




**National
Quality Mark**

for SMSC
And British Values



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SCHOOL HANDBOOK

2026

Guidance for Schools



PROMOTING CHARACTER, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE
Recognising excellence in SMSC and British Values

 SPIRITUAL

 MORAL

 SOCIAL

 CULTURAL

National Quality Mark for SMSC & British Values

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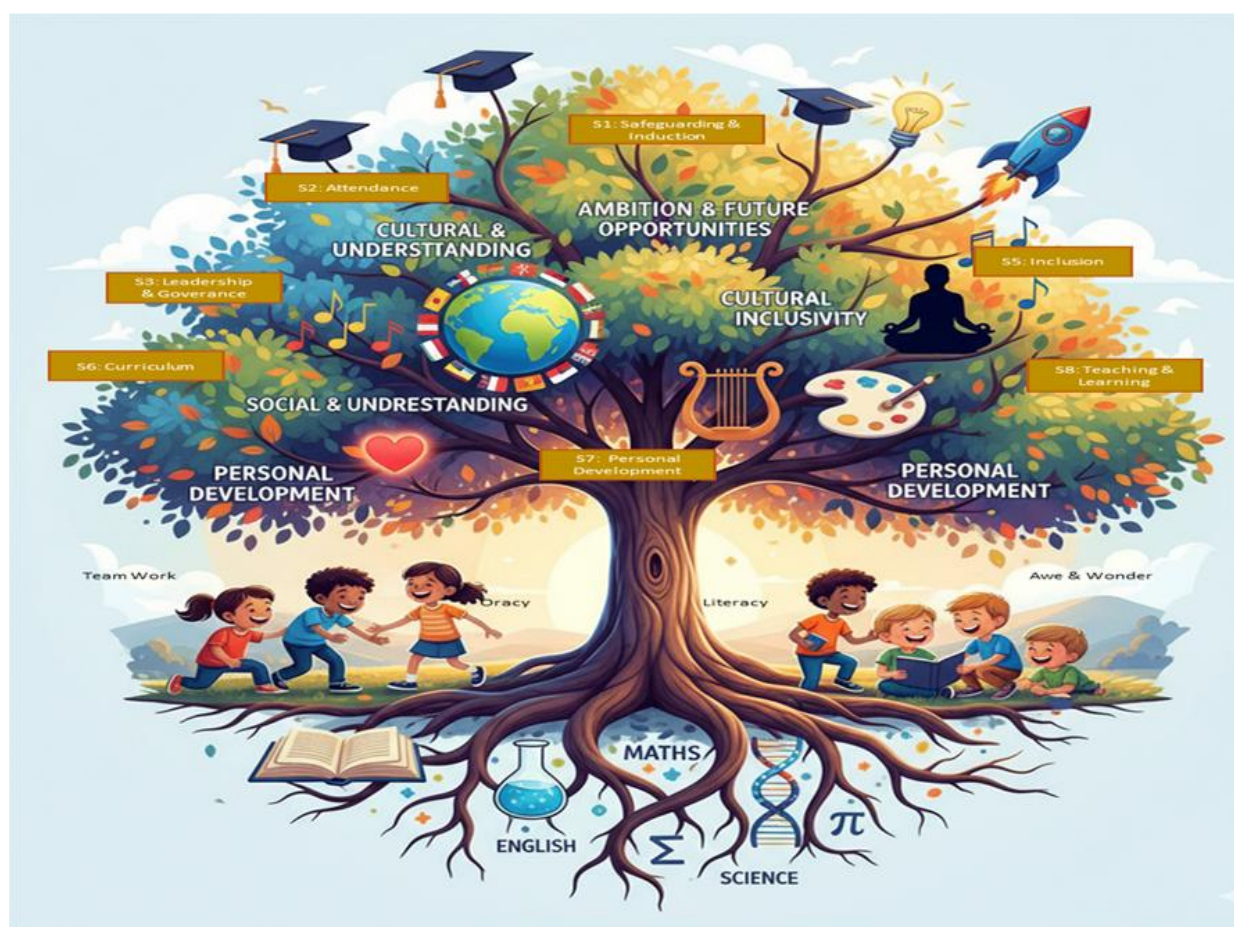
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Welcome

The National Quality Mark for SMSC & British Values is a supportive, school-led framework designed to help schools **evaluate, strengthen and celebrate** their provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, alongside British Values.

This guide explains what schools can expect when engaging with the Quality Mark – from self-review through to verification and award.

The process is **developmental, not inspection-based**. Its purpose is to recognise authentic practice, affirm strengths and support meaningful improvement.



1. The National Quality Mark: Vision and Rationale

The National Quality Mark for SMSC & British Values exists to:

- Support schools to embed high-quality SMSC and British Values meaningfully
- Strengthen self-evaluation and reflective practice
- Recognise excellent provision through external verification
- Promote education that develops character, identity, belonging and citizenship

High-quality SMSC provision contributes to:

- Positive school culture and ethos
- Improved relationships and behaviour
- Pupil wellbeing and belonging
- Engagement with families and communities
- Preparation for life in modern Britain

SMSC and British Values are not bolt-ons. They should be evident in curriculum intent, everyday practice, leadership, behaviour, and relationships.

