



Statement of values by the National Forum for Values in Education and the Community

An extract from the preamble to the statement

- The remit of the Forum was to decide whether there are any values that are commonly agreed upon across society, not whether there are any values that should be agreed upon across society. The only authority claimed for these values is the authority of consensus.
- These values are not exhaustive. They do not, for example, include religious beliefs, principles or teachings, though these are often the source of commonly held values. The statement neither implies nor entails that these are the only values that should be taught in schools. There is no suggestion that schools should confine themselves to these values.
- Agreement on the values outlined below is compatible with disagreement on their source. Many believe that God is the ultimate source of value, and that we are accountable to God for our actions; others that values have their source only in human nature, and that we are accountable only to our consciences. The statement of values is consistent with these and other views on the source of value.
- Agreement on these values is compatible with different interpretations and applications of them. It is for schools to decide, reflecting the range of views in the wider community, how these values should be interpreted and applied. For example, the principle 'we support the institution of marriage' may legitimately be interpreted as giving rise to positive promotion of marriage as an ideal, of the responsibilities of parenthood, and of the duty of children to respect their parents.
- The ordering of the values does not imply any priority or necessary preference. The ordering reflects the belief of many that values in the context of the self must precede the development of the other values.
- These values are so fundamental that they may appear unexceptional. Their demanding nature is demonstrated both by our collective failure consistently to live up to them, and the moral challenge which acting on them in practice entails.

Schools and teachers can have confidence that there is general agreement in society upon these values. They can therefore expect the support and encouragement of society if they base their teaching and the school ethos on these values.

The statement of values

The self

We value ourselves as unique human beings capable of spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical growth and development.

On the basis of these values, we should:

- develop an understanding of our own characters, strengths and weaknesses
- develop self-respect and self-discipline
- clarify the meaning and purpose in our lives and decide, on the basis of this, how we believe that our lives should be lived
- make responsible use of our talents, rights and opportunities

- strive, throughout life, for knowledge, wisdom and understanding
- take responsibility, within our capabilities, for our own lives.

Relationships

We value others for themselves, not only for what they have or what they can do for us. We value relationships as fundamental to the development and fulfilment of ourselves and others, and to the good of the community.

On the basis of these values, we should:

- respect others, including children
- care for others and exercise goodwill in our dealings with them
- show others they are valued
- earn loyalty, trust and confidence
- work cooperatively with others
- respect the privacy and property of others
- resolve disputes peacefully.

Society

We value truth, freedom, justice, human rights, the rule of law and collective effort for the common good. In particular, we value families as sources of love and support for all their members, and as the basis of a society in which people care for others.

On the basis of these values, we should:

- understand and carry out our responsibilities as citizens
- refuse to support values or actions that may be harmful to individuals or communities
- support families in raising children and caring for dependants
- support the institution of marriage
- recognise that the love and commitment required for a secure and happy childhood can also be found in families of different kinds
- help people to know about the law and legal processes
- respect the rule of law and encourage others to do so
- respect religious and cultural diversity
- promote opportunities for all
- support those who cannot, by themselves, sustain a dignified life-style
- promote participation in the democratic process by all sectors of the community
- contribute to, as well as benefit fairly from, economic and cultural resources
- make truth, integrity, honesty and goodwill priorities in public and private life.

The environment

We value the environment, both natural and shaped by humanity, as the basis of life and a source of wonder and inspiration.

On the basis of these values, we should:

- accept our responsibility to maintain a sustainable environment for future generations
- understand the place of human beings within nature
- understand our responsibilities for other species
- ensure that development can be justified
- preserve balance and diversity in nature wherever possible
- preserve areas of beauty and interest for future generations
- repair, wherever possible, habitats damaged by human development and other means.