

Appendices

RSA

Action and Research Centre

**Schools with
Soul: A new
approach
to Spiritual,
Moral, Social
and Cultural
Education**

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Appendix 1: SMSC looking back and forward

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1. Introduction

The holistic – as opposed to the purely religious or academic – development of pupils has been a function of education in the United Kingdom since the time of the first public schools in the Middle Ages. Named ‘public’ because they were intended to prepare young men for careers as public servants, these were the first schools which explicitly sought to develop their pupils’ character, beyond the scholastic preparation for the church or university. In later centuries, the waning of a common faith in the UK saw a growth rather than diminishing of this purpose. In the late 19th century education initiatives such as the Ethical Union and the Moral Instruction League were established to develop an alternative to rote-learning of Bible stories as the sole form of moral instruction in schools. Progressives advocated ‘character’ building in an attempt to disconnect moral education from religion (Arthur, 2010).

Today, consensus remains that the personal and social development of children is a fundamental purpose of publicly-funded education: the most recent survey of parents found that 87 percent felt that schools should *focus* on character development as well as academic study (Populus, 2013). Yet while that mission of public schooling has endured, the context of schools has vastly changed over this time period especially in the last two decades. In 1988 when it was first written into national legislation that schools should promote the ‘spiritual, moral, social and cultural’ (SMSC) development of pupils, twice as many Britons were regular churchgoers; shops still closed on Sundays; and the networks that would become the Internet were still being connected. Today, the world surrounding children and forming their character is radically different, but there has been no substantial change to either the definitions of ‘SMSC’ or the support schools receive to provide for these forms of development.

This introduction provides a historical overview of the situation of SMSC in the education policies of the constituent parts of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), and outlines the external changes that set a new scene for SMSC today.

2. Where did SMSC come from, and why?

The 1944 Education Act gave local education authorities the duty to contribute towards ‘the spiritual, moral, mental, and physical development of the community’. This duty came under the heading: ‘Stages and purposes of statutory system of education’.¹ The Education Reform Act of 1988, which brought a new national curriculum to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, similarly stated that it must be one which ‘promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society’. Additionally, prior to devolution and the

development of their own national curricula, SMSC was embodied in Wales by the supplementary Curriculum Cymreig, and in Northern Ireland by 'Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage' (Wyse et al, 2012).

Meanwhile, in Scotland (which has always set its own education policy) SMSC existed partially in the curriculum, but was mostly the duty of schools to define. The Education Act of 1980 recognised that local education authorities had the right to apportion capital 'to such educational purposes, mental or physical, moral or social, as fit ... having regard to the public interest and to existing conditions, social and educational'. As local authorities had responsibility for all decisions regarding curriculum and the governance of schools, this amounted to a declaration that they were fit to take into account social and moral purposes in the design and monitoring of schools.

With SMSC established as a goal of schooling, it was naturally a focus when Ofsted was introduced in England in 1992. The new Chief Inspector was given a duty to keep the Secretary of State informed about the 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at those schools' in England. The omission of the 'mental' and 'physical' was presumably made since these were sufficiently covered through the national curriculum. Inspectors reported on SMSC alongside pupils' attitudes and behaviour (and later from 2004–8, alongside a host of other personal attributes).

1992, however, also saw the introduction of league tables of GCSE results in England, which created an alternative focus for school leaders aside from the inspection framework. Additionally, the weight borne by the stipulation for SMSC shifted as other requirements were added to the national education framework. These additions included, from 1997, the national Literacy and Numeracy strategies; in 2002 the introduction of a statutory curriculum for Citizenship education in Key Stages 3 and 4, which includes a focus on social and moral responsibility and community, as well as new programmes for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and environmental education (topics built into the Scottish curriculum); and in 2007 the introduction of a duty on schools to promote community cohesion. With attention focused on what would best progress students' academic learning, improving 'behaviour' became the primary purpose of personal and social interventions, with the Steer Reports labelling disruptive behaviour as a key hindrance to productive learning (DfES 2005, 2009).

The period 1988 to 2012 therefore saw SMSC everywhere, and potentially nowhere. It was at the very heart of the national curriculum, and yet what it actually constituted in schools remained unclear. Even inspectors, it appears, did not quite know what or how to look for SMSC: a synthesis for the 2010 Ofsted Annual Report indicated that judgments for SMSC were almost always in line with those for 'Behaviour,' and rarely fell below 'Good' (Ofsted, 2010). As we will now see, however, capturing what SMSC is and where and how it happens is an elusive art, which has yet to find standardised form across the UK.

