



The School's Faith Authority

The school is a Hindu faith school and the designated faith authority is the iFoundation. The iFoundation is rooted in the teachings of Lord Chaitanya, and promotes an inclusive, accessible approach towards spirituality. It aims at a personal, loving and spontaneous reciprocation with the divine (Krishna).

Avanti Schools share the same distinctive ethos, founded on three pillars: Educational Excellence, Character Formation and Spiritual Insight. Our curriculum is developed to include a Philosophy and Ethics course which, although taught discretely, is intended to inform all learning throughout the pupils' time at school. The Philosophy & Ethics course is focused on developing seven key values. Humility is the overarching value and unifies the others, which are: empathy, courage, respect, self-discipline, gratitude and integrity. Each value is integrated into all that the pupils do on a half-termly basis, repeating year on year to extend the pupils understanding to demonstrate progress over time (e.g. Autumn 1 focus is Empathy). Included in each half term unit of study is a focus Festival Day that unifies the values and character qualities we intend to develop. These are special celebratory days, involving planned lessons, performing arts and opportunities to perform publically. The overview identifies expectations for significant milestones throughout the pupil's school life. Yoga, meditation and mindfulness, Sanskrit and Religious Education lessons, contribute to the holistic education of pupils and students and are linked with this course.

Summary:

- Weekly sessions
- One value covered each half term
- Linked with yoga, meditation and mindfulness lessons
- Linked with Religious Education and Sanskrit lessons
- Celebration Festival Days each term (based on Hindu and other religious festivals)
- Assessed termly against Expected outcomes

The School's Aims for Religious Education –

We are committed to Faith Nurture with some elements of multi-faith Religious Education, in order to ensure that our children receive a broad and balanced outlook. The school's aims for Religious Education are:

(**Bold text** relates to Faith Nurture, **non-bold** text to the Harrow Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education).

1. To enrich pupils' faith by providing positive and memorable experiences
2. To nurture pupils' innate aptitude for inquisitive, reflective and philosophical thought
3. To enhance pupils' spiritual knowledge, understanding and personal realisation
4. To encourage pupils' application in everyday life of religious and moral principles
5. To promote character formation and self-understanding
6. To empower pupils in self-expression and authentic representation of their own traditions
7. To enable pupils to live harmoniously in today's culturally plural societies

8. To equip pupils with esteem for their own faith traditions and respect for others

9. To enhance pupil's taste for service and spiritual activities

10. To nurture children's natural attraction for God (Lord Krishna) as their dearest friend

Avanti House Primary School will support pupils in their religious and spiritual development through:

- Religious Education
- All curriculum areas including Sanskrit, citizenship, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Collective worship
- Observance of festivals
- Modelling
- Partnership working not only with our own faith advisers but other faith communities

Teachings of the Faith Adviser

The core teachings of the Faith Authority are assimilated into all aspects of school life. They revolve around four main subjects, as follows:

1. The real self (Atma), is different from the temporary mind and body. All pupils are nurtured to recognise the true worth of all people, irrespective of temporary labels relating to age, race, class, gender, ability, nationality and religious affiliation. The worth of all living creatures is recognised and the privileges and responsibilities that accompany human life are acknowledged.

2. The Supreme, Lord Krishna, who is eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all powerful and all attractive is situated (1) everywhere (2) within the heart and (3) in his own abode, as a person. Pupils are encouraged to see everything connected to God. Through reflection and moments of stillness, they become sensitive to divine guidance and their own exercise of choice. They learn that life is based on relationships, nourished and fulfilled through an attitude of loving service.

3. This world, made of both spirit and matter (Prakriti), consists of three qualities. These are (1) goodness, which sustains; (2) passion which creates; and (3) ignorance which destroys. By cultivating goodness, tempering passion (with goodness and wisdom), and avoiding ignorance, pupils have opportunities to become peaceful, happy and free of unwanted cares. As staff also develop appropriate qualities, pupils feel loved, protected and supported.

