

CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In his foreword to the OFSTED discussion paper 'Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development', HM Chief Inspector of Schools reminds us "that education in this country is not only about the gaining of knowledge and the acquiring of essential skills but also about personal development in its fullest sense."
- 1.2 This concept of education consisting of two 'closely interwoven strands' ie. personal relationships and the school's curriculum is certainly one which we would wish to embrace in full, and in so doing ensure that children's personal and social education is developed through both of these strands.
- 1.3 In defining further what is meant by "personal development in its fullest sense", the 1992 Schools Act refers to "the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils." The purpose of this document is to clarify how these strands link together, to signal the value which we attach to these areas and to state in broad terms how we seek to establish the personal development of all **our** pupils.

2. School Ethos

- 2.1 The ethos of our school should be such that it is easily perceptible even to the casual visitor. It should permeate every aspect of our work, the children's work and their behaviour.
- 2.2 Our aim is to make the school a warm welcoming place for children and adults to live and work together in, an environment which is stimulating and conducive to effort. We want to ensure that these efforts lead to work of high standard from which children derive satisfaction, pride and high self-esteem.
- 2.3 Such an ethos can only be founded upon a clear, structured order, demonstrated continuously through consistent and high expectations set by all staff, teaching and non-teaching both as individuals and as a corporate body. The priority we place upon those expectations and the extent to which we maintain them will be evident to any school visitor through a variety of indicators including:-
 - the range and quality of work displayed and the care with which it is displayed.
 - the climate of co-operation and discipline in each classroom and throughout the school.
 - the range and quality of activities designed to promote personal development.
 - the quality of adult/pupil relationships.
 - the degree to which pupils themselves display personal commitment to the values we encourage.
- 2.4 The school is quite rightly, held in high regard locally for the ethos which prevails. That many people comment positively upon it as one the main reasons for selecting Hawkes Farm is proof of the value **they** place upon it. Given this endorsement of one of our principal aims and the fact that ethos derives not simply through osmosis but from what and how we teach, how we behave and teach others to behave, we will wish to ensure that **all** our work and the

improvements we continually seek to make are seen within the context of developing children's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development.

3. Spiritual Development

3.1 "Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of an enduring reality. 'Spiritual' is **not** synonymous with religious; all areas of the curriculum may contribute to pupils' spiritual development." (OFSTED Framework for Inspection).

3.2 Spiritual development is therefore concerned with how an individual acquires personal beliefs and values, especially on questions which are "at the heart and root of existence".

Spiritual development is "emphatically **not** another name for religious education" and although it would be reasonable to expect that RE forms a significant part of children's spiritual development, the latter will stem from what we provide through the whole curriculum, through collective worship and through the ethos prevailing in each classroom in terms of helping children to form responses to life and various forms of experience.

3.3 For teachers and for parents the idea of spiritual belief will vary according to an individual's own standpoint be it religious or non-religious, but spiritual development deals with what is "supremely personal and unique to the individual" and how they eventually respond to questions relating to the purpose of human existence.

3.4 The contribution of RE and Collective Worship to this area is expanded on in the policy document relating to each but if we are to view the spiritual dimension in the broader definition given above, then we must ensure that there are ample opportunities made available for pupils to pursue open-ended tasks and to take increasing responsibility for both their behaviour and their work. Work or an environment which promotes neither of these can hardly claim to be leading children towards formulating their own answers, beliefs and ideas. We have already set out in some detail how we will develop children's independence (see policy for Teaching and Learning) though hitherto this has not been linked to spiritual development. Forming such a link simply serves to underline those declared aims and the need for a consistent approach across the whole school.

RE and Collective Worship together with the whole curriculum (including extra-curricular activity) will be instrumental in developing:-

- knowledge of the central beliefs and practices of major religions.
- an understanding of how people through the ages have sought to explain the universe through myths, stories, religious and scientific explanations
- personal beliefs linked to moral values
- behaviour and attitudes linking those beliefs and action
- personal response to questions about the purpose of life and aspects such as beauty, love, pain and suffering

through activities which challenge children and call for involvement at personal and corporate level in making decisions.

4. Moral Development

- 4.1 Whilst children's moral development is not the exclusive domain of the school, we must at least see ourselves as partners in the process. Our role in this will depend upon "the climate of co-operation and discipline ... which is the foundation of good personal relationships". The cornerstone of such a climate will be the rules laid down as the basic code for behaviour in school and these should be agreed between pupils and their teacher at the beginning of the year. Rules in which the children share authorship will not only be expressed in terms appropriate to the age groups, but will also provide a form of contract agreed from the outset between pupils and teacher, and which from thereon should serve as a point of reference if and when a child 'breaks the contract'. These rules must therefore be treated as a working code, operable day in, day out.
- 4.2 The underlying principal of any rules should be that they are there for the safety and well being of the individual and the school community as a whole. Basic rules are laid down in the school handbook and should be upheld consistently by all staff. The drawing up of rules in the classroom will provide an opportunity to discuss the moral reasons or values behind each rule and develop in children the ability to clarify in their own terms, the principles upon which their moral code rests.
- 4.3 Throughout their school life children must be encouraged to:-
- consider others and observe simple courtesies
 - treat others as they would wish to be treated
 - tell the truth
 - keep promises
 - respect the rights and property of others
 - help others less fortunate or weaker than themselves
 - take personal responsibility for their actions (see Teaching and Learning Policy : Attitudes and Values)

