Improving the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development of Pupils
Non-Statutory Guidance for Independent Schools
Non-statutory guidance for the SMSC regulations for independent schools

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Background

Independent schools are required to meet the Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural (SMSC) regulations as set out in the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003. There are five parts to the SMSC regulations, which are shown below:

(2a) Enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence
(2b) Enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law
(2c) Encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life
(2d) Provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England
(2e) Assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions

Ofsted conducted a survey during summer 2009 to assess whether the regulations for the SMSC development of pupils in independent faith schools were fit for purpose. The report of the survey, published October 2009, found that the regulations were fit for purpose. However, it did recommend greater clarity in defining what the regulations required. In taking forward this recommendation, a practitioner group was set up consisting of teachers and head teachers from independent schools, officers from Ofsted and other inspectorates, and representatives from faith associations.
Purpose

The purpose of this guidance is to clarify for schools the intention and interpretation of the SMSC regulations. Given the importance of SMSC development in pupils and the range of independent school ethos, it is vitally important to ensure that schools share a common understanding of the terms used in the regulations; what the regulations mean; and how schools could put them into practice. This guidance is non-statutory: it is designed to help schools reflect on and improve their practice, particularly the minority of schools that are struggling to provide good quality SMSC. This guidance is not intended to be used by inspectors as some kind of an inspection framework: it is intended to provide advice and support to independent schools in reflecting on the things they can do to meet the SMSC regulations. There has been input from Ofsted and other inspectorates in updating this guidance, but inspectors will continue to make judgements in the same way as before based on the existing framework and criteria.

It should be noted that these regulations are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. Schools can demonstrate that they meet them in a variety of ways, for example through the school ethos, religious and cultural activities, and also through formal teaching. Personal, social and health education, and religious education, usually make a positive contribution to pupils’ development, although pupils’ SMSC can be developed through most areas of the curriculum. Each school must decide how it will choose to meet the regulations and every school is expected to make sure that it provides effectively for every pupil’s SMSC development.

All five of the regulations are interrelated: it is important to bear this in mind as we consider the regulations separately in this guidance for clarity. In practice, schools need to take a holistic approach to SMSC.

Spiritual, Moral, Social, and Cultural development can be defined as shown below:
**Spiritual development** – the development of the non-material element of a human being which animates and sustains us and, depending on our point of view, either ends or continues in some form when we die. It is about the development of a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose. It is about the development of a pupil’s ‘spirit’. Some people may call it the development of a pupil’s ‘soul’; others as the development of ‘personality’ or ‘character’.

**Moral development** - enabling pupils to build a framework of moral values, aligned with the law of the land, which regulates their personal behaviour. It is also about the development of pupils’ understanding of society’s shared and agreed values. It is about understanding that there are issues where there is disagreement and it is also about understanding that society’s values change. Moral development is about gaining an understanding of the range of views and the reasons for the range. It is also about developing an opinion about the different views.

**Social development** - 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 in harmony and making a positive contribution to the school community and wider society. It is about functioning effectively in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society and developing into a tolerant and helpful human being. 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.

**Cultural development** - helping pupils to develop an understanding of their own culture and other cultures in their town, region and in the country as a whole. It is about understanding cultures represented in Europe and elsewhere 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, art, theatre, travel and the internet. It is about understanding that cultures are always changing and
coping with change. Promoting pupils’ cultural development is intimately linked with schools’ attempts to value cultural diversity and prevent racism.
Regulation (2a) Enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence

Aim

Schools play a very influential part in the personal development of their pupils, and it is important that they do this in a manner that is beneficial to the pupils. A climate or ethos should be developed in the school within which all pupils can grow and flourish, respect others and be respected. This regulation aims to ensure that schools do all they can to help their pupils develop into self-assured, confident, happy, positive young people who are developing their self-knowledge.

**Definitions**

*Self-knowledge* – Knowledge about strengths, weaknesses, and character.  
*Self-esteem* – Being able to appreciate yourself, your strengths and character.  
*Self-confidence* – Being able to trust your own capabilities, and feeling sure of yourself.

