

Bentley Wood High School

Statement on British Values

Updated February 2026

Introduction

Bentley Wood High School is committed to serving its diverse community in North London. We recognise the multicultural, multi-faith, and ever-changing nature of the United Kingdom, and we celebrate the rich diversity of those we serve.

As a community school, we accept admissions from all those entitled to an education under British law, including pupils of all faiths or none. In accordance with our governing body's equal opportunities policies, there will be no discrimination against any individual or group, regardless of belief, ethnicity, sex, sexuality, disability, or any other protected characteristic.

We understand the promotion of British Values as central to our pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) development. We will encourage and support all our students to realise their full potential, hold the highest expectations for their futures, enjoy fulfilling lives, and share an ethos of respect for themselves and others.

The school embraces the belief that at the heart of a modern community is acceptance of fundamental British Values. In promoting these values, our learners grow as individuals and citizens. We recognise and respect difference, while also recognising what unites us: our shared country, community, culture, and values. The school holds that these 'British values' are a subset of, or continuous with, broader liberal democratic values shared by many globally.

Statutory and Inspection Context

The Department for Education's non-statutory guidance, *Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools* (DfE, 2014), requires maintained schools to actively promote the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.

As the DfE guidance states: "actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values." The guidance further requires schools to enable students to develop self-knowledge and self-confidence, distinguish right from wrong, accept responsibility for their behaviour, and acquire respect for public institutions and services.

Ofsted's renewed *State-Funded School Inspection Toolkit* (November 2025) places British Values firmly within the 'Personal Development and Well-being' evaluation area. Inspectors assess the extent to which schools succeed in "developing and deepening pupils' understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs" and in "promoting equality of opportunity so that all pupils can thrive together and understand that individual characteristics make people unique."

The Equality Act and Protected Characteristics

Inclusivity is at the heart of the curriculum at Bentley Wood. We ensure that all students understand the Equality Act 2010 and the nine protected characteristics, and that it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of them. Students are taught about British Values, equality, and protected characteristics across the curriculum, as reflected in our 'Equality in the Curriculum' document.

There is a particular focus on these areas in PSHE/RSE and in our weekly 'Wise Thoughts' programme, a key plank of our SMSC education strategy. Teaching about these issues is age-appropriate and is informed by the school's context and its diverse community.

Democracy

The school promotes democratic processes, fostering freedom of speech and the concept of collective action. Through the election of School Council members to represent each class, students have genuine opportunities for their voices to be heard. Council members are voted in by their classes, and the School Council meets regularly to discuss and effect real change within the school. We also run elections for Harrow Youth Parliament and hold internal mock elections to coincide with national elections.

Staff are also included in democratic processes: changes to policies and strategies are discussed with Middle Leaders and in whole-staff CPD sessions. Key to this is the concept of holding those in positions of authority to account.

In the curriculum:

- In History, KS3 students study the shifting balance of power between the monarchy and the people from the medieval period onwards; at KS4 they examine democracy and inequality in America, including the social policies of the 'Great Society'.
- In Philosophy & RS, all Year 11s study a unit on Human Rights and Social Justice, exploring rights, responsibilities, and the democratic basis of law.
- In English, students explore democracy and the rule of law through texts including *Animal Farm*, *Macbeth*, and *An Inspector Calls*, examining what happens when moral and political order breaks down.
- In Latin & Classics, KS4 students study Roman elections, political rights, and the unpopularity of dictatorship through Suetonius' account of Julius Caesar's death.
- In MFL, Year 13 students study dictatorships in Spain and South America, the transition to democracy, and the role of young people in political activism.
- In Sociology, students develop critical thinking and debate skills, exploring how democratic values function in British society.
- In Geography, students at KS4 study development and corruption, and at KS5 study the role of superpowers.