3. The current situation: SMSC around the UK

As each of the UK nations has developed their approaches to policy, they provide an opportunity to contrast different approaches to situating SMSC-type goals within the stipulations for school education.

England

In England, the 2012 revisions to Ofsted introduced judgments regarding SMSC made in relation to the four key aspects of the new inspection framework: achievement of pupils, quality of teaching, behaviour and safety of pupils, and quality of leadership and management (DfE, 2012). The overall rating of SMSC is based on both how well each of these areas contributes to SMSC (provision), and a verdict on the development of current pupils (outcomes). To aid this judgment, descriptors were provided of what could be expected of pupils in each of the four domains. However, the same descriptors apply to primary and secondary, leaving judgments of sufficient progress or standards to the individual inspector.

The place of SMSC at the heart of education is still reflected in both the current and the forthcoming (from September 2014) National Curriculum, included in the purpose of schooling stated at the start of the document. Cultural education is reiterated as a purpose of study for two subject areas – English and the Arts – but in the document as a whole SMSC goals are not integrated into the learning standards within subjects. Recent guidance indicates that care is required to ensure that the meeting of curriculum standards equates with the kind of deep learning which promotes SMSC development. A recent study by Ofsted on the situation of religious studies (RS) makes a key recommendation for schools to ‘ensure that learning in RE has a stronger focus on deepening pupils’ understanding of the nature, diversity and impact of religion and belief in the contemporary world’ (Ofsted, 2013).

For better or worse, guidance concerning how to create this depth is not forthcoming at the national level. In a recent publication of departmental advice on SMSC for independent schools, the additions appear focused on assuaging concerns that newer ‘independent’ schools (including Free Schools and academies) might promote extremist or imbalanced views to pupils, as opposed to a deepening engagement with the relationship between SMSC standards and teaching and learning (DfE, 2013). For independent schools – and all schools – this kind of preventative rather than promotional role may be the appropriate one for government to take, but it makes it all the more important that time and resources are given to bodies, networks and schools themselves to do the real work of integrating SMSC into their curriculum.

Scotland

An example of what an integrated curriculum might look like comes in the form of Scotland’s Curriculum for Excellence, published in 2004 and formally implemented in 2010–11. As an ‘aims-based curriculum’, it is shaped by the vision that students in Scotland should become ‘successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, and effective contributors’. Several of these aims blend academic, social and personal outcomes, and the curriculum as a whole integrates social and cultural learning goals across various learning areas. In addition, learning areas are defined in terms of eight subject/content areas, one of which is ‘religious and moral education’. The ‘experiences and outcomes’ for this area encourage learning beyond the school and can be shared between subjects, though are mostly designed by expert teachers of ‘religious, moral and philosophical studies’, a new subject configuration in Scotland.

Schools in Scotland are not inspected specifically for their promotion of personal, social, or moral development. The school inspection framework, revised after consultation in 2010, is based on a range of Quality Indicators which include the requirement for schools to have appropriate values and aims, and to promote positive attitudes in students (specifically to social and cultural diversity).

Northern Ireland

Similarly, the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in Northern Ireland enquires into schools' pastoral care of students with respect to their personal development, but the inspection framework makes no specific reference to the nature of this development. Instead, in Northern Ireland elements of SMSC are written into the more formal parts of the national curriculum. In the current curriculum (introduced in 2009) each Key Stage has an associated set of 'learning areas' and 'skills and capabilities'. These include 'Thinking Skills and Personal Capabilities' (TS&PC) which are described as 'the ability to think both critically and creatively and to develop personal and inter-personal skills'. This set of capabilities, which encompass many similar terms which make up the definitions of SMSC, is said to be 'at the heart of the revised curriculum from Foundation to KS4'. A new set of cross-curricular thematic units help to create a space for this learning. The introduction of these units, called in Key Stages 3 and 4 'Learning for Life and Work', has led to the creation of curriculum materials for themes such as spiritual awareness and cultural understanding.² As these units are not assessed, however, there is concern that they are low on the priorities of many leaders and run the danger of being shoe-horned into existing curriculum plans.