2. What We Mean by SMSC and British Values

Verifiers should use the shared definitions below when evaluating provision.

- **Spiritual development**
Reflection, meaning, identity, values, awe and wonder, purpose
- **Moral development**
Understanding right and wrong, ethical reasoning, integrity, justice
- **Social development**
Relationships, collaboration, empathy, responsibility, participation
- **Cultural development**
Respect for diversity, cultural understanding, identity, participation in society
- **British Values** are expressed through:
 - ✓ Democracy
 - ✓ Rule of law
 - ✓ Individual liberty
 - ✓ Mutual respect
 - ✓ Tolerance of different faiths and beliefs

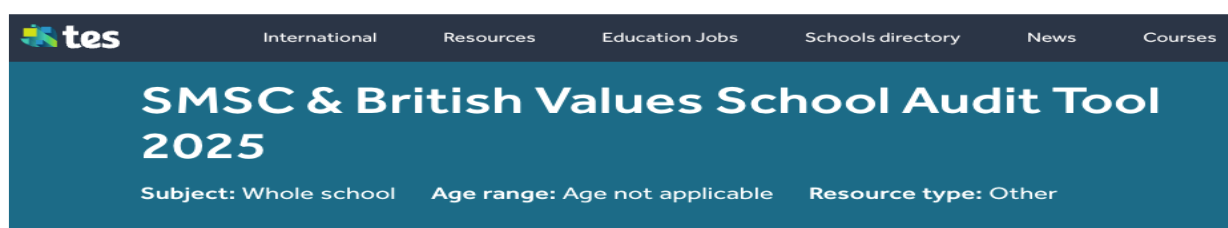
Strong practice shows how these are lived, modelled and experienced, not simply displayed on walls or written in policies.

3. Overview of the Verification Journey

Schools engage with the Quality Mark through a structured process:

1. School downloads a free sample of the audit tool
2. School purchases the full audit tool (£90) and completes self-review
3. School requests verification when ready
4. A verifier is allocated
5. Self-review documentation is shared at least two weeks before the visit
6. Verifier completes pre-visit preparation and contacts the school
7. Verification visit takes place (virtual or in-person)
8. Verifier submits report within 2–4 working days
9. Internal quality assurance confirms the outcome
10. Certificate and logo are issued

Verification and the award are valid for **three years**.



4. Fees and Services

The National Quality Mark is staffed by volunteers. Our fees and services reflect our actual costs.

- Full SMSC & British Values Audit Tool (TES): **£90 one-off purchase**
- Verification (virtual or in-person): **£499**
- In-person verification: reasonable travel expenses may apply (agreed in advance)
- Optional CPD Twilight Session (virtual or in-person): **£195** (+ travel if applicable)
- Award validity: **3 years**

All travel arrangements will be communicated clearly and transparently to schools.

