



# Values Guide for Schools

## What matters most to you as a school?

**Values are the things that are important to us as individuals, as schools, and as communities.**

World Values Day challenges us to think about our most important values and to act on them.

By putting our values into action both inside and outside our organisation each and every day we can change ourselves, our organisations, our communities, and the world for the better.

This is the World Values Day call to action!

A powerful way to put values into action is through formal or informal volunteering; 'Values and Volunteering' is our theme for this year.

**World Values Day – Thursday, 15th October 2026**

**[www.worldvaluesday.com](http://www.worldvaluesday.com)**

**#WorldValuesDay**

## 1. What are Values?

Values are the things that are important to us, the foundation of our lives. Values are immensely powerful! They motivate us, drive our behaviour, ignite passion in our hearts, and explain why we do the things we do and feel the way we feel.

Values are the heart of all communities, including school communities. They are a shorthand way of describing our collective motivations. They connect us – they are the glue that binds the school community together. They define its culture, the way it behaves and how it shows itself to the rest of the world. They guide the community, and keep it focused and on track. Our values show us the way.

Above all, they support and sustain the collective wellbeing of the school community and all the staff, pupils, and families who are part of it. They can also provide a beacon of positive values for the surrounding local communities.



## 2. Why are Values so important for schools?

The activities of every school will inevitably be based on certain values. But often those values are not held completely consciously and are often taken for granted and forgotten about.

If the members of a school community are not clear about what values hold them together and motivate them, the school will not thrive. There will be lack of cohesion, lack of direction, and lack of energy. The school will struggle to attract and retain staff and pupils, to make good decisions, and to agree effective priorities and goals.

School communities who don't consistently practise their values will be less able to stand the stresses and strains that affect any group of individuals who spend a lot of time with each other. Whether it's tackling external problems or internal disputes, or planning ahead, or getting things done - everything is more difficult without shared values to rely upon.

Individual members of the school community – pupils, teachers, governors, parents and administrators – whose personal values are not in alignment with their experience at school, are likely to suffer from anxiety and stress, affecting their motivation, productivity, and mental health.

School communities that are clear about their values, where those values are aligned with their members' values, and where people make a consistent effort to practise those values, will produce a collaborative and resilient culture where members are well-motivated, happy and work productively together.

### **3. Can Values really change the world?**

We all sometimes forget our values or just ignore them – often when we need them most. Then we find ourselves somewhere we really don't want to be. This is as true for schools as it is for individuals.

It is a good idea to regularly review and refresh our school values. Are they still the most important ones for the school? And are they really being lived to the full in daily behaviour across our whole community, or do we need to spend time consciously reconnecting with them?

There's a wider impact when individuals and communities forget their values - a negative ripple effect. If those values are not lived to the full in our lives, at home, at work and elsewhere, then our communities won't live those values either and our individual and collective wellbeing will suffer. If our communities don't reflect our values, then the wider world won't reflect them either and its wellbeing will suffer too. We will lose our cohesion and connection to each other.

So if we want to change for the better our own lives, our school and the communities connected to the school, ultimately changing the world itself, then we have to change the behaviours that currently create the problems in our

communities and the wider world. And the only way to do that is for all of us to live our values to the full every day in everything we do.



#### **4. Our school doesn't have official Values. How do we go about identifying them?**

Here is one way to find your values and decide which are the most important ones **that you would like to see** in your school (not necessarily be the same ones that you see there now). Try to get as many of the school's staff as possible to take part in this exercise. You could also consider involving at least some pupils, governors and parents too, if practicable.

Each person taking part in the exercise should have a copy of the list on the next page and follow these simple instructions.

Reflect first about the activities you all normally take part in, what they look like when they go well and what they look like when they sometimes doesn't go so well.

Then look down the list and tick the box opposite the 10 words in the following table that best describe the values that you consider need to be reflected in your school to support its success.

Once you have selected 10, then you should next reduce these to your top 5. This two-step process will help you to appreciate how some values may be more essential to you than others. Then put the 5 values in order of importance from 1 to 5, with 1 being the value which is most important to you.

Collect the lists from everyone and by adding up the number of times a value is included in participants' "Top 5", you will discover the overall top 5 values that have been voted as being the most important values for the school.

### School Values

acceptance		creativity		initiative		respect	
accessibility		dependability		innovation		responsibility	
accountability		democracy		integrity		reward	
achievement		development				safety	
adaptability		diversity		justice		security	
appreciation		efficiency		kindness		sense of purpose	
authenticity		empowerment		leadership		service	
awareness		enthusiasm		learning		simplicity	
beauty		environmental awareness		listening		social responsibility	
calmness		equality		loyalty		success	
caution		ethics		making a difference		support	
caring		excellence		openness		teamwork	
celebration		fairness		order		trust	
challenge		financial stability		partnership		truth	
cleanliness		forgiveness		patience		variety	
Coaching / mentoring		freedom		perseverance		wellbeing	
collaboration		fun		positivity		willingness	
commitment		gratitude		pride		wisdom	
community involvement		growth		productivity		willingness	
competence		harmony		professionalism		add here*	
continuous improvement		helpfulness		quality		add here*	
contribution to society		inclusivity		recognition		add here*	
cooperation		independence		reliability		add here*	

\* If a value is important to you and it is not on the list, add it here.

Our most important values: 1.....  
 2.....  
 3.....  
 4.....  
 5.....