Wales

In the 2008 National Curriculum for Wales, the cultural and spiritual themes once represented by the supplementary curriculum have become dissipated. The focus is on young people as 'learners', as opposed to whole, developing individuals. To cover required personal skills, the curriculum framework has sections for 'Personal & Social Education' and 'Religious Education' separate from the academic subjects, each with an associated framework arranged by age. Wales is unusual in this respect in defining age-based outcomes in personal and social areas, although there is some overlap with the non-statutory requirements for PSHE in England. There is no description of moral and spiritual development as distinct from Religious Education.

In a legacy of the former curriculum, the Welsh national inspectorate Estyn includes in its framework the provision for health and wellbeing in a school, 'including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development'. Additionally, Quality Indicators of student wellbeing direct inspectors to signs of students' 'social and life skills', and 'community involvement and decision-making'. Beyond this, as in England, there is no further guidance for schools or inspectors as to how to make these judgments. The thematic reports produced by Estyn over the past ten years include nothing on SMSC development.³

In different ways therefore, in all four parts of the UK a general prescription for SMSC lies either in the national curriculum and/or the

school inspection framework. The two are never entirely aligned in their language, however, leaving space either for schools to interpret terms – or potentially for aspects of SMSC to fall through the gaps.

4. Why SMSC and not something else?

Given the differences in the four national curricula, is it justified to maintain SMSC in this united form? On the one hand, SMSC is just one of the formulations that provide a ‘balancing function’ to inspection and accountability requirements dominated by performance measures, supporting holistic development alongside the mastery of specific subject knowledge and skills. However, looking across the four curricula highlights that there is more to this holistic development than SMSC: there are important overlaps with critical thinking, personal and identity development, and wellbeing. Important questions remain about the extent to which SMSC can be fully conceptualised and structured in schools without attendance to these other aspects, particularly in relation to the later teenage stages of education.

On the other hand, these specific four dimensions (S, M, S, and C) are arguably of a different order to these other areas, partly arising from subject-based learning, but producing in combination wellbeing, identity development, and critical thinking. For example, the process of cultural education might be informed by study of Languages or Arts; learning which is valuable in and of itself (in contributing to an understanding of the beliefs and meaning-making of others) over and above the value of acquiring certain skills and qualifications. A similar knowledge and skill base could underpin ‘moral’, ‘social’ and ‘spiritual’ development, but it is worth considering whether SMSC is sufficiently integrated and visible in the curriculum for subject-based learning to drive its development. Ultimately, while definitions and the conceptual relationships between SMSC and other subjects differ on the margins amongst the four parts of the UK, none contest their importance, despite each placing greater emphasis on academic progression as the purpose of education.

This will to reach beyond narrow measures of progress is replicated internationally, and voiced at the highest levels. The highly influential OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has a specific focus on learning and skills, but nevertheless includes special sections to investigate personal qualities such as drive and motivation, recognising the interplay between personal development and academic learning (OECD, 2013a). The OECD is also attempting to direct global attention to the social and critical skills needed for a successful life, starting with ‘collaborative problem-solving’ in 2015 and ‘global competence’ in 2018 (OECD, 2013b).

Other multilateral bodies have gone further in defining the purpose of education as a moral and social one. In 1996 UNESCO produced a vision for 21st century education, which urged that the aims of universal schooling must include ‘Learning to Live Together’ and ‘Learning to Be’ (UNESCO, 1996). These goals now find more solid form in efforts to establish global metrics for universal education: the Learning Metrics task force will seek to track, along with foundational goals such as literacy and numeracy, the extent to which students in different countries are developing to be ‘Citizens of the World’ and recognises social and emotional

learning and culture and the arts as key learning domains (UNESCO/ Brooking, 2013).

Noting these trends, we have to ask the question: as global competition to educate citizens heats up, why has a more expansive conception of the purpose and function of education become more, not less relevant?

5. The changing context for SMSC

New challenges: the demands of modern life

Globalisation, population growth and increased migration in search of work (often termed population ‘churn’), environmental disruption, the spread of information and communication technologies, the western shift from a manufacturing to a services economy: these changes in the global environment and interconnected fate of nations filter down to people’s daily lives, affecting the types of knowledge, skills, and capabilities that they need to have a successful and fulfilling life. Young people today have access to more information, opinions, and media from across the world than even their most affluent counterparts in past decades.

