

# British Values and Discovery RE

When a new initiative is announced by the Government, often a collective groan goes up across the country from over-stretched teachers, desperately trying to raise Literacy and Numeracy levels, fill in mountains of paperwork, organise trips and in some cases, maintain a life of their own.

Michael Gove's 'British Values' was no exception, causing hysterical headlines from the tabloids and concern about what it really meant.

**The Department of Education statement about British Values reads:**

'We want to create and enforce a clear and rigorous expectation on all schools to promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.'

In the Discovery RE October newsletter, Alison Harris wrote that Ofsted is asking RE leaders about British Values and their links to RE. To be clear, RE alone cannot 'do British Values', nor should it. The ideas outlined by the Department of Education are embedded in the ethos of the school in numerous ways: in their PSHE Scheme of Work, in their home-school links, in the way that adults and children conduct themselves, and so on. However, there are specific ways that Discovery RE contributes significantly to fulfilling the requirements of the 'British Values' agenda.



# Individual liberty

Discovery RE promotes the idea that individuals have freedom to choose what they believe. Woven into every enquiry is the idea that not everyone is the same. A class cannot investigate the behaviour of 'all Muslims' or 'all Christians', because not everyone within a faith will practise it in the same way. For example, a Year 4 enquiry asks, 'Do people need to go to Church to show that they are Christians?' Some Christians will choose to go to church every week and have the community of the church at the very centre of their family lives. Others will not, choosing a more esoteric approach to living their faith.

There are also the enquiries inviting children to consider: 'What is the best way that a Jew/Christian/Hindu/Sikh/Muslim can show his/her commitment to God?' Year 5 investigate the question 'How far would a Sikh go for his/her religion?' Some Sikhs choose to go to the Gurdwara, some pray at home. Some have arranged marriages, some choose not to. Through these enquiries children are given the opportunity to explore, gain knowledge and to reach an understanding that people are at liberty to choose how they express their faith and what they believe in.

# Rule of law

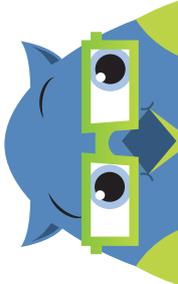
There are many examples of 'rule of law' within Discovery RE. Children are encouraged to think about the laws, commandments, expectations within a faith and how those rules would impact on their own lives as well as on the lives of the people within those religions. In Year 2, the enquiry, 'Does praying at regular intervals every day help a Muslim in his/her daily life?' gives the opportunity to explore the expectations and ritual surrounding prayer. Year 2 is also asked, 'How important is it for Jewish people to do what God wants them to do?' They are asked to consider the question 'Should people follow religious leaders and teachings?'

The Year 5 Sikhism enquiry investigates the importance of the wearing of the turban and carrying the kirpan (ceremonial dagger) for Sikhs, and encourages children to think about the potential conflict between religious law and the law of Government.

Children are enabled to understand the origins of the various codes of conduct, rules, laws and expectations put forward by different religions and belief positions, and to consider their own position in relation to these.



# Mutual respect, democracy and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.



These three concepts stand at the very heart of every classroom. Every lesson is a chance to demonstrate them. Teachers have opportunity to model respect, tolerance and democracy within the classroom, allowing all children the opportunity to speak, using class voting systems and debate and using trips and visitors to bring the subject to life.

Using the enquiry method means that children are discussing issues in RE that some adults would find uncomfortable. For example, in Year 6, children discuss the true meaning of the word Jihad for Muslims. Through learning about faith practices and really investigating what they mean for the individuals, children are encouraged to develop mutual respect and tolerance but also to develop critical thinking skills enabling them to question and discuss beliefs and the ways they might be manifested. They are also enabled, through their knowledge, to challenge ideas about religion and spot intolerance when they see it amongst their community and in the media.

Discovery RE advocates the holistic study of one religion/belief system at a time to avoid confusion, but in due course, children will begin to identify similarities and draw comparisons between different faiths. For example, by Year 2, most children will have noticed that different religious festivals involve similar activities. They can understand what having special food, getting together with family and friends, wearing special clothes or sharing a special story might be like for children of faith, because they will have had some experience of this themselves. Through the framework of their own experience, they learn to understand and respect the experiences of others. They are also enabled through their knowledge to challenge ideas about religion and recognise intolerance.

Most children enjoy talking about their religion and beliefs and what these means to them; and most children enjoy hearing about the lives of their classmates. By giving this, through RE, a place in the curriculum, we are giving the message that it is important to understand the beliefs of others, that it is important to listen to the story of another human being.

The Discovery RE framework does make a significant contribution to the promotion of 'British Values': these are just a few examples. Although the idea of covering 'Fundamental British Values' in school may conjure up some concerns, we feel that these values are not only 'British' but are core values shared by the majority of human beings, as manifested in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so here at Discovery RE we are secure in the role RE plays in this process.

We invite you to make good use of the Overview of the Discovery RE Programme within the Discovery RE folder, our sample RE policy [www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/sample-re-policy](http://www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/sample-re-policy) and our helpful video outlining religions covered and methods of teaching used [www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/what-is-discovery](http://www.discoveryschemeofwork.com/what-is-discovery), to help you to confidently explain the contribution Discovery RE makes to this agenda. There is also a useful mapping document on the website showing the contribution of each enquiry to each of the 4 British values identified.

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