What can we learn from Buddhism?’,

‘Key Stage 4, GCSE units are from both a Christian and Islamic perspective, and includes varying views found within both world religions on key issues such as Marriage and the family, medical ethics and war and peace.

9. PSHRE Coordination

Overall responsibility for Personal Development lies with the Vice Principal for Personal Development, Behaviour and Safety. The Personal Development programme oversight will involve:

- Ensuring cross curriculum links
- Ensuring that the principles of British Values are embedded across the curriculum
- Developing a robust LORIC and character curriculum
- Ensuring all pupils are exposed to personalised CIAEG
- Ensuring the statutory RSE requirements are covered through the PSHRE curriculum

A PSHRE coordinator has been appointed to start from September 2024.

10. Inclusion

This policy has given careful consideration to the seven equality strands - race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, disability and sexuality. This is to ensure that PSHRE education is provided for in a sensitive and non-judgemental way that will enable all young people, staff and the wider school community to feel valued and included in effective policy and practices. In order to achieve this we regularly reflect upon specific needs of particular groups in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability and special educational needs as PSHRE is renewed and updated.

11. Teaching Sensitive and Controversial Issues

Sensitive and controversial issues are certain to arise in learning from real-life experience. Teachers will be prepared to handle personal issues arising from the work, to deal sensitively with, and to follow up appropriately, disclosures made in a group or individual setting. Issues that we address that are likely to be sensitive and controversial because they have a political, social or personal impact or deal with values and beliefs include: family lifestyles and values, physical and medical issues, financial issues, bullying and bereavement. Teachers will take all reasonable, practical steps to ensure that, where political or controversial issues are brought to pupils' attention, they are offered a balanced presentation or opposing views. Teachers will adopt strategies which seek to avoid bias on their part and will teach pupils how to recognise bias and evaluate evidence. Teachers will seek to establish a classroom climate

in which all pupils are free from any fear of expressing reasonable points of view that contradict those held either by their class teachers or their peers.

12. Confidentiality

School staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality if approached by a pupil for help. Staff must make this clear to pupils. Child protection procedures must be followed when any disclosures are made. Where it is clear that a pupil would benefit from the involvement of a third party, staff should seek consent of the pupil to do so. If appropriate, staff might inform the third party together with the pupil. Unless clearly inappropriate, pupils will always be encouraged to talk to their parent/carer. An underlying principle in supporting pupils in our school is that all pupils are listened to sensitively and objectively. Although the school cannot guarantee confidentiality pupils will be informed of national and local helplines, if appropriate, where confidentiality can be maintained.

13. Use of External Agencies

Outside agencies and speakers may be involved in inputting to PSHRE education lessons and as points of referral as support services for pupils. Houlton School will prioritise developing links with organisations which still can add value to the experiences of our pupils, such as the Fire Service. Individual support for pupils (School Nurse etc.) and appropriate referrals will be made through pastoral staff.

14. SMSC

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development is crucial for individual pupils and it is crucial for society as a whole. It is the heart of what education is all about - helping pupils grow and develop as people. Houlton School's statutory obligation is to provide a curriculum which:

- promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school;
- actively promotes British Values;

- prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

SMSC development remains as a whole school issue, but has particular links within PSHRE. Whether talking about the family, teenage pregnancy, the misuse of drugs, ethics in business or politics, football hooliganism, Community Cohesion, homophobia, the promotion of good race relations, the consequences of social disadvantage, a failure to vote at elections, or the host of other issues – it is clear that the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimension of these issues should be raised.

15. Partnerships with parents and carers

The role of Houlton School, in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils is central to our core values and principles. However it is realised that we need to work in partnership with parents and carers, who will play their part in encouraging and supporting what we are striving to do. There is a real sense then in which Houlton School is engaged in a partnership with parents and they will play a significant part in the development of these values in their children. The contribution of the wider community and, in some cases the involvement in a particular faith community and in all cases the involvement with society at large will also contribute in various ways to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

16. Spiritual Development

Pupils at Houlton School will be expected to demonstrate a willingness to reflect on and appreciate their own faith and spirituality and will be encouraged to have:

- a recognition of the right of others to hold their own views and respect for those who have different beliefs and customs;
- a willingness to look beyond materialism;
- a willingness to reflect on and think critically about their experiences, responses and choices.;
- a willingness to reflect on and appreciate works of literary, artistic or musical merit;
- a willingness to ask and explore 'ultimate questions';

- a growing ability to cope with the times of suffering which human life naturally presents: anxiety, stress, unhappiness, illness, divorce and death.