Witnessing this more demanding environment, the field of psychology and human development has got to grips with describing the challenge this poses to young people and adults (Kegan, 1994; Gardner, 2009). When SMSC was first written into school legislation, there was very little conception of a scientific underpinning of these terms. Now, there is potential to outline trajectories of SMSC development. We understand more clearly than ever how certain habits and knowledge develop and interact with our environment to produce behaviour (Fischer and Bidell, 2006), as well as about our ability – or lack thereof – to be reasonable in the face of dilemmas (Ariely, 2008). We know how education interacts with that individual development, and that certain kinds of complex and long-term thinking must be promoted during adolescence (Selman, 2003). In other words, we have an opportunity to demand more of SMSC education.

In order to serve young people well, schools need not only to provide them with a stable environment in which to develop positive behaviours, but, as far as possible, to also introduce them to content and forms of thinking which will equip them to tackle complex problems with moral and cultural dimensions. And the space for self-development and spirituality needs to be actively protected if it is to survive.

Below, we look briefly at each dimension of SMSC in turn and at how societal changes have created new demands and opportunities.

Spiritual development

Current UK context increases the case for separating spiritual development and religious education, while giving each a place in schools. In the last census, one quarter of the UK population reported having no religion, 40 percent of whom were under 25 (ONS, 2011). The protection of other spaces for spiritual development – and avoiding a default materialist stance – may be supported by findings that individuals who favour extrinsic goals and values (anything which can be quantified or demonstrated) are prone to lower wellbeing (Kasser and Kanner, 2003). While not necessarily connected, this is a time when child wellbeing remains

low (Unicef, 2013), and the number of adolescents in the UK diagnosed with depression has almost doubled in recent decades (Hagell, 2013). If spiritual development is to remain a core part of the mission of schools, it warrants a serious conversation about the relationship between spirituality and wellbeing in the development of young people.

Moral development

Moral development and education similarly looks different in a society that is increasingly secular and multi-faith, in two specific ways. Firstly, there is evidence to demonstrate that despite differences in beliefs, there is robust agreement that parents expect their child's school to promote a set of values (if not a fixed set of 'British values'⁴): a recent national survey of over 1,000 parents found that 81 percent felt that schools should have a statement of core values that it attempts to instil in pupils (Populus, 2013). In other words, schools can be confident in developing their own understanding of values and promoting them.

Secondly, moral development is under renewed scrutiny in the debate over the role of character in determining young people's life chances. Character – sometimes reduced to 'grit' but also comprising empathy, self-regulation, commitment, and self-direction – has been identified as a key factor in social mobility, helping certain individuals to 'buck the trend' of their socio-economic background (Tough, 2012; Lexmond and Grist, 2010). Character has emerged as a key goal of formal education as it has been demonstrated that character can be 'built' and grown (Lexmond and Reeves, 2009). In some countries, notably Singapore, South Korea and China, the development of character is already a key focus of national education.⁵ Similar trends are visible in certain schools: the KIPP charter school network in the USA has introduced 'character report cards' in a bid to put the development of character on a par with academic learning (KIPP, undated).

Social development

In comparison with moral development, social development might seem like an uncontested and unchanging arena. Fostering community and cohesion has long been a goal of schools, and in many ways the social context of young people has changed little over the past 25 years. Just over 80 percent of the UK population live in urban areas, a slight increase from 78 percent in 1988 (World Bank, 2013); economically, little has changed: income inequality and limited social mobility remain features. In the *virtual* space, however, social interaction has changed radically.

What is the role of schools in preparing children for participation in this world? Education systems have reacted in different ways to the coming of the internet. Several US states have passed measures to secure severe punishment for cyberbullying (Hinduja and Patchin, 2013), while Scandinavia has led the way in offering 'safe' social networks such as the Finnish Petra's Planet⁶ to scaffold children's online play and provide induction into online communication. Meanwhile, in England, although a number of initiatives provide advice on online safety,⁷ national education frameworks have yet to take account of social development in the internet sphere: the afore-mentioned recent official update on SMSC makes no use of the words internet, digital, or online (DfE, 2013).

Cultural development

Finally, cultural education must also take account of a new and increasingly complex landscape. More and more children live among and between multiple cultures and, as a consequence, develop multiple identities turning them into what has been termed ‘cosmopolitan citizens’ (Osler and Starkey, 2005). England’s urban areas in particular have become more ethnically diverse in the past ten years, but all UK regions have experienced similar changes (ONS, 2011). But young people need to be prepared to understand not just discrete and concrete ‘other cultures’, but have the tools to come to terms with the global super-culture developing online. To compose a comfortable identity from these sources means being prepared not just to appreciate different cultures, but to really understand the nature of what *culture* is – how it forms and how it changes, and the shaping force it has on our lives.

