



# Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion

department for  
children, schools and families



# 1. Introduction

The curriculum for all maintained schools should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society, and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life<sup>1</sup>.

Schools have a duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups<sup>2</sup>.

All schools will recognise these two important statements which are part of existing law. From September 2007 schools will also be under a new duty to promote community cohesion<sup>3</sup>. Most schools already consider this as a fundamental part of their role and already work in ways which promote community cohesion. Similarly, many local authorities are working to promote community cohesion and should also regard this as an area to support schools. This document looks at ways in which schools can build on what is happening already in the light of the new duty.

Every school – whatever its intake and wherever it is located – is responsible for educating children and young people who will live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of cultures, religions or beliefs, ethnicities and social backgrounds. Different types of schools in different communities will clearly face different challenges and globalisation means both that the populations of schools are often more diverse, and that they might also change at fairly short notice. The staff and pupil populations of some schools reflect this diversity, allowing their pupils to mix with those from different backgrounds. Other schools, often by nature of their location, serve a predominantly monocultural population.

As all children and young people can benefit from meaningful interaction, schools will need to consider how to give their pupils the opportunity to mix with and learn with, from and about those from different backgrounds, for example through links with other schools and community organisations. Through their ethos and curriculum schools can promote discussion of a common sense of identity and support diversity, showing pupils how different communities can be united by shared values and common experiences. One of the aims of the new secondary curriculum is for all young people to become responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society and citizenship education offers opportunities for schools to promote community cohesion. The Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review published in February 2007 states that:

*...we passionately believe that it is the duty of all schools to address issues of 'how we live together' and 'dealing with difference' however controversial and difficult they might sometimes seem.*

1 Education Act 2002, Section 78

2 Race Relations Amendment Act 2000

3 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to the Education Act 2002 introducing a duty on the governing bodies of maintained schools to promote community cohesion.

This guidance is non-statutory and is offered as formative guidance to support all schools in promoting community cohesion, as well as to the foundations of foundation schools<sup>4</sup>.

The guidance:

- Explains what is meant by community cohesion; and
- Describes how a school can contribute to community cohesion, outlining the work that many schools already do to promote community cohesion as a basis for all schools to consider what they already do and what more might be needed.

<sup>4</sup> Under a duty to promote community cohesion under section 23A(6) of the Education Act 2002.

## 2. What is community cohesion?

By community cohesion, we mean working towards a society in which there is a **common vision** and **sense of belonging** by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar **life opportunities** are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community<sup>5</sup>.

### Common vision

The recently published report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion takes this agenda forward in the context of rapid change in some local communities. It suggests the importance of "shared futures", and breaks the original definition of cohesion down into more detail<sup>6</sup> – outlining a cohesive community as one where: "There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country."

This recognises the contribution made by individuals within any community and the fact that people will naturally hold different ambitions, aspirations, beliefs and life experiences. But importantly, it places a strong emphasis on how they will also share important characteristics and experiences with those from their own and different communities.

### Sense of belonging

In addition, the Commission provides a helpful definition of 'sense of belonging' as:

- There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn.
- There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, speaking in Parliament on 2 November 2006. Based on the Government and the Local Government Association's definition first published in Guidance on Community Cohesion, LGA, 2002 and resulting from the Cattle Report in 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Our Shared Future, the final report of the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, June 2007

## Life opportunities

The Commission's report also underlines the importance of equality – both the importance of tackling inequality gaps, but also the importance of making this social change visible to all communities, communicating fair treatment at all times.

Schools' role here is crucial: by creating opportunities for pupils' achievement and enabling every child and young person to achieve their potential, schools make a significant contribution to long term community cohesion.