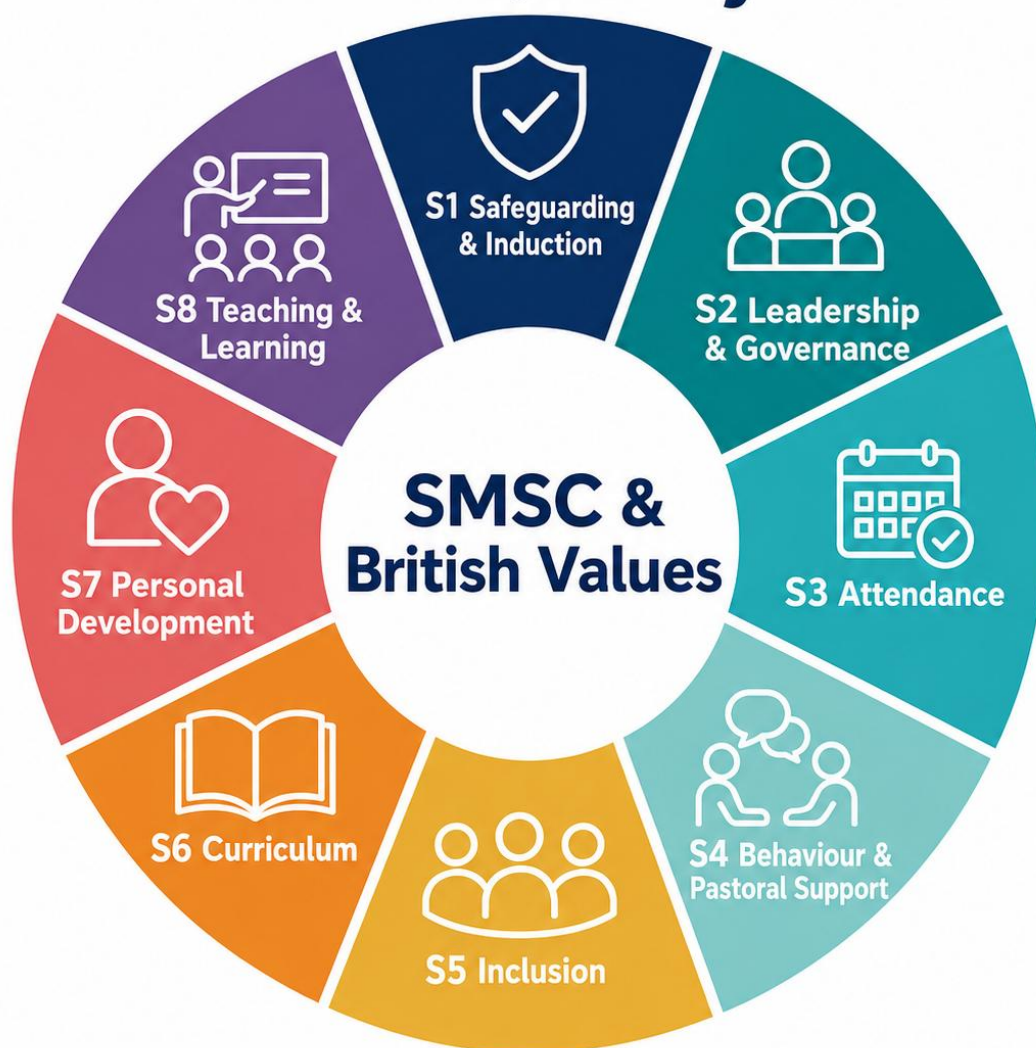
5. Invoicing

Once verifiers have been allocated a school, arranged a date and agreed travelling expenses, they will submit an invoice to the school. The school will receive their award and the report, once the invoice has been settled.

6. What is Evaluated: The Eight Standards

Verification is structured around eight educational standards, ensuring breadth and credibility:

Eight Standards of the National Quality Mark



Together, these standards reflect the full lived experience of SMSC and British Values across school life

7. Evaluation & Assessment

Stage 1: Self-Review and Reflection

Schools begin by completing the National Quality Mark **SMSC & British Values Audit Tool**, available via the TES or through information on our website.

The self-review:

- Encourages honest, reflective evaluation
- Helps identify strengths and priorities for development
- Is owned by the school – there is no expectation of perfection
- It is a living document which should be regularly updated
- Can easily shared and used as evidence during an Ofsted inspection to help support the schools' judgements on 'Personal Development.'

Stage 2: Preparing for Verification

Once the self-review is complete, a verifier is allocated to your school.

Ahead of the visit, schools can expect:

- Clear communication about timings and format
- Agreement about who will be involved (leaders, staff, pupils, governors)
- Reassurance about what evidence is (and is not) required

Verification can take place **in person or virtually**, depending on preference and context.

Stage 3: The Verification Visit

Verification is a **professional conversation**, not an inspection.

During the visit, the verifier will:

- Talk with senior leaders and key staff
- Listen to pupil voice
- Meet with governors or trustees
- Explore how SMSC and British Values are experienced day-to-day

Verifiers do not:

- Grade lessons
- Inspect teaching
- Audit paperwork for compliance

The focus is always on **impact, culture and lived experience**.

Pupil Voice

Pupils are central to the Quality Mark.

Schools may involve pupils through:

- Small group discussions
- School council or pupil leadership
- Audio or video contributions
- Adult-supported communication (in SEND settings)

There is no expectation that all pupils are involved – a **representative sample** is sufficient.

Evidence and Documentation

The Quality Mark is **not evidence-heavy**.

Schools may choose to share:

- Examples of curriculum or enrichment
- Photographs or displays
- Survey summaries
- Policies (where helpful)

These support professional dialogue but are not judged in isolation.

The role of the Verifier

Our verifiers are drawn from a diverse range of education consultants with previous leadership experience of both school and trust wide experience.

They are expected to:

- Validate the school's self-review with professional rigour
- Triangulate evidence through discussion, observation and pupil voice
- Celebrate strengths and effective practice
- Offer constructive, developmental feedback
- Ensure fairness and consistency across schools
- Produce a two-page report outlining strengths and agreed target areas for improvement.

They are not expected to:

- Inspect lessons or grade teaching
- Audit large volumes of paperwork
- Adopt an Ofsted-style approach
- 'Catch schools out'

8. Virtual Verifications

The verification process for the National Quality Mark for SMSC & British Values is rooted in the celebration of each school's distinctive ethos, values and lived experience. Historically, this has been achieved through in-person visits, enabling verifiers to engage directly with pupils and staff and to experience the school's culture first-hand.

As working practices have evolved, **virtual verification** has become an established and credible alternative. While a virtual visit does not replicate every element of physical presence, when conducted with thoughtful preparation and professional engagement it can offer a **rich, authentic and meaningful verification experience**.

Verifiers should approach virtual verification with the same rigour, curiosity and professionalism as an in-person visit.

Pre-Visit Preparation (Verifier Expectations)

Preparation for virtual verification mirrors that of in-person visits. Verifiers are expected to:

- Review the completed self-review tool carefully
- Identify strengths and areas requiring clarification
- Familiarise themselves with the school's website and public information
- Arrange and confirm logistics with the school in advance

Some verifiers may also choose to explore wider contextual information (for example through publicly available sources such as Google Maps, local authority information or community context). This can support a deeper understanding of the school's setting, history and community, and may help inform professional dialogue during the visit.

