

Universal Values – A Guide for Parents

Schools are required to provide for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of their pupils. Part of this requirement means that they actively promote the fundamental Universal Values. The fundamental Universal Values are defined as:

- Democracy
- The Rule of Law
- Individual Liberty
- Mutual Respect and Tolerance of Different Faiths and Beliefs.

Promoting these Universal Values is now a central part of teaching and learning. By doing this, schools aim to help children become well-rounded members of the society. These Universal Values are promoted throughout the curriculum, across the whole school. They are also seen in school ethos and policies, assemblies, special events and cultural celebrations. Below are some examples of how each of the Universal Values may be promoted in schools.

Democracy

Schools aim to promote this Universal Value by demonstrating how democracy works by discussion, decision-making and voting. For example:

- Encouraging children to know their views count and their opinions are important - for example, following the children's interests for topics and activities.
- Encouraging children to make decisions together, e.g. when sharing a group toy, like a large train set.
- Encouraging children to see their role in the 'bigger picture', e.g. linking to part of a family, class, group, school, community etc.
- Providing opportunities for the children to vote between choices of activity, for example, choosing a theme for their role play area, choosing a book for story time or a song for song time by a show of hands.
- Children may also have the opportunity to vote for members of a school council.

The Rule of Law

Schools aim to promote this Universal Value by demonstrating a need for rules and laws help to keep us safe and happy. For example:

- Encouraging adults and children to work together to create group rules. Discussing the need for rules and how they should be administered fairly, e.g. the need for rules to keep everyone safe and happy.
- Teaching children to understand their own and others' behaviour and feelings, and the consequences.
- Working together to create an environment where actions are consistently followed through, e.g. adherence to class rules, follow-ups on discussions and other choices explored after taking a group vote.

- Encouraging and supporting children to learn how to distinguish right from wrong.

Individual Liberty

Schools aim to promote this Universal Value by individual freedoms to choose faiths, beliefs and likes/dislikes. For example:

- Providing opportunities for children to develop their self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities, e.g. by sharing achievements and successes and promoting independence.
- Encouraging children to try a range of different activities and opportunities and to discuss and select their own preferences.
- Providing activities for all children to engage in and actively challenge gender-specific tasks and activities.
- Encouraging children to develop a positive sense of themselves.

Mutual Respect and Tolerance of Different Faiths and Beliefs

Schools aim to promote this Universal Value by demonstrating respect and tolerance towards other beliefs and faiths. For example:

- Working as a group to create an environment that includes, values and promotes different faiths, cultures, views and races.
- Providing opportunities for the children to make links with the wider community, for example outings to local places, inviting family members or speakers to visit the setting or making links with a local charity.
- Encouraging children to learn about other faiths, cultures, traditions, families, communities and ways of life. Schools might encourage the children to share their experiences with the group and allow the children to recognise similarities and differences between themselves and others. For example, learning about festivals and special days, different types of family units, different occupations and places around the world.
- Encouraging children to learn about the world around them – both locally and further afield. For example, local trips, using books, stories, posters and videos, etc. to learn about places far away, cultural days, local events and activities and national celebrations.