4. Attaining perfection and ending the cycle of Samsara (suffering, repeated birth, old age, disease, and death). Having forgotten our eternal relationship with the Supreme, we search for lasting happiness in a temporary world. Our attempts produce reactions, (Karma), which cause us to remain within this world for repeated lifetimes (Samsara). By sincerely following a genuine path (Sanatan Dharma) under the guidance of a self-realised teacher, we can become free from anxiety and achieve permanent happiness when situated in our eternal position as servants of Lord Krishna (God).

Collective Worship

Collective worship takes place in the Temple Room and in the classroom setting. It includes opportunities to wear and apply tilak, chant japa, engage in kirtan, reflect, meditate, pray, and listen to stories and verses from scriptures.

All Avanti Schools Trust schools follow the agreed Collective Worship model, where all elements of worship are linked to learning.

- Consolidates pupils' faith by providing positive spiritual experiences;
- Enriches the distinctive character of the school;
- Generates a culturally and spiritually nurturing atmosphere;
- Nurtures pupils' esteem in themselves and their religious traditions;
- Helps pupils become well-versed, self-reliant and skilled in worship;
- Develops pupils' critical and reflective thinking skills;
- Nurtures the children's natural attraction for God (Lord Krishna).

* Parents have the legal right to withdraw their child from collective worship and Religious Education; however, before making this decision, parents are requested to discuss their concerns with the Headteacher. Parents need to give in advance annual written notification to the school, if this is the case.

Diversity, Inclusivity and Equality of Opportunity

All pupils at Avanti House Primary School will learn about diversity and inclusivity. Pupils will have opportunities to learn from each other through their traditions, with confidence and pride.

Teachings within the Bhagavad-gita and general Hindu beliefs regarding all living things, are based on an understanding that there are two parts to that identity. The first part of the identity is the temporary material body and the second part is that which resides within the material body – The Eternal Soul (Atma). This Atma is said to be 'Sacid Ananda Vighraha' that is, it is pure, blissful, eternal and part and parcel of the Supreme Lord.

According to Bhagavad-gita **one in knowledge transcends and sees beyond the temporary body and material designations in relation to race, class, age, gender, sexual orientation, and economic and social status.**

Additionally alongside the Atma, resides the Paramatma (the Supreme Lord) who witnesses the karmic thoughts, words and actions of the person and those he/she interacts with. Hence the action and phrase of bowing with one's hands together saying for example, Namaste/Hare Krishna/Jai Sri Krishna – "I bow to the Atma and Paramatma both of whom reside in your temporary body".

Therefore it is imperative **to see everyone with equanimity and to respect all living entities without judgement or discrimination.** Anything other than this can be seen as a form of exclusion or bullying either directly in words and actions, or indirectly in thoughts.

All members of Avanti House Primary School aim to imbibe and actively demonstrate this moral and spiritual imperative. Furthermore, this has a direct correlation with **British legal statute and policy for equality of opportunity such as The United Nations Charter, the Every Child Matters agenda and the rights and responsibilities of an individual.**

See Bhagavad-gita chapter 5, Verse 18 and chapter 7, Verse 8.

Etiquette, Good Manners and Behaviour,- Behaviour for Learning

Relationships as expressed in **Vedic scriptures** will be the basis of the exchange between pupils, peers, parents, staff and the wider community.

Children will have opportunities to grow organic produce, assist in cooking and make offerings to Lord Krishna. They will be involved in serving Prasad, clearing away and cleaning. These opportunities will be underpinned by good hygiene standards, etiquette and manners. This is critical to enhance and develop pupils' devotional attitude, as well as their social and emotional skills.