Conducting the Virtual Verification

During a virtual verification, verifiers will meet remotely (via an agreed online platform) with a range of stakeholders, which may include:

- Senior leaders
- Teaching and support staff
- Pupils
- Governors
- Parents (where available)

Your role remains the same: to **triangulate evidence**, explore the lived experience of SMSC and British Values, and validate the school's self-evaluation through professional dialogue.

The emphasis should remain on **authentic experience, culture, relationships and impact**, not on performance or presentation.

Pupil Voice in Virtual Verification

Pupil engagement remains a central and non-negotiable element of verification.

In virtual contexts, this may take a variety of forms, including:

- Live pupil discussions via video call
- Short recorded audio or video contributions
- Teacher-facilitated group responses shared with the verifier

It is not necessary for every year group to be represented. A well-chosen sample (for example, two or three groups across different age ranges) is usually sufficient to provide a credible and balanced picture of pupil experience.

Verifiers should focus on authenticity rather than polish.

Virtual School Tours

Some schools may choose to provide short filmed tours of their environment as part of the virtual process. These can offer helpful contextual insight into:

- Ethos and atmosphere
- Displays and pupil work
- Learning environments
- Areas linked to SMSC development

However, filmed tours are **entirely optional**. A school's decision not to provide a virtual tour **must never disadvantage** their outcome. Verifiers should rely primarily on dialogue, pupil voice and triangulated evidence.

Use of Supplementary Materials

Schools may also choose to share additional materials to support the verification process, such as:

- Examples of curriculum work (e.g. PSHE, RSHE, Citizenship)
- Photographs of displays or events
- Short video or audio clips
- Evidence portfolios via secure platforms (e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox)

These materials can enrich understanding but should always be treated as supporting evidence, not as a substitute for professional dialogue and triangulation.

Appendix

Verification Timetable

Verifications usually take place in the morning and following the suggested timetable below. We allow schools to edit the flow of the morning in order to suit their children and routine. Any changes made to this timetable by the school will be relayed to the verifier by the SMSC Quality Mark Manager or SMSC support team.

Time	Action
8.45am	Verifier arrives at the school
09:00 - 09:15	Meeting Headteacher and SMSC lead
09:15 - 09:45	Brief tour of the school - led by pupils / SMSC lead? NB 30 mins max
09:45 - 10.35	Meeting pupils (group of 8-10 pupils) from a variety of year groups. Preferably not all school councillors
10:35 - 10:55	Meeting with governors
10:55 - 11:15	Meeting with parents
11:15 - 12:15	Discuss self-review tool to probe evidence, agree strengths and suggest areas for improvement with SMSC lead
12:15 - 12:30	Meeting with headteacher / SLT / SMSC lead to conclude findings, strengths and any areas for development and to discuss the proposed final level. The final level will then be agreed and confirmed by the SMSC QM panel. The SMSC lead/headteacher will be notified within 5 working days of the visit

SMSC Quality Mark Virtual Verification: Countdown Planner & Checklist

4–6 Weeks Before the Verification

Planning & Coordination

- Review and finalise your **National SMSC & British Values Quality Mark Audit Tool** and supporting evidence.
- Submit your school's Audit Tool
- Identify your SMSC lead and team for the process
- Confirm verification date with your Quality Mark verifier and organise introductory meeting
- Agree who will represent each stakeholder group (staff, pupils, parents, governors).

Evidence Preparation

- Start gathering photos and videos showing SMSC in action (e.g. classroom displays, community projects, behaviour boards).
- Identify pupil work samples that illustrate SMSC learning outcomes.
- Collect policy documents and school-wide plans linked to SMSC (e.g. Behaviour, British Values, Curriculum Map & SMSC Audit).
- Prepare your SMSC impact summary – key achievements, data, and reflections for moving forward.

2–3 Weeks Before

SMSC Lead Preparation

- Carry out introductory meeting with your verifier to confirm all arrangements for the virtual verification visit
- Check your tech setup (camera, sound, screen share, permissions).
- Set up a Teams/Zoom schedule for each interview (include backup links) and share with adult attendees
- Brief all staff on the verification schedule and expectations.
- Prepare pupil interview groups – mixed ages, confident speakers, varied experiences.
- Invite parents and governors – share an outline of what they'll likely discuss and the verification process
- Arrange for SLT or Headteacher to be available for the opening and closing sessions.

Evidence & Presentation

- Create a virtual evidence folder (e.g. in OneDrive or Google Drive) labelled by SMSC strand or audit section.
- Record or edit and share a short school walkthrough video 'tour' of school (optional).
- Prepare a PowerPoint or screen-share pack highlighting your SMSC journey.
- Review work samples, ensuring pupil names are anonymised where necessary
- **Ensure that any materials you wish to share as evidence are shared with your verifier no later than 2 weeks before your virtual verification date, including any amended versions of your audit tool.**

1 Week Before

Technical & Logistical Checks

- Test your video links and camera access in each room/space you'll use.
- Double-check that all interviewees have the correct times and links.
- Share your final itinerary with the verifier (if not already agreed or if it has changed)
- Ensure a quiet, private space for online interviews and discussion

Final Evidence Review

- Upload final photos of displays (especially behaviour boards and SMSC corners).
- Make sure your self-review document and school improvement plan are up to date.
- Print or save a copy of your key evidence pack for easy reference.

