



## **PASTORAL PROGRAMME & SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL (SMSC) POLICY**

This policy applies across the College at all age ranges including Early Years, Prep and Senior Schools.

St. Columba's College is conducted in the educational tradition of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. As such the school community becomes a sanctuary for young people, a place where they feel protected and welcomed, a place where students sense the compassion which motivates those who care for them, and where they are known, valued, and treasured. We strive to create an atmosphere of understanding and generosity, which awakens in young people a sense of community and a desire to serve others.

Policy owners: Assistant Head: Staff and Student Wellbeing  
Deputy Head (Pastoral) Prep  
Assistant Head: Student Formation

Date reviewed: October 2025

Date of next review: September 2026 (A year earlier than schedule due to changes in statutory PSHE guidance from the government coming into force 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026)

Ratify by Governors: No

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## **Section 1 Overview**

This policy sets out the school's aims, principles and procedures for the delivery of Spiritual, Moral, Social & Cultural Education and Citizenship. It reflects the values and philosophy of the College in relation to the teaching and learning of these elements. It gives a framework to which all staff, teaching and non-teaching, work giving guidance on planning, teaching and assessment. This policy is intended to be used in conjunction with philosophical and theological planning documents of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart in the development, delivery and assessment of the entire pastoral programme. In doing so it accords with and actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.

## **Section 2 Aims**

St Columba's aims to provide a holistic education, one of head and heart. As a Brothers of the Sacred Heart school and part of a global network of schools, it draws on the writings of its founder, Father Andre Coindre, and other foundational documents from the institution and scripture. Staff are invited to be 'Partners in Mission' and that named document is the practical resource for good practice in the spirit of the institution. The education strives to create a sanctuary for young people to learn, make mistakes in a safe environment and flourish as global citizens, embodying the core values of the charism –

- An Open Heart - knowing they are loved unconditionally in the Catholic community
- Respect – knowing that they and their neighbours are made in God's image and have a responsibility to serve others
- Missionary Spirit – having the desire and means to action their love in the community
- Compassion and Trust – developing a sense of identity and vocation, and mature relationships in a safe environment
- Holistic Perspective – fostering the spiritual, moral, personal and academic formation in the development of young people with their families and the wider community.

The holistic pastoral programme aims to find a way to live them out and to bring them to life in the classroom and community. In this way we seek to produce young people of character who are self-reliant, self-motivated, and exhibit self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence in a fast-changing world. Pupils are actively encouraged to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understanding how they can contribute positively to the lives of those living and working in the community and to society more widely. Pupils are supported academically, emotionally and spiritually to achieve their potential. All pupils, regardless of background, faith or ability, are welcomed and supported in the Catholic community.

This policy is also grounded in the principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST). Pupils are encouraged to live out these principles in their daily lives and through acts of service. The key principles of CST include:

- Human Dignity - Every person is created in God's image and must be treated with respect and love.
- The Common Good – We seek to build a community where all people can flourish.
- Solidarity - We stand alongside those in need and promote unity and peace.
- Subsidiarity - Decisions should be made at the most local and responsible level, encouraging active participation.

- Option for the Poor and Vulnerable – We have a special duty to care for those most in need.
- Stewardship of Creation – We respect and protect God’s creation.
- Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers – Work is a way to participate in God’s creation and contribute to the common good.

These principles are embedded across our curriculum, pastoral systems, co-curriculum (SOCS) and enrichment days, guiding how pupils interact with one another in the community and engage with the wider world.

### **Section 3      Delivery**

These core values and aims are delivered through the pastoral programme as follows:

#### Pastoral Tutor Period (PSHE/SMSC)

These periods are held twice a week in the Senior school. Periods are divided between assemblies, speakers and tutor/student-led activities and discussions, according to the Programme Overview Document,

Form Tutors deliver the Pastoral Programme in Tutor lesson. Each week there is a key theme that reflects the statutory Government guidance for PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education) and RSE (Relationships, Sex Education). The themes are communicated to the parents at the start of the year. The Pastoral Programme Coordinator has responsibility to ensure resources are delivered effectively and in an engaging and age-appropriate manner. Students are assessed on their engagement and understanding of these key themes in a half-termly quiz or knowledge recap. Content of lessons include information about the law, current debates and students have a chance to reflect upon and debate these issues in their Form Group. Each student in the Senior School should research and deliver a ‘What in the World’ presentation to their Form Group about a current issue or affair taking place in the world.

