Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Policy

Revised 9 November 2026 | Next review November 2027 or sooner if guidance changes

INTRODUCTION

This policy is carried out within the context and spirit of the Trust's vision for Education, Care, and Opportunity. It supports and reinforces the aims of Watling Academy, valuing all students equally and as individuals, through **Respect**, **Responsibility**, and **Kindness**. All staff will work together to create an inspiring, challenging, stimulating, and caring environment in which students can enjoy their time at our Academy and celebrate their achievement.

Watling Academy strives to build a community which encourages all its members to develop a healthy respect for each other. In addition, we provide a happy, stimulating, and caring environment where there are opportunities, encouragement, and stimuli to develop each student to their full potential.

This policy relates to the whole life of the Academy and its role in promoting spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development (SMSC) by the example set by adults in the Academy and the quality of relationships they espouse.

Review date: 6 November 2026. Status: revised draft for approval through the Trust's governance arrangements. Proposed next review: November 2027, or sooner if legislation or guidance changes. Yellow highlighting identifies added or amended wording; unchanged text is unhighlighted.

Statutory framework and related policies

The Academy's SMSC provision reflects section 1A of the Academies Act 2010 and Part 2, paragraph 5 of the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. It is informed by the DfE's April 2026 Independent School Standards guidance, which is non-statutory explanatory guidance rather than new SMSC legislation.

This policy is read alongside the Academy's safeguarding and child protection, behaviour, anti-bullying, equality, SEND, online safety, PSHE and RSE policies. Relevant statutory guidance includes Keeping children safe in education 2026, the revised RSHE guidance in force from 1 September 2026, and Prevent duty guidance 2023. The DfE's political impartiality guidance explains existing legal duties.

Equality and access

The Academy will meet its Equality Act 2010 duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty: having due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations. Provision will encourage respect for people with protected characteristics and challenge prejudice, including racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, sexism, homophobia and disability-related bullying.

Teaching and enrichment will be accessible to students with SEND, including through reasonable adjustments for disabled students. Activities will take account of age, understanding, communication and individual needs. Students will not be required to disclose personal beliefs or experiences to demonstrate participation.

1. Spiritual Development

Aim

This area relates to the beliefs, feelings and emotions through which students acquire worthwhile insights into their own lives. All areas of the curriculum may contribute to spiritual development. Although education and spiritual development are not synonymous, Academy experiences can make a significant contribution to spiritual development.

Spiritual development includes religious and non-religious beliefs and the perspectives of those with no faith. Students will be supported to reflect on meaning, identity and values without pressure to adopt a particular belief.

Objectives

At Watling Academy, the students will be provided with opportunities to develop their spiritual understanding by experiencing a curriculum which will:

- Develop their **RESPECT** for themselves through their own self-esteem, self-knowledge and belief;

- Allow them to develop a range of personal values and beliefs based on a sense of curiosity and respect towards their own and other beliefs;
- Explore the spiritual values of others through stories, drama, music, art and religious education to name just a few;
- Allow them to take **RESPONSIBILITY** for their actions through expressing themselves in a variety of ways and giving them time to reflect on their own experiences and actions;
- Show **KINDNESS** by allowing them to understand, express, use and control feelings and emotions as well as encouraging empathy in terms of relationships with others;

In Practice at Watling Academy, this will be delivered through:

1. Religious Education lessons which will develop self-esteem and knowledge and an ability to reflect on and develop individuals' own spiritual values.
2. A PSHE programme which utilises tutoring to involve all students in opportunities for themed discussion, reading (both fiction and non-fiction) and competitive quizzes to encourage learning and develop an awareness of our core values as soon as students arrive.
3. An assembly programme to address the spiritual aspect of quiet and reflection – in particular, using past and present role models from both MK and indeed, the world, and encouraging community participation.
4. A student support structure that is focused on learning and providing appropriate information advice and guidance for students as well as opportunities to explore pathways of development.
5. Educational enrichment trips, creative partnerships and visiting speakers provide students with a range of experiences, which may promote a sense of awe and wonder about the world.
6. A reflective approach to learning through formative assessment techniques – students having ownership and understanding of where they are, where they need to get to and how they are to do it.
7. A rewards system developing student self-esteem through certificates, postcards home, reward stamps and awards at all levels.
8. Displays of student work will bring a sense of pride in the work students produce and therefore a sense of expressing the talents of the individual.
9. The use of our student council to involve students in the life of the Academy.
10. PSHE programme for all students

Moral Development

Aim

Moral development refers to the students' knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to what is right and wrong. Watling Academy has a clear Behaviour Policy that encourages staff to have a supportive and systematic approach to the management of challenging behaviour.

