



## American Academy Junior School, Larnaca

### Mission and Vision Statement Policy

The Academy's **mission** statement is:

**The American Academy's mission is to be true to our ideal: - to grow and to serve. Our graduates will have the vision, knowledge and skills to enable them to be leading citizens and lifelong learners who respond to the needs of their families and communities in a spirit of tolerance.**

- To develop positive attitudes to learning through world class motivational teaching which engenders self-belief.
- To be at the forefront of educational development as a learning organisation which enables all students to become independent learners appreciating the significance of life-long learning.
- To have a positive and blame free environment which encourages co-operation and which focuses on success and enables our students to become positive, responsible clear thinking and caring adults.
- To appreciate the learning needs and styles of individual students and to provide a stimulating and forward looking curriculum which encourages every student to understand the world around them and to reach for the stars.
- To encourage and enable students to develop those personal qualities which lead them to have self-respect, respect for others and for their environment.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education  
'Caring and nurturing the children in our trusted care'

#### Introduction

The American Academy promises an innovative and challenging environment in which the pursuit of excellence is balanced by Christian kindness to produce a well-rounded individual fit to take his or her place in the world of tomorrow.

The Academy offers an "education for life" and that this means "the development of the whole person, mind, body and spirit."

The Academy believes that the education provided is not only about the gaining of knowledge and the acquiring of essential skills, important though they are, but that it is also about the personal development of each young person, in its fullest sense. At the heart of this are five closely interwoven strands.

The first, which informs the others, is a Christian world view serving as an ever present backcloth to the ongoing life of the school.

The second, is integrity and commitment where adults and young people are encouraged to value and be true to the highest ideals.

The third strand, personal relationships, is closely related to the foregoing and informed by it. This concerns adults and young people alike aiming to set, and being entitled to expect from others, good, caring standards of behaviour, marked by respect, responsibility, openness and honesty.

The fourth strand, discipline, is concerned with critical openness through which all members of the community are encouraged to develop self-discipline. Discipline is not unthinking obedience but rather about the development of positive attitudes to oneself and others resulting in self-induced responsible behaviour.

The fifth strand is developing all pupils to their fullest potential. This means encouraging and challenging the very able to develop to their fullest degree, and supporting and enabling low achieving and average pupils to value themselves and even surprise themselves through what they are able to achieve.

It is the task of the Academy to ensure that an adequate foundation of experience and knowledge, with opportunities for discussion, reflection and evaluation, is provided, so that pupils can be given maximum scope to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions.

### Partnership

The role of the Academy in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its young people is one of stimulus and nourishment. The school, however, realises that it does not do this by itself. It recognizes that the education of its young people has been entrusted to it by parents.

Hopefully parents, even if they do not share the values on which the Academy is built, are nevertheless in broad sympathy with them and will play their part in encouraging and supporting what it is striving to do. There is a real sense then in which the school is engaged in a partnership with parents and they will play a significant part in the development of these values in their children.

The contribution of the wider family and, in some cases the involvement in a particular faith community and in all cases the involvement with society at large will also contribute in various ways to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### Rate of Development

There are four distinct areas in which development can take place. It must not be assumed that the rate of development will be identical in each of them. It is believed that there are aspects of 'social development' which are generally straightforward and can be observed, but this is not thought to be the case with 'spiritual development' which tends to be somewhat erratic. Similar variations will be seen when attempting to propose educational aims and objectives in relation to these areas. It is obviously much easier to identify an appropriate body of knowledge and skills and an appropriate list of desired attitudes and values in some of these areas than in others.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions of humankind are ones in which it is impossible to prescribe a rigid and bureaucratic set of aims, objectives and standards to be met. It is, however, possible to establish clear signposts to show the general direction of the desired development.

In the Academy the insights of its Christian roots and modern educational ideas mesh in its desire to encourage individual autonomy and responsibility; respect for individual difference, rather than mere conformity; and also a willingness to appreciate and celebrate diversity. What follows is an attempt to clarify the ways in which the School can encourage its pupils to develop as whole human beings.

### Students' Spiritual Development

The fact that the Academy seeks to base its conduct on Christian precepts does not mean that it is primarily concerned with converting its pupils to Christianity. The 'conversion' which really matters is from shallow to deeper thinking. The spiritual development which must be encouraged rests upon the encouragement to think, explore and discuss. It is concerned with how personal beliefs and values are acquired, especially on questions of religion, whether life has purpose, and the basis for personal and social behaviour. It is not another name for religious education, although there are close connections. For example, spiritual development may be both an aim for religious education and an outcome of it.

The potential for spiritual development is open to all pupils. It is concerned with specifically religious concerns but by no means confined to the development of religious beliefs. The spiritual dimension of life at the Academy is seen as the set of beliefs, values, attitudes, experiences, and reflections by which individuals give direction and shape and meaning to their lives.

Spiritual development is also concerned with the promotion of the development of feelings and emotions, as well as identifying the importance of intellectual curiosity. It is concerned with deepening appreciation of music, art and literature. These areas, as well as those traditionally understood as religious, seek to explain what life is about and pupils are invited and encouraged to explore them. They are urged to approach these areas with serious intent and take on increasing responsibility for themselves in them. The methodology adopted is that of discussion, exploration and reflection through what is taught in its curriculum, participation in music, drama and artistic activity, through collective worship and through the Academy's ethos.

