

# St Mary's Catholic Academy

## British Values and Our Catholic Ethos



The government set out its definition of 'British values' in the 'Prevent Strategy' (2011), which was designed to prevent the extremism and religious radicalisation of young people. British values are summarized by the government as:

- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect
- Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs

The promotion of 'British values' is central to Catholic education at St Mary's because British values have their origin in Catholic values. St Mary's Catholic Academy is a Catholic school which actively promotes tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation. Our mission and whole school aims below encourage inclusivity:

*Our mission is to provide an outstanding whole-person education through which all are challenged to grow in wisdom, understanding, self-esteem and closeness to God.*

The hallmarks of St. Mary's are:

*Catholic Caring Community Challenging*

*St. Mary's is a Catholic school where prayer and reflection are woven into the fabric of the school's life. The universal message of the Church and its call to new life encourages us to value every individual as precious in God's sight. The distinctive education offered at the school includes the continuing development of morals and Christian values.*

*Respecting the uniqueness of each person is central to the caring nature of the school and a reflection of the Gospel message of love. A strong and supportive pastoral system continues to care for all and helps build people's self-esteem.*

*The school strives to be a community where high quality and enriching relationships are built. Tolerance and the valuing of others are key points of daily life. We seek to manage every aspect of school life, with justice, for the common good of all.*

*We challenge all people to use their God-given gifts to achieve excellence and make significant progress in their learning. Opportunities exist for aesthetic, performing and creative talents to be nurtured.*

The St Mary's Catholic Academy community, made up of students, staff and governors, is a multi-cultural one. At St Mary's Catholic Academy we recognise, not only the importance of helping students to flourish academically but also spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, so that they are prepared for a life in British society with a foundation based on our faith in God. We teach the importance of British values by exploring more deeply what it means to live a good life with closeness to God, within a framework of Catholic Christian values. This provides the context and meaning for understanding why British values are important. Our framework for understanding British values draws on the example of Jesus and his welcome and inclusion of all, which is developed in Catholic social teaching. At St Mary's we provide an education which focuses on the formation of the whole person and on our vocation and purpose in life. We are guided by the Christian values of a prophetic community, Imago Dei, a serving community, a community of gratitude, a forgiving community and a community of stewardship as we reflect on our place and purpose in the world. We place a significant emphasis on the celebration of individuality and difference within our communities

and our calling to work for the Common Good, in the service of others. Our Catholic ethos, which includes explicit reference to Christian and British values, makes a tangible difference to the way we work together and with our wider communities. Within this framework it would be impossible to overlook the government's view of British values expressed as 'democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.'

*How St Mary's Catholic Academy embed British Values through curriculum, wider curriculum activities and ethos:*

### **Democracy**

**An understanding of how citizens can influence decision making through democratic process.**

St Mary's strives to be an establishment where the views of students are listened to. We have a newly appointed and influential school council which has begun to impact on a number of areas of school life such as anti-bullying and health related initiatives. Students vote for their form reps for student council. In addition to this a Head boy and girl, Deputy Head boy and girl are appointed through an application process and election by staff. Senior prefects within each learning house are democratically elected by students within the learning house.

All students then have an opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to school life when preparing for school council meetings and each year group has a core focus to allow them to develop expertise. A group of Yr10 students have been involved in Diana Award Anti-bullying training and a conference and have been to disseminate this information to the rest of the student council. Within the curriculum KS4 students are taught how to develop their views and construct a reasoned argument for their GCSE English Language exam. In KS3 History students learn about the rise of parliament and debates take place in KS4 History around the rise of particular leaders and their ideas e.g. Lenin, Karl Marx and Roosevelt. PE lessons also promote democracy taking place around how captains and leaders are elected democratically. When sporting disputes take place students are encouraged to vote for their preferred outcome. To develop teaching and learning students at St Mary's are involved in a Pupil Voice survey twice per year and, in addition to this, staff and parents are annually surveyed around whole school issues. Through PSHE students focus on the topic of UK Politics and are educated on the main political parties and the changes to Government. Students have held mock General Elections within PSHE.