**Desired outcomes**

The list below describes the kinds of behaviour/abilities/understanding that can be expected in pupils as a result of schools meeting this regulation. It should be noted that this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

- Respect for themselves and for others;  
- Awareness of their own and others' beliefs, feelings, and values;  
- Develop a set of values, principles and beliefs, which may or may not be religious, which inform their perspective on life and their patterns of behaviour;  
- Ability to articulate their feelings and justify them through discussion, debate, and presentations to others;  
- Readiness to question things that could limit their self-knowledge, self-esteem, and self confidence – for example, lack of aspiration, discrimination (such as sexism, racism, etc), injustice, bullying, and so on;  
- Acquire the skills to be self-reliant and work independently or in a team;  
- A readiness to take on responsibility for their own actions;
• Value a non-material dimension to life and consider the questions at the heart of existence (such as who am I, where am I going?);
• An appreciation of the intangible – for example, beauty, truth, love, goodness, order – as well as for mystery, paradox, and ambiguity;
• An increasing ability to reflect, and to learn from this reflection.

**Possible actions schools can take**

There are many different actions that schools can take to do well in this area. Some of these are listed below, but again this list is not prescriptive.

• Promote teaching styles which value pupils’ questions and give them space for their own thoughts, ideas, and concerns;
• Teachers should be acting as role models of the values desired in pupils;
• Ensure an environment is created where every child may reach their potential regardless of gender, race, disability, or other equalities issues;
• Help pupils to be aware of their potential and support them to achieve it;
• Where pupils already have religious or non religious beliefs, support and encourage these beliefs in ways which are personal and relevant to the pupils;
• Provide opportunities for spiritual development through learning outside the classroom, for example drama, music, art, visits to museums, historic buildings;
• Encourage pupils to explore and critically analyse what interests and inspires themselves and others;
• Encourage pupils to reflect and learn from reflection;
• Encourage individual endeavour and celebrate achievement and success, both within and outside the classroom, such as through drama, sports, music and outdoor pursuits;
• Encourage pupils to work and cooperate as part of a team;
• Provide opportunities for pupils to develop leadership skills and challenge so they can take care of themselves and others, and develop self-reliance.
Regulation (2b) Enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law

Aim

This regulation highlights the development of pupils’ values and their understanding of society’s agreed values and the law of the land. How children observe school members of staff act can have a great impact on their own code of values.

Desired outcomes

The list below describes the kinds of behaviour/abilities/understanding that can be expected in pupils as a result of schools meeting this regulation. It should be noted that this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

- Understanding of and respect for the laws of the land;
- Ability to distinguish right from wrong, based on a knowledge of their own values, those widely held by society, and the laws of the land;
- An understanding that ‘society’ is held together by a communal understanding of right and wrong, which may change over time;
- Ability to think through the consequences of their own and others’ actions, and the confidence to act consistently in accordance with agreed principles, and especially to understand the impact that their own actions can have on others;
- Respect for others’ needs, interests and feelings, as well as their own, and a desire to explore these;
- Ability to make responsible and reasoned judgements on dilemmas of right and wrong;
- Willingness and confidence to express their views on ethical issues and personal values;
- An ability to respond appropriately to the immoral and the illegal;
- An understanding of the need to review and reassess their values, codes and principles in the light of experience.
Possible actions schools can take

There are many different actions that schools can take to do well in this area. Some of these are listed below, but again this list is not prescriptive.

- Teach pupils how today’s legal system has evolved and why it is important, and help them understand the law and the importance of abiding by it;
- Provide a clear framework of values and behaviours which is promoted consistently through all aspects of the school, with teachers as role models;
- Inform parents of school ethos and procedures so that what is learnt at school can be supported at home, and ensure this ethos aligns with the law of the land;
- Give pupils opportunities across the curriculum to explore and develop moral concepts and values, such as right and wrong, justice, personal rights and responsibilities;
- Reward good insight and behaviour;
- Teach pupils about citizenship, and the importance of being a good citizen;
- Discuss in an informed and balanced way breaches of agreed moral codes where they arise, and their impact on society and themselves;
- Provide models of virtue through literature, humanities, sciences, arts, assemblies, relevant role models, and acts of worship;
- Reinforce the importance of a cohesive, harmonious, law abiding society through images, posters, classroom displays, exhibitions, etc;
- Address discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age and other criteria, and promote racial and other forms of equality.
Regulation (2c) Encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life