Traditional **Vaisnava Hindu etiquette** regarding **spiritual practices** will be **explicitly taught and expected**. For example, children will learn how to enter the temple room, offer obeisances, and sit properly in the temple (not point feet towards the altar etc). The Hindu faith places an important emphasis on the child developing **respect** for parents and teachers. **Parents have a key responsibility to ensure their child's teacher is valued and their commitment appreciated.**

Please support our ethos to ensure we see the best in everyone including; parents, staff, children and the wider community. Please protect the **wellbeing of our children** and the school community from **gossip and anti-social behaviour**; such activity is detrimental to one's emotional and spiritual progress. **If you have any concerns, always speak to your child's teacher or to an appropriate member of staff.** See section on Compliments, Suggestions, Concerns, and our Complaints Procedures.

For further reference see the books Nectar of Instruction and Nectar of Devotion.

Pillars of Dharma

The following Pillars of Dharma can be expressed through words, actions, feelings and thoughts:

- Truthfulness
- Self-control
- Cleanliness
- Compassion

Conduct

Pupils are nurtured in the above-mentioned values through conduct and etiquette aligned with the Hindu notion of 'Dharma' (religious duty). Dharma involves living in harmony with the laws of God and nature and, in the social context, embraces both rights and duties. Traditionally, the school stresses responsibilities, aiming to promote a confident mood of service over a distrustful, self-serving attitude. Simultaneously, pupils learn that Dharma includes looking after their own needs, safety and interests. They learn that all humans are responsible and accountable for their individual actions. To this end, and to promote pupils' all-round well-being, staff are mindful of their own duty to provide loving care and to set worthy examples.

Gratitude, Humility, Serving Others and Co-operation

The school community, including staff, pupils, parents and governors, aims to focus on the **Dharmic** qualities. These virtues automatically promote a positive mood and spirit, emotional wellbeing, improved physical health and develop dynamic relationships. In contrast, negative thoughts bring about mistrust and misery.

Application of the Three Gunas

The school embraces the philosophical notion of '**Three Gunas**', as taught by the **Faith Authority** and explained within the **Bhagavad-gita**.

The Gunas are:

1. **Sattva-Guna**: the quality of goodness (or knowledge) - this results in desirable behaviour/elevation
2. **Raja-Guna**: the quality of passion (or ambition) - neither good nor bad/human platform
3. **Tama-Guna**: the quality of ignorance (or darkness) - this leads to undesirable behaviour

The **quality of goodness** is typified by **uplifting emotions such as tranquillity, vigour, enthusiasm, conviction, patience, forgiveness and tolerance**. The **mind** is peaceful, but alert. **Language** is calm, well-chosen, measured, inspiring and helpful to others. The **body** is relaxed but upright and full of vigour.

The **quality of passion** is typified by emotions that promote activity and agitation; they include ambition, lust, excessive desire to acquire and enjoy, determination, irritability and uncertainty. Additionally, emotions are susceptible to circumstances and thus to change. The mind tends towards activity and agitation, and looks predominantly towards the future. Language is agitated, unnecessarily loud or domineering and may include unnecessary 'space-fillers'. The body is active, and there may be difficulty in relaxing.

The **quality of ignorance** is marked by degrading emotions such as sloth, hopelessness, violent rage, self-loathing, self-indulgent lamentation and self-destructive guilt. The mind tends towards negativity, stupor and denial and may be obsessed with looking towards the past with debilitating lamentation. Language is abusive and hurtful to the self and others. Bodily functions are totally undisciplined, and may indicate rage, depression, catatonic trance, or a tendency to 'cut off'.

***Note:** in one sense, all emotions have some place in our human experience, and even so called negative emotions can promote personal growth and spiritual progress. For example, a certain amount of sadness, such as in bereavement, is normal and may help promote contemplation and introspection. However, when such sadness and lamentation endures, and is not relinquished, it may indicate the unhelpful influence of ignorance.*

Although we recognise that we are all bound by a combination of the Three Gunas or modes, we strive for the mode of goodness in all areas of school life. These include cleanliness, code of conduct, teaching and learning, behaviour, and diet and cuisine.

We examine below the Gunas in connection to promoting pupils' emotional literacy, teaching styles and school diet.