Beyond the classroom:

- Members of our Debate Club and Year 10 students attend Model United Nations events, learning about international politics and respectful debate.
 - We run Student Voice panels, where students are consulted on school priorities including mental health provision.
 - Prefects, Form Captains, Human Rights Ambassadors, and other student leadership roles give pupils practice in democratic participation.
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The Rule of Law

School rules apply equally to all pupils. Staff take great care to be fair in their application of rules, and to avoid any kind of favouritism. The school has high expectations of pupil conduct, reflected in our Behaviour Policy, and pupils are encouraged to exceed minimum standards through our rewards system. The importance of laws is consistently reinforced throughout school life, assemblies, and when managing behaviour. Visits from authorities such as the Police and Fire Service help reinforce the reasoning behind particular sets of rules.

Senior Leaders share and examine research on fairness, for example by analysing data about internal exclusions and behaviour points broken down by ethnic background, ensuring that the school's systems operate equitably.

In the curriculum:

- In Philosophy & RS, Year 8 students study ethical theories including Utilitarianism and Kantian deontology through the 'If Odyssey' unit, learning rational, secular approaches to deciding moral questions. Year 10 students explore conflict, war, and terrorism. A-Level students examine the origins of morality and what underpins the rule of law through studying Mill and Aristotle.
- In History, students learn about the rule of law in Britain through studying the development of constitutional government, Magna Carta, and changes in power over centuries.
- In English, students study texts that depict the consequences of breaking moral and legal order, including Macbeth, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and Hamlet.
- In Latin & Classics, students learn about Roman legal and political structures and read about the political rights of men and women in Rome.
- In Computing, students study legislation including GDPR, the Data Protection Act, and the Computer Misuse Act across KS3–KS5.
- In Science, ethical issues around research, the scientific method, and peer review are regularly discussed, teaching students about evidence-based reasoning.
- In Psychology, students study recidivism, anger management programmes, and cognitive behavioural therapy for offenders.
- In PE, students learn the importance of applying rules fairly when adjudicating between conflicting viewpoints.
- In Health & Social Care, students learn about duty of care, safeguarding principles, and how laws around equality and discrimination have been enacted through democratic processes.

Individual Liberty

Pupils are actively encouraged to make choices within a safe and supportive environment. They are encouraged to know, understand, and exercise their rights and personal freedoms, and are advised how to exercise these safely, for example through E-Safety and PSHE lessons. The practice of restorative justice fosters students' awareness of their own autonomy and encourages them to take ownership of their behavioural choices.

In the curriculum:

- In GCSE Philosophy & RS, students study the free will and determinism debate, thinking about whether we are in control of our lives. In Year 11 they learn how liberty can be taken away through human trafficking and exploitative labour practices.
- In English, students study *The Handmaid's Tale* (KS5), in which Atwood critiques a society where women are stripped of autonomy, highlighting the fragility of rights and the dangers of unchecked power. At KS3, *Noughts and Crosses* reverses racial power structures to explore freedom and oppression.
- In History, KS4 students study the American civil rights movement, including segregation, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and the development of campaigns for liberty and equality.
- In Drama, students explore liberty through play texts including *Random* (knife crime and the justice system) and *Liberation Squares* (cultural diversity and Prevent).
- In Psychology, students learn about the process of social change, studying how societies have moved from criminalising homosexuality to widespread acceptance, analysing the mechanisms of minority influence.
- In Art, Design & Technology, students at KS5 choose their own project stimuli, frequently exploring how men, women, and various ethnic groups are represented in society.

Beyond the classroom:

- Students exercise choice by joining a broad range of enrichment clubs and activities, and develop their autonomy through leadership roles including Prefects, Mental Health and Wellbeing Ambassadors, Subject Ambassadors, and School Council Representatives.
- Wise Thoughts discussions and themed weeks (such as LGBT+ History Month) enable students to explore concepts of freedom, identity, and belonging.

Mutual Respect

All staff model respectful behaviour towards each other, parents, and pupils, and towards our shared school environment. Displays celebrate student achievement, and the environment is warm, welcoming, and a source of pride. Expectations are extremely high for all pupils: they are expected to behave respectfully at all times. Rewards and sanctions are developed partly with a view to creating and sustaining a respectful culture.

