

*“Bad ideas are most soundly defeated by good ideas. Bigoted opinions should never be given a free pass. They should always be protested and countered. But the best way to do this is usually by subjecting them to open debate, to show why they are factually and morally wrong..... Let’s defend free speech, now and always. It is the linchpin of a democratic and free society”.* **Peter Tatchell, Human rights campaigner**

Our programme of visiting speakers forms a key part of the progressively liberal education associated with Bedales (see latest Bedales Events programme [here](#)<sup>1</sup>.) Our guiding principle is to expose pupils to a broad and balanced range of views to encourage discussion and debate around complex issues facing society. Bedales pupils learn to disagree, question and challenge opposing views, which in turn stimulate their thinking and paths through the world. Where controversial views are given a platform, we must be careful to ensure they remain lawful and do not lead to a breach of the peace. This Code of Conduct (Code) addresses such situations and gives guidance on our approach, which has freedom of speech as a sacrosanct principle.

The school will not suppress freedom of thought and expression. However, we have a duty (including ‘Prevent’<sup>2</sup>) to ensure that such thoughts and expressions do not go beyond the articulation of points of view and do not constitute incitement to riot or commit terrorism, insurrection, racial hatred, religious hatred, sexual harassment or other activities (beyond the right of peaceful protest) which are likely to cause a breach of the peace or public disorder or otherwise to be unlawful. We are committed to facilitating pupils’ spiritual development, and making religious observance possible. We take reasonable steps to ensure that, where political issues are brought to the attention of pupils, they are offered a balanced presentation of opposing views. Through our broad and stimulating offer, to which visiting speakers make a valuable contribution, Bedales seeks to promote the following principles (see [Bedales Approach](#)<sup>3</sup> for more on the Bedales ethos and values):

- Enable pupils to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Enable pupils to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law of England.
- Encourage pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute positively to society.
- Enable pupils to acquire a broad general knowledge of and respect for public institutions and services in England.
- Further tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions by enabling pupils to acquire an appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures.
- Encourage respect for other people, paying particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the 2010 Equality Act.
- Encourage respect for democracy and support for and participation in the democratic process, including respect for the basis on which the law is made and applied in England.

For all external speakers, the lead Bedales staff member for the talk is required to confirm that this Code has been supplied to speakers who, in turn, have confirmed that they have read it and discussed any concerns with their Bedales contact. Any outstanding issues should be discussed with the Head who will have the final decision on whether a talk can proceed. We are very grateful to external speakers for their contribution and adherence to this Code which applies to all Bedales sanctioned events taking place on school property or elsewhere that are organised by individuals, groups or societies using the school’s name or resources. This Code is informed by guidance from the Department for Education, Amnesty International, Liberty, the Higher Education Policy Institute and a range of UK universities.

Author: Rob Reynolds; Review body: 3SST; Review: February 2020; next review due: February 2022

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bedales.org.uk/events>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-children-from-radicalisation-the-prevent-duty>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bedales.org.uk/home/about-bedales/bedales-approach>