This short submission is in relation to the following lines of enquiry:

5. What should be the role of education in teaching and encouraging good citizenship? At what stages, from primary school through to university, should it be (a) available, and (b) compulsory? Should there be any exemptions? Should there be more emphasis on political participation, both inside and outside classes? How effective is current teaching? Do the curriculum and the qualifications that are currently offered need amending?

8. What are the values that all of us who live in Britain should share and support?

1 As part of revised guidance for promoting children and young people’s spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC), the 2014 OFSTED inspection framework in England introduced the expectation that schools ‘promote the fundamental British values (FBV) of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs’ (Ofsted 2014:35). This echoed the professional standards for teachers in England introduced 2 years earlier that requires teachers do not undermine these stated FBV (DfE, 2012).

2 The definition and role ascribed to ‘Fundamental British values’ first emerged within the 2011 Home Office ‘Prevent’ anti-terror strategy. ‘Prevent’ defined ‘extremism’ (2011. Annex A) as vocal or active opposition to these FBV, illustrating the decisive role of security in driving values education in a post-multicultural space. Locating the FBV requirement in the Prevent Duty and in the Ofsted Inspection framework, encouraged a sense of social crisis by conflating education with national security in ways which many found troubling and divisive. Criticisms included the lack of public debate about the meanings of Britishness and the relation to conceptually unclear values (Richardson and Bolloten 2015; Smith, 2016).

3 The requirement for English schools to promote FBV has provoked concern and criticism from a range of commentators. This has highlighted the perceived lack of clarity about the values themselves and the sense of parochialism invoked by the agenda (Richardson and Bolloten 2015). The mundanity of consensus values that attempt to speak to everyone have been criticised as ‘little more than feel-good words devoid of real substance’ (Arthur, 2005: 245). Arguably attempts to formulate a common set of values militates against the celebration of diversity inherent in a liberal democratic society.

4 The seductive simplicity of the concise list of the FBV belies the conceptual nuances invoked by these values and the complexity of their diverse manifestations within practice. Conflict between particular values that are potentially irreconcilable is concealed. For instance, the guidance for schools (Department for Education [DfE], 2014) is ambivalent regarding the meaning of toleration. It fails to distinguish between a range of interpretations that include a genuine openness and deliberative engagement with difference to a grudging or uncritical acceptance of difference. Disputes around the idea of tolerance reverberate in practice. Concerns about both ‘negative toleration’ that simply
requires ‘putting up’ with something towards which a negative attitude is held and ‘positive
toleration’ that entails naively celebrating diversity has led to calls to move beyond
tolerance to constructively engage with differences through dialogue for mutual
understanding.

5 Our research into teacher understanding of British Values at Liverpool Hope University is
ongoing and we would be willing to share further information with the House of Lords
Select Committee as required. Despite the problematic nature of teaching ‘British values’ as
outlined above, we have also found that the focus on teaching values opens up a more
progressive space for developing criticality– for example through opening up pedagogical
approaches such as philosophy for children and through nurturing encounters with others /
engaging the community through initiatives such as service-learning (Bamber, 2016).

6 The committee should be aware that at the same time UNESCO has set out a vision for
education emphasizing holistic aspects of learning that move ‘beyond the development of
knowledge and cognitive skills to build values, soft skills and attitudes among learners that
can facilitate international cooperation and promote social transformation’ (UNESCO 2014:
9). The subsequent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to harness international
collaboration to better understand how education as a public good can more effectively
nurture peace, tolerance, sustainable livelihoods and human fulfilment for all (see for
example Bourn et al, 2017). Global Citizenship Education is seen as central to these efforts:
an indicator for success in meeting SDG 4 is the extent to which global citizenship education
is mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies, (b) curricula, (c) teacher
education and (d) student assessment (UNESCO, 2016: 287). In addition, the OECD have are
developing a framework for global competency (OECD, 2016) to be used as the basis for
international comparisons in the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment
(PISA). The SDGs and OECD measure of global competency present policy opportunities that
we must exploit to help us move beyond narrow understandings of Britishness in order to
prepare our young people for life in a modern Britain and global society.

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References


