



Wilson's School Policy

**Concerning the Ethos and Religious Character of the School,
Religious Education and Collective Worship in the School**

Approved by Trustees: Autumn 2025

Ethos and Religious Character

1. The school's ethos is defined in the school's ethos statement, agreed between Governors and the Diocesan Board of Education (*see appendix 1*)
2. The school's religious character is defined in a memorandum agreed between the Governors of Wilson's and the Diocesan Board of Education (*see appendix 2*)
3. Notwithstanding its status as an Academy school designated as having a religious character, the school does not consider itself to be a church school. It does not consider as part of its mission the promotion or nurturing of any religious belief, nor of religious belief in general.

Religious Education

4. Religious Education is a formal and discrete part of the curriculum at KS3 and KS4. Religious Education at KS5 continues via a programme of Philosophy and Ethics taught in Year 11 (following the completion of the KS4 programme in Year 10) and through assemblies, the Moral Maze programme, the Thought for the Day programme and the tutorial programme in Years 12 and 13.
6. RE recognises explicitly the Christian heritage of this country as well as the significant contribution made by other religions and cultures.
7. It is part of the task of all departments and all structured activities in the school to promote the values and virtues of respect and tolerance for all; the pursuit of truth and justice; the challenge of service and duty; the experience of mutual trust and reconciliation and the pursuit of excellence.
8. All pupils are encouraged to attend religious education classes; however, parents have the right to withdraw their son from RE lessons. Such requests should be submitted in writing to the Head.

Collective Worship

9. Collective worship provides an opportunity to uphold and promote the character of the school.
10. The school acknowledges its obligation to provide for all pupils the opportunity for a daily act of worship in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.
11. Acts of Worship include assemblies and Form Tutor sessions. Although the regular schedule for these will change from year to year, the school is committed (venues permitting) to providing one formal assembly per week for Years 7-11, one per fortnight in the Sixth Form and one Year meeting per week in Years 7-11.
12. The school operates current DfE policy in relation this area and in particular, given the diversity of our community, emphasises that collective worship is an opportunity for students to reflect on their own beliefs; to develop a community spirit, a common ethos and shared values; to consider spiritual and moral issues to respond to worship. It is not the school's policy that each and every element listed here be included in every Act of Worship.
13. The school notes and agrees with the statement included in DfE Circular 1/94 (page 57) that, "*although worship is to be regarded as veneration paid to a supreme being or power, worship in schools must necessarily be of a different character*". An important aim of Collective Worship is that it should seek to unite the school, rather than divide it.
14. Accordingly acts of worship in Wilson's are defined as opportunities for reflection that are broadly spiritual in their nature and implications. Given the religious diversity of the school they will not be started or finished with a prayer.

15. At Wilson's we understand spirituality to be "the universal search for individual identity - the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live".

16. Worship, as defined in point 14 above, occurs daily in many circumstances within the school, both within and beyond the curriculum, within formal gatherings brought together for worship and in gatherings, such as classes, which have a wider purpose. These opportunities for worship occur on a daily basis within the school, for instance, in form time in celebrating or sharing a joyful event or in acknowledging an achievement or a service rendered; or in an English or music or art lesson in the appreciation of a beautiful work of art or literature; or in science or geography lessons in taking note of, and appreciating a wonderful feature of nature; or in RE lessons in sharing some belief with others, or in the quiet reading of a sacred text.

17. These daily acts of worship, formal or informal, are supplemented by the multitude of opportunities provided by the extensive co-curricular programme, by acts of charity and of service to the community and to the school.

18. The school will provide opportunities for groups of pupils, parents and members of the wider community to meet for corporate worship. In acknowledgement of the school's historical links with the Church of England, meetings of religious groups, considered by the church to be explicitly opposed to or antipathetic to its mission, will not be permitted at the school.

Ethos Statement

Wilson's School is a selective school that seeks to promote excellence in all areas of school life and to provide a caring community and challenging environment in which all feel valued and have the self-confidence, motivation and opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Recognising our historical foundation, we seek to maintain an inclusive ethos broadly in the spirit of and in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education. All religious traditions and those without religious faith are valued equally.

