

Values

In any school, the *values guide and influence* practices and behaviours. They may be shared with the local community of schools, too.

This contributes to a consistency of approach in how schools are run, regardless of whether a school is a faith school, a community school, a free school or a special school.



Creating a values culture

In order to place values at the heart of a school and its ethos, there first needs to be agreement on what those values are. The process of deciding this should involve staff, students and the wider parent community.

Consulting members of the school community and asking them which values they feel are most important to the school is a useful starting point. Using these ideas, teachers from the school – or staff representatives from a number of local schools, if this is to be a collaborative project – can come together to work out which values will provide a suitable focus at different times of the year.

Planning a values programme

In line with the seven principles of Harmony explored in this guide, we would encourage schools to consider having seven values. It is not an easy task, distilling down values to just seven, but having fewer values can make them more memorable. Once the seven values have been agreed, then each value can be embedded over a half-term or six-week block. Following this approach, six values would be covered over a school year with the seventh value being introduced at the beginning of the next school year, so shifting the values forward a half-term for the next round.

Revisiting the values through a rolling programme like this gives students the opportunity to look at them again at different stages of their learning and development. We may, for example, consider a value such as ‘Trust’ at a younger age and think about who we trust and why we trust them, then, at a later stage, explore the value again in terms of how we build trust.

Living out the values

Most importantly, the values need to be role-modelled and lived out. If we believe a value like ‘Respect’ is essential to healthy relationships, then we would not expect a teacher to shout at students or vice versa. Giving quality time, ideally each week, for students to explore and make sense of each value – and ultimately to own the value – is key to creating the right values culture in a school.

If the values programme can be developed across a range of school settings – primary, secondary and special schools, for example – the impact of this approach can be significant, building a common language around the behaviours of each individual and the collective whole.

Introducing events each year that reinforce this values culture, such as musical performances, poetry recitals or the creation of a values mosaic in a local park or community centre, enable the values to be celebrated more widely.

Possible school values might include:



Once agreed, the values should remain central to the school and its relationship with the wider community. They are the reference points in how everyone in the school treats one another. As such, they need to be articulated in ways that help the students, as well as the adults, to understand what it means to put them into practice.

The value that is the focus for a half-term might be shared through weekly assemblies, displays and during times of reflection. It might equally be communicated in newsletters, in staff meetings, and in lesson time. This will ensure each value becomes part of the language of the school and the way all members of the school community strive to be.

Linking Nature's principles of Harmony to values

As a school begins to apply Nature's principles of Harmony to learning and to the life of the school, there are opportunities to link these principles directly to the school's values.

Aligning values and principles in this way may help children make sense of the way principles and natural laws can inform and influence the values that are important in shaping how we live.

An example of how Nature's principles of Harmony can complement a school's values is shown on the opposite page.

**The principle of
Geometry**
*The values of
Quality
Understanding*

