



## British Values and Our Catholic Ethos

The government set out its definition of 'British values' in the 'Prevent Strategy' (2011), which was designed to prevent the extremism and religious radicalization of young people. British values are considered by the present government to be **democracy, 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 Bede's Catholic Primary School we recognise, not only the importance of helping pupils to flourish academically but also spiritually, morally, socially and culturally, so they are fully prepared for life in British society and for their role as citizens, 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. 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 Bede's we provide an education which focuses on the formation of the whole person and on our vocation and purpose in life. We are guided by our mission statement; 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. 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* at St Bede's Catholic School and should be seen as an indication of our approach rather than an exhaustive list.

**Democracy:** This value is embedded into the daily practice of our school. Pupils are always listened to by adults and are taught to listen carefully and with concern to each other, respecting the right of every individual to have their voice and opinions heard. Pupils have the opportunity to air their opinions and ideas through the School Council and questionnaires. Our School Council enables pupils to be heard and become involved in the decision making process within our school, examining the idea that we all share a responsibility to use our voice and influence the wellbeing of others. Council members are elected based on pupil votes reflecting our British electoral system and demonstrating democracy in action. Other examples include the election of House Captains and the school election to vote for the national British bird.

**The Rule of Law:** 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 assemblies. 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 Police and Fire Service are regular parts of our learning programmes and help reinforce this message.

**Individual Liberty:** Within St. Bede's Catholic School pupils are actively encouraged to make independent choices knowing that they are in a safe, secure and supportive environment. As a school we educate and provide boundaries for students 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 our 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 of E-Safety in computing.

**Mutual Respect:** Respect is a core value of our school and is modelled by pupils and staff alike. Our school promotes respect for others and this is reiterated through our classroom and learning environments as well as extra-curricular activities such as sport. 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. We encourage students to substantiate opinions and to realise the value of co-operation and consensus as well as decision making through voting.

**Tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs:** 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 College community and within the wider community. All students experience a connection with other cultures and beliefs through our RE, theme days and local, regional and international links. The emphasis on working with others, and learning other languages 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.