Form tutors and those coordinating specific themes in the Pastoral Programme are responsible for providing academic challenge, as well as ensuring it is inclusive and age appropriate. When exploring contemporary and moral issues, staff maintain professional boundaries, carefully monitor discussions and answer pupils’ questions in an age-appropriate manner.

The Prep School follows a separate pastoral programme which is overseen by the PSHE Lead and the Pastoral Deputy Head. The programme is delivered by Form Teachers throughout the week, through curriculum-based lessons and weekly theme activities, and is further strengthened by weekly assemblies. Form Teachers intentionally adapt this programme to meet the specific needs and context of the children in their class, ensuring it is accessible, relevant and responsive. Pupils are assessed through half-termly assessments on Wayground and will also self-assess at the end of each topic to track their own progress and personal development. The PSHE Lead supports staff by providing age-appropriate, inclusive resources and by monitoring delivery and impact. Pupils deliver a ‘In The News’ presentation on a topic of their choice.

### Opting Out from PSHE and RSE Provision

At St Columba's College, the delivery of the Pastoral Programme, including Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), is carefully designed to be age-appropriate, inclusive, and reflective of both the Catholic tradition and the fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance. In line with statutory government guidance and the Independent School Standards, parents and guardians are informed of the content and themes of the PSHE and RSE curriculum at the start of each academic year to ensure transparency and partnership in education. While the College encourages full participation in these programmes to promote holistic development, intellectual, spiritual, moral, social, and cultural- parents may exercise their right to withdraw their child from components of sex education as part of the RSE curriculum that are non-statutory but not relationships education, in accordance with current government guidance. Such requests should be made directly to the Head and are managed sensitively and in dialogue with school leaders to ensure the student's welfare and learning needs continue to be met effectively. The College's approach respects parental rights while maintaining its commitment to safeguarding, inclusivity, and the promotion of positive values as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025) and the Prevent Duty 2023. Ultimately, the school seeks to balance respect for individual beliefs with its mission to educate the whole person -head and heart- in a safe, nurturing, and legally compliant environment.

### Chaplaincy and Liturgy

An education in spirituality, prayer and reflection is delivered through the liturgical and prayer life of the College. Through prayer and reflection, students are provided with an opportunity for inner-reflection and growth, in keeping with the aims of the programme. The Chaplaincy / 1821 Centre is a safe place for spiritual development. Pupils are given the opportunity to engage in pastoral workshops, prayer and discussion groups to reflect on their relationship with God and their community. Doves, Alpha, RE Ambassadors, Rosary Club and 'The Good Place' Philosophy club are examples of opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge and to develop a sense of wonder, awe, and gratitude for God's creation.

### Retreats and Enrichment Days

The College is committed to developing an effective retreat programme. This has been developed through a model of day retreats incorporating creative workshops and reflections on Christian themes in the Sixth Form and teaching group day retreats on the subject of relationships in the light of "Imago Dei". Each KS3 year group have day retreats as part of the school calendar. Their tutors accompany them on retreats. These are inclusive for students of all faiths and none, providing the chance to pause and reflect on their busy lives, Residential retreats are also offered to students.

Retreats and Enrichment Days provide the opportunity to explore ethical and moral issues in more depth, developing a conscience informed by Gospel values. They also enable pupils to develop respect and learn from people of different faiths and backgrounds as well as appreciating the richness of Catholic tradition and world cultures through first-hand and social experience.

### Service Programme

Underpinned by the core values and Catholic Social Teaching, the College has an extensive service programme (part of the SHAPE framework in the Senior School), and students are encouraged to participate at an age-appropriate level in the various House and College services available, including the following:

- a. CAFOD: the College is a strong supporter of CAFOD in the UK. Our CAFOD programme raises money and awareness through education programmes and guest speakers. The CAFOD Leaders take a prominent role in promoting social justice and creative liturgy within the school
- b. Project Respond: The College has strong ties with its sister-schools in Zambia. An annual trip to Africa provides Sixth Form students with an opportunity to assist and learn from these schools through this service programme.
- c. Recycling & Environment. The College has developed a recycling and environmental programme, that provides leadership opportunities for students
- d. Combined Cadet Force and Duke of Edinburgh Scheme. Military service is understood to be a key element of national service, and the College supports a strong contingent of boys and girls engaged in the combined cadet force. Outdoor education and the opportunity to achieve awards beyond the classroom is an essential part of our holistic offer, developing leadership, collaboration and responsibility.
- e. Chaplaincy groups, including altar serving and Eucharistic Ministers, serve the school and wider community through active involvement.
- f. Buddying & Mentoring. 6<sup>th</sup> Form students have an opportunity to develop peer mentoring skills through buddying, and peer mentoring programmes in the College. In Prep, specific year groups act as Buddies at key transition points and all Prep Six pupils select and fulfil a monitor role throughout the year.
- g. Chariry projects. The service programme is not static and responds to issues and opportunities as they arise. Many of these initiatives are student-led, especially during the season of Lent. Immersive Homeless workshops for charity and Foodbank appeals are strong traditions.
- h. Houses. Much of the service programme is delivered through the House system. Each Senior House has its own service initiatives and supports its own charities.
- i. Student Voice (Student Council among them). The College strongly endorses student voice as a way to encourage students to develop leadership skills.