New opportunities: the social and emotional nature of learning

A new societal context seems to call for a whole host of experiences and opportunities for young people, placing high demands on schools. Fortunately, we can now say definitively that planning for the best SMSC provision and the best learning environment should be a both/and, not an either/or. Developments in the science of learning have demonstrated the vital role of emotions and social influence in both academic learning and personal development (CERI, 2010). Caring about what one is learning; feeling some kind of connection and human interest; or a strong sense of purpose or real outcome, make for engaging learning experiences that transform and motivate pupils. This helps us to understand that the stuff of SMSC development – challenge and engagement with authentic questions and problems – also provide potent contexts for learning.

Several successful school models are based on this understanding – integrating the teaching of school subjects and the development of personal and social competences.⁸ It does appear that the opportunity for decentralised school design in places such as the US and parts of the UK is at the root of some promising examples of this integration (eg Seider, 2012).

Conclusion: what could SMSC be?

In the discussion above, we outlined some of the changes in the external conditions and in our understanding of learning and development which create a new context for young people’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In line with these changes, we need to think about reviewing or redesigning existing approaches aimed at promoting that development.

The changing context of society and the pressures to better prepare young people in the UK for that context explains why the rationale for the inclusion of a ‘something other than academic attainment’ category in national curriculum documents and inspection and accountability frameworks is stronger than ever. In England, a tightening of the accountability regime and raised expectations of young people’s academic performance at every age may be justified, but may also constrain all but the most confident schools from focusing on anything else. Of course, the most successful schools will successfully manage both, with a strong ethos that ensures that attainment and wider goals are mutually supportive.

However, many others may abandon or deprioritise those aspects of SMSC which are challenging, time consuming and difficult to connect with curriculum goals. Although the current methodology for inspecting schools' SMSC provision may be insufficiently robust, its inclusion is still important.

However, the language for SMSC should not be seen as sacrosanct. It has arisen through a particular set of historical circumstances, has always been different in Scotland, and is diverging in Wales and Northern Ireland. It has never been fully detailed or nuanced for different developmental levels of schooling. Now may be an opportune moment to disentangle the four strands of SMSC – the spiritual, moral, social and cultural – better understand what, where, when and why certain strands are at most risk of being marginalised in schools, and propose some actions to address these imbalances and strengthen the purpose and promotion of SMSC for all young people.

Endnotes

1. Thanks to Ted Huddleston for his insights on the 1944 and 1988 Acts.
2. See: www.nicurriculum.org.uk/connected_learning/thematic_units
3. See: www.estyn.gov.uk/english/thematic-reports/recent-reports
4. In 2006, it was proposed that UK schools should promote a set of 'core British values' in citizenship classes. The idea of promoting a singly 'fixed' set was met with mixed reaction. See 'Reaction to UK 'core values' idea', BBC News, 15 May 2006. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/4772059.stm
5. See, for example a speech by the Minister for Education in Singapore, on 'Character and Values as "the most critical part" of education: 'Keynote Address by Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education, 12 September 2012', Singapore: Ministry of Education. Available at: www.moe.gov.sg/media/speeches/2012/09/12/keynote-address-by-mr-heng-swee-keat-at-wps-2012.php
6. On reforms in China, including the development of moral education for teachers, and inclusion of 'ethics' as one of the five quality indicators of schools, see: 'Education Special', China Daily, 27 June 2013. Available at: www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-06/27/content_16673634.htm
7. On the place of character education in South Korea see: <http://asiasociety.org/education/learning-world/south-korean-education>
8. Petra's Planet www.petrasplanet.com/site
9. Examples include Digizen, part of the NGO Childnet International: www.digizen.org/ and the UK Council for Child Internet Safety, a government initiative: www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis
10. Examples from the United States include Big Picture Learning (www.bigpicture.org), the Coalition of Essential Schools (www.essentialschools.org), and Expeditionary Learning (http://elschools.org), all large-scale networks of schools who endeavour to provide environments and curricula that tackle real-world issues with moral and cultural dimensions, and subscribe to a holistic philosophy of pupil development. Additionally, their schools typically outperform district schools with a similar pupil intake on state-wide assessments.