Verification Day

Be Calm & Organised

- Welcome the verifier and give a brief overview of the day.
- Prepare the headteacher to explain the school values and place them in context.
- Let pupils and parents speak naturally; don't over-rehearse them.
- Keep your evidence handy
- Highlight impact and reflection (not just activities).
- Allow time for the verifier's questions and note any points of feedback
- Allow time for comfort breaks.

Select three areas of success and development to feature in your report.

Appendix 2A: Suggested questions for your visit

Suggested Questions for Primary Headteachers

1. How do you support staff to respond to significant events (local, national or global) and help pupils reflect on them in age-appropriate ways?
2. How do you ensure your school's values, ethos, SMSC and British Values are clearly understood by new staff, supply teachers and visitors?
3. During my visit, what would you hope I would see, hear or experience that best reflects the culture and values of your school?
4. What training or professional development have staff had around SMSC, PSHE or British Values, and what difference has this made to pupils?
5. How do you promote staff wellbeing and a positive work–life balance, and how does this model the values you want pupils to develop?
6. What are you most proud of in terms of how your school supports pupils' personal development and character?
7. Where do you feel the school is still developing its SMSC provision, and what are your next steps?
8. How are governors involved in supporting and understanding the school's work around SMSC and British Values?
9. What makes your school distinctive in the way it nurtures pupils' character, relationships and sense of belonging?
10. What do you think has made the biggest difference to pupils' confidence, wellbeing or attitudes to learning?

Appendix 2A:

Suggested Questions for Secondary Headteachers

1. How do you enable staff across different subjects to respond to current affairs and wider issues in ways that promote reflection, ethical thinking and pupil voice?
2. How do you communicate your expectations around SMSC, British Values and school culture to all staff, including new staff, supply staff and external speakers?
3. During this visit, what would you want me to see or hear that best represents the lived experience of SMSC and British Values in your school?
4. What CPD have staff accessed in relation to SMSC, PSHE, inclusion or personal development, and how has this influenced practice across the curriculum?
5. How do you actively promote staff wellbeing and workload balance, and how does this contribute to the overall culture of the school?
6. What do you see as the strongest aspects of your provision for pupils' personal development, character and preparation for life beyond school?
7. What are your current priorities for further strengthening SMSC and British Values, and how are these reflected in your strategic planning?
8. How do governors understand and engage with the school's work on SMSC and personal development, and how do they provide support and challenge?
9. In what ways does your school's approach to SMSC and British Values stand out compared with other settings?
10. Looking across curriculum, culture and relationships, what has had the greatest impact on pupils' wellbeing, behaviour or readiness for adult life?

Appendix 2A:

Suggested Questions for Headteachers in Special Schools / SEND Settings

1. How do you ensure that all pupils, including those with complex communication needs, are able to express their views and feel that their voice matters in the life of the school?
2. How do you adapt your approach to SMSC and British Values so it is meaningful and accessible for pupils with a wide range of needs and abilities?
3. During my visit, what would you hope I would see, hear or experience that best reflects the culture, values and lived experience of your school community?
4. What training or professional development have staff undertaken around SEND, inclusion, communication, trauma-informed practice or personal development, and how has this influenced everyday practice?
5. How do you promote staff wellbeing and emotional resilience, given the complexity and intensity of work in specialist settings?
6. What are you most proud of in terms of how your school supports pupils' confidence, independence, relationships and sense of belonging?
7. Where do you see opportunities to further strengthen your SMSC provision, and how are these reflected in your improvement priorities?
8. How do governors understand the unique context of your school and support the work around inclusion, personal development and safeguarding?
9. What makes your school distinctive in the way it nurtures pupils' dignity, identity and sense of self?
10. Looking at pupils' wellbeing, engagement and development over time, what do you believe has made the greatest difference to their lived experience of school?

Appendix 2B

Suggested Questions for Pupils - Primary

Use these as flexible prompts rather than a script. Keep the conversation relaxed, choose questions that suit the group and follow pupils' answers with prompts such as "Can you tell me more?" or "Can you give me an example?"

Theme 1: Belonging, Safety and Relationships

What do you like most about your school, and what makes it feel like a welcoming place?

If you were worried, lonely or upset, who would notice and help you?

When pupils fall out or someone is unkind, what usually happens next?

Theme 2: Voice, Fairness and British Values

Can you tell me about a time pupils shared an idea and something changed because adults listened?

Where do you get opportunities to vote, make choices or take responsibility?

What does being treated fairly mean in your school?

Theme 3: Culture, Character and Personal Growth

What have you learned about people whose religion, culture or way of life may be different from yours?

Can you think of something at school that has helped you become more confident, kind or independent?

