

# The American School in London

## Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Policy (SMSC)

*The current version of any policy, procedure, protocol or guideline is the version held on the ASL website. It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure that they are following the current version.*

<b>Responsible Party</b>	Head of School
<b>Approved by</b>	Board of Trustees
<b>Approval date</b>	November 2023
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### Overview

The American School in London is an independent, college-preparatory, K-12 day school dedicated to the intellectual and character development of every student in its care.

The mission of the School speaks directly to the importance of the tenets of SMSC development as we seek to “empower each student to thrive as a lifelong learner and courageous global citizen by fostering intellect, creativity, inclusivity, and character.” The programs at ASL reflect the intertwining of intellect and character—the importance of academic achievement combined with the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural elements of the program—that will prepare students to be productive and positive contributors both at ASL and to the world around them. This approach reflects the American pedagogical approach to educating “the whole child” which prioritizes the developmental and personal needs of students in addition to their academic achievements. The core values at ASL—respect, responsibility, kindness, integrity and the courage to act—further reinforce the overall expectations and ethos of the School, dedicated to building the self-knowledge, resilience, and self-confidence of all students and conducted in a culturally diverse, international community. Our aim is to ensure that each student is known, valued

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and supported. The role of SMSC at ASL is important for ensuring that we are equipping students with the skills for their future success.

The goals of the SMSC policy at ASL are to:

- Respect the fundamental British values—which align with American and international values—of respect for democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs in the entirety of the School program.
- Ensure that SMSC, where possible and appropriate, is included in the lessons and the academic framework of the classroom experience and in the extra-curricular and co-curricular programs at the School.
- Preclude the promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject in the School or in any presentations provided at the School and ensure that we offer balanced presentations of opposing views in teaching and presentations.
- Help students develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem, resilience and self-confidence.
- Ensure that students, whether or not they have a specific faith or belief system, acquire the knowledge to respect and appreciate the diversity of beliefs, values, and the spiritual lives of others and to develop their own personal and moral values.
- Foster in students a clear sense of right and wrong, to be caring members of the school community, to accept responsibility for their behavior, and to live by the codes of conduct acceptable in the School, the community, and the wider world.
- Develop the social and leadership skills needed to be responsible citizens in a democratic society and to contribute to School life with energy, positivity, and enthusiasm.
- Appreciate the cultural diversity of our international community and develop the global and intercultural competency to work, engage and build bridges across lines of difference among people from many different experiences, backgrounds and cultural traditions.

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- Promote inclusion and belonging and resist discrimination, prejudice and bias, both at School and in the community beyond the School as reflected in our statement on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Provide support for those identified under the protected characteristics in the 2010 Equality Act: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- To be responsive to the needs of all students in the School, and to be aware of the experiences of students who are under-represented or experiencing discrimination.
- Help our students learn and practice social skills and emotional intelligence to develop the ability to interact with others, form meaningful relationships, and to learn to be reliable and responsible individuals.
- Offer a variety of activities, clubs, and service opportunities to develop avenues for students to identify their own strengths and to learn how best for them to contribute to the School and the wider world.
- Provide a range of engaging extra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities—from sports and the arts to robotics and Model United Nations to debate and social justice, among others—to develop students' self-knowledge and constructive participation in local and wider communities.
- Promote wellbeing as an important foundational principle of the program and as an important element in the ASL Portrait of a Learner.
- Provide a space in the curriculum where issues can be discussed in an age appropriate manner, with tolerance and respect, where teachers can challenge and correct misinformation and/or extremist views, and where a balanced presentation of opposing views can be ensured in order to nurture students' interest in the world around them.

The faculty and staff at ASL are active in delivering experiences, inside and outside of the classroom, that foster the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education of our students. The expectation is that the tenets of SMSC will, where possible and appropriate, be included in the subject lessons and academic framework of the classroom experience. SMSC also lives heartily in our lower school responsive

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classroom practices, middle and high school advisory program, and in the extra-curricular and co-curricular programs at the School.

Our responsibility to provide SMSC programming is reflected in the expectations in the ASL Teaching Standards and are evident in the many programs led by ASL faculty and staff, from daily teaching and advising responsibilities to coaching teams, mentoring clubs, chaperoning trips among other examples. Our Teaching Standards, Safe-working Practices, Professional Code of Conduct, and the fundamental British values all reinforce our commitment to providing positive role modeling for students based on mutual respect and positive student engagement. We expect from ourselves what we expect from our students.