17. Moral Development

Moral development is concerned with a pupil's knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to what is 'right' and 'wrong'. Moral development then is concerned with fundamental judgements and precepts about how people should behave and act and reasons for such behaviour. The intention at Houlton School is that pupils, as they develop a sense of morality, will be invited to explore moral and ethical matters and acquire value systems which are their own. We work to emphasise an understanding that pupils' behaviour and actions should be derived from a moral set of beliefs and values and should correspond to the ethos, core values and code of conduct of the school.

On a more personal level, teachers have a significant responsibility for moral education. They inevitably define, for their pupils, standards of behaviour in the classroom and around their College and act as role models. They engage pupils in thinking about their responsibilities when issues arise, such as keeping promises, telling the truth, or dealing with unfairness and injustice. Our aims for the moral development of pupils are that they will develop:

- a developing sense of self-discipline and responsibility not only for their own actions, but for their responsibilities to others enabling pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- a developing awareness of, and pride in, their own unique gifts, talents and privileges, and a parallel rejection of all forms of prejudiced perception of others on the basis of class, race, sex, religion or nationality;
- an appreciation of the importance of honesty, truthfulness and the development of personal integrity;
- a sensitivity to the feelings, needs and rights of others as well as encouraging respect for other people;
- a growing disposition towards generosity, rather than selfishness, by helping those less fortunate or weaker than ourselves;
- an appreciation of the importance of being kind to others and a clear rejection of unkindness, cruelty or bullying;
- a developing of a mature sense of self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;

- a developing 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 the UK.

18. Social Development

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. It is about functioning effectively in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society. It involves growth in knowledge and understanding of society in all its aspects. This includes understanding people as well as understanding 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. As such there are obvious links with LORIC skills and PSHRE. The quality of our relationships defines the kind of people we are and, ultimately, the kind of world we live in. Our capacity to participate effectively in social life is crucial to our well-being and that of the communities we belong to. These communities are defined not only by the spaces we live in but also by the prevailing ideals and values and by the codes and structures for living together.

Our aims are:

- to provide opportunities for pupils to work in groups and in pairs to experience a variety of social roles;
- to provide opportunities for pupils to experience working co-operatively in partnership, and contributing positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely;
- to provide opportunities for pupils to exercise leadership and responsibility and show initiative;
- to provide opportunities for pupils to learn to respond to the initiatives of others, and what it means to share a common purpose.;
- to provide opportunities for pupils to be involved in a decision-making process which involves democratic participation, ie Pupil Fora.

19. Cultural Development

Cultural development is about pupils' understanding their own culture and other cultures in their town, region and in the country as a whole. It is about understanding cultures represented in the world. It is about understanding and 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. Pupils need to understand their own culture, and also the issues of globalisation and the 'global village' in which we live. Culture embraces customs, history, geography, icons, images, artefacts, music, painting, sculpture, dance and technology as well as the spoken word and written literature.

Our aims are:

- to provide pupils with the knowledge of the nature and roots of their own cultural traditions and practices, including historical, social, religious, aesthetic, ethnic or political and also of the key features of other major cultural groups within their own society. This includes enabling pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in the UK;
- to develop an understanding of the diversity of religious, social, aesthetic, ethnic and political traditions and practices within their society, promoting tolerance between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures ;
- to encourage a personal participation in a range of cultural activities including inclusive opportunities to participate in trips and visits.

20. Promoting SMSC

SMSC should, and does happen across the whole experience at Houlton School – in lessons, tutor activities, learning conversations, trips and visits, socialising, Pupil Fora etc. The following list is not exhaustive but illustrates the range of opportunities which happen which can promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development:

- through the taught curriculum across all subject areas
- vocational work including work experience
- educational visits

- visitors to the school, and their contribution to the curriculum
- assemblies
- the tutor time programme
- peer and teacher led mentoring
- primary links
- community links
- rewards and consequences
- Pupil Leadership and pupil fora
- co-curricular clubs and activities
- charity work
- the values of the school

21. Additional Information

Answering Difficult Questions

Teachers are careful to ensure that their personal beliefs and attitudes do not influence the teaching of PSHRE. To this end ground rules have been agreed to provide a common values framework within which to teach. There are clear parameters as to what will be taught in whole class setting and what will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Ground Rules and Distancing Techniques

- No one, teacher or pupil, should be expected to answer a personal question
- No one will be forced to take part in a discussion
- Meanings of words will be explained in a sensible and factual way

Dealing with Questions

Teachers should establish clear parameters about what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole-class setting. Teachers should set the tone by speaking in a matter-of-fact way and ensuring that pupils discuss issues in a way which is of a desired level of maturity.