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Appendix 2: Analysis of Ofsted inspections of SMSC provision in primary and secondary schools

Jen Lexmond

1. Methodology

To support the RSA's Investigation into SMSC, Ofsted provided us with a sample of the 4102 Section 5 Inspection Reports inspected between 1 September 2012 and 30 April 2013. All reports with passages containing the following search criteria 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural' were captured from the following schools:

- Outstanding Primary schools (126 out of 297)
- Inadequate Primary schools (67 out of 235)
- Outstanding Secondary schools (20 out of 72)
- Inadequate Secondary schools (20 out of 72)

An initial analysis has been conducted of a sample of ten schools from each category owing to time and capacity (for a total of 40 schools). Information has been captured, with specific reference and attention paid to the following aspects which are of most relevance to the investigation:

- the quality of the SMSC provision at the school
- the quality of leadership and management at the school (information on leadership and management was deemed relevant because SMSC provision is considered part of the responsibility of Leadership and Management under current Ofsted regulation)
- the extra/curricular subject(s) and style through which SMSC is provided or taught at the school
- key quotes regarding the Ofsted inspector's reporting of SMSC provision at the school

2. Descriptive analysis

Overall, there is both a strong association between Outstanding schools and good quality SMSC provision, with no examples of Outstanding schools assessed with poor quality SMSC.

'The leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders at all levels, including governance, have a shared vision for continuous improvement ... The leadership and management of the quality of teaching have been highly effective in improving the quality of provision. Teachers are keen to share and learn from existing good practice and there is a tangible drive for further improvement ... Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is central to the school's work. This is addressed and

embedded across the curriculum and is also supported by the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer.’

Meols Cop High School (Outstanding)

‘The leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher leads the school with passion, drive and energy. Together, senior leaders constantly build upon the school’s many strengths. They receive whole-hearted support from staff ... High quality teaching ensures that pupils’ outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted in interesting and absorbing ways.’

Bede Community Primary School (Outstanding)

By contrast, a number of ‘inadequate’ schools received positive or satisfactory assessments on SMSC, for example:

‘School leaders’ satisfactory promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures pupils get on well and support one another, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity.’

Aylesford Primary School (Inadequate)

Additionally, a significant number of schools with poor leadership were assessed as delivering good quality SMSC, but this was usually followed by a negative comment about wider skills development:

‘The leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders at all levels have not ensured sufficient improvement since the previous inspection and key issues from that time have not been successfully tackled. The curriculum contributes well to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but is ineffective in raising achievement in literacy and numeracy.’

Kenyngton Manor Primary School (Inadequate)

‘The leadership and management require improvement ... The inadequate quality of teaching and weaknesses in past leadership indicate that previous performance management arrangements lacked impact ... The curriculum does much to foster pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but does not support the development of pupils’ basic skills well enough.’

Hightown Primary School (Inadequate)

In both cases, poor leadership and management and poor curriculum do not seem to inhibit the delivery of satisfactory SMSC, although there are no examples or evidence of what that SMSC development looks like in either case. It is difficult to draw conclusions from such examples, and from the relatively small sample of schools analysed. It is not clear, in these examples, whether good quality SMSC can be delivered in the absence of good leadership and wider skills development, or if a ‘vagueness’ or difficulty to measure SMSC provision and outcomes may be resulting in SMSC becoming an area with which to praise schools who are otherwise failing to deliver. It is the case that schools in challenging areas focus too much on the ‘personal’ curriculum and have low academic expectations.

Approaches to SMSC provision

Inspectors referenced SMSC provided through:	
Whole curriculum/teaching	23
Music, dance, arts	13
RE	2
English	3
Sport	5
Science	1
Philosophy	1
Business studies	2
Assemblies	4
Outdoors/extracurricular	17
Behaviour code	3
Parental engagement	7
International links	2

Ofsted inspectors saw SMSC being provided in a variety of ways. The most frequently cited was through a ‘whole curriculum’ approach, where inspectors noted SMSC being addressed both through a range of different subjects as well as through the style and approach of the teaching staff:

‘Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is skilfully mapped against the curriculum ensuring that pupils enrich their lives with a wide range of experiences.’

Highampton Community Primary School (Outstanding)

‘Teaching makes a very positive contribution to students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in supporting students in reflecting, working well together and listening carefully to others.’