## Barriers to community cohesion

MORI polling conducted for the Commission on Integration and Cohesion found that:

- 18% of people surveyed identified immigration/migrants as the main issue facing Britain today – with this answer overtaking crime in MORI's regular surveys in May 2006.
- More than half of people (56%) felt that some groups in Britain get unfair priority when it comes to public services like housing, health services and schools. (Although this seems to be a stronger national than local perception – locally only 25% feel that some groups get unfair priority).
- For the 14% of people surveyed who said they were not proud of their area, the main reasons were crime (55%), a feeling of lack of community spirit (43%) and concern about poor facilities (29%).

This gives a sense of the barriers to building cohesion: mistrust of different groups, particularly those new to the local community; a perception that local authorities are giving others special treatment; and a lack of spaces for meaningful interaction.

Cohesion is therefore about how to avoid the corrosive effects of intolerance and harassment: how to build a mutual civility among different groups, and to ensure respect for diversity alongside a commitment to common and shared bonds. Further information on what works in building cohesion is offered by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion in its final report, along with an evidence base for how cohesion can be built by tailored solutions at local level.

## Community from a school's perspective

For schools, the term 'community' has a number of dimensions including:

- the *school community* – the children and young people it serves, their parents, carers and families, the school's staff and governing body, and community users of the school's facilities and services;
- the *community within which the school is located* – the school in its geographical community and the people who live or work in that area. This applies not just to the immediate neighbourhood but also to the city or local authority area within which a school is located;
- the *UK community*<sup>7</sup> – all schools are by definition part of this community; and
- the *global community* – formed by EU and international links.

In addition, schools themselves create communities – for example, the networks formed by similar or different types of schools, by schools that are part of the specialist schools network, or by schools that work collaboratively in clusters or in other models of partnership.

Many schools will operate across all of the above dimensions, for example by providing extended services for the local community and forging links with other schools regionally or internationally. Schools should not limit themselves to one particular dimension but may want to consider the initial dimensions first – acting within the school and the area where the school is located – before considering the wider community, EU and international links.

Race and faith are often seen as the most frequent friction points between communities, and the most visible sources of tension. However, discrimination and prejudice can be experienced by other groups – including the disabled, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender communities and different age and gender groups. Schools should therefore design their programmes to recognise where other strands of the equalities agenda – including gender, sexual orientation, disability and age – are interconnected with the aspiration to promote community cohesion, but should note that the main focus of the duty is cohesion across different cultures, ethnic, religious or non-religious and socio-economic groups.

<sup>7</sup> The duty to promote community cohesion applies to maintained schools in England only. However, the UK is referenced here given the scope of citizenship education and work between schools across the UK.

# 3. The role of schools in promoting community cohesion

## 3.1 How does a school contribute towards community cohesion?

Section 2 describes community cohesion as being about building a more tolerant, more understanding and a fair and transparent society, in which all members share a common sense of belonging that overcomes their differences. This section outlines the contribution that schools can make towards community cohesion.

As a starting point, schools build community cohesion by promoting equality of opportunity and inclusion for different groups of pupils within a school. But alongside this focus on inequalities and a strong respect for diversity, they also have a role in promoting shared values and encouraging their pupils to actively engage with others to understand what they all hold in common.

All schools, whatever the mix of pupils they serve, are responsible for equipping those pupils to live and thrive alongside people from many different backgrounds. For some schools with diverse pupil populations, existing activities and work aimed at supporting pupils from different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds to learn with, from and about each other, will already be contributing towards community cohesion. For other schools where the pupil population is less diverse or predominantly of one socioeconomic, ethnic, religious or non-religious background, more will need to be done to provide opportunities for interaction between children and young people from different backgrounds.

Just as each school is different, each school will make an important but different contribution to community cohesion. Each will therefore need to develop an approach reflecting:

- the nature of the school's population – whether it serves pupils drawn predominantly from one or a small number of religions or beliefs, ethnic or socio-economic groups or from a broader cross-section of the population, or whether it selects by ability from across a wider area.
- the location of the school – for instance whether it serves a rural or urban area and the level of ethnic, socio-economic, religious or non-religious diversity in that area.

