

British Values at Verulam School

The DfE have reinforced the need “to create and enforce a clear and rigorous expectation on all schools to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.”

The government set out its definition of British values in the 2011 Prevent Strategy, and the Prime Minister has reiterated these values this year. The Office for Standards in Education insist that all schools teach their students about the four main British Values:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance

Verulam School is committed to promoting British Values as part of SMSC education and helps pupils to become confident and articulate young people who can succeed in education and adult life.

Democracy

Democracy is the system of government in which people choose leaders by voting. In Verulam School we teach the rise of democracy in the nineteenth century Britain in Year 8 History lessons.

We also demonstrate democracy in practice, each form votes for their own form captain and house representatives. This ensures that all students are involved and have a voice. The school council system provides a forum for students to discuss issues relevant to their experience of school life and to engage in projects to improve the learning culture, the school environment and support a charity.

The School Council has made a number of significant improvements to the school including raising £9000 with the PTA to replace 400 lockers, purchasing new sports equipment for students to use during break times and raising over £5000 for the Teenage Cancer trust as part of this year’s Mills match.

The role of democracy was reinforced when the school held its own mock general election where students throughout the school were then given the opportunity to vote. Prior to voting students discussed the importance of democracy and discussed the policies of the main parties, as well as possible outcome of the General Election.

The Rule of Law

The rule of law is the legal principle that laws should govern a nation, as opposed to the arbitrary decisions of individuals.

The importance of laws, whether they be those that govern the class, the school, or the country, are consistently reinforced throughout regular school days using the school’s behaviour for learning policy, as well as when dealing with behaviour and through school assemblies. Students are taught the value and reasons behind laws, that they govern and protect us, the responsibilities that this involves and the consequences when laws are broken.

Students recognise the difference between right and wrong, understand that actions have consequences, and apply this in their own lives by respecting English civil and criminal law. In addition, during Curriculum Enrichment Days pupils take part in activities involving qualified

Magistrates. This involves pupils acting in a variety of roles and making decisions on punishments for a variety of crimes.

The PSHE curriculum covers 'crime and punishment' and 'drug and alcohol awareness' at KS3 to reinforce the belief in personal and social responsibility and respect for British institutions. In addition to this E-safety is also covered within the PSHE curriculum and is something regularly referred to during assemblies.

Individual Liberty

In Britain, there is a long history of individuals being free to exercise those rights outside of government control, such as freedom of speech. Within school, students are actively encouraged to make choices, knowing that they are in a safe and supportive environment. As a school we educate and provide boundaries for students to make choices safely, through the provision of a safe environment and an empowering education. Students are encouraged to know, understand and exercise their rights and personal freedoms and are advised how to exercise these safely, with evidence of this in our Curriculum Enrichment Days (CED's).

Students are given the freedom to make choices whether it is through choice of challenge or participation in extensive extra-curricular clubs and opportunities. They have a sense of enjoyment and are enthusiastic in learning about themselves and others. Pupils are given the choice to participate actively in sporting, artistic and cultural activities. This includes trips such as Lake District in Year 7, Blue Peris in year 9 and the Ski Trip that is available to all students each year.

Mutual Respect and Tolerance

Mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and those without faith is an important British Value. Our approach to school assemblies and behaviour is to have a British Values led approach. 'Respect' is an important value of the schools community code with all members of the school community treating each other with respect. This is reflected in posters around the school. Students have been part of discussions and led assemblies related to what this means and how it is shown e.g. Homophobia and Feminism. Students also are mindful of other pupils within their classes whom are also demonstrating such values. Mutual respect is an integrated part of classroom behaviour, as well as our whole school approach to behaviour.

Through timetabled RE lessons students are reflective about their own beliefs and perspectives on life, and the extent to which they are the same as/different to others' faith, feelings and values. Students are encouraged to show an interest in investigating and offering reasoned views about moral and ethical issues, and appreciate the viewpoints of others. Pupils are encouraged to explore issues and articulate their values confidently.

The school's PSHE curriculum provides opportunities to openly tackle controversial issues and challenge misconceptions. Students study the holocaust as part of the Religious Education curriculum and the school has recently had a Holocaust survivor in the school, giving an inspirational talk to our sixth form students as well as a group of Year 9 pupils. In addition we actively encourage visitors from a range of communities and organisations into the school.

The school promotes an environment where all students work and socialise with students from different religious, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, co-operating well, celebrating diversity and resolving conflicts effectively. Ethnic minorities are included in all aspects of the school e.g. leadership roles, sport, drama, music etc.