Students will learn to distinguish right from wrong, respect the civil and criminal law of England, consider ethical questions and understand the effects of their actions on others.

Objectives of the code of conduct are to promote the concept of excellent behaviour by being:

- **Responsible**
- **Respectful**
- **Kind**

In practice – at Watling Academy this will be delivered through:

- Clear models of outstanding behaviour from staff and students and reinforcement of Academy and classroom rules both inside and outside of lessons
- A student support structure focused on conflict resolution and appropriate restorative approaches. These must not replace safeguarding action or require a victim to meet the person who harmed them.
- Themed tutor time and discussions based on moral issues, where appropriate, across the Academy community from the start of the day in tutor time, during wellbeing lessons and across all lessons.
- PSHE programme for all students.
- PSHE/Wellbeing and wider teaching will reinforce the revised RSHE guidance, including respectful relationships, consent, recognising misogyny and harmful stereotypes, online influences and how to seek help. Staff will challenge harmful ideas without stigmatising students or suggesting that boys are inevitably perpetrators or girls inevitably victims. Curriculum detail, parental information and sex education withdrawal arrangements are set out in the separate RSE policy.
- Assembly themes on moral issues, developed and reinforced during tutor time.
- Fund raising activities for nominated charities, in addition to national charity events which give rise to discussion around morality.
- The use of students in teams across the Academy: Student council; Eco-team;
- Teaching safe and responsible internet use, supported by appropriate filtering and monitoring. Staff will report concerns promptly through safeguarding procedures; technical controls do not replace education or staff vigilance.
- Local, national and global incidents, in addition to programmes of study, will give an opportunity for teaching about morality and behaviour during deep learning weeks across the Academy and will demonstrate the flexibility of our teaching programme.

Social Development

Aim

Social development relates to the skills and personal qualities necessary for individuals to live and function effectively in society.

Objectives

Students will be encouraged to:

- Maintain and develop **RESPECTFUL** relationships within the Academy, working successfully with other students and adults in our community;
- Respond to the opportunities being offered, show initiative and take RESPONSIBILITY for their own learning in our community;
- Gain an understanding of the wider society through their family and carers, the Academy, local and wider communities;
- Actively participate and show **KINDNESS** in the Academy community and beyond into the wider community outside of the Academy.
- Develop a broad understanding of public institutions and services in England and how they can contribute to local and wider society.

In Practice, at Watling Academy we will provide opportunities for students in the following ways:

- Interact with all staff and with external partners of the Academy in an appropriate and outstanding manner

- The use of students in teams across the Academy: Student council; Eco-team; Sports teams; House teams and other clubs and societies.
- Elected Academy and House council representative to feedback views, ideas, and concerns to their tutor groups and to the senior leadership team.
- Experience, in programmes of study, the development of skills in speaking, listening and key reflective work where students can learn both with teacher interaction and support, but increasingly with more independent study.
- PSHE programme for all students.
- Experience excellent pastoral and career advice in which all staff are involved throughout the year. Subject specific advice is given at certain milestones of a student's life at the Academy.
- Participate in the wider community through work experience in year 10 and volunteer support work in the local community. This will be tracked through Academy on a database of student activity both in Academy and in the wider community and will rely initially on the tutor and then other staff.

Cultural Development

Aim

Cultural development refers to students increasing understanding and response to those elements, which give societies, and groups their unique character. The Academy will promote **RESPECT** for the cultural traditions of our own area and the ethnic and cultural diversity of the wider world.

Objectives

The students will be encouraged to:

- Appreciate, understand and **RESPECT** aspects of their own and other cultural environments in terms of beliefs, values, attitudes, customs, knowledge and skills;
- Recognise that similarities and differences may exist between different societies and groups;
- Experience a range of cultural activities in terms of literature, music, technology, art and design, dance, drama, sport and other media;
- Broaden, develop and enrich their interests and insights through interacting with opportunities the Academy and the wider community provides.