An effective approach to community cohesion will also consider these factors alongside the levels of community where action can take place – within the school itself, the geographical community or the wider national and global communities – to determine the school's contribution to community cohesion accordingly.

Clearly, promoting community cohesion is not a new idea in schools. A great many are already undertaking excellent work with their pupils and with the wider community, and we want to build on the best of that practice. In the light of the new duty all schools will find it useful to consider how different aspects of their work already support integration and community cohesion: to take stock of what has worked so far, for them and for other schools; and consider where there may be scope to improve their existing work through a more explicit focus on the impact of their activities on community cohesion.

Broadly, schools' contribution to community cohesion can be grouped under the three following headings:

- *Teaching, learning and curriculum* – helping children and young people to learn to understand others, to value diversity whilst also promoting shared values, to promote awareness of human rights and to apply and defend them, and to develop the skills of participation and responsible action – for example through the new 'Identity and Diversity: living together in the UK' strand within citizenship education.
- *Equity and excellence* – to ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible, striving to remove barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities and working to eliminate variations in outcomes for different groups.
- *Engagement and extended services* – to provide reasonable means for children, young people, their friends and families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations, including: links with different schools and communities; the provision of extended services; and opportunities for pupils, families and the wider community to take part in activities and receive services which build positive interaction and achievement for all groups.

Whilst acknowledging the role of schools at the heart of their local communities, it should also be acknowledged that schools face tensions and problems stemming from societal factors outside of their control and which they may not be able to solve. In addition, external factors shape the lives of pupils, including their parents or carers, families and the wider community, and responsibility for community cohesion lies with them too. Any approach to community cohesion needs to take into account these factors and requires the involvement of local partners and other organisations.



## 3.2 What does a school need to consider in promoting community cohesion?

Under the headings set out above, each approach a school takes is likely to include a range of activities, some of which will take place within an individual school, whilst others will take place between different schools or between schools, parents and local and wider communities. Within each school, it is for the governing body and senior management team to discharge the duty to promote community cohesion as part of its leadership and management role, leading the school and involving the school workforce and pupils in the promotion of community cohesion. As a starting point, governors will find it useful to audit a school's existing practice in relation to community cohesion, taking a whole school approach to determine what further action may be required.

Some examples are included below to illustrate the work that many schools already do to promote community cohesion and to enable schools to understand the impact of what is happening within their own school. In addition, schools will want to consider the duty to promote well-being as much of the work and activities that support community cohesion can also contribute towards the Every Child Matters outcomes. For example, a key part of the extended schools full core offer is that schools encourage parents to become more involved in the school and in their child's learning and that they open up their services and facilities to the wider community.

### Teaching, learning and curriculum

An effective school will have a high standard of teaching, learning and curriculum provision that supports high standards of attainment, promotes shared values and builds pupils' understanding of the diversity that surrounds them, recognising similarities and appreciating different cultures, religions or beliefs, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. There will be high expectations of success, with all pupils expected and encouraged by teachers and parents to achieve their potential. Opportunities for discussing issues of identity and diversity will be integrated across the whole curriculum, including in citizenship education. From September 2008, the revised secondary curriculum for citizenship education will include the new strand "Identity and Diversity: Living together in the UK". In this, pupils learn about national, regional, ethnic and religious cultures, the connections between them and between the UK and the wider world and explore the concept of community cohesion and the different forces that bring about change in communities over time.

Many schools have built very successful approaches to using the curriculum and teaching and learning techniques as a tool in building community cohesion, for instance, by providing:

- Opportunities across the curriculum to promote shared values and help pupils to value differences and to challenge prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping. As well as the opportunities in citizenship described above, there are opportunities across the curriculum and in the new programmes of study for Religious Education (RE) and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE).
- A programme of curriculum based activities whereby pupils' understanding of community and diversity is enriched through fieldwork, visits, for example to places of worship, and meetings with members of different communities.

- Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), and specific support for their teaching staff, to remove barriers to effective learning, enabling the pupils to be integrated and achieve the highest possible level in English.
- Assemblies which involve members of the local and wider community and promote the engagement of learners and shared understanding, as well as a school's ethos and values.
- Encouragement for learners to value diversity and develop a better understanding of UK society, for example by challenging assumptions and creating an open climate to address sensitive and controversial issues.

## Equity and excellence

Schools already have a focus on securing high standards of attainment for all pupils from all ethnic backgrounds, and of different socio-economic statuses, abilities and interests, ensuring that pupils are treated with respect and supported to achieve their full potential.

Progress can be evaluated by analysing assessment results to keep track of the relative performance of different groups and to tackle underperformance by any particular group or the reintegration of excluded or self-excluded pupils into a school. In line with existing duties, all schools should have effective approaches in place to deal with incidents of prejudice, discrimination, bullying and harassment. Monitoring of whether pupils from particular groups are more likely to be excluded or disciplined than others should be accompanied by appropriate behaviour and discipline policies in place to deal with this, and pupils should be involved in evaluating the success of a school in implementing these policies.

The new School Admissions Code emphasises the importance of admission arrangements that promote community cohesion and social equity. Admissions authorities must act in accordance with the new Code and schools can find the Code at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sacode/> . It is important that schools do not present themselves in a way that might deter parents from particular communities.

## Engagement and extended services

Meaningful contact between people from different groups has been shown to break down stereotypes and prejudice. Contact is meaningful when: conversations go beyond surface friendliness; in which people exchange personal information or talk about each other's differences and identities; people share a common goal or share an interest; and they are sustained long-term (so one off or chance meetings are unlikely to make much difference).

*Commission on Integration and Cohesion, June 2007*

*School to school:* All schools can benefit from partnership arrangements, and many do already, both to share their good practice and to offer pupils the opportunity to meet and learn from and with other young people from different backgrounds. In many cases, these links may be with a very different type of school – either locally or further afield, for example serving different communities in a city, county or region. Benefits can also be gained through international links by raising motivation levels and stimulating the interest of pupils, parents and governors. Links can

be made via email, the internet or videoconferencing and provide opportunities to develop partnerships and joint projects with other schools internationally. The best examples of school linking are built into existing schemes of work and grounded in the curriculum with pupils working together on a joint project or activity and involving parents and carers as required.

Teachers and governing bodies can also benefit from links with different schools – in particular where opportunities are available to broaden their experience by working with different groups of pupils, teachers and governors. In developing such arrangements, schools need to handle the engagement appropriately to ensure that pupils are able to meet and interact in the right environment. The shared use of facilities also provides a means for pupils to interact, as do opportunities for meaningful intercultural activities such as sport, drama, music, festivals, volunteering activities and school trips.

*School to parents and the community:* Good partnership activities with parents and the local and wider community might include:

- Working together with community representatives, for example through mentoring schemes or bringing community representatives into school to work with the pupils or to support learning by leading assemblies.
- Local engagement through links with community groups and organisations, enabling them to play a role in the school and encouraging pupils to make a positive contribution in the local area.
- Ensuring that the pupil voice is heard and able to effect change: by involvement of pupils in the governance and organisation of the school through school councils, in a way that facilitates their participation and ability to make a difference in school, in their local community and beyond; or enabling pupils to take responsibility and to evaluate how well the school is building community cohesion.
- Maintaining strong links and multi-agency working between the school and other local agencies, such as the youth support service, the police, different religious groups and social care and health professionals.
- Developing links with work placed learning providers and other employers.
- Placements for pupils in voluntary community based activities.
- Engagement with parents through curriculum evenings, teaching and learning activities such as parent and child courses, and family liaison work, tailored to suit the needs and requirements of the school and parents. For example, reaching parents who may need additional support through other local bodies and community points of contact.

