

British Values at Harris Westminster

“Schools should promote the fundamental **British values** of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.”

Department for Education advice to Maintained Schools November 2014

The Harris Westminster Sixth Form ethos is one of academic debate in which the scholarly virtues of critical and scrupulous thought are promoted. Students are encouraged to develop their own views and to refine them scrupulously – considering the justification for each statement and being aware of any weaknesses in the facts and opinions on which they are relying. They are encouraged to debate their opinions with others, opening them to critical review and, in their turn, engaging with and critiquing the views of others. Within this framework they develop an understanding that respect and tolerance of those with different views (or faiths or beliefs) does not imply agreement and that individuals have the liberty to develop their own views and the responsibility to ensure that their views (and actions) are in line with the maintenance of a just and fair society.

Scholarly debate takes place in all subjects across the curriculum with argument being conducted according to the paradigm of each individual discipline. The Subject Societies that meet every week epitomise this with students delivering short lectures on the subject of their choice and being open to questions afterwards. The sport of debating is also very strong: an inter-house debating competition takes place every year and teams are entered for a wide range of national competitions: within this format students develop the intellectual rigour of identifying strengths and weak points of an argument as well as the discipline of attacking reasoning rather than individuals and respecting the rights of others to express their views.

Every week speakers come to deliver a lecture at Harris Westminster which all students are encouraged to attend. These speakers come from a wide variety of backgrounds including both Houses of Parliaments, business and academia. By attending these lectures and questioning the speakers, students gain an understanding of the foundations of British society, its democracy and legal system as well as a wide variety of insights into academic disciplines and different careers.

Weekly assemblies are used to broaden the education of students, covering a wide variety of academic and cultural ideas and frameworks and reinforcing the ethos of Harris Westminster and the values on which the community is built. Students are encouraged to engage positively with each other, to consider each other's needs and to make their own choices, taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Harris Westminster students are encouraged to engage with and understand the beliefs of others with or without religious faith and are taught to value a society in which personal beliefs can be enjoyed without imposing on the freedoms of others. This engagement is supported by assemblies that take place in the great cultural institutions of St Margaret's Church on Parliament Square and Westminster Abbey.