What are you most proud of doing or learning at school?

Theme 4: School Culture and Improvement

If a new pupil joined tomorrow, what would you tell them about the values of this school?

What would you change to make the school even better for pupils?

Appendix 2B

Suggested Questions for Pupils - Secondary

Use these as flexible prompts rather than a script. Keep the conversation relaxed, choose questions that suit the group and follow pupils' answers with prompts such as "Can you tell me more?" or "Can you give me an example?"

Theme 1: Belonging, Safety and Relationships

What helps you feel that you belong, are respected and can be yourself in this school?

If you experienced a worry, discrimination or unfair treatment, how confident would you be that someone would listen and help?

How does the school help pupils resolve conflict, understand consequences and repair relationships?

Theme 2: Voice, Agency and British Values

Can you give an example of pupil voice influencing a decision or improvement in the school?

Where do pupils have genuine opportunities to lead, make choices or take social action?

How does school help you understand democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect in real life?

Theme 3: Culture, Character and Preparation for Life

Where do you explore different beliefs, cultures, identities and viewpoints in a way that encourages thoughtful discussion?

Which experiences have most helped you develop confidence, resilience or independence?

How well is the school preparing you for life and participation in modern Britain?

Theme 4: School Culture and Improvement

How would you describe the "vibe" and values of this school to someone thinking of joining?

What is the school especially good at, and what would you most like it to improve?

Appendix 2B

Suggested Questions for Pupils - Special Schools and SEND Settings

Adapt each prompt to the pupil's communication needs. Responses may be spoken, signed, symbol-based, aided, observed or supported by a trusted adult. Focus on the pupil's lived experience rather than the form of the response.

Theme 1: Feeling Safe, Happy and Included

What do you like best at school?

What helps you feel safe, calm and happy here?

Who helps you when something feels difficult?

Theme 2: Choice, Voice and Fairness

How do you show adults what you want, need or think?

Do adults listen to your choices? Can you show or tell me about a time they did?

What happens if someone is unkind or something does not feel fair?

Theme 3: Relationships and Personal Growth

What helps you make friends, communicate or work with other people?

What have you learned to do that makes you feel proud or more independent?

How does school help you learn about being kind and respectful?

Theme 4: Making School Better

What is your favourite part of the school day?

Is there anything you would like to change or make better?

Appendix 2C: Suggested Questions for Parents and Carers

Theme 1: Life in Modern Britain & British Values

1. Beyond academic grades, how do you feel the school is preparing your child to be a successful and responsible citizen in today's world?
2. Has your child ever come home talking about things like voting, fairness, or how society works? What did they share?
3. How successful has the school been in helping your child develop a genuine respect for people with different beliefs, religions, or backgrounds?
4. In what ways does the school encourage your child to listen to and respect opinions that differ from their own?

Theme 2: Character, Kindness & Personal Growth

5. Can you share a specific time when the school's focus on confidence, independence, or resilience really showed up in your child's behaviour at home?
6. Has your child been involved in any charity work or community projects through the school? What impact did you notice this had on them?
7. We talk a lot about "kindness and empathy"—how does the school encourage your child to demonstrate those values in their daily life?
8. Does your child feel they have a "place" at this school? How do you feel they are made to feel valued and included?

Theme 3: School Culture & Community

9. When the school takes the children on trips or brings in external visitors, what do you think they gain from those experiences?
10. How does the school communicate with you about your child's personal development (not just their grades)?
11. If a neighbour asked you about the "vibe" or the values of this school, what would you tell them?

Theme 4: Strategic Leadership & Governance

12. How would you describe the role of the Governors in shaping the school's vision and long-term values?
13. Have you had opportunities to meet the Governors or hear from them? Do you feel they are visible and committed to a well-rounded education?
14. Do you have confidence that the Governors listen to parent views and "check in" to make sure school leaders are delivering the best for every child?

Appendix 2D

Suggested Questions for Governors - Primary

Use a professional but conversational style. Begin with what governors value and have experienced, then explore examples, impact and next steps rather than testing knowledge of policies or terminology.

Theme 1: Vision, Values and Culture

Beyond academic outcomes, what do you most value about the way this school helps children grow?

If a parent asked about the “vibe” or values of the school, what would you tell them?

What have you personally seen or heard that best captures the school’s ethos?

Theme 2: Pupil and Community Voice

How do governors hear directly about pupils’ experiences, including quieter pupils and those who need additional support?

Can you share a time when pupil, parent or staff voice influenced a decision or improvement?

How visible and approachable is the governing body to families and the wider community?

Theme 3: Inclusion, Character and British Values

How do you know that children learn to respect different beliefs, cultures and ways of life?

What difference do you believe the school’s approach is making to pupils’ confidence, relationships and sense of belonging?

How do governors check that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND participate fully in personal development opportunities?

Theme 4: Leadership, Impact and Next Steps

How does the governing body support and challenge leaders around SMSC, wellbeing and personal development?

What is the school’s next priority in this area, and how will governors know whether it has made a difference?