*Extended services:* All schools should have a core offer of extended services developed by 2010. This includes: a varied menu of activities including study support; childcare 8am-6pm all year round for primary schools; parenting support; swift and easy referral to specialist health and social care services; and opening up their facilities to the wider community. Many schools are already involved in developing this offer and have done so in such a way which is supportive of the duty to promote community cohesion by:

- Consultation with pupils, parents, families and the wider community about the activities and services they provide to ensure they meet the needs of all groups.

- Working in clusters with other schools to build greater interaction and diversity into the daily lives of their school and wider community.
- Working with local voluntary and community groups to build stronger relationships with the community, increase the range of activities and services they can offer, and gain expertise in working with different groups who are already established in their area.
- Embedding services and activities to their school improvement plan and to personalisation to ensure they support the achievement of pupils from all different backgrounds.
- Support for all parents through providing information, advice, and evidence based parenting programmes which are designed to meet the needs of different groups.

*Schools to local authorities and other partners:* Local authorities, religious or non-religious organisations, SACREs and other voluntary and community organisations have an important role in supporting schools to discharge the duty to promote community cohesion. Local authorities in particular should work in partnership with schools, providing appropriate support and information and, when required, acting as an initial point of contact with community groups and other agencies. Schools will already be working closely with local authorities and other partners, but should be able to look to them for practical support and assistance to promote community cohesion, for example through the identification of relevant local contacts and facilitating links with other schools and organisations.

At local level, the promotion of community cohesion should be placed within the broader context of community planning – for instance in the development of the local area’s Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) and the wider Sustainable Community Strategy, to which schools should contribute through engagement with the Children’s Trust partnership arrangements and the Local Strategic Partnership, as appropriate. The Children and Young People Plan is an important tool that is available to local authorities to promote schools’ contribution to community cohesion. Schools are now under a new duty to have regard to the CYPP when doing their own planning and could look to use it in assessing a school’s contribution to community cohesion.

Ofsted inspections of the contribution that schools make to community cohesion will not commence until September 2008. Ofsted will issue its own guidance to inspectors and will give details of this and any other developments in due course in *Inspection Matters*, which is published on the Ofsted website.

## 4. Case studies

Alongside this formative guidance we are publishing case studies demonstrating good practice across a range of different schools. The case studies and further information are available on the DCSF website at: [www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/communitycohesion](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/communitycohesion).

This resource will be updated with further case studies over the course of the next year. In light of responses to the consultation on draft guidance, we will develop further resources to support schools from September 2007 onwards, building on this guidance and the *Community Cohesion Education Standards for Schools* (2004).

## 5. Sources of further information

Legislation relevant to community cohesion includes:

- Equality Act 2006
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- The Children Act 2004

Alongside the legislative framework, there is a range of community cohesion guidance including:

- Commission on Integration and Cohesion, *Our shared future* (June 2007)
- Communities and Local Government, *Community Cohesion Education Standards for Schools* (2004)
- Local Government Association, *Community Cohesion – an action guide*, LGA guidance for local authorities (2004)
- Communities and Local Government, *Community Cohesion: Seven Steps – A Practitioners Toolkit* (2005)
- Communities and Local Government, *Building a Picture of Community Cohesion* (2003)
- Communities and Local Government, *Strong and Prosperous Communities – the Local Government White Paper* (2006)

### Additional websites of interest

The Specialist Schools network, led by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, with advice and information available at:

[www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk](http://www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk)

The Global Gateway to educational partnerships between schools and colleges across the world:

[www.globalgateway.org.uk](http://www.globalgateway.org.uk)

Information on extended schools partnerships and networks at:

[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/extendedschools](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/extendedschools)

Resources available through the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) website at [www.tda.gov.uk](http://www.tda.gov.uk), including:

Extended Schools Core Offer – Community Access and Extended Schools consultation kit available at:

<http://www.tda.gov.uk/remodelling/extendedschools>

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