In the curriculum:

- In Computing, students at KS3 study e-safety and cyberbullying, thinking about how to respond to content online that they disagree with, particularly on social media. At KS4 and KS5, they study the moral and ethical issues relating to digital technology, including 'offensive communications'.
- In Food Technology, students prepare a range of dishes reflecting ethnic and cultural diversity and plan for the dietary needs of different groups of people.
- In English, texts such as *Blood Brothers*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *A Monster Calls*, and *The Bone Sparrow* explore tolerance, empathy, and challenging prejudice.
- In Music, students study a wide range of cultural traditions including the Blues, Reggae, Samba, West African, and Indian music, as well as learning about musicians from diverse backgrounds.
- In Science, students are encouraged to listen to and value each other's opinions while also evaluating evidence critically, particularly on potentially controversial topics such as the Big Bang and natural selection.
- In Maths, posters display mathematicians from different gender and ethnic backgrounds, and Maths Week activities raise awareness of diverse contributions to the discipline.
- In MFL, the languages curriculum develops an awareness and understanding of countries and communities where the target language is spoken, including their traditions, customs, and festivals.

Beyond the classroom:

- Bar Mock Trials, Jack Petchey speeches, and Ethics Cup provide opportunities for students to respectfully debate a variety of issues drawn from current affairs.
- In most lessons, 'thinking hard' discussions occur where students learn that we can respectfully disagree with people who hold very different views to our own.

Tolerance of Those of Different Faiths and Beliefs

Whole-school assemblies and lessons across the curriculum promote the importance of tolerance. As a comprehensive school, collective worship is non-denominational and recognises that those attending may have a wide range of faiths or none, while remaining in line with regulation. Our 'Wise Thoughts' programme and PSHE lessons regularly address prejudice and prejudice-based bullying. Planning for RS is informed by the SACRE Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education.

In the curriculum:

- In Philosophy & RS, Year 7 students study Christianity and Islam, exploring the diversity of belief and representation. They consider, for example, why Jesus is often depicted as European when he was from the Middle East. Year 8s study Hinduism and the ethics of the caste system. Year 11 students study Human Rights and Social Justice, including freedom of religion, expression, and tolerance.

- In English at KS3, the diverse literature programme includes texts such as *Noughts and Crosses*, which reverses racial power structures, and *The Bone Sparrow*, about refugee experience. At GCSE, *An Inspector Calls* promotes collective responsibility and challenges class prejudice.
- In History, KS3 students study medieval Africa and the significance of pre-slavery African history, the British Empire and its legacies, and medieval antisemitism. At KS4 they study migration, empire, and the Windrush generation, including the work of Claudia Jones.
- In Latin & Classics, students learn about ancient Greek and Roman values, many of which differ markedly from modern British values, fostering comparative discussion. At KS5, the *Love and Relationships* unit examines attitudes to foreigners, women, and homosexual relationships in the ancient world.
- In Sociology, the curriculum explores how ethnicity, religion, gender, and social class shape people's experiences within key institutions, and students examine contemporary examples of racial inequality and social change.
- In Health & Social Care, the teaching of the 6Cs provides pupils with the skills to interact with others in a kind and thoughtful manner, including learning from people who are different from themselves.
- In Geography, KS5 students study diverse places, examining ethnic clustering, tolerance, and how communities cope with change and integration.
- In Drama, students explore the text *Fugee*, which looks at undocumented child refugees, and at KS4 they study *Liberation Squares*, which explores cultural diversity.
- In PE at KS5, students study the impact of the 'Black Power' demonstration at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics.
- In Psychology, students learn about cross-cultural differences in norms and how behaviours deemed normal in one culture may differ in another.

Further Information

The examples above are illustrative, not exhaustive. British Values are promoted through every aspect of school life, from the taught curriculum to our wider ethos, enrichment programme, and pastoral care.

For more information about how Bentley Wood High School promotes British Values, please contact the school office and Mr O'Sullivan (AHT) will be happy to help.

Key References

- Department for Education (2014), *Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools*
- Ofsted (2025), *State-Funded School Inspection Toolkit (version 1.1, November 2025)*
- Ofsted (2025), *Education Inspection Framework*
- Equality Act 2010
- Prevent Strategy 2011