Aim

Schools can help pupils to understand how to be responsible for their behaviour from an early age, as well as encourage the pupils to show initiative. They can also create a real sense of community belonging in the pupils, by creating a strong school community and through work with other communities. Developing pupils’ contribution to community life should also help to promote community cohesion.

Definitions

**Community** - Community in this sense refers to several different communities. It refers to family and extended family; the school community; pupils’ faith and cultural communities; the local area community; the national community; and the global community. In a wider sense, it can also include all living things and the environment.

**Contribution to community life** – Making a positive contribution to community life is about playing a part in and feeling a sense of belonging to the various communities described above: pupils can do this by taking on responsibilities, contributing to the decision making process, and participating in and contributing to community events.

Desired outcomes

The list below describes the kinds of behaviour/abilities/understanding that can be expected in pupils as a result of schools meeting this regulation. It should be noted that this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

- Show respect for people, living things, property and the environment
- Work effectively and respectfully with other pupils;
- Share their own views and opinions with others, and work towards understanding and cohesion;
- Participate in activities relevant to the communities they belong to;
- Take part in democratic processes available to them, for example, voting or running for a student council;
• Adjust to a range of social contexts by appropriate and sensitive behaviour;
• Develop the ability to live alongside those from different cultures and beliefs;
• Appreciate the rights and responsibilities of individuals within the wider social setting;
• Reflect on their own contribution to society;
• Understand how societies function and are organised in structures such as the family, the school and local and wider communities;
• Understand the notion of interdependence in an increasingly complex society, and also understand that communities and societies function at a variety of levels;
• Know about sections of society and other people less fortunate than themselves, and what they can do to help.

**Possible actions schools can take**

There are many different actions that schools can take to do well in this area. Some of these are listed below, but again this list is not prescriptive.

• Foster a sense of community, with common and inclusive values which ensure that everyone, irrespective of ethnic origin, nationality, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and religious or non-religious beliefs, can flourish;
• Encourage pupils to work co-operatively;
• Provide positive group activities, for example, through assemblies, team activities, residential experiences, school theatre and music productions;
• Encourage pupils to take responsibility for their actions, for example, respect for property, care of the environment, and developing codes of behaviour;
• School linking or partnership work to give pupils the chance to mix with pupils from different areas/cultures/faith;
• Help pupils to develop personal qualities which are valued in society, for example, thoughtfulness, honesty, respect for difference and sound moral principles;
• Provide opportunities for participating in different communities – for example, religious, cultural, local and global;
• Provide opportunities for pupils to exercise leadership and responsibility;
• Ensure that through lessons and other formal and informal settings opportunities are provided for pupils to demonstrate initiative, develop their interests and organise activities for themselves and others.
Regulation (2d) Provide pupils with a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England

Aim

By meeting this regulation, teachers will ensure that pupils are knowledgeable about the public institutions and services in England, enabling them to understand the support these offer and how they can be accessed.

Definitions

**Broad general knowledge** – It is important for the pupils to have an understanding of the main local and national public institutions and services in England, what they are for, and how they can be used.

**Public institutions** – Local and national organisations that are wholly or partly funded by taxpayers funds such as Parliament, police, hospitals, libraries, schools, universities, post offices, local authorities, job centres, museums, etc.

**Public services** – Services provided by public institutions, contractors, and the Government for the benefit of citizens, for example, childcare, transport, refuse collection, education, healthcare and welfare support.