### Spiritual Aims

- A willingness to reflect on and appreciate the faith which has given the Academy its distinctiveness
- A recognition of the right of others to hold their own views and respect for those who have different beliefs and customs
- A willingness to seriously explore the religious faith which has shaped the particular culture from which the student has come
- A willingness to look beyond materialism
- A willingness to reflect on and think critically about their experiences, responses and choices
- A developing sense of awe and wonder in the face of the universe
- A willingness to reflect on and appreciate works of literary, artistic or musical merit
- A willingness to ask and explore 'ultimate questions'
- A growing ability to cope with the times of suffering which human life naturally presents: anxiety, stress, unhappiness, illness, divorce and death

### Students' Moral Development

Moral development is concerned with a student's knowledge, understanding, intentions, attitudes and behaviour in relation to what is 'right' and 'wrong'.

Moral development then is concerned with fundamental judgements and precepts about how people should behave and act and reasons for such behaviour. The intention at the Academy is that pupils, as they develop a sense of morality, will be invited to explore the place of reason in ethical matters and, as autonomous moral agents, acquire value systems which are their own, together with an understanding that their behaviour and actions should be derived from a moral set of beliefs and values. It is crucial for the school to expect high moral standards from all members of its community and it is in this context that it is felt important that teachers explore the basis of moral behaviour. It is important for young people to understand that any social grouping depends for its continued existence on the broad acceptance of rules and laws.

In the classroom situation, in consistency with the purpose of developing pupil autonomy and personal responsibility, moral education focuses on values clarification. It is important, however, to be clear and consistent when dealing with matters of morality, especially where there is a high degree of consensus in society.

#### Moral Aims

- A developing sense of self-discipline and responsibility not only for their own actions, but for their responsibilities to others
- A developing awareness of, and pride in, their own unique gifts, talents and privileges, and a parallel rejection of all forms of prejudiced perception of others on the basis of class, race, sex, religion or nationality
- An appreciation of the importance of honesty, truthfulness and the development of personal integrity
- A sensitivity to the feelings, needs and rights of others
- A growing disposition towards generosity, rather than selfishness, by helping those less fortunate or weaker than ourselves
- An appreciation of the importance of being kind to others and a clear rejection of unkindness, cruelty or bullying
- A developing of a mature sense of self-confidence and self-worth and a consequent willingness to lay aside arrogance

### Students' Social Development

Social development refers to the progressive acquisition of the competences, capabilities and qualities needed to play a full part in society. It is primarily concerned with the skills and personal qualities necessary for individuals to live and function effectively in society by being a member of the community.

The Academy can only complement and extend what the home and society in general can achieve in helping to prepare young people to participate constructively in society. Upon entry to the Academy a student will be required to learn the obligations and constraints, but also the satisfaction, that go with being a member of a group or community. As they develop young people will also become aware of their own identity as individuals, as well as the importance of taking into account the feelings and wishes of others within the group or community, and they will be given opportunities to

experience a variety of social roles. Social development is seen to be closely related to the development of moral principles.

### Social Aims

- To provide opportunities for students to work in groups and in pairs to experience a variety of social roles
- To provide opportunities for young people to experience working co-operatively in partnership
- To provide opportunities for students to exercise leadership and responsibility
- To provide opportunities for students to learn to respond to the initiatives of others, and what it means to share a common purpose
- To provide opportunities for pupils to understand about the 'political' aspects of living in society
- To provide opportunities for pupils to be involved in a decision-making process which involves democratic participation

### Students' Cultural Development

Cultural development refers to students' increasing understanding and command of those beliefs, values, customs, knowledge and skills which, taken together, form the basis of identity and cohesion in societies and groups. This area of development is principally concerned with the students' understanding and appreciation of the music, art, drama, poetry, science and technology of the society in which they live.

The purpose of education is both to develop and strengthen the cultural interests which the students already possess and expose them to a breadth of stimuli which will allow them to develop new interests. It is important to realise that cultures change, consequently students will be taught about those past features which have influenced and shaped the present, as well as about how the present generations, themselves included, are maintaining, interpreting and reshaping their cultural traditions.

It is also acknowledged that the school will not be the only means whereby a young person is influenced culturally and, indeed, that it may not be the strongest of these. The Academy can have an immediate impact upon its pupils and does have a contribution to make. Such contributions may include an introduction to the values and customs held within a nation's culture, and to those of other significant cultures, including those represented in the School. In the Academy's context, with the presence of a significant minority of pupils from other cultures it is important that they feel that their values and customs are respected.