Memorandum of Understanding

Wilson's School

Memorandum of Understanding between Wilson's School and Southwark Diocesan Board of Education

1. Historical context of the school

The school was founded by Edward Wilson in 1615 in Camberwell. Wilson was appointed Deacon of Ely in 1576. He subsequently became vicar of the Parish of Camberwell at the request of Queen Elizabeth I in 1578. At the time, the establishment of a grammar school in England required the assent of the Crown. This was obtained from King James I after the first school buildings were constructed. The school closed for a period of time between 1845 and 1883 and then reopened in Camberwell under a second Royal Charter granted by Queen Victoria in 1880.

In 1961 the Greencoat School, a mixed elementary Church of England institution, closed, with the funds used to support the building of the Greencoat Science Building situated at the school's former site in Camberwell.

The 1883 building and Greencoat Science Building continued to be used until 1975 when the school moved to Wallington. The original site is owned by the Wilson's Grammar School Foundation for the benefit of Wilson's School. The Foundation is an entirely separate entity from the Academy Trust.

The school does not have a historic trust deed.

2. Historical links with the Diocese of Southwark

The school has historical links with the Church of England and the Diocese of Southwark. The school was a Foundation School until 1999 when it became a Voluntary Aided School designated with a religious character (Church of England), a decision fully supported by the Governing Body at the time.

The Southwark Diocesan Board has, for a considerable period of time, appointed members to the Wilson's Grammar School Foundation and Trust and to the Governing Body. The school has been inspected under the Section 48 of the Education Act on a five yearly cycle. The relationship between the school and the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) has been outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding since 2005.

This Memorandum of Understanding has defined the school's religious character in broadly moral terms which respect the school's very diverse community as well as its historical links with the Church of England.

In 2011 Wilson's School moved from Voluntary Aided to Academy status. Under the terms of the Academies Act, the school, which was designated with a religious character prior to conversion, continued with the same designation post conversion. The Objects of the Academy Trust Company specify that the Academy Trust must conduct "a selective school designated as having religious character" in association with the Board and offering a broad and balanced curriculum. The funding agreement states that the school is subject to a Section 48 Inspection designated with a religious character (Church of England). It also states that Religious Education must be given to all pupils at the Academy in accordance with the tenets of the specified religion and collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the Church of England. Finally, it states that under the OFSTED framework, lead inspectors should check the Section 48 arrangements.

The SDBE has been afforded an advisory role in respect of the appointment of any new Head at Wilson's. There is no expectation that a Head will be a practising member of the Church of England nor any other Christian denomination, but he or she will be required to lead and run the school in accordance with the principles outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding.

3. Southwark Diocesan Board of Education

Vision

Developing Church of England Education

- To enable the mission of God through work of the Board
- To be a high performing Diocesan Board promoting excellence in education both locally and nationally
- To develop and grow highly effective, inclusive Church of England Schools rooted in Christian values
- To celebrate and share the richness, quality and successes of our school and chaplaincies
- To offer exemplary service to our schools and chaplaincies

4. Wilson's School

Ethos and Values

Non Sibi Sed Omnibus – *'Not for oneself, but for all'*

In setting the highest aspirations for our students we aim:

- to ensure a safe and kind environment for learning, building pupils' confidence and actively promoting their wellbeing
- to enable all students to reach the highest levels of academic enjoyment and achievement by balancing breadth and depth of knowledge in a wide range of disciplines
- to enable our students to think independently and to feel secure in taking intellectual risks
- to give all of our students every opportunity to engage with the social, spiritual, moral and cultural dimensions of life

- to provide every pupil with opportunities for achievement and enjoyment beyond the classroom
- to provide our students with the skills and attitudes needed to thrive in Higher Education and proceed to satisfying careers and fulfilling lives.

The following statement of values is endorsed by Wilson's School:

"The spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of each child will be based upon the values and virtues: respect and tolerance for all; the pursuit of truth and justice; the challenge of service and duty; the experience of mutual trust and reconciliation and the pursuit of excellence.