At the same time children should be aware that as a community we reject:-

- bullying
 - cheating
 - deceit
 - cruelty
 - irresponsibility
 - dishonesty
- 4.4 Pupils should be clear that any transgression of the rules laid down will result in action by the teacher. Such action will of course vary according to the circumstances, form a simple warning or clarification of the rule through to an appropriate punishment and in some cases, parental involvement.
- 4.5 The importance of collective responsibility and consistency across the whole school cannot be overstated. Teachers' responsibility for checking behaviour extends far beyond their own pupils and classroom, to all children in any part of the school. Establishing rules with the children is one thing, but we cannot expect that they will be transmitted via osmosis. From time to time values and rules have to be taught and returned to systematically.

5. Social Development

5.1 Social development is concerned with "the skills and personal qualities necessary for individuals to live and function effectively in society" and with the "growth in knowledge and understanding of society in all its aspects".

5.2 As children enter school and become part of a wider community involving various groupings, so they are required to learn the conventions and constraints that will enable those groups to thrive. In this respect there is an obvious link with moral development.

5.3 Most children will develop 'socially' as a matter of course regardless of the prevailing organisation and management of the classroom. However the quality of the social skills and attitudes acquired will depend very much upon the **planned** opportunities for children to experience co-operation and partnership, to exercise leadership and also responsibility. Such opportunities will extend beyond the classroom to clubs, school productions, fund raising ventures, school trips, games and matches etc. Any kind of grouping by the teacher will often convey strong messages to the children and teachers will need to be vigilant to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. If insufficient thought is given to this aspect of the curriculum, relationships and social development will be the first casualties. As stressed in our Teaching and Learning Policy, good pupil-teacher, pupil-pupil relationships are a cornerstone of any effective learning environment.

6. Personal Behaviour

6.1 It is generally recognised that children, like adults, respond positively when their efforts and achievements receive acknowledgement and praise. In such a way are good habits reinforced and self esteem bolstered. The opportunity to respond in such a way obviously depends again upon a well managed classroom in which challenge is the norm, but where that challenge is finely balanced to allow each child to experience success given a reasonable level of effort. The Teaching and Learning Policy gives detailed criteria by which we judge the successful learning environment and emphasises that children who are engaged in activities which are clearly defined, appropriately pitched, and lead to work which is valued by pupil and teacher provide a basis for positive behaviour. The opposite is also true, i.e. that where work is insufficiently explained, unchallenging or over demanding, boredom and/or frustration are likely outcomes, providing a fertile basis for negative behaviour.

6.2 This of course does not in anyway discount the presence of features such as lazy and deliberately disruptive behaviour which will from time to time be displayed by some pupils, but before we use such terms to describe behaviour we would first need to be assured that both the level and the quality of the activities offered at the outset were not in any way lacking.

6.3 Every opportunity to praise children's good efforts should be seized e.g. through display, good work assemblies, sending children to other teachers/the head, good work certificates/stickers, use of ROA folder, and above all discussion and written comment from the teacher.

7. Cultural Development

7.1 Given the relatively small proportion of time pupils spend in school (some 20% of their working hours) and other factors such as TV (the average viewing time for children seems to be in the region of three hours per day) school is by no means the only cultural influence for pupils.

Nevertheless, one of the functions of any school is to develop cultural interest which pupils already possess and to expose them to a range of experiences aimed at developing new interests.

- 7.2 Many of our children will bring with them attitudes and values which are the same and similar to those which prevail as part of our national culture, some may not. As in every area of children's development there will be a range of starting points which cannot be ignored. Cultures grow and change over time and children must be provided with opportunities to learn how the past has influenced the present. Equally they must learn the absolute need to respect the values, customs and heritage of other cultures and this cannot be done without deepening their knowledge and understanding of world religions and of the full range of human achievement in art, music, literature and science.
- 7.3 Whilst specific areas of the curriculum such as RE, Dance, Drama, Art, Music and History provide an obvious vehicle for cultural development, there will be opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding and, equally important, personal response, in a range of cultural fields throughout the curriculum as a whole. For example the use of assemblies to listen to a range of music, to examine a variety of paintings and to listen to and discuss stories from different cultures. The reading material offered in the libraries and classrooms and stories read should also reflect that range, as should the displays of artifacts and pictures around the school. The involvement of speakers and artists from outside the school and of course school visits, all provide further useful channels.

We therefore come full circle, faced with the undeniable conclusion that school ethos and high standards both in terms of achievement and behaviour are inextricably linked not just with each other, but also with the quality and consistency of expectations which we as teachers have for all our pupils: that whilst we can define as discrete areas spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the neglect of any of these will severely restrict children's development in its fullest sense.