Treviglas Community College (Outstanding)

‘There are good examples of the promotion of students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For instance, in a Year 8 drama lesson, students worked enthusiastically together to create scenes in a story of a missing teenage girl and carefully considered the issues about those living in disadvantaged circumstances. In a Year 13 religious studies lesson, students vigorously debated the moral issues involved in making decisions about abortion.’

Bicester Community College (Inadequate)

‘The development of students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills is evident in lessons. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, where students discussed Browning’s poetry, they developed a deepened understanding of the culture and historical context of the poem’s setting. In a Year 9 sociology lesson, students discussed GCSE-level questions regarding the morality of gender and stereotypes well.’

Little Ilford School (Outstanding)

This suggests that many schools feel that SMSC education should be, is most easily, or is most effectively delivered when it is integrated into the existing curriculum or through the specific practices of teachers and support staff, and the wider ethos of the school environment. It also highlights that the majority of schools do not deliver SMSC education through ‘bolt-on’ methods on their, for example weekly or monthly ‘SMSC classes’, although a significant number do use assemblies or special events to supplement existing provision. It also suggests that the majority of schools do not use or administer tests or assessments of SMSC development. This may be reflective of the Ofsted emphasis on schools evidencing their provision of SMSC education, rather than showing improvements to SMSC related outcomes. It also reflects, given that SMSC qualities are hard to measure regardless, the lack of a recognised structure or validation for SMSC development and outcomes.

The second most frequently cited form of provision was through learning outside of the classroom, or provision being delivered outside of the regular school day (ie lunch time, before school or after school clubs) as well as outside of the traditional school environment (ie special events or field trips involving travel away from school, outdoor activities on or beyond the school grounds).

‘Opportunities to find out about a wide range of topics and themes, along with many visits and after-school classes, contribute to the pupils’ outstanding achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.’

‘Planned activities include opportunities to undertake visits and to learn outside the classroom, and themes which are relevant to the interests and needs of the pupils. As such, these make an outstanding contribution to the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.’

Our Lady Queen of Heaven RC Primary School (Outstanding)

‘The outstanding curriculum provides an extensive range of educational visits which provide a practical and first-hand context for pupils’ learning. These experiences inspire pupils of all abilities, promote strong relationships and are highly effective in promoting pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.’

Aston Fence Junior and Infant School (Outstanding)

‘National materials are used to support pupils’ personal and social education, and assemblies highlight the themes, such as the current focus on ‘trust’. The school is committed to making improved use of its attractive grounds, for instance as a resource for artwork.’

Hightown Primary School (Inadequate)

‘The school makes suitable provision for the pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of diversity. Teaching programmes are increasingly interesting as topics link learning between subjects more closely. Pupils greatly enjoy visiting the local ‘forest school’, which develops their understanding of the natural world.’

St Clare’s Catholic Primary School (Inadequate)

The high instance of extracurricular and outdoor activities in SMSC education provision suggests that there may be something important or effective about experiential learning for building SMSC skills and capacities, with pupils reportedly responding very well to opportunities for first hand learning, practical contexts, and themes that are relevant to pupils' own interests and needs.

There were also many references to subject specific SMSC provision, with the Arts being the most common. In the 40-school sample, there were 13 references to SMSC provision through music, dance, art, and drama.

'The school takes steps to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is done well through activities such as dance and music.'

Chaulden Junior School (Inadequate)

'The school holds the Artsmark award in recognition for its excellent promotion of art, drama and music. These and other daily events, such as assemblies, make a significant contribution to the excellent promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.'

Ingoldisthorpe Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School (Outstanding)

However, this final excerpt illustrates one Ofsted inspector's view that in one school, whilst the arts are an effective conduit for building cultural awareness as part of broader SMSC education, it was not being carried through into other aspects of the school day and school curriculum. There is perhaps some evidence then of schools pigeon-holing SMSC education into specific subjects:

'The wide range of extra-curricular activities is popular and promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. An awareness of culture is encouraged within the arts but not more widely.'

Colne Valley Specialist Arts College (Inadequate)

Less frequently cited subjects in the schools sample included sport, English Literature, Philosophy, Business Studies, RE, and Science. In some of these cases, schools seem to be doing precisely what is mentioned above – addressing SMSC effectively through one or two subjects, but not across the whole curriculum. Ofsted has no recommended strategy for whether schools should provide SMSC through subject specific or whole curriculum approaches. A deeper, comparative analysis of type of SMSC provision (whole curriculum v subject specific) and quality of SMSC provision (according to Ofsted assessment) could provide more insight here on which approach works the best.

