

PERSPECTIVES ON ETHICAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN LIFE (PERSIL)

The personal and social development of young people is a process which enables them to cope successfully with the challenges of life, now and in the future.

“.....all pupils have to be prepared to meet the basic intellectual and social demands of adult life, and helped to form an acceptable set of moral values.” (HMI 1980)

“Section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988 places a statutory responsibility upon schools to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which:

- a) Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of the school and of society; and
- b) Prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.”
(NCC, Curriculum Guidance 3: The Whole Curriculum)

“The important role which education in partnership with home, can and should play in the spiritual and moral development of our children hardly needs emphasising. These dimensions are vital underpinnings of all aspects of school life and should provide a foundation for adulthood and our society in the future.”
(David L Pascall, National Curriculum Council, 1993)

Aims of PERSIL

The underlying aims of the programme are to encourage students to:

- Prepare for responsible adult life
- Develop communication and teamwork skills
- Develop tolerance, mutual respect and support for all others
- Think about issues and form their own values and opinions
- Be aware of and care for others and for the environment
- Talk about feelings and be sensitive to the feelings of others
- Be constructively critical and questioning
- Be responsible for their behaviour and to encourage them to become independent learners
- Consider, assess and develop their potential
- Support the ethos of the School

PERSIL is taught from the First to the Fifth Years inclusive. The broad aim of the course is to prepare children and young people for adult life, ie to become responsible and thoughtful citizens, to be able to take care of themselves; and to look at issues which can be but are not necessarily part of the rest of the curriculum, or which need to be studied from a different perspective or in greater depth.

One key aspect is the ability of the programme to take an issue which is topical either within the school community or in the outside world and deal with it as it arises. At an independent selective school, it is also important to raise awareness of other social, community and political issues of life, locally, nationally and globally. The programme is delivered not only through PERSIL lessons but also through tutor time and other subject lessons eg Biology, Geography, History, Drama, English, Religious Studies. Outside speakers are brought in when possible to raise awareness and to encourage discussion of issues. Hence PERSIL should be reflected within the ethos of the whole school, particularly its identity as a boarding community.

Topics include:

First Year: sex education, friendship, family issues, self-confidence and awareness, bullying and school issues.

Second Year: environmental issues, current affairs, peer pressure, problem solving, vandalism, caring for people and possessions.

Third Year: adolescence, family issues, health including drugs, mental health, lifestyle, alcohol and smoking, sex education, aids and STDs.

Fourth and Fifth Years: Topical moral, social, environmental and political issues

In the First, Second and Third Years students take PERSIL in a rotation within the four periods per week allocated to Art & Design.

In the Fourth and Fifth Years, PERSIL is timetabled as a double period every fortnight for each half-year group. Two or three PERSIL tutors run these sessions, with a clear focus on discussion.