### Current Affairs

The continued referencing of current affairs as part of the programme through assemblies, tutor periods, in discussion which also incorporates participation in mock elections, and the 'What in the World/In The News' programme in which students present on topical issues. There is a wide range of guest speakers visiting the school to inspire pupils to explore new ideas and cultures.

## **Section 4 Evaluation**

Evaluation of the Pastoral Programme takes place annually through a consultation process with the Heads of House (Senior), the Pastoral Programme Co-ordinator & PSHE Coordinator (Prep) and relevant members of the Leadership team who participate in the management of the pastoral programme.

The purpose of the consultation process is:

- Develop a structure in which students take an active role in the management of PSHE/SMSC.
- To examine good practice in other schools in respect to structure.
- To update and drive programme forward in general.
- To ensure the provision actively promotes British values (democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance) as rooted in Gospel and CST values of justice and respect .

Consultation process methods include:

- Meetings with Student Voice
- Online feedback
- Feedback from Heads of House
- Meeting/feedback from tutors
- Tutor/student sessions

The aims of the consultation process are:

- Consistency across Houses/tutor groups
- Ensuring high quality resources and coverage of all relevant topics, including those detailed in statutory guidance
- Management of programme by Pastoral Programme Co-ordinator
- Updating of delivery system
- Collation of resources
- Ensuring provision is age-appropriate and academically challenging
- Identifying knowledge gaps and training needs amongst tutor teams

## **Section 5 Fundamental British Values**

Rule of English Civil Law: The school's ethos and teaching, to include that of faith teaching, (see Overview Statement –Section 1) will uphold and support the rule of English civil and criminal law and students will be made aware of the differences and explore the relationship between the law of the land and religious law.

Other Cultures and Faiths: Students will be educated to respect their own culture and will be educated into an understanding, appreciation, regard and respect for other cultures and traditions and faiths in order to promote tolerance and harmony.

British Institutions and Services: through the curriculum, academic and pastoral and related activities students will be able to acquire a broad general knowledge of those institutions and services which come to define and serve the country.

Democracy: students will be educated to an understanding of why democracy is perceived within England as the fairest form of political organisation; to promote respect for democracy; understand why being involved and taking part in democracy is a good thing; and why law making on the basis of representation in Parliament is seen as better than alternative methods.

Political Indoctrination: the College will actively seek to prevent students being exposed to political indoctrination through the curriculum. This is not to say that political matters will not be discussed and debated, nor students exposed to political viewpoints, but they will not be encouraged by staff or others (for instance external speakers) to support particular partisan political viewpoints. This accords with the Government's Prevent Strategy designed to prevent radicalisation of individuals.

Protected Characteristics: within the ethos of the school and manifest within our core values and CST principles, respect for the individual is a central feature of lived practice to include those defined under this category in the Equality Education Act 2010 (See appendices).

### References

This policy has been written with reference to and in conjunction with the following policies and guidance documents;

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025
- The Prevent Duty Guidance (2023)
- Promoting Fundamental British Values as Part of SMSC in Schools (DfE, 2014)
- Equality Act 2010
- ISI Inspection Framework (2023)
- Department for Education Statutory Guidance on Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE), and Health Education – **statutory curriculum requirements coming into force from September 2026**
- Catholic Social Teaching principles and Brothers of the Sacred Heart charism documents

## Appendix 1 Protected Characteristics

1. Age: A person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32-year-olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).
2. Disability: A physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to conduct normal day-to-day activities.
3. Gender reassignment: The process of transitioning from one gender to another.
4. Marriage and civil partnership: In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. This will also be true in Scotland when the relevant legislation is brought into force. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
5. Pregnancy and maternity: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
6. Race: A group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
7. Religion and belief: Religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). A belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
8. Sex: A man or a woman.
9. Sexual orientation: Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.