In Practice at Watling Academy we will encourage:

- Educational visits at home and abroad to experience other cultures and ways of life.
- Educational visits to places of interest such as: libraries; museums; galleries; theatres; places of worship and other educational establishments – Academies, schools, colleges and universities – in order to better understand other cultures and ways of life.
- PSHE programme for all students
- Collective assemblies – a themed approach that give rise to many opportunities to explore SMSC and cultural diversity. Other events will also be celebrated with drama, art, dance and presentations.
- Topic work across the Academy which explores "culture" in all its various forms in relation to specific subject areas.
- Access to the Internet in order to explore cultures and activities as extension learning

British Values at Watling

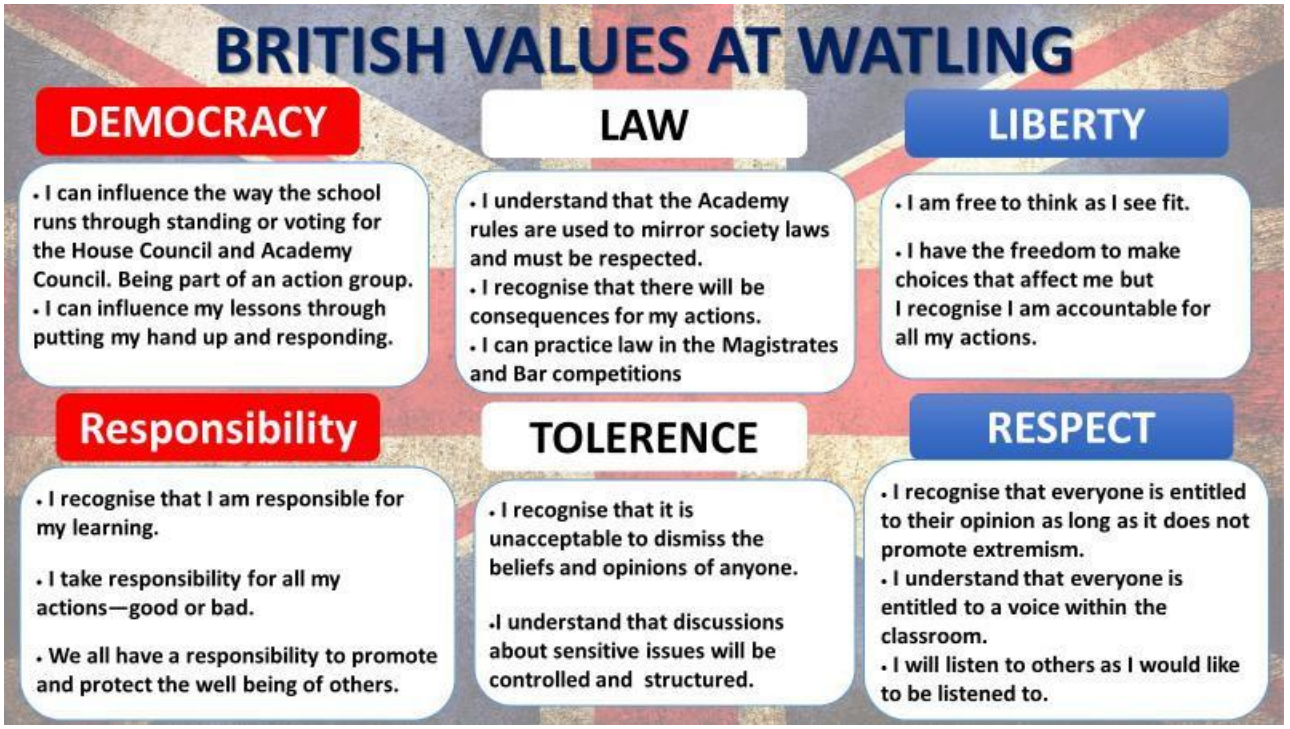
Aims

To actively promote the fundamental British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

Objectives

Students will learn how democratic participation influences decisions; why law protects people; how Parliament, government and independent courts operate; and why freedom of belief and respect for people of different faiths or no faith matter. Teaching will enable students to recognise and challenge unlawful discrimination.

To ensure opportunities are created for students to hear and discuss different political issues that strike a balance between the opinions and beliefs discussed. (This will include preventing the political indoctrination of students through the curriculum).



In Practice at Watling Academy we will:

Use classroom displays to reinforce taught examples of each fundamental British value. Posters alone do not demonstrate effective promotion; students should be able to explain and apply their learning.

Encourage debate in the delivery of our PSHE curriculum during tutorials, in any work associated in promoting British Values.

Continually demonstrate our Core values of **RESPECT**, **RESPONSIBILITY**, and **KINDNESS** in all behaviour and communications

Use assemblies and tutor sessions to explore fundamental British values through relevant examples and respectful discussion.

Have democratic elections for House and Academy elections that follow our election procedures in the UK. Provide extra curricula opportunities such as the Magistrates and Bar Competition to support the promotion of fundamental British Values.