## **Promoting fundamental British values at ASL**

We are committed to ensuring that our students leave ASL fully prepared with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to contribute to the wider world with distinction and a clear understanding of the democratic process, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

We promote acceptance and community spirit by helping students gain an understanding of the different lifestyles, beliefs, cultures and faiths which make up our community. Our students know that the freedom to hold different faiths and beliefs is protected by law and that living under the rule of law is essential for the wellbeing and safety of everyone. Students are encouraged to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own cultures and to promote tolerance, respect, and harmony among different cultural traditions. They know that identifying discrimination, bias, and prejudice is an integral part of upholding British values. Also, they know that all students within the School have a voice that is listened to and valued. Evidence of our commitment to these democratic values can be seen across the School and on our website and other documentation. We are particularly aware of the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

ASL promotes fundamental British values through:

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- Engaging students in the practice of using democratic processes, for example, mock elections for local or national issues or using democratic voting procedures for student elections or classroom decisions—to model the use of democratic processes for students.
- Teaching about the value of the “rule of law” and its use in countries and governments studied, locally and worldwide, primarily in social studies coursework.
- Promoting student “voice” and expression of views in classroom discussions, debates, and presentations in all classrooms, for all subjects.
- Providing opportunities for students to express their own “individual liberty” through self-selected projects, sharing their views in class discussions and presentations as well as choices for extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, inside and outside of the classroom.
- Use of curated resources that promote a balanced view of controversial or political issues in the classes where appropriate.
- Careful selection of visiting speakers to promote a balanced view of a range of topics for all classrooms and student assemblies.
- Attention to political impartiality inside and outside of the classroom so that students feel free to discuss their opinions and to formulate their personal views and beliefs.

## **Spiritual Development**

Spiritual development in a secular school is shown by a student’s ability to know their own beliefs, values and purpose. At ASL, spiritual development is not narrowly restricted to the pursuit of a particular religious belief but is focused on the students’ growth of a sense of self and of others, the ability to discover and articulate their beliefs and values and to reflect on those beliefs to formulate a perspective on life. A student’s spiritual development is shown by the knowledge of and respect for those who do practice a particular faith or belief as well as respect for the feelings and values of others who do not. Imagination, wonder and creativity are part of the path to understanding the inner life as is the willingness for students to reflect on their own experiences. Spiritual development is a personal pathway for each

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student, supported by the exploration of ideas and experiences both inside and outside of the classroom.

ASL promotes spiritual development through:

- The core values the School identifies, upholds and fosters—respect, responsibility, kindness, integrity, and the courage to act—and our Portrait of a Learner which encourages students to be thinkers, explorers, collaborators and innovators in order to discover their own passions and interests.
- Promoting wellbeing and life skills in the wellbeing framework for all students, and providing counseling and emotional support for individual and small groups of students who need it.
- Providing a positive school ethos and “school spirit.”
- Family “shares” that include a range of presentations on spiritual practices and belief systems in the lower school classrooms.
- Student ambassador programs in middle and high school to help with the transition of new students to the School, including a high school Peer Leader program.
- Responsive classroom activities in the lower school and advisory meeting topics in middle and high school that encourage discussion and reflection.
- Reinforcing a “growth mindset” that emphasizes success over failure.
- Visiting speakers from a range of professions who provide inspirational insight into the variety of ways that lives can be lived.
- Curricular opportunities to learn about and respond to a variety of beliefs and values, including the teaching of the major world religions, the opportunity to reflect upon one’s own individual beliefs and values, and discussions of current events.
- Giving choice to students in terms of book choice or research topics to inspire creativity and inspiration.
- Having counselors and health teachers conduct stimulating values-oriented discussions.

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- Sponsoring extracurricular activities and clubs in the lower, middle and high school to encourage student interest, engagement and exploration, often created by student interest.
- Offering multiple and robust opportunities for service learning and community action partnerships for lower, middle, and high school students.
- Providing robust reading lists, extensive library services and collections, and promotion of reading widely, K-12 both in and out of school.

## **Moral development**

Moral development is shown by a student's ability to recognize the difference between right and wrong and to apply this understanding in their own lives, both in and outside of school. The best frame for understanding the difference between right and wrong comes from the positive and forward-looking development of inner convictions rather than fear of consequences for misbehavior, although moral development does also involve the understanding of the consequences of a student's behavior and actions. Furthermore it should involve the student's interest in investigating and offering views about moral and ethical issues to situations as well as the ability to understand and appreciate the viewpoints of others on these issues. We aim to have students take responsibility for their own actions through a deep understanding of moral development in alignment with the School's core values. We strive to foster a sense of ethical commitment to a greater good in our students as expressed through our mission statement.

ASL promotes moral development through:

- Promoting the five core values throughout the School program: respect, responsibility, kindness, integrity, and the courage to act.
- Clarifying age-appropriate behavioral expectations in the code of conduct and using restorative relationship practices for each division: lower, middle, and high school. Lower school programming focuses on conflict resolution and "talk-it-out" strategies.