As part of our extra-curricular programme, the English department offer a Debate Club which is well attended and allows the students a platform to debate their ideas surrounding topics such as, socio-economic issues in Blackpool and their hope for Blackpool's future; this was attended by our local MP Paul Maynard. Politics students also regularly attend events such as Party Conferences which compliments their core studies.

### **The Rule of Law**

**An appreciation that living under the rule of law protects individual citizens and is essential for their wellbeing and safety.**

At the beginning of each year of PSHE the students are asked to generate a set of class rules to ensure a safe environment to support conversations that may occur. Class rules are also generated and reiterated at the beginning of more sensitive topics such as sex and relationship education. PSHE also provides time at the beginning of the academic year to refresh students on the schools behavior policy which is supported by all staff. PSHE also focuses lessons on UK law and justice which inform students of the UK judicial system, backed up by teachings on right and wrong, with Catholic values underpinning these discussions. RE have a focus on the Rule of Law throughout their curriculum with students learning about the laws in relation to abortion and euthanasia as well as learning about the Catholic beliefs with regards to these

issues. The teachings of the Church are highlighted in the RE curriculum, for example the 10 commandments and the Precepts of the Church.

The Rule of Law is also covered throughout the school's curriculum in a number of subjects. In Business Studies students learn about taxation, employment law, ethics, and a number of other business laws. In ICT they learn about the Data Protection Act as well as other pertinent computing legislation such as copyright. In Media Studies censorship is discussed as part of their concentration on moral panics including the classification of media.

In English Yr8s study 'Stone cold' which deals with crime and the punishment and homelessness as well as Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' which deals with marriage law and its changes over time. At KS4 the study of Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Lord of the Flies' as well as many other books, stories and poems all link to aspects of law and democracy. In History the English political system is explained and students learn about the development of rights over time. Relevant laws are also studied in Technology including health and safety laws and regulations, food safety and hygiene as well as British Standards. In Science students discuss the law surrounding ethical issues like laboratory testing using embryos and animal testing from a Catholic perspective.

### **Individual Liberty**

**An understanding that there is a separation of power between the executive and the judiciary, and that while some public bodies such as the police and the army can be held to account through Parliament, others such as the courts maintain independence.**

Students are encouraged to be independent though our Collective Acts of Worship (CAOW). Using circle time based discussions and reflective prayer our students are given a strong foundation to express themselves and reflect on the teachings to make independent decisions. Our Chaplaincy team offer support to those students who struggle with emotional difficulties to become more independent through coaching techniques and by providing them with a platform to express their views and concerns.

As a school we provide boundaries for students to make independent choices in a safe and supportive environment by providing strong pastoral support through our tutor team and pastoral managers.

In PSHE students we encourage students to see themselves as unique individuals able to make a unique contribution to building community. Students are encouraged to know, understand and exercise their rights, responsibilities and personal freedoms and receive advice about how to exercise these safely and learn to make choices by being educated through the exploration of E-safety, sex and relationship education, drugs and alcohol, consent and healthy eating. The students are provided with a learning journal that asks them to consider their learning and make a choice based on the question 'How will you use the knowledge, from the lesson, outside of the classroom?' This provides our students with a platform to make independent choices.

In addition to this students study the rule of law in the UK during PSHE and how the British Judicial System is organised. A team of key stage three students attend a mock magistrates trial competition each year and learn about the structure and approach to legal proceedings in a magistrates court.

Our Behaviour policy supports individual liberty by allowing students to make choices about their behaviour through a step-based system. This is present in all rooms and the language used by staff reinforces the expectations to allow our students to make good choices.

### **Mutual Respect**

**An understanding that the freedom to choose and hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law.**

Our school constantly promotes respect for others and this is reiterated through our classroom and learning environments as well as extra-curricular activities such as sport. The Behaviour for Learning

strategies in the classroom focus on a FAIR policy which includes 'Following instructions first time', 'Actively listening to staff and students', 'Involving ourselves fully to help others' and 'Respect'; this policy encourages respect for all members of staff and students by using good manners.

In line with our commitment to democracy, students are always able to voice their opinions as we foster an environment where students can debate ideas and are safe to disagree with each other in a range of subjects across the academy. Our emphasis on ethics, fairness and justice means that we ask our students to ensure that they look out for those who might be marginalised and disadvantaged. The school takes a strong stance on social inclusion and anti-bullying through an explicit focus on strategies to enable respect for difference through, for example, reflections on all forms of bullying. A number of students are trained Diana award anti bullying ambassadors and older students learn the value of supporting others in society through acting as buddies to a year 7 form or through becoming paired reading mentors or math's mentors.

