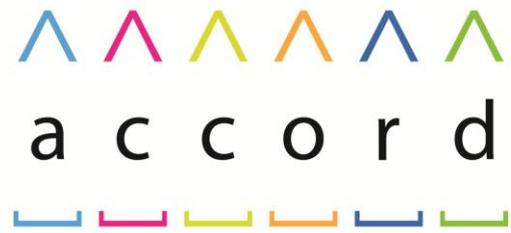


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believing in children, learning together

Beliefs and Values Education

The Accord Coalition for Inclusive Education recognises and affirms that high-quality, balanced and informative teaching about beliefs and values is a key part of the task of every school.

‘Beliefs and values’ are the core convictions, stories and propositions about the nature of life and the human person which motivate and inspire people in their social, cultural, political and economic life.

For millions of people, these beliefs and values take specific religious forms. Others develop their life-stance on the basis of an outlook that rejects faith but seeks ‘good faith’ in all areas of life. An increasing number see themselves as ‘spiritual but not religious’.

The challenge

It is vitally important that all publicly funded schools, whether secular or religious in foundation, seek to equip pupils for positively critical and respectful engagement with the challenges of living in a mixed-belief society.

This is best done by providing Religious Education (or, better, Beliefs and Values Education) that is wide ranging, fair and objective in its delivery, and as part of a properly monitored National Curriculum.

The aim of education about beliefs and values in a local and global context should not be to inculcate one particular belief system, whether religious or non-religious. ‘Confessional’ education is not the job of the taxpayer funded school system, but rather the responsibility of particular faith or non-faith communities in the sphere of civil society. Avoiding confusion about this is vital.

Rather, the aim of good quality teaching in this area should be to develop the analytical tools and human sympathies needed to appreciate and understand different beliefs and values while developing and adhering to one’s own life-stance. That includes recognising beliefs as ‘lived realities’, not simply textbook propositions.

The opportunity

The significance of teaching and learning about the whole range of beliefs and values that shape the contemporary world and its history lies in the irreversibly plural nature of modern Britain, the challenges posed by globalisation, and the conflict that can and does take place among those of different cultures and beliefs.



We recognise that beliefs and values education will often need to pay special attention to the school's particular background and local setting, and the specific needs of its pupils and staff. But this should not (and does not need to be) at the expense of providing information and tools for understanding in relation to the full range of religious and humanist convictions found in the world today.

The same principles apply in the area of Personal, Social & Health Education (PSHE), where the views propounded by those running or sponsoring a publicly-funded school need to be balanced against different perspectives in society as whole. For example, Catholic positions on contraception, abortion and end of life issues will differ from views developed in other Christian traditions, other faith communities, and from approaches developed by Humanists and non-religious moral thinkers.

This is why the Accord Coalition believes that RE, PSHE and Citizenship Education should be made accountable under a single inspection regime to ensure the highest possible standards of content and teaching.

About the Accord Coalition

The Accord Coalition is a campaign coalition, launched in 2008, which brings together a wide range of organisations, both religious and non-religious, who want state funded schools to be open and suitable to all children of every background, no matter what their parents' or their own beliefs, and who are concerned that restrictive legislation around admissions, employment and the curriculum in state funded faith schools can serve to undermine community cohesion and not adequately prepare children for life in our increasingly diverse society.

Accord's growing list of members and supporters includes the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the British Humanist Association, the Christian think tank Ekklesia, the British Muslims for Secular Democracy, The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and the race equality think tank The Runnymede Trust.