These values and virtues find expression in the curriculum, character and life of the school through:

- spiritual development which recognises the religious dimension of education, through the curriculum and collective worship
- moral development, which builds character, enabling each child to have the courage to do what is right
- cultural development which values the contribution of all faiths and those without faith equally
- mental and physical development which releases each child's full potential.

5. SDBE and Wilson's engagement

- Wilson's being considered as part of the 'Diocesan' family and supporting the Board and other members within it by mutual agreement
- Access to services and advice from the Board
- Use of the Cathedral and local churches for services
- SDBE advisory input to Head's selection process
- RE advice and support
- SDBE appointment of two governors to support and guide the school.

6. Section 48 Inspection

As an Academy school designated as having a religious character, Wilson's recognises that it will be subject to a Section 48 Statutory Inspection. In respect of Section 48 Inspection, the SDBE recognises that, in view of the particular history of the school and the fact that it does not have a historic trust deed, but does have a religious character, the nationally agreed Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) framework is not an appropriate inspection tool for this Academy. The legal position is that the Education Act 2005 and associated Regulations continue to require that a governing body must consult the relevant Diocesan Board of Education before appointing an inspector. The Academy Trust, in agreement with the Diocesan Board, will procure a Section 48 Inspector who will carry out the Section 48 Inspection focusing only on points (a) – (f) below in light of the school's Ethos & Values set out above.

The Section 48 Inspection will focus on the following areas:

- (a) The nature of the provision of collective worship and Religious Education, solely in light of the school's policy for this area;
- (b) Whether the school encourages all students to reflect on the importance of a system of personal belief and the place faith (including nontheistic faith) has in other people's lives;
- (c) Whether the school challenges and encourages all students to understand the difference between right and wrong and the consequences of their actions for themselves and others;
- (d) Whether the school encourages all students to be creative, questioning and imaginative within a framework that recognises the importance of experience, personal values and respect;
- (e) Whether the school and all students recognise and respect cultural diversity;
- (f) Whether the school enables all students, including the disadvantaged, to make strong academic progress.

Evidence to support the inspection process will be found in the school's Self Evaluation documents. It is agreed that specific documentation separate from this is not required for the Section 48 process.

The Section 48 Inspection process and report writing must not apply any quantitative grades, but instead will make broad qualitative assessments in relation to points (a) – (f) above with suggested development points. SIAMS templates/categories should not be used as this is not an appropriate inspection tool for this Academy.

The Governing Body and SDBE will jointly prepare for the inspection by:

- i. Ensuring Section 48 Inspection takes place within the normal 5 year cycle.
- ii. Considering the school self-evaluation materials to be made available to the inspector to ensure the smooth running of the process, whilst noting that such self-evaluation will be part of the school's general evaluation rather than separate from it.
- iii. Procuring a Section 48 Inspector agreed by both parties to carry out the Section 48 Inspection.

The SDBE will oversee the inspection process by:

- i. Appointing the inspector (noting point 6iii above).
- ii. Determining the exact timing of the inspection.
- iii. Briefing the inspector in relation to this MoU.
- iv. Quality assuring the inspection process.

7. School Self-evaluation joint working

Due to the unique nature of this Section 48 Inspection regime and the fact that a criteria based framework is not being applied, there will be SDBE Adviser visits to the Academy annually (or at least four times) between Section 48 Inspections to work with senior leaders and/or governors to support self-evaluation and to provide

an additional evidence base which can be used by an inspector. Each visit will focus on one or more of the six areas outlined above, with a programme established by the school in advance. A brief note of the visit will be sent to the school and circulated to the Head within 15 working days, but will not be published.

8. Advisory Rights

The Academy Trust will consult with an accord advisory rights to the SDBE in respect of the appointment of a new Head of the Academy.

9. The SDBE as a Member of the Academy Trust will appoint a representative. The SDBE will appoint two governors to the Governing Body.

10. Review

This Memorandum of Understanding is subject to review on a periodic basis subject to the mutual agreement of both the Governing Body and the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education. The Board and the school have the discretion to change their Aims & Ethos/Value Statements and areas surrounding self-evaluation without consulting one another.

Appendix 3

Religious education in English schools: Non-statutory guidance published by the Department for Education

This document can be downloaded at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-guidance-in-english-schools-non-statutory-guidance-2010>