



## **Our Gospel Values and 'British Values'**

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 considered by the government to be democracy, the search for excellence, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs. The promotion of 'British values' is central to Catholic education because British values have their origin in the Christian values of our nation. "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).

At St Mary's Catholic High School, we recognise not only the importance of helping pupils to flourish academically in their search for achieving their God given potential, but also spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, so that they are fully prepared for life in British society and for their role as citizens, and are able to make the strongest possible contribution to the Common Good of all. We teach the importance of British Values by going much deeper into the meaning of what it means to live a good life, within a framework of Catholic Christian Values – our Gospel Values based on the Beatitudes. Jesus promises those who live out these attitudes that they will find true happiness and holiness, for they are the qualities of the saints. 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 that focuses on the formation of the whole person and on our vocation and purpose in life.

We are guided by our school motto '*Let your light shine*' and by the Gospel values of faithfulness, humility, truth, forgiveness, dignity, tolerance, service and respect, 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 Gospel 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.' The examples that follow are an indication of some of the many ways we seek to embed British values St Mary's Catholic High School, and should be seen as an indication of our approach rather than an exhaustive list.

Faithfulness: 'How happy are the poor in spirit: theirs is the kingdom of heaven'

We hold weekly liturgies, daily collective worship, Chaplaincy events and Super Learning Day workshops on our Catholic faith – all to help us realise how we are 'poor in spirit' and need to grow in our relationship with God. We are faithful to Him and His Church.

## **The Rule of Law**

Truth: 'Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied'

The importance of laws, whether they be those that govern the class, the school, or the country, are consistently reinforced throughout every day, as well as when dealing with behaviour and through liturgies and assemblies. We reflect, and act upon the Ten Commandments which are the most well known 'instructions' within the bible. These 'instructions' form the basis of many laws within our country, such as prohibiting murder, adultery, theft and giving false witness'. The curriculum is designed to ensure pupils are taught the values and reasons behind laws, that they govern and protect us, the responsibilities that this involves and the consequences when laws are broken. Visits from authorities such as the Fire Service are regular parts of our learning experiences and help reinforce this message.

We learn about the truth that the Church and Jesus Christ teaches us and the need to be just and honest. Through our Chaplaincy and Faith in Action groups, we explore and respond to the injustices throughout the world. This could be demonstrated by deeds of charity work, producing food parcels for those less fortunate in society (regardless of their beliefs or backgrounds) or written campaigns via CAFOD. fight for those in most need in our community and world, hunger and thirsting for justice through our fundraising efforts.

## **Individual Liberty**

Humility: 'Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage'

Within St Mary's Catholic High School, pupils are actively encouraged to make independent choices knowing that they are in a safe, secure and supportive environment.

Forgiveness: 'Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them'

As a school, we educate and provide boundaries for pupils to make choices safely, through the provision of a safe environment and an empowering education. We encourage pupils to see themselves as unique individuals able to make a unique contribution to building community. Pupils are encouraged to know, understand and exercise their rights, responsibilities and personal freedoms

and receive advice about how to exercise these safely, for example through our exploration in PSHCEE activities.

A number of liturgies throughout the Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy (2015-2016) called by Pope Francis asked the whole Church to be merciful and compassionate. We hold Reconciliation services during Lent and Advent, providing students and staff the opportunity to receive this healing Sacrament. Each service is underpinned with specific scripture and a focal point is provided to nurture their time to examine their conscience. (confession) each term for pupils, and last year this included a visit from the 'Mercy Bus'.

## **Mutual Respect**

Dignity: 'Happy those who mourn:  
they shall be comforted'

Respect: 'Happy the pure in heart:  
they shall see God'

Respect is one of the eight core Gospel values of our school and is modelled by pupils and staff alike. The school promotes respect for others and this is reiterated through our classroom and learning environments, as well as through our pastoral care. In line with our commitment to 'democracy', pupils are always able to voice their opinions, as we foster an environment where pupils can debate ideas and are safe to disagree with each other – these skills are developed through our weekly form discussion topics and our debating groups.

We encourage pupils to substantiate opinions and to realise the value of co-operation and consensus, as well as decision making, through voting. For example, voting for Form Representatives, our senior prefect team and other leaders within school.

Service: 'Happy those who are persecuted in the  
cause of right: theirs is the kingdom of heaven'

Our emphasis on ethics, fairness and justice means that we ask our pupils to ensure that they look out for those who might be marginalised and disadvantaged. We have many whole school fundraising efforts; in fact, raising money for charity is a regular feature in our school – including annual Mary's Meals, CAFOD, Nugent and the Salvation Army – serving God and our neighbour. In addition to these whole school charities, each year group is allocated a Charity. Year 7 currently have NUGENT as their year groups charity. Other year groups support Derian House and St Catherine's, both hospices within our local area. We further support Rainbow House, a charity supporting disabled children and Macmillan. Students are encouraged to think of the needs of others, and as a result many approach Chaplaincy to lead in 'separate' charity events such as 'young minds, cancer research, multiple sclerosis and dogs trust'. , An Extended Learning Day from 'Aid to the Church in Need' focused on

fighting for the rights of persecuted Christians in the world by writing to politicians, signing petitions and attending 'Stand up for faith' and a religious freedom event.

Our Chaplaincy Team and Faith in Actions groups take a lead in many of our fundraising activities. The school has taken a very strong stance on social inclusion and anti-bullying through an explicit focus on strategies to enable respect for difference through, for example, reflections on homophobia and other forms of bullying through our PSHCEE and extended learning curriculum. For example, pupils are provided with the opportunity to experience 'real life' experiences through guest speakers during dedicated assemblies and super learning days.

## Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs

Tolerance: 'Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called sons of God'

This is achieved through equipping pupils with the ability to develop positive values, understand their own beliefs and their place in a culturally diverse society. We give our pupils opportunities to experience such diversity within the school community and within the wider community. All pupils experience a connection with other cultures and beliefs through our RE curriculum, PSHCEE programme and Super Learning Days. The emphasis on community and working with others directly contributes to the appreciation of others' perspectives on life. Our Religious Education 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. Our pupils learn about the wrongs of religious extremism and how living side by side, despite our differences, brings peace. We explore what unites us rather than what divides us.

At St Mary's We Promote British Values

- ♥ Democracy
- ♥ The rule of Law
- ♥ Individual liberty
- ♥ Mutual respect
- ♥ Tolerance

