



POLICY FOR THE SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS (SMSC)

Last reviewed:	February 2026
Next review due:	February 2028
Reviewed by:	Deputy Head, Senior School Deputy Head, The International School Deputy Head, Sixth Form Vice Principal, Pastoral
Approved by the Board of Governors:	February 2026

Fostering the personal development of students at d'Overbroeck's is crucial because we aim for our students to "achieve to the best of their potential, both academically and personally" and to be "well equipped with the skills and understanding needed for their next steps."

d'Overbroeck's has no particular religious affiliation and our student body is made up of young people from a variety of backgrounds, cultures and faiths. We enjoy and value this mix and diversity and we aim to help our students to develop core values and beliefs that will sustain them through life and see them through the dilemmas, choices and difficulties that they are bound to encounter at one point or another.

We aim to help our students to develop a reflective approach to themselves and to the world around them, encouraging students to look outwards, to be tolerant, to engage and manage the complexity and change in the world around them and to develop as well-informed global citizens.

1. Principles for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of our students

We aim to:

- enable students to develop self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence;
- enable students to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the civil and criminal law of England;
- encourage students to assume responsibility for their behaviour, to show initiative and to understand how they can make a positive contribution within their local community and to society more widely;
- enable students to acquire a broad general knowledge and respect for public institutions and services in England;
- help students respect and appreciate their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different faiths, beliefs and cultural traditions;
- promote actively the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs;

- encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 (age; gender reassignment; being married or in a civil partnership; being pregnant or on maternity leave; disability; race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation);
- ensure that extremist or discriminatory opinions and behaviours have absolutely no place in any aspect of our school life;
- encourage respect for democracy and support for participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England;
- ensure that we preclude the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in school, and to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that, where political issues are brought to the attention of students, a balanced presentation of opposing views is given. This should apply whether students are in attendance at school or taking part in activities which are provided or organised by or on behalf of the school. It should also apply in any promotion at the school, including through the distribution of promotional material, of activities taking place at the school or elsewhere.

2. Outcomes

The application of our aims and principles should result in, among other things, students developing:

- an understanding of how citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process;
- an appreciation that living under the rule of law protects individual citizens and is essential for their well-being and safety;
- 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;
- an understanding that the freedom to hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law;
- an acceptance that people having different faiths to oneself (or having none) should be accepted and tolerated, and should not be the cause of prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour;
- an understanding of the importance of identifying and combatting discrimination;
- a framework of moral values.

3. Spiritual development

Spiritual development is associated with attitudes, feelings, beliefs and emotions rather than that which is experienced through the physical senses. The spiritual dimension of life at d'Overbroeck's is derived from our shared ethos – perhaps to be defined as a set of values, attitudes, expectations and reflections which help us to gain direction and meaning in our lives.

'Spiritual' is, of course, not synonymous with 'religious' though it certainly extends to an awareness of religious belief and of the diversity of religious belief systems. Although the school has no particular religious affiliation, we fully recognise that some students will wish to express their spiritual awareness in religious terms.

We aim to foster the spiritual development of our students through:

- celebrating individuality and enabling young people to express themselves freely, helping them to reduce socio-emotional stress and develop a strong sense of self;
- promoting an environment where all students are given the scope to reach their full potential;
- establishing a school ethos which is tolerant, non-judgemental and respectful of the individual beliefs and values of every member of the d'Overbroeck's community;
- modelling this ethos in the relationships established between staff and students and within the staff community;
- providing information and support to those who wish to pursue their own religious and spiritual development more actively, for example through participation in local societies, church, synagogue, mosque, etc;
- demonstrating that there are many different legitimate belief systems and ways of celebrating and that all deserve understanding and appreciation;
- proactively using opportunities provided within the taught curriculum to explore issues relevant to spiritual development. For example, most humanities and social sciences provide plentiful opportunities; the creative arts have strong associations with spirituality in its various expressions; the interface of science and religion/human spirituality is fertile ground for exploration and Personal Development lessons provide a broad scope for discussions about this topic;
- encouraging students to explore and develop that which animates and inspires them and others through debate, discussion and reflection, both in class and through other opportunities that present themselves both in and outside school;
- taking advantage of our small class sizes and relatively informal teacher-student relationships to foster a climate in which aspects of spirituality may be discussed actively, frankly and openly with established agreement on ways to approach such conversations with respect and awareness of others' views and feelings';
- using the extra-curricular activities programmes to allow the exploration of spirituality (for example, through topics in the Debating Society, creative writing, and visiting speakers, etc).
- active teaching in pastoral time and extended learning opportunities about different cultural celebrations, including those linked to religions and beliefs from around the world

4. Moral development

Moral development is concerned with enabling young people to build a framework of moral values, aligned with the law of the land, which regulates their personal behaviour. It involves:

- fundamental judgements and precepts about how people should behave and about the reasons for such behaviour;
- developing an understanding of society's shared and agreed values while at the same time developing a capacity to reflect on these and evaluate them for oneself;
- understanding that society's values are in continuous evolution in response to social and cultural change, and that there are many issues over which there is disagreement;

- respecting the needs, interests and feelings of others, being ready to explore and discuss one's own views and those of other people and understanding the need to review and reassess one's beliefs, preconceptions and conduct in the light of experience;
- actively supporting charitable initiatives in the local community while educating students about issues that affect those who are less fortunate than themselves.