Have restorative justice conversations that will support students in understanding the consequences of their actions, and to accept responsibility for their behaviour

Take reasonably practicable steps to provide a balanced presentation of opposing views when political issues arise in teaching, school-organised enrichment and the promotion of extra-curricular activities. Staff must not promote partisan political views. Teaching will distinguish fact from opinion and allow students to reach reasoned conclusions.

Visiting speakers may be invited individually. Staff will check their suitability, affiliations, proposed content and resources beforehand, arrange appropriate supervision and provide teaching that secures political balance where necessary. Balance can be achieved over time and does not require equal time for every view. Discrimination and dangerous views must be challenged; impartiality does not require treating them as acceptable. The Academy remains responsible for content delivered to students.

Radicalisation

Watling Academy will build pupils' resilience to extremism and radicalisation by supporting inclusion and a sense of belonging in the community and by providing a safe environment for debating emotive issues. As part of this whole school approach, PSHE education lessons will develop knowledge and understanding of the factors that lead to extremism, and skills such as critically evaluating the media and the messages of charismatic speakers and groups, as well as developing attributes such as resilience, empathy and respect for others. These lessons will not be taught in isolation, but will form part of our planned, developmental PSHE education programme.

The Prevent duty requires due regard to preventing people from being drawn into terrorism. The DSL will coordinate Prevent within the Academy's safeguarding arrangements, informed by a proportionate assessment of local and online radicalisation risks and an action plan where needed. Staff will receive appropriate training and report concerns to the DSL or deputy without delay, following child protection procedures. The DSL will consider appropriate support, referrals and cooperation with Channel partners. Concerns will be assessed on evidence and context, without assumptions based on faith, ethnicity or lawful political views.

Safeguarding in SMSC provision

All staff must read Part One of Keeping children safe in education 2026 and follow the Academy's child protection procedures. Discussions and enrichment can lead to disclosures: staff must listen, avoid promising confidentiality, record concerns and act without delay. Students will be shown how to report worries and access support. Abuse, harassment and bullying must not be dismissed as banter. Immediate safeguarding action takes priority over a planned lesson or restorative response.

Role of Senior Leaders and Key Staff

- To undertake audits and observations of department developments in SMSC provision.
- To promote and facilitate enrichment events in Academy.
- To organise themes for the weekly focus in tutor group time linked to an assembly programme.
- To promote student "voice" opportunities and the related teams in order to maximise student participation.
- To compile and update a portfolio (photographs and programmes) to record the Academy's support for S.M.S.C.
- To oversee a database of student involvement both inside and outside of Academy
- To encourage staff and students to be involved in enrichment activities which are spiritually, morally, socially, and culturally engaging both inside and outside the classroom.

The Trust Board retains accountability, with oversight exercised in accordance with the scheme of delegation. The Headteacher will ensure implementation; the Personal Development lead will coordinate provision and review; subject leaders and tutors will identify SMSC opportunities and assess understanding; the DSL will advise on safeguarding and Prevent.

Monitoring and review

The Personal Development lead will review provision at least annually using curriculum mapping, student voice, samples of work, participation in enrichment and relevant behaviour and safeguarding patterns. Monitoring will consider access for students with SEND and disadvantaged students, identify gaps and agree actions with responsible

staff. Findings will inform reporting through the Academy's governance arrangements. Records and photographs will be managed under the Academy's data protection procedures.

Expectations of stakeholders

All stakeholders expected to support and be engaged in the implementation of this policy through every engagement that they have with each other; in tutor time, assemblies and in the course of daily interactions (with each other) in their classes and outside classrooms to promote and celebrate the equality and diversity of the Academy community.

Sources and review notes

Review completed against sources available on 6 November 2026. The additions clarify existing SMSC duties and align linked provision with current safeguarding and RSHE guidance; they do not imply a new standalone statutory SMSC policy requirement. Governance approval dates must be recorded through the usual school process.

SMSC and British values: Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule, Part 2, paragraph 5. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/3283/schedule

DfE Independent School Standards guidance, April 2026, Part 2 (non-statutory). https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69c3d64593cc6e8b87a6f636/Independent_school_standards_guidance_April_2026.pdf

Equality Act 2010 and DfE advice for schools (existing equality duties). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools

Keeping children safe in education 2026 (statutory guidance, in force September 2026). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (revised statutory guidance, in force 1 September 2026). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education

Prevent duty guidance 2023 (statutory guidance, in force 31 December 2023). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance

Political impartiality in schools (non-statutory guidance explaining existing duties; updated March 2025). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/political-impartiality-in-schools