Several schools were recognised for addressing SMSC through assemblies, through the creation of behaviour codes or codes of conduct, through effective parental and community engagement, or through international cultural exchange.

This suggests that there are a multitude of valid ways to provide good SMSC education in primary and secondary school settings, and similarly that there is no 'silver bullet' approach to be discovered. In most of these

cases, schools providing quality SMSC seem to be drawing on their existing strengths, whether through making use of extensive school grounds, exploiting international connections, or links with local businesses.

3. Thematic analysis

SMSC, or spiritual, moral, social, cultural education?

In the majority of cases, Ofsted inspectors report on only one aspect of SMSC, although they are required to assess all of them. This may reflect the area that they feel is most significant. It is very rare for an inspector to make reference to more than one of these areas; for example in Enfield County School, an Ofsted inspector chooses to focus on provision of cultural education:

‘The curriculum makes a particularly strong contribution to students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The combination of specialist language college status and International School accreditation provides a wealth of opportunities for students to learn about different cultures.’

Enfield County School (secondary) (Outstanding)

At St Benedict’s Roman Catholic school, the inspector has highlighted aspects of social and behavioural development:

‘The wide range of clubs at lunchtime and after school is well supported by pupils. These and the broad curriculum make a strong contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through developing enquiring minds, tolerance and concern for others.’

St Benedict’s Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided Middle School (Inadequate)

In this final example below, a call for improvement to SMSC is based solely on an assessment of poor pupil behaviour and insufficient observance and enforcement of a behaviour code, where no reference is made to cultural or spiritual education, either positive or negative:

‘... behaviour in and around school, due to inconsistent application of the behaviour code and adults’ unclear expectations, means that the promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development requires improvement.’

Heatherbrook Primary School (Inadequate)

SMSC and academic attainment

There are a significant number of examples of schools where Ofsted has assessed school curriculum as adequately contributing to SMSC but not to overall academic progress or the development of other core skills like literacy and numeracy. Some Ofsted inspectors have concluded that this is undermining equal opportunities and fairness, concepts sometimes cited by Ofsted inspectors as relevant to adequate SMSC provision because SMSC is concerned with the promotion of good values, diversity, and equality.

‘Most teaching makes a secure contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, letters from pupils in Brazil provided Year 4 pupils with a clear insight into the lives of people in another continent. The curriculum fosters pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development adequately. It does not ensure pupils make the academic progress they are capable of and so, equal opportunities are inadequately promoted.’

Silverdale Primary School

This leaves questions as to the boundaries of SMSC provision and the extent to which wider issues of pupil progress, attainment, and social background are relevant to SMSC itself.

For example, in another case, good quality SMSC outcomes (rather than provision) are seen to underpin good and safe learning environments and support academic progress:

‘Students’ excellent behaviour and positive attitudes help them learn well. Students feel very safe in school and are not concerned about any form of bullying.’

Ellowes Hall Sports College (secondary) (Outstanding)

In this case good SMSC development of students is described as an influence on, or even a prerequisite for, academic attainment.

In other cases, Ofsted inspection assessment of SMSC seems to be based on pupils’ explicit understanding of how a school teaches SMSC, as opposed to whether the inspector feels and sees evidence of provision and development. For example, in the case of Denes High School (124826) (Inadequate), an Ofsted inspector finds that:

‘The curriculum includes a broad choice of academic and work-related courses. Pupils talked enthusiastically about philosophy, music and a range of enrichment activities . . . Partnerships with local businesses and extensive use of the school’s facilities promote positive engagement with the wider community.’

Whereas the provision of ‘philosophy, music, and a range of enrichment activities’ maps on well to this report’s findings on how schools are providing SMSC development, in this case the Ofsted assessment concludes with:

‘However, when asked, they showed little understanding of the meaning of spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education or how this was taught.’

It is not clear how important this excerpt is in the overall assessment, but it does throw up questions about what is important when it comes to SMSC: the provision of relevant curriculum, activities, and enrichment opportunities; the outcomes of positive behavior and cultural understanding in pupils; or the conscious understanding on the part of pupils that education is about more than the development of purely academic skills and knowledge.

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