We aim to foster the moral development of our students through:

- providing positive staff role models in both school and boarding who demonstrate respectful behaviour, integrity and kindness in daily interactions;
- maintaining an ethos which is characterised by mutual respect and tolerance throughout our school community;
- defending these core values as the foundational context in which moral understanding develops and modelling them in staff attitudes and behaviour;
- providing a clear framework of values and behaviours which is promoted consistently through all aspects of school life;
- having high expectations for behaviour and operating a fair and reasonable system of sanctions and rewards;
- giving students opportunities across the curriculum and, where appropriate, in extra-curricular activities to explore and develop moral concepts and values, such as right and wrong, justice, personal rights and responsibilities;
- offering students a degree of freedom and self-regulation that is often greater than they have experienced previously, in order that they may develop their own autonomous moral values and understanding in a manner appropriate to their age, and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own moral decisions;
- combining this sense of freedom with secure and effective support and monitoring mechanisms, in order that students may receive whatever support and guidance may be necessary as they develop their own moral awareness and values;
- ensuring a prompt, decisive response to any expressions of discrimination, bullying or abuse;
- encouraging conflict-resolution based on a restorative approach involving respect, co-operation, reflection and discussion responsibility and repair; addressing moral issues through lessons and activities in school, eg, assemblies, conversations with Personal Tutors/ Directors of Studies, the Personal Development programme which includes Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and debates;
- providing an extended learning framework which encourages all students to get involved in supporting charities and fundraising events and activities to support the wider community and celebrates these positive behaviours

5. Social development

Social development refers to the abilities and qualities that young people need to acquire if they are to play a full and active part in society. It includes:

- developing knowledge and understanding of others and acquiring the skills and personal qualities necessary for living and working together in harmony with others;
- functioning effectively in a multi-racial, multi-cultural society and developing into a tolerant and responsible human being;
- developing the inter-personal skills necessary for successful relationships;
- making a positive contribution to the school community and to the wider society;
- developing an understanding of society's institutions and structures, of its economic and political principles and organisations, and of individuals' roles and responsibilities within it.

We aim to foster the social development of all our students through:

- developing a student community that is anchored in shared values of respect, co-operation, self-discipline and friendship;
- developing links between staff and students characterised by concern for individuals, open discussion and consultation and encouragement of individual personality and talents;
- encouraging students to work co-operatively, listen respectfully and contribute with confidence;
- a preference for promoting collaboration and self-motivation, rather than hierarchy and imposed discipline;
- providing a range of opportunities for larger scale group activities (assemblies, sporting, musical, dramatic events, progression programme, end of year celebrations, etc) to foster a sense of community and support strong friendships which span year groups, nationalities and cultural backgrounds;
- ensuring that all students have a voice that is actively heard and taken into consideration (eg, through the Student Ambassador groups, surveys, focus groups);
- teaching students about public institutions and services;
- providing positive and effective links with the world of work and with the wider community (for example, a wide-ranging careers education programme, involving contributions from current parents and former students as well as external speakers);
- providing opportunities for students to learn about, and to engage in, local and national democratic processes;
- providing activities which promote awareness of the wider world, (eg, assemblies, talks given by members of staff and visiting speakers, trips, extra-curricular clubs and activities etc);
- encouraging students to develop valuable personal qualities such as thoughtfulness, honesty and respect by acting as exemplars and through the medium of a structured programme of Personal Development;
- providing effective pastoral care and, where necessary, helping students to resolve any tensions and conflicts that may arise within school fairly, respectfully and considerately;
- encouraging students to support nominated charities through school events;
- encouraging students to support one another, for example through the system of peer mentoring;

- encouraging tolerance for individual, cultural and other differences;
- enabling students to feel a strong sense of belonging as they take part in a wide range of academic, sporting, cultural and service activities through extended learning, helping them build positive connections with the school community

6. Cultural development

Cultural development refers to the development of a knowledge and understanding of differing cultural beliefs, customs, traditions and 'ways of doing things' which, taken together, form the basis of identity and cohesion in societies and groups.

At its heart lies the need to develop a sense of rooted personal identity while at the same time acquiring an understanding and tolerance for other cultures and their traditions. Students at d'Overbroeck's develop an ability to recognise and understand their own cultural principles and values (and their dynamic and developmental nature) and to appreciate the influences which have shaped their own cultural heritage, whether music, drama, art, science, poetry or history, alongside an ability to appreciate cultural diversity and accord dignity and respect to other people's values and beliefs.

Cultural development should result in an ability to appreciate and operate within the emerging world culture of shared experiences provided by television, art, theatre, travel and the Internet. It is also about understanding that cultures are always changing and coping with change.

Promoting students' cultural development is intimately linked with the value we place on cultural diversity and on a firm rejection of all forms of discrimination.