As part of PHSE, students have focused on topics specifically following the theme of prejudice, discrimination and relationships. Students also take part in a biannual Holocaust day where they are asked to reflect on the impact of the Holocaust and then are invited to sign the Anne Frank pledge. In alternate years the Anne Frank Trust visit the academy and a team of trained year 8 ambassadors deliver lessons to students in key stage three about the life of Anne Frank and what we have learned from her diaries. It is emphasised in RE, assemblies, PHSE and at many other times in school that every person is unique and 'created in the image of God'.

Charity work and raising money for those less fortunate than ourselves has always been at the core of St Mary's ethos. Every advent students raise money and then organise themselves the purchase of gifts for those who might otherwise go without. In the 16 years of the project almost £44 000 has been raised. This year gifts were bought for 63 children hampers were donated to 9 elderly people, 30 homeless people and 24 families. In addition to this during Lent each Learning House raises money for our lentern charities. Half of the money raised goes to support two partner school in Ghana and the other half to the chosen learning house charity, Students raise money through a plethora of events including a year 7 disco that is run by older students, quiz nights, and many more. The students also engage in trip to places like Battlefields and Auschwitz to learn more about these events and to highlight the importance of mutual respect.

Care of those with needs different or additional to ours is also a core value of our school. This is most clearly apparent in the work of our SEND department. SEND students are actively enabled to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence and encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour, to show initiative and to understand how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the locality of the school and to society more widely. We work with all students to encourage respect for other people and to encourage an understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting decimation.

### **Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs**

**An acceptance that other 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 behavior.**

This is achieved through equipping students with the ability to develop positive values, understand their own beliefs and their place in a culturally diverse society. We give our students opportunities to experience such diversity within the school community and within the wider community. All students experience a connection with other cultures and beliefs through our RE curriculum, PHSE and local, regional and international links. Students are invited to go to Nepal to visit a school that is funded through their charity events and a number are due to visit Ghana to meet students from our partner school. The emphasis on

enterprise, working with others, and learning other languages directly contributes to the appreciation of others perspectives on life. Our Religious Studies curriculum follows the teaching of the Church in providing a broad and balanced education, which includes an understanding of and respect for people of other faiths or none and other religions, cultures and lifestyles. It provides students with a deep understanding of their own faith as well as an awareness of the faith and traditions of other religious communities as a basis for understanding and respecting them. Students study a range of other religions in addition to Catholicism, including Judaism and Islam. Stories such as The Good Samaritan and The Woman at the Well are also used to show how Jesus encouraged tolerance himself.

Other faiths and cultures are promoted through war poems and books studied in English such as 'Boy in the striped pajamas', 'Trash' and 'Checking out me history' which a range of cultures. The Book Club has featured novels set in different times and places, and dystopian themes have been prevalent in 'Noughts and crosses', where democracy and government has completely broken down.

The CES summarises the link between Catholic and British values below and St Mary's Catholic Academy subscribes fully to this:

*"We are proud that Catholic schools promote values that are both Catholic and British, including: respect for the individual, democracy, individual liberty, respect, tolerance and inclusiveness. Our schools promote cohesion by serving more ethnically diverse and poorer communities. Catholic schools provide high standards of education which are popular with parents from all social, economic and faith backgrounds." Paul Barber (Catholic Education Service 15 December 2014)*

*'This is a Catholic school which seeks to live out the values of Jesus Christ. We promote these values by our words and deeds, and Catholic doctrine and practice therefore permeates every aspect of the school's activity. We provide a Catholic curriculum, which is broad and balanced, recognising that every pupil is unique and is created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). Our curriculum is designed to enable every pupil to discern their vocation and to be well-equipped to follow it as active citizens in service to the world. Catholic Religious Education is the "core of the core curriculum" (Pope St John Paul II) and the foundation of the entire educational process. We also provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities and strong pastoral support. We incorporate democratic principles, value the rule of law, support individual liberty and foster a community in which different faiths and beliefs are respected.'*