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- Using student assemblies for school leaders and for students as assembly moderators to clarify acceptable and unacceptable behavior and to emphasize our core values.
- Implementing our Technology, Information Literacy, and Media curriculum and agreements for students to recognize and practice their rights and responsibilities of living, learning, and working in an interconnected digital world and to model and interact in ways that are safe, legal and ethical.
- Affirming our rejection of bullying, cheating, deceit, cruelty, dishonesty, obscenity, and intolerance for any form of harassment, discrimination or bias.
- Highlighting examples of positive student behavior, both in classrooms and on trips.
- Providing high school students with the opportunity to serve as members of the Student Faculty Disciplinary Board to consider, discuss, and ultimately render recommendations to the high school administration on the outcomes and consequences for students who have transgressed the Code of Conduct.
- Providing opportunities for students to explore ethical and moral issues through balanced classroom discussions of historical and current events, in research projects and independent study.
- Supporting age-appropriate activities, academic and co-curricular, that explore complex ethical and moral topics, from arts and dramatic opportunities to discussions of current events and debating competition to writing for middle and high school newspapers, and more.
- Through specific academic units of study, including philosophy and independent research in the high school.
- Providing examples of the kind of behavior expected through the positive example of faculty and staff.

## **Social development**

Social development for students is shown in the range of social skills that students can use in different contexts, especially those including students from different religious, cultural, family, political and socioeconomic backgrounds. Volunteering and cooperating well with others and being able to engage in dialogue and



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discussion about a range of views and beliefs, to resolve conflicts effectively, to offer constructive feedback to peers and adults, and to learn how to ask for help when needed reveal well-developed social skills. Exemplary social skills allow a student to play a full and active part in the School, to engage positively in a diverse community and to take on leadership roles. A sense of belonging and an increasing willingness to engage with others are hallmarks of well-honed social development and enables students to be able to make a personal contribution to the progress and wellbeing of groups. Strong social development will provide the knowledge, skills, qualities and attitudes that enable students to live thoughtful, productive lives, to participate in civil society and democratic processes in the local, national and global communities.

ASL promotes social development through:

- Implementing teaching strategies that emphasize collaboration and group-based projects and pedagogies in classrooms.
- Organizing classrooms physically to promote connection and collaboration which fosters the social development of all students, K-12.
- Establishing classroom norms and routines that establish the importance of group work and appropriate social dynamics in the classroom, on athletic teams, in co-curricular activities such as robotics and arts performances.
- Implementing Responsive Classroom in lower school and advisory programs in middle and high school to promote community-building and connections among students.
- Teaching strategies and providing support from counselors at each division to help with social-emotional and problem-solving skills.
- Encouraging students to take responsibility for the successful completion of group activities and projects through taking on various leadership roles.
- Creating multiple opportunities for students to run for office and take on leadership responsibilities.
- Providing support for an active program in community partnerships that very nearly involves every student in the School and includes service opportunities for all families in the School as well.

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- Establishing a vibrant athletics program that emphasizes teamwork and student leadership in more than 100 teams schoolwide.
- Encouraging student leadership in establishing student clubs at the middle and high school levels.
- Employing the Harkness Table discussion strategies which facilitate equity of participation and social awareness in all high school English classes.

## **Cultural development**

Cultural development is demonstrated when students show they understand and appreciate the wide range of cultural influences that have shaped their own heritage and experiences, and those of others. A central theme concerns the development of a sense of personal identity while acquiring awareness, understanding and respect for the diversity of multiple world cultures. Students must develop the ability to recognize and value what we share in common across cultural, religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines to promote an inclusive community. Students also need to demonstrate their interest in understanding, respecting, and honoring diversity by actively engaging and learning to appreciate the varied cultural aspects of our community and beyond. An appreciation of the different cultures in the School and developing the value of global and intercultural competency—becoming “courageous global citizens” as our mission requires—are essential elements of a student’s preparation for life in the changing modern world.

ASL promotes cultural development through:

- Providing a multicultural curriculum that provides understanding of beliefs, customs, values, knowledge and skills which form the basis for cultural identities and inclusion in our School and the wider community.
- Ensuring that all students are engaged in learning about cultural development through coursework, experiential programs, and field trips to centers of cultural interest.

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- Identifying, publishing, and supporting a full and varied calendar of commemorations and celebrations that reflect various cultures and religions that contribute to the richness of cultural diversity in the community.
- Encouraging knowledge of each student's own cultural traditions and practices along with those of other cultural groups in a variety of ways, including "family shares" in the lower school and commemorations and celebrations across the school community.
- Helping students develop the empathy, wisdom and perspective to engage positively in an environment where people from many different backgrounds and cultures learn and work together.
- Ensuring that we use our location and resources in London as a "laboratory" for the understanding of cultural diversity and inclusion.
- Using our clubs and activities programs to encourage students to explore additional and new aspects of cultural understanding for themselves.
- Supporting Families INtegration Diversity (FIND), supported by the Parent Community Association, dedicated to supporting the diversity of families and cultural traditions in the parent body including creating a bi-yearly community-wide Global Festival that recognizes and celebrates the over 60 nationalities in our international community.