This way of identifying the school's core values should ensure that the school's values are aligned with those of its stakeholders, and that the stakeholders "buy into" the values of the school and really take them to heart.

## **5. Now let's put those values into action!**

Values are for acting on! If we make a conscious effort to make our values part of our working life wherever we are and whatever we are doing, we will enhance the wellbeing of the school community, help the school face the future more effectively and productively, and so help to make the world a better place.

Here is how your school might go about putting its values into action in a way that will bring the whole school community closer together, and which can also bring the wider communities that you are part of closer together too.

The process could involve two steps:

### ***1. Staff session.***

Try your best to involve not just staff in this initial discussion but also, if you can, some pupils, governors and parents, so that the whole school community is involved from the outset.

Identify one of your school values that you all feel needs extra attention. Discuss how you can go about putting it more completely into action in a way that would get everyone at the school involved and would help bring staff, pupils, parents and care-givers closer together and so benefit and strengthen your school community, and also possibly bring you together with the wider communities around you. You will need to devise a simple and practical plan of action to do this (you will see some ideas for putting your chosen value into action on the next page).

You might consider using our **Values Challenge for Schools** to help you do this. It is a ready-to-use workshop which will help you to look at one of your school values and decide how you can put it into action more effectively across the whole school community. It is just one hour long, is simple to run, and we have had great feedback on it in previous years from many schools and other organisations, big and small. To get the Values Challenge for Schools free resource pack including a Facilitator Manual and set of slides to use in the

session, go to [this page](#) of the World Values Day website and click the 'Take the Challenge' button which you will see at the bottom of the page.

## **2. Involve the pupils.**

Whether or not you decide to use the Values Challenge, the next step will be to involve all the pupils, staff and, wherever possible, members of the wider school community in a plan to put the value into action.

Or pupils can be asked to come up with their own ideas for putting that value into practice – something challenging, creative, fun, something that can make a difference. Maybe give some sort of recognition for the best/most effective suggestions.

After World Values Day is over the pupils can be asked to think about which actions worked the best, and why, and then that action can be repeated and become a way that the school regularly supports and interacts with its local community.

**Here are some ideas** that could be used to prompt both staff and pupils. Many of the suggested activities reflect this year's World Values Day theme of **values and volunteering**, by which we mean not just organised volunteering but any action done to help others without expectation of reward or recognition.

**Starting the discussion** – you could kick-start discussion among the pupils by delivering an assembly around a particular value. You could give examples about how they could put the value into action – for instance if the value is **Environmental Awareness, Teamwork, Responsibility, or Respect** (for the environment) the suggestion could involve picking up rubbish around the school or in a local litter black spot. You could adopt a local monument and keep it clean. You might agree a plan to reduce the use of single-use plastics at school and outside school.

You could hold a **Values Day/ Values Week** where staff and pupils discuss values (this can be incorporated into planned topics for the term/semester) and put them into action in school, at home and in the community.

If the value is **Creativity, or Making a Difference** or something similar, you might like to support the local community by organising a "Values Fair" at the school with students and parents/carers bringing in cakes, biscuits and other prepared

or fresh food and produce to be sold in aid of a local charity (or given to a local foodbank), and arrange some fun activities with a values theme.

Or if the value is **Caring** or **Creativity** you could suggest connecting with the residents of a local retirement home by visiting and chatting with them, or doing songs or skits, or read them poems and short stories.

You could also invite members of the community, grandparents, community police, health visitors, local shopkeepers etc in to share their favourite childhood stories or to read a story from the class library with younger pupils. The pupils then engage in conversations with them, helping to bridge the generational gap and build **trust, empathy** and intergenerational **respect** and **connection** within the community.

Or the visitors might share some of the games which they played when they were children - games such as skipping games, hop scotch, and other games that are no longer seen in playgrounds. Indoor games such as chess or pick up sticks etc can also work well. This could easily fit into interdisciplinary and cross curricular learning and take place over a number of weeks ahead of World Values Day. For older pupils the intergenerational activity might take the form of discussions about how schools or the local communities have changed over the years, perhaps held during a coffee morning.

Get everyone to come up with their own ideas for ways to **bring your school values to life**. And you don't need to wait until World Values Day to start putting those ideas into action.

## **6. Then share your story!**

Once you've put your values into action, we'd love to hear about it! Share your experience with the global World Values Day community.

### ***What to include:***

- The value(s) you chose
- The action(s) you took
- How it went

### ***How to share:***



Post on your favourite social media using **#WorldValuesDay** or email us at [info@worldvaluesday.com](mailto:info@worldvaluesday.com). You could use the 'I Value/We Value' Templates which you can download from here: <https://www.worldvaluesday.com/value-templates-download/>. Just fill in your chosen value and the action, and use it in a group selfie.

Use words, photos, videos. Whatever works best!

*Remember not to publish any photographs or personal information about children without receiving appropriate parental permissions.*

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- LinkedIn: [World Values Day](#)
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- TikTok: [@worldvaluesday](#)
- BlueSky: [@valuesday.bsky.social](#)
- X (Twitter): [@ValuesDay](#)



**Why not join other schools, groups, organisations and individuals from all around the world in other World Values Day activities?**

**Please have a look at the many values-related events and activities that will be taking place on and around World Values Day on Thursday 15th October 2026 on our website <https://www.worldvaluesday.com/events-and-activities/>**

**Let's show the world just how valuable living our values can be.**

**Get involved!**

**#WorldValuesDay**

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