### Cultural Aims

- To provide students with the knowledge of the nature and roots of their own cultural traditions and practices, including historical, social, religious, aesthetic, ethnic or political and also of the key features of other major cultural groups within their own society
- To develop an understanding of the diversity of religious, social, aesthetic, ethnic and political traditions and practices within their society
- To encourage a personal response and accomplishment in a range of cultural fields which might include, as a minimum: literature (both prose and verse);

music; technology (including information technology); art and design; and physical movement, particularly in the realms of sport

- To enlarge students' capacity to relate what they learn, in school generally and in particular areas of the curriculum, to their appreciation of wider cultural aspects of society, and to evaluate the quality and worth of cultural achievements

### Achieving the Aims

The moral, spiritual, social and cultural (personal) aspects of a student's development do not form part of any separate curriculum area's scheme of work. The formation of character, beliefs, values and a spiritual centre, is really the development of character and is not something which can be attained by formula, curriculum organisation or prescription. Personal meanings, beliefs and values which constitute a person's spirituality, and the qualities of character and value from which morally good and socially responsible action proceed, are built up steadily, slowly, continuously and cumulatively in the on-going process of how we relate to each other as human beings. It is a fact that the process began before the young people came to the Academy and will continue after they have left.

No single system or institutional structure within the school, no single department or procedure is responsible for the moral, spiritual, cultural or social developments of the young people at the Academy. The school, however, can endeavour to provide an ethos where such development can take place through the general day to day quality of relationships.

The so-called 'hidden curriculum' (non-academic education) is also of immense importance and can aid development. Some areas of the school's life may have a greater part to play in the process of these characteristics than others. As far as the student is concerned the precise nature of this variance will be individual and possibly idiosyncratic. What is important within these four areas is that positives must be emphasized, and actions and attitudes which display the opposite should be discouraged.

In an attempt to achieve its aims, the Academy does have a number of more formal structures which are intended to contribute to the general process of moral, spiritual, social and cultural development. It is not intended that these structures obviously and clearly deliver moral, spiritual, social, or cultural development, but that collectively they underpin the more important aspects of the general social relationships which exist within a school. They also provide some of the contexts within which creative personal interaction and development may take place.

### 1. The Curriculum

All subjects and all teachers can and do contribute to personal development simply by the way staff interact with students during lessons. However, certain subjects such as RS, PHSE (Personal, Health and Social Education), English, Greek, History, Geography, PE and Biology by their subject matter have a particular contribution to make.

### 2. Assemblies

Assemblies, by what they applaud, celebrate, encourage and disallow, make a highly significant contribution to the articulation and demonstration of the values which the

Academy wishes to promote and develop. In line with the school's foundation, assemblies are of a broadly Christian character, which provide the opportunity for prayer and reflection. **Every week where possible and relevant, there is a moral or social theme for assemblies.**

### 3. The Mentor System

Each young person is a member of a mentor group. The Mentor is responsible for their academic, social and personal welfare. As part of their role, Mentors conduct one tutor period a week which, as well as dealing with routine administration, will at times, both explicitly and implicitly, deal with the promotion of personal values.

### 4. Year Activities

In each Year Group, specific activities take place which are explicitly designed to further personal development. This may be PHSE, Weir Camps or the Greece Trip, etc. and opportunities for Community Service.

### 5. Enrichment Curricular Activities

There are numerous and diverse co-curricular activities which make a major contribution to personal development. A wide variety of overseas trips and tours, visits to the theatre and art galleries, the creation of in-house literary magazines, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme all contribute to the social and cultural development of pupils.

### 6. Responsibility and Leadership

Membership of various Brotherhood committees, provide both formal and informal opportunities for young people to exercise leadership, service and responsibility.

### 7. Specialist Staff

In addition to all teaching staff there are a number of specialist staff – the Pastoral and Academic Counsellors and the Heads of Year have a particular role to play in working closely with individuals to assist them to prepare in diverse ways for the outside world.

### 8. Special Services

During the school year there are occasions, such as the Carol Service and various significant national days, which are celebrated in and through Christian acts of worship. These serve both to remind the Academy of its heritage and enable it to celebrate what it is.

### 9. Models and Examples

In the Academy the young people will encounter a wide variety of different people, through teachers, non-academic staff as well as visitors to the School. All these will provide material for reflection and evaluation in the development of their own character.

## 10. The School Ethos and Rules

There is so much more to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development than just conforming to a set of rules. It is important, however, to have a well-regulated and disciplined environment for any educational achievement. The school has policy documents on behaviour that are based on mutual respect, and these together with the general ethos of the school (implicitly) are expressions of the values that the Academy seeks to encourage. They are considered to be a vital ingredient in the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all the young people.

### Evaluation

It is accepted that there are no correct definitions of these terms and that there are no easily definable criteria to measure the success of any policy which aims to promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the young people. Personal development is an erratic, unpredictable and long term phenomenon, and the effects of even the most sensitive moral instruction or spiritual reflection may be different from what is hoped for. There also may be a wide divergence between a person's stated beliefs and values, and behaviour and relationships. This makes any evaluation of a school policy difficult in regard to outcomes.

Particular outcomes cannot be guaranteed, but it is important that the Senior Management Team of the school monitor and review the policy from time to time with regard to its general effectiveness.

### Related Policies

- Admissions Policy
- Behaviour Policy ( Including Discipline and Exclusions)
- Curriculum Policy
- PSHE Policy
- LEARN Policy
- Disability Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Anti-bullying policy