Appendix 2D

Suggested Questions for Governors - Secondary

Use a professional but conversational style. Begin with what governors value and have experienced, then explore examples, impact and next steps rather than testing knowledge of policies or terminology.

Theme 1: Vision, Values and Preparation for Life

Beyond examination results, what do you most value about the way the school prepares young people for adult life?

How would you describe the culture and values of the school to a prospective family?

What have you personally seen or heard that demonstrates SMSC and British Values in everyday school life?

Theme 2: Pupil and Community Voice

How do governors hear directly from different pupil groups, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND?

Can you share an example of pupil, parent or staff voice influencing a strategic decision?

How does the governing body remain visible and responsive to families and the local community?

Theme 3: Inclusion, Character and British Values

How do you know that pupils encounter different beliefs, cultures, identities and viewpoints in a balanced and meaningful way?

What difference is the school making to pupils' confidence, agency, relationships and readiness for life beyond school?

How do governors assure themselves that personal development opportunities are equitable and inclusive?

Theme 4: Leadership, Impact and Next Steps

How does the governing body support and challenge leaders around SMSC, behaviour, wellbeing and personal development?

What is the school's next priority in this area, and what evidence will governors use to evaluate impact?

Appendix 2D

Suggested Questions for Governors - Special Schools and SEND Settings

Use a professional but conversational style. Begin with what governors value and have experienced, then explore examples, impact and next steps rather than testing knowledge of policies or terminology.

Theme 1: Dignity, Belonging and Culture

What are you most proud of in the way the setting protects pupils' dignity, safety and sense of belonging?

How would you describe the setting's values and culture to a new family?

What have you personally seen that captures the lived experience of pupils here?

Theme 2: Pupil and Family Voice

How do governors hear the views of pupils with different communication profiles and levels of need?

Can you share a time when pupil or family voice changed provision or a governing-body decision?

How well does the governing body understand the experiences and priorities of families?

Theme 3: Inclusion, Agency and Personal Growth

How do you know that SMSC and British Values are meaningful and accessible for every pupil?

What difference is the setting making to pupils' confidence, relationships, agency and independence?

How do governors check that reasonable adjustments enable equitable participation?

Theme 4: Leadership, Impact and Next Steps

How do governors support and challenge leaders around safeguarding, wellbeing, inclusion and personal development?

What is the setting's next priority in this area, and how will governors recognise progress?

Appendix 2E

Suggested Questions for Trust Boards and MATs

Use a professional but conversational style. Begin with what governors value and have experienced, then explore examples, impact and next steps rather than testing knowledge of policies or terminology.

Theme 1: Shared Vision and Local Character

What do trustees most value about the way the trust promotes character, belonging and preparation for life in modern Britain?

How does the trust balance shared expectations with each academy's distinctive context and character?

Theme 2: Stakeholder Voice and Community

How does the trust hear and respond to pupil and family voice across different academies and communities?

Can you give an example of stakeholder voice influencing a trust-wide decision or improvement?

Theme 3: Inclusion and Educational Experience

How does the board know that SMSC and British Values are meaningful across curriculum, culture and relationships in every academy?

What evidence helps trustees understand the experience of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND?

Theme 4: Impact and Improvement

Can you share an example of trust-wide collaboration improving pupils' experiences?

What is the trust's next priority in this area, and how will the board evaluate progress and impact?

Appendix 2F

Suggested Questions for SMSC Coordinators - Primary

Keep the discussion reflective and developmental. Invite coordinators to describe authentic examples, what pupils experience, what has informed improvement and where further support would be useful.

Theme 1: Strengths and Lived Experience

What are you most proud of in the way children experience SMSC and British Values in this school?

Where would you take me to see this work at its best, and what would pupils say about it?

Can you share a particular moment when you saw the school's values making a real difference to a child?

Theme 2: Voice, Inclusion and Participation

How do pupil and family views influence your planning? Can you give an example of something that changed?

How do you know that quieter pupils, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND participate fully?

Theme 3: Curriculum, Culture and Staff Practice

How do staff make SMSC meaningful through everyday teaching, relationships and school routines?

How do you help colleagues respond confidently to significant local, national or global events?

Theme 4: Impact, Reflection and Next Steps

What difference is the school's approach making to pupils' confidence, behaviour, relationships or sense of belonging?

What has been more difficult to develop, and what have you learned from that?

What is your next priority, and what evidence will help you judge progress?

Appendix 2F

Suggested Questions for SMSC Coordinators - Secondary

Keep the discussion reflective and developmental. Invite coordinators to describe authentic examples, what pupils experience, what has informed improvement and where further support would be useful.

Theme 1: Strengths and Lived Experience

What are you most proud of in the way pupils experience SMSC and British Values across the school?

Where would you take me to see this work at its best across subjects, enrichment and wider school life?

Can you share a moment when pupil voice, social action or ethical discussion had a particularly strong impact?

Theme 2: Voice, Inclusion and Participation

How do pupil and family views influence provision? Can you give an example of something that changed?

How do you check that different pupil groups experience equitable access, belonging and meaningful participation?

Theme 3: Curriculum, Culture and Staff Practice

How do you help subject and pastoral teams recognise their contribution without making SMSC feel like an add-on?

