



**First Thought
Independent School**

FIRST THOUGHT CARE SERVICES

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Policy

2026-2027

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Statement of Intent

At First Thought Independent School, pupils and their learning are at the heart of every decision we make. We provide a safe, caring and happy environment where each pupil is valued as an individual and supported to reach their full potential.

Our approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education recognises the unique ways our pupils learn and communicate. SMSC development is embedded in every aspect of school life through relationships, routines, play, exploration, and shared experiences.

We aim to nurture pupils' curiosity, independence and sense of belonging. Through consistent support and encouragement, pupils learn about themselves and others, developing the understanding and skills that will help them to enjoy positive relationships and contribute to their community.

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2002
- DfE (2014) 'Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools'
- Ofsted (2025) 'Non-association Independent School Inspection Toolkit'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

Aims of SMSC Education

Our SMSC provision helps pupils to:

Spiritual development

- Explore their own feelings, thoughts and experiences.
- Develop curiosity, imagination and a sense of wonder about the world.
- Express themselves through creative, sensory and reflective experiences.
- Recognise and celebrate things that are special or meaningful to them and others.

Moral development

- Begin to understand right and wrong through consistent routines and clear boundaries.
- Learn how their behaviour affects others and to take responsibility for their choices.
- Develop empathy, kindness and fairness in their relationships.
- Experience positive role models who demonstrate honesty, respect and care.

Social development

- Build positive relationships and learn to cooperate and share with others.
- Communicate their needs, preferences and ideas in their own way.
- Participate in group and community activities where they can contribute and feel valued.
- Develop confidence and independence within a safe and structured environment.

Cultural development

- Experience and celebrate a range of festivals, traditions, art, music and stories from different cultures.
- Learn that people have different ways of life, beliefs and values, and that these make our world interesting and diverse.
- Feel pride in their own background and identity.
- Learn to show curiosity, respect and enjoyment when exploring other cultures and experiences.

A Whole-School Approach to SMSC Education

At First Thought Independent School, we recognise that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development happens through every interaction, routine and experience across the school day. SMSC is not a separate subject — it is part of everything we do.

All staff contribute to pupils' SMSC development by creating a learning environment that is:

- **Safe, consistent and predictable**, so that pupils feel secure and ready to learn.

- **Warm and respectful**, where every pupil is valued and differences are celebrated.
- **Stimulating and creative**, offering pupils varied sensory and communication experiences.

The **governing board** ensures that SMSC is embedded across all areas of school life and that pupils' personal development is promoted in line with their individual needs, communication styles and learning profiles.

The **head of education and senior leaders** promote a school culture where relationships, inclusion and wellbeing come first. Staff are supported to model kindness, patience, respect and fairness in all interactions.

The **staff team** plays a vital role in helping pupils to develop a sense of self and belonging. Through consistent modelling and positive support, staff encourage pupils to:

- Communicate their feelings and choices in their own way.
- Build trusting relationships with adults and peers.
- Learn how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Celebrate successes and respond positively to challenges.

Our approach to SMSC is rooted in the belief that every moment in school whether in the classroom, the playground, the dining hall or on a community visit offers an opportunity for growth, reflection and connection.

Spiritual Development

Staff help pupils to explore their feelings and imagination, and to find joy and curiosity in the world around them. This might include sensory exploration, creative arts, outdoor learning, quiet reflection times or celebrating special moments and achievements together.

Moral Development

Through clear routines, visual supports and positive behaviour approaches, pupils are helped to understand right and wrong and to make kind and fair choices. Staff use stories, social narratives and role play to help pupils recognise the impact of their actions and develop empathy.

Social Development

Social learning happens throughout the day through shared play, teamwork, turn-taking, and communication. Pupils learn to cooperate, share, and recognise others' feelings. Structured social times and community experiences help pupils develop confidence and a sense of belonging.

Cultural Development

Pupils experience and celebrate a range of festivals, traditions, art, music and stories from around the world. These experiences are sensory, visual and participatory, helping pupils appreciate diversity in ways that are accessible and enjoyable. The curriculum reflects pupils' own backgrounds and the wider community, promoting pride in who they are and respect for others.

Cross-Curriculum Teaching and Learning

At First Thought Independent School, spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) education is woven throughout the curriculum and daily life of the school. SMSC is not taught as a separate subject but is experienced through every area of learning, play, and interaction.

Staff plan opportunities for SMSC development across all subjects, ensuring that activities are accessible, meaningful and matched to pupils' individual communication, sensory and cognitive needs.

Embedding SMSC Across Learning

- **Spiritual development** is supported through creative and sensory exploration, expressive arts, outdoor learning, and reflection time. Pupils are encouraged to notice and enjoy new experiences, express feelings and preferences, and take pride in their achievements.

- **Moral development** is promoted through consistent routines, clear boundaries and visual supports. Pupils learn to recognise right and wrong, understand cause and effect, and develop empathy through stories, role play and supported reflection.
- **Social development** is nurtured through co-operative play, group activities, and opportunities to share, help and communicate with others. Staff explicitly teach social communication skills and model respectful relationships throughout the day.
- **Cultural development** is enriched through music, art, food, stories and celebrations from different cultures and traditions. Pupils learn that people live in many different ways and that these differences are positive and interesting.