Diet and Cuisine

An important feature of the school is its provision of healthy, vegetarian food (**mode of goodness**). The following table indicates how food and eating are categorised and evaluated according to the three modes:

Aspect of Eating	Goodness Sattva-Guna	Passion Raja-Guna	Ignorance Tama-Guna
Food and Meals	Pure, clean, wholesome, and succulent vegetarian meals that are offered to the Lord first for sanctification; conducive to health, longevity and well-being; give strength and satisfaction. Meals are well-balanced; eater feels peaceful, alert and rejuvenated.	Foods that give immediate pleasure but in the long-term cause distress, misery or disease. They are over-rich or extravagant. Meals tend towards excess and imbalance; can promote hyper-activity.	Food produced through violence, such as non-vegetarian food , or through fermentation. Bland or tasteless foods. Foods that stupefy the senses. Meals promote sluggishness and inattention.
Examples	Grains, milk products, vegetables, fruits, legumes, seeds, herbs and spices. Ingredients are produced locally and naturally, without undue difficulty, and in a sustainable manner.	Onions and garlic. Meals with excessive salt, sugar, chilli, ghee, hard-cheese and tomatoes. Ingredients transported with great endeavour.	Meat, fish, eggs, mushrooms, alcohol and vinegar. Meals that are unclean, remnants or tasteless. Ingredients are putrid, or produced through violence or destruction.
Preparation	Ingredients are added conscientiously and in moderation; prepared with care and love.	Intense atmosphere. Meals are prepared with intention to enjoy, to excite the senses or for personal gain, such as money or reputation.	Meals are made begrudgingly, in a resentful or neglectful mood. There is no care or concern for the outcome or consequences.
Place	Clean, tidy, tranquil and harmonious environment which is in tune with nature.	Extravagant, opulent and expensive places.	Filthy, degraded and unhygienic places.
Time	Highly regulated; the same time each day.	Somewhat erratic; schedule may regularly change.	Irregular or whimsical.
Manner of Eating	Peacefully, well-mannered, in silence or with minimal uplifting speech. Taken with full attention, preferably seated on the floor.	Excitedly, noisily or with excessive pride, gusto, haste or conversation. Usually at tables and chairs with other finery.	With no concern for manners, decency or decorum. Taken compulsively; whilst walking, lying in bed, sprawled on floor, etc.
Mode of Serving	Served peacefully with care, affection and attention to each individual.	Served in a rushed, passionate and disturbed atmosphere, with concern for one's own pleasure.	Disrespectful, disdainful and inattentive, with negative thoughts towards the eater.

Cohesion, Relationships and Character Development

Avanti House Primary School promotes the rights and responsibilities to oneself, each other and the wider community. This enables staff and parents to collectively create dynamic and positive relationships. We encourage everyone to follow the six loving exchanges listed below:

1. Offering gifts in charity
2. Accepting charitable gifts
3. Revealing one's mind in confidence
4. Inquiring about the confidential service of the Lord
5. Accepting Prasad (spiritual food)
6. Offering Prasad to others

For more information on the above activities see Nectar of Instruction by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

We encourage confidentiality, positive exchanges that empower and lift each other's' spirits, loyalty, sharing, caring, empathy, and appreciation of each other's' talents and gifts. We promote a climate of **trust** where **constructive criticism** is valued as a vehicle for professional and personal empowerment.

Religious Education

Religious Education will **inform and contribute to** all the children's learning. **Faith Nurture** in the classroom will take the form of observance of festivals, collective worship, the Philosophy and Ethics programme and through cross-curricular links. **Special areas** in the classrooms will help the children focus on current **themes and festivals**. This will enable them to develop their devotional practice and reflect on their own feelings and experiences.

Children will be introduced to **religious words**. They will use their senses in exploring different religions, beliefs, practices and other forms of expression. They will also use their imagination and curiosity to develop their appreciation and wonder of the world. **Multi-Faith RE** will involve learning about different places of worship and the commonality of God.