How are staff supported to respond thoughtfully to current affairs and contested issues?

Theme 4: Impact, Reflection and Next Steps

What difference is the school's approach making to pupils' wellbeing, relationships, agency or readiness for adult life?

Where is practice less consistent, and how are you working with colleagues to strengthen it?

What is your next priority, and what evidence will show that it has made a difference?

Appendix 2F

Suggested Questions for SMSC Coordinators - Special Schools and SEND Settings

Keep the discussion reflective and developmental. Invite coordinators to describe authentic examples, what pupils experience, what has informed improvement and where further support would be useful.

Theme 1: Strengths and Lived Experience

What are you most proud of in the way pupils experience dignity, belonging and meaningful participation?

Where would you take me to see SMSC and British Values made accessible through everyday practice?

Can you share a moment when a pupil's communication, choice or independence had a particularly strong impact?

Theme 2: Voice, Inclusion and Participation

How do pupil and family views influence provision? Can you give an example of something that changed?

How do you ensure pupils with the most complex needs can express choices and exercise agency?

Theme 3: Adaptation, Relationships and Staff Practice

How do staff adapt opportunities to pupils' communication, sensory, cognitive and emotional needs?

How do relationships, routines and specialist approaches help pupils experience fairness, respect and belonging?

Theme 4: Impact, Reflection and Next Steps

What difference is the setting's approach making to pupils' confidence, relationships, independence or quality of life?

What has been most challenging to develop, and what have you learned from that?

What is your next priority, and what evidence will help you recognise progress?

Appendix 2G: Verifier Prompt Box

What to listen for (aligned to Ofsted Personal Development)

When exploring these questions, verifiers should listen for evidence that:

- Leaders can clearly articulate impact, not just describe activities
- SMSC and personal development are embedded in everyday practice, not treated as bolt-ons.
- Pupils' experiences reflect belonging, respect, inclusion and safety
- Provision supports character development, resilience, confidence and independence
- Leaders understand how disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND access personal development opportunities
- Pupil, staff and parent voice are used meaningfully to inform improvement
- Priorities for development are realistic, reflective and clearly planned, rather than aspirational only
- The language used reflects values, culture and relationships, not inspection compliance
- Strong responses are typically grounded in authentic examples, shared ownership across staff, and a clear sense of how SMSC contributes to pupils' readiness for life beyond school.

Appendix 3: Evidence Base and Selected References

The National Quality Mark for SMSC & British Values is informed by statutory guidance, government policy, inspection frameworks, professional guidance and relevant educational research. The evidence map below identifies the principal foundations for each of the eight standards.

These sources support the framework but do not mean that every descriptor represents a statutory requirement. The terms ‘must’ and ‘required’ are reserved for established legal duties; other descriptors represent developmental or recommended practice.

A fuller evidence map and complete APA 7 bibliography are maintained in a separate companion document. Further information is available from www.smscqualitymark.co.uk

Evidence Map for the Eight Standards

Standard	Principal evidence base	Principal sources
S1 Safeguarding and Induction	Safeguarding culture, child-centred practice, safer recruitment, staff induction, early help, Prevent and online safety.	DfE safeguarding guidance; Working Together to Safeguard Children; Prevent Duty Guidance.
S2 Leadership and Governance	Strategic leadership of SMSC and FBV, governance oversight, shared vision, staff development and school improvement.	DfE governance guides; Headteachers’ Standards; Ofsted inspection toolkit.
S3 Attendance	Whole-school attendance culture, relationships with families, early identification of barriers, inclusive support and partnership working.	Working Together to Improve School Attendance; SEND Code of Practice; equality guidance.
S4 Behaviour and Pastoral Support	Positive behaviour culture, respectful relationships, pastoral support, wellbeing and proportionate responses to behaviour.	Behaviour in Schools; suspension and exclusion guidance; statutory RSHE guidance.
S5 Inclusion	Equality, diversity, belonging, SEND, reasonable adjustments, protected characteristics and equitable participation.	Equality Act guidance; SEND Code of Practice; Ofsted inspection toolkit.
S6 Curriculum	A broad curriculum in which SMSC and FBV are taught meaningfully through subjects, current issues and wider experiences.	National curriculum; FBV through SMSC guidance; political impartiality guidance.
S7 Personal Development	Character, pupil voice and agency, leadership, citizenship, social action, enrichment and preparation for life in modern Britain.	Character Education Framework; FBV guidance; Lundy’s pupil-participation model.
S8 Developing Teaching and Learning	Discussion and enquiry, metacognition, staff expertise, adaptive teaching, respectful debate and pupils’ understanding.	EEF metacognition guidance; Teachers’ Standards; Ofsted curriculum and teaching toolkit.

Selected References

This concise selection identifies the principal sources most useful to schools. Full bibliographic coverage is provided in the companion evidence-base document.

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-inspection-toolkit-operating-guide-and-information>

Reviewing the evidence base

The National Quality Mark reviews its evidence base at least annually and whenever there is a significant change to safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, equality, SEND, RSHE, curriculum or inspection guidance.