Learning Opportunities Across the Curriculum

- **PSHE and RSE** provide structured opportunities for pupils to explore relationships, emotions, kindness, safety and decision-making at an appropriate level.
- **English and Communication** activities help pupils to express opinions, listen to others, and take turns in conversation key building blocks for participation and democracy.
- **Creative arts** (music, art, drama and dance) allow pupils to express themselves, explore emotions and experience a sense of wonder.
- **Humanities and topic work** help pupils to explore their local community, history and environment, and to develop an awareness of the wider world.
- **RE and cultural studies** promote awareness of different beliefs and traditions, focusing on shared values such as kindness, belonging and respect.
- **Outdoor learning** and community visits enable pupils to apply social and moral learning in real-life settings, such as showing respect for public spaces, engaging with community members, and practising safe and responsible behaviour.

Inclusive and Accessible Practice

Teachers and support staff work together to adapt lessons so that all pupils can participate and succeed. This includes:

- Using **visual supports**, symbols, objects of reference and communication aids.
- Providing **sensory experiences** and multi-sensory approaches to learning.
- Supporting pupils to make choices, express opinions and reflect at their own level.
- Reinforcing SMSC themes through repetition, structure and consistent modelling.

Every pupil is encouraged to explore the world, build relationships and develop the confidence and understanding that will help them take their place in the wider community.

Community Links

At First Thought Independent School, we believe that every pupil is part of both our school community and the wider world beyond it. Developing a sense of belonging and participation in community life is a key part of pupils' social and cultural learning.

We recognise that many of our pupils experience the world through direct, sensory and supported interactions. We therefore create **practical, accessible and meaningful experiences** that help them connect with the people and places around them.

Engaging with the Community

Pupils learn about and take part in the local community through activities such as:

- Visiting local parks, libraries, shops and cafés to practise social communication and independence skills.
- Inviting visitors from the community into school for example, emergency services, musicians, artists, animal handlers, and local faith representatives.
- Participating in community celebrations, charity events and awareness days.
- Taking part in small-scale fundraising or 'helping' activities such as collecting food for a local charity, growing plants for the community garden, or making cards for care home residents.
- Sharing achievements and performances with families and community guests during school events and celebrations.

Building Relationships

These experiences help pupils to:

- Develop confidence when meeting new people and visiting new places.
- Learn about different roles in society and the importance of helping others.
- Experience inclusion as valued members of their community.
- Understand that they have something to contribute, however small.
- Practise skills such as communication, kindness, patience and gratitude in real-life settings.

The school values strong partnerships with families and local organisations. Parents and carers are encouraged to participate in events and share their own experiences, helping to enrich pupils' understanding of community diversity.

Through these links, pupils begin to understand that **they belong to a wider network of people who care for, support and value them**, and that they too can have a positive impact on others.

Promoting Fundamental British Values

At First Thought Independent School, the promotion of **fundamental British values** is an integral part of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development.

The values of **democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs** are reflected in our relationships, curriculum and daily routines.

Teaching and learning are adapted so that pupils with severe learning difficulties, complex needs and Autism can **experience and understand these values in meaningful, practical ways** that promote communication, inclusion and belonging.

Further details on how these values are taught and experienced across the school are set out in our **British Values Policy**, which should be read alongside this document.

Ofsted Inspections

Ofsted evaluates a school's provision for **personal development and well-being**, which includes pupils' **spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC)** education.

At First Thought Independent School, this means we provide a coherent and carefully planned programme that supports pupils to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to participate in life beyond school, at a level appropriate to their needs and abilities.

Our approach ensures that:

- The **curriculum and wider school experiences** promote pupils' personal development, character and well-being.
- Pupils are supported to become **responsible, respectful and active members** of the school and wider community.

- Pupils experience and understand the **fundamental British values** of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance (further detail in the British Values Policy).
- The school promotes **equality of opportunity**, ensuring that every pupil is valued and that their individuality is recognised and celebrated.
- Pupils develop **confidence, resilience and emotional regulation**, supported by consistent routines, positive relationships and specialist strategies.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves **safe and healthy**, both physically and emotionally, including through age-appropriate teaching about relationships, online safety, and personal well-being.
- The school provides a broad and meaningful programme of **enrichment activities** that extend learning and support physical and social development.
- Pupils are prepared for the **next stage of their education or transition** to further settings through personalised planning and close collaboration with families and external professionals.

The head of education and governing board monitor SMSC provision and its impact through curriculum reviews, staff reflection, observation of practice and evidence of pupils' engagement and progress.

Findings contribute directly to the school's **self-evaluation of personal development and well-being**, which informs improvement planning and staff training priorities.

Monitoring and Review

The head of education and senior leadership team monitor the quality and impact of **SMSC and personal development** provision throughout the year. This includes:

- Reviewing curriculum plans and enrichment opportunities to ensure SMSC and personal development are embedded across learning.
- Observing lessons, assemblies and community activities to see how pupils experience and respond to SMSC opportunities.
- Gathering staff feedback through discussion and supervision to identify strengths and next steps.
- Reviewing evidence of pupils' progress in personal, social and emotional development through observations, work samples and individual learning plans.
- Consulting with parents and carers to understand the wider impact of the school's work on pupils' well-being and independence.

Findings from this monitoring feed into the school's **self-evaluation** and inform staff training, curriculum development and improvement planning.

The governing board receives regular updates on SMSC and personal development outcomes and ensures that statutory duties are met.

This policy is reviewed **annually** by the head of education and the pastoral lead (or earlier if there are significant changes to statutory guidance). Any updates will be shared with all staff and published on the school website.