Desired outcomes

The list below describes the kinds of behaviour/abilities/understanding that can be expected in pupils as a result of schools meeting this regulation. It should be noted that this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

- A thorough understanding of British public institutions and services along with knowledge of how to use them and willingness to do so;
- Understand what the public institutions and services do for people throughout the country;
- Take part in democratic processes, for example, voting for or joining a student council;
- Understand how citizens can express their views through the democratic process so they can influence decision makers;
• Appreciate the rights and responsibilities of individuals within the wider social setting
• Understand the strengths and advantages of democracy and how democracy works in the context of Britain and Europe in contrast to other forms of government

Possible actions schools can take

There are many different actions that schools can take to do well in this area. Some of these are listed below, but again this list is not prescriptive.

• Teach pupils about democracy and citizenship, and the importance of being a good citizen;
• Ensure that all pupils within the school have a voice that is listened to;
• Ensure that pupils are aware of their rights and the rights of others as human beings;
• Teach pupils about what public institutions and services are available, what they are for, and how they are funded;
• Provide positive and effective links with the world of work (for example, shadowing, work experience, and visits from professionals) and the wider community (for example school visits, including to public institutions, taking part in community events);
• Provide opportunities for pupils to learn about and engage in local and national democratic processes, including having democratic processes within the school such as a school council whose members are voted for by the pupils.
Regulation (2e) Assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions

Aim

In the increasingly diverse UK society, children growing up today are more likely to come into contact at some point in their lives with people from different cultures and faiths. It is important for schools to ensure that their pupils are ready for such interaction, as they may not come across different cultures at home or at school. By meeting this regulation, teachers will ensure that pupils are encouraged and enabled to interact with people of other cultures in a positive way, thus promoting community cohesion.

Definitions

Appreciation – Seeing the value of something or someone.

Respect – To regard something or someone with esteem and appreciation.

Culture - Culture is about the factors that are common to communities, such as customs, traditions, dress, food, and so on. It can be examined from both a historical and a societal perspective. While culture is therefore different to faith, the two are interlinked, and influence each other. There can be different faiths within one culture, and different cultures within one faith.

Tolerance – Tolerance does not imply ‘putting up with’. It is about understanding and respecting other people’s right to their hold their own values and views, whether we agree with them or not.

Harmony – Peace and agreement. Harmony has a significant positive impact on relationships.
**Desired outcomes**

The list below describes the kinds of behaviour/abilities/understanding that can be expected in pupils as a result of schools meeting this regulation. It should be noted that this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

- An ability to recognise and understand their own cultural principles and values, and the dynamic and developmental nature of these;
- An understanding of the influences which have shaped their own cultural heritage;
- An ability to appreciate cultural diversity and accord dignity and respect to other people’s values and beliefs, to challenge racism, and to value race equality;
- Tolerance of people with different cultural, religious, and non-religious beliefs;
- Ability to interact positively with people of different cultural, religious, and non-religious beliefs.

**Possible actions schools can take**

There are many different actions that schools can take to do well in this area. Some of these are listed below, but again this list is not prescriptive.

- Provide opportunities for pupils to explore their own cultural assumptions and values;
- Provide opportunities for pupils to participate in literature, drama, music, art, crafts and other cultural events and encourage pupils to reflect on their significance;
- Provide opportunities for pupils to mix with children from other cultures, for example through school linking programmes;
- Give pupils the opportunity to explore different values, beliefs, and cultures through a variety of approaches, including discussion and debate, in order to gain understanding;
- Present authentic accounts of the attitudes, values and traditions of diverse cultures;
• Develop partnerships with outside agencies and individuals to extend pupils’ cultural awareness, for example, theatre, museum, concert and gallery visits, resident artists and foreign exchanges;
• Audit the quality and nature of opportunities for pupils to extend their cultural development across the curriculum, particularly developing an understanding of the cultures of the UK.
Useful resources

There are a number of resources which can be very helpful for promoting pupils' SMSC development. A selection of these are shown below. Some will be more appropriate for certain schools than others as different schools will have different requirements.

- [www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion)
- [www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion/communitycohesionsresourcepack](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion/communitycohesionsresourcepack)
- School Linking Network - [www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk](http://www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk)
- NASACRE - [www.nasacre.org.uk/](http://www.nasacre.org.uk/)