We aim to foster the cultural development of our students through:

- cultivating a harmonious, well-knit student community which is multi-ethnic and multi-cultural. We are fortunate at d'Overbroeck's to have a broad mix of students of different nationalities and cultures, and we value the richness and diversity, and the opportunities to learn from one another, that this gives to our school community;
- tackling any issues of discrimination or prejudice directly, and doing so in a way that ensures that any such occurrences become useful learning experiences for those involved and for others around them;
- encouraging and celebrating expressions of cultural diversity, for example in the creative arts, through clubs and activities, through celebration of food and languages and through the curriculum;
- providing opportunities for students to participate in literature, drama, music, art, crafts and other cultural events and encouraging students to reflect on their significance;
- giving students the opportunity to explore different values, beliefs, and cultures through a variety of approaches, including discussion and debate, in order to gain a broader cultural understanding;
- international trips, including with students from other Nord Anglia schools;
- maintaining an effective equal opportunities policy and practice.

7. Promoting SMSC at d'Overbroeck's

The development of students' character, personality and values is not something that can be pinned down to a timetable or targets; rather it needs to happen over their school career, organically, and as a result of an exposure to, and modelling of, a consistent set of beliefs, attitudes, expectations and experiences that are part of the daily life of our community. The ethos at d'Overbroeck's encourages open communication and mutual respect; it values and fosters individuality and diversity within a strong and tolerant community with a clear moral structure, a strong sense of right and wrong and the confidence for young people to raise their voice when needed. It relies less on a multiplicity of formal rules and sanctions and more on fostering a growing sense of personal responsibility, and it places a strong emphasis on tolerance and consideration for others.

However, some examples of the other ways by which students develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding are via:

- **The curriculum**

Every subject on the curriculum has its part to play in developing the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural aspects of student development. Some subjects, by their nature, have more obvious opportunities for exploring these issues but the less overt contribution of other subject areas should not be underestimated.

- **Assemblies**

Assemblies for students in each section give staff and students the opportunity to address a very wide range of significant issues. Where appropriate, assemblies tie-in with national and international dates and themes, such as anti-bullying week, neurodiversity celebration week, International Women's Day, Mental health Awareness Week.

- **The Personal Development Programme**

Sessions are mostly run in small groups, through sometimes larger groups are more appropriate for speakers and workshops intended to open new horizons for students and to expose them to issues and questions that lie outside their day-to-day experience. This is also where elements of the PD curriculum (consent, healthy relationships and RSE) will be embedded with input from the pastoral team.

- **Music, drama, dance and debating/ public speaking**

There are numerous opportunities for students throughout the age range to take part in concerts, plays, musicals, dance performances and debating and public speaking events, both inside and outside of school. These help to nurture self-confidence and self-assurance, the ability to listen to, and work closely with others, as well as a growing sense of maturity and cultural awareness.

- **House system (Senior School and d'Overbroeck's International)**

We have three houses at Senior School and d'Overbroeck's International – Austin, Cooper and Morris. The supportive groups created by the house system provide a platform for a rich variety of house competitions, such as sports days and open-mic events. These are often more about co-operation within houses than competition between them, but the competitive element can encourage friendly rivalry and an opportunity to demonstrate leadership skills from the House Committees or Captains.

- **Activities**

These can be powerful opportunities for personal development. The school has a busy and diverse programme of clubs, activities, trips and events; these range from international educational visits to the Duke of Edinburgh award programme and a wide variety of other activities at weekends, to clubs and activities on weekdays in school.

- **Promoting environmental awareness.**

- **Creating leadership opportunities**

eg, House Leaders, or House Committees, Peer mentoring, School Council, School Ambassadors.

- **Outside speakers**

eg, speakers leading sessions related to: health and wellbeing; Personal Development; RSE; internet safety; finances; the law, curriculum subjects; careers, etc.

- **Student participation in external events**

eg, university fairs, academic conferences, Olympiad events, debating competitions, essay writing and creative competitions, sporting events, Model United Nations, etc.

- **The pastoral system**

The strong relationships that are established between staff and students at d'Overbroeck's have a lasting influence on students' personal development. Students meet regularly and 1:1 with Personal Tutors/ Directors of Studies (and, for boarders, with boarding staff) and this offers opportunity for discussion, guidance and advice, including in SMSC issues. In addition, the school has a strong system of pastoral support, with a wide team of staff (including school counsellors and the school nurses) involved in the care and support of students.

- **Links with the wider community**

eg, visits to local care home, events with students at other local schools, food-bank collection scheme.

- **Charity fundraising**

This is embedded in our extended learning programme which all students access.

*

This policy is written in accordance with:

- The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014, PART 2: Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- ISI Inspection Framework 2024, SECTION 4: Pupils' social and economic wellbeing, and contribution to society.

This policy should be read alongside other school policies available from the [website](#), including:

- Aims and ethos
- Behaviour, rules, rewards and sanctions
- Curriculum
- Equal opportunities for students
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- Anti-bullying policy

*