Teachers should not be drawn into providing more information than is appropriate to the age of the pupil. They should use their judgment and if questions are not appropriate for a lesson, they may respond to the pupil individually.

If a teacher is concerned that a pupil is at risk of abuse then usual child protection procedures must be followed.

Handling sensitive and controversial issues

Learning from real life experience is central to the development of social, emotional and behavioural skills. Sensitive and controversial issues are certain to arise. Pupils should not be sheltered from such issues, through them they can develop an important range of skills, including listening, accepting other points of view, arguing a case, dealing with conflict and dealing with difficult feelings. Teachers/ practitioners need to be prepared however to handle personal issues arising from the work, to deal sensitively with, and follow-up appropriately, disclosures made in a group or individual setting, and to know what to do in the case of a potential child protection issue. This will involve being clear about issues of confidentiality. Issues that are likely to be sensitive or controversial are those that have a political, social or personal impact and arouse strong feelings. Those which deal with values and beliefs are also potentially sensitive or controversial.

Issues likely to be sensitive or controversial include:

- family and lifestyle values
- physical and medical issues
- law and order
- financial issues
- unemployment
- environmental issues
- bullying

However, almost any issue can prove sensitive to specific individuals, whether they are adults or pupils. It is important to establish a classroom climate in which pupils can express a point of view that may differ from those held either by their teachers/practitioners or their peers. Ground rules will need to include being able to listen to and learn from the experiences of others, showing sensitivity to diversity of experience and lifestyle, respecting others' rights and taking care not to put each other down.

Teachers/practitioners need to be ready to:

- judge when to allow pupils to discuss issues confidentially in groups and when to support by listening into those group discussions;
- ensure that pupils have access to balanced information and differing views with which they can then clarify their own opinions and views, including contributions made by visitors to the classroom;

- decide how far they are prepared to express their own views, bearing in mind that they are in an influential position and that have to work within the framework of the school's values;
- ensure they take due care of the needs of individuals in the class when tackling issues of a controversial nature – know your group, and their background.

Ensuring balance

There is a need for balance when discussing sensitive or controversial issues and teachers/practitioners can seek to avoid bias by using the measures outlined below. However, the need for balance should not be regarded as inhibiting a clear stand against racism and other forms of discrimination. Our common values require that there are behaviours we should not tolerate, for example racism, bullying, including homophobic bullying, and cruelty are never acceptable in any form and should be challenged.

Teachers/practitioners should seek to avoid bias by:

- trying to highlight a particular selection of facts or items of evidence in a way that gives it a greater importance than other equally relevant information;
- actively encouraging pupils to offer alternative or contradictory interpretations of information, for example of facial expressions, conventions of deference or politeness;
- making clear that they are not the sole authority of matters of fact or opinion
- helping pupils to distinguish opinions and value judgements from facts
- opening up opportunities for all pupils to contribute their views to a discussion, avoiding any implication by their choice of respondents;
- challenging a consensus of opinion that emerges too easily.

Confidentiality

Pupils occasionally make personal disclosures, either in class or to individual teachers/practitioners. For example, they may disclose that they or their friends or relatives are using drugs, that they are engaging in illegal activity or that they have been abused. As there are many circumstances through which teachers/ practitioners may come to possess sensitive information about pupils, staff must ensure they follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

22. Monitoring Evaluation and Review

It is accepted that there are no correct definitions of these terms and that there are no easily definable criteria to measure the success of any policy which aims to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our pupils. Personal development can be an unpredictable and long term phenomenon, and the effects of even the most sensitive moral instruction or spiritual reflection must be reviewed regularly and respond to changes in society.

This policy will be reviewed annually by Chloe Buckenham, Vice Principal for Personal Development, Behaviour and Safety and approved by the Local Governing Board.