Duty to promote community cohesion: draft guidance for schools

Purpose of this document
This document seeks the views of schools on the content of guidance on the implementation of the new duty to promote community cohesion under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The final version of the guidance will be published in July 2007 and will be informed by the responses received to this consultation and examples of existing good practice in promoting community cohesion.

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\(^1\).

Schools have a duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups\(^2\).

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. Most schools already consider this part of their role, and already work in ways which promote community cohesion. This document looks at ways in which schools can build on what is happening already in the light of the new duty.

As migration and economic change alter the shape of our increasingly diverse local communities, it is more important than ever that all schools play a full part in promoting community cohesion. Every school should be a thriving, cohesive community, but it also has a vital part to play in building a more cohesive society.

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 culture, faith, ethnicity and social backgrounds. The staff and pupil populations of some schools reflect this diversity, allowing pupils to mix with those from different backgrounds. Others do not, and need to make links with other schools and organisations in order to give their pupils the opportunity to mix with and learn with, from and about those from different backgrounds. Through their ethos and curriculum schools can promote a common sense of identity and support diversity, showing pupils how different communities can be united by common experiences and values. 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.

This document seeks your views on the role that schools can play in promoting community cohesion, and on what approaches are most effective. These views will

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\(^1\) Education Act 2002, Section 78
\(^2\) Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
inform a fuller version of this guidance to be published in July 2007. Our aim is to bring together the best of what schools are doing already to help all schools to contribute fully to building cohesive communities.

This draft guidance is non-statutory and is offered to support all maintained schools in promoting community cohesion. It will also be of use to independent schools in maintaining the standards laid down in the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003. The draft 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.

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.

Community from a school’s perspective

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

- the school community – the pupils it serves, their families and the school’s staff;
- the community within which the school is located – the school in its geographical community and the people who live or work in that area;
- the community of Britain - all schools are by definition part of this community;
- the global community – formed by EU and international links.

In addition, schools themselves create communities – for example, the networks formed by schools of the same or different faiths, or by schools that are part of the specialist schools network.

Consultation question: From a school’s perspective, how helpful are the definition of community cohesion and the description of the term ‘community’ for schools?

3. The role of schools in promoting community cohesion

3.1 How does a school contribute towards community cohesion?

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. According to Ted Cantle, there is a business case for an effective approach to community cohesion as schools that are riven by divisions are less likely to

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4 Appointed by the Home Secretary in August 2001 to Chair the Community Cohesion Review Team
perform well and improving cohesion will also improve all aspects of a school’s performance. 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 faith, socioeconomic or ethnic group more will need to be done to provide opportunities for interaction between pupils from different backgrounds.

Just as each school is different, each school’s contribution to community cohesion will be different and will need to develop by reflecting:

- the nature of the school’s population – whether it serves pupils drawn predominantly from one or a small number of faiths, 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, faith and socio-economic diversity in that area.

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

| Only 2% of secondary schools and 5% of primary schools in England have no minority ethnic pupils |
| 360 primary schools and 63 secondary schools have over 50% black and minority ethnic pupils |
| At secondary phase, faith schools have a more ethnically mixed intake, with a higher proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds than schools without a religious character, 20% compared to 17%5 |
| 50% or more of the pupils in approximately 1000 primary and secondary schools are entitled to free school meals |

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 harmony; 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** – to teach pupils to understand others, to

5 PLASC 2006, Edubase 22/08/2006. Minority ethnic is defined as White and Black Caribbean, Irish, Traveller of Irish heritage, Gypsy/Roma, White and Black African, White and Asian, Any other mixed background, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Any other Asian background, Black Caribbean, Black African, Any other black background, Chinese, Any other ethnic group.
promote common values and to value diversity, to promote awareness of human rights and of the responsibility to uphold and defend them, and to develop the skills of participation and responsible action.

- **Equity and excellence** – to ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible, removing barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities and eliminating variations in outcomes for different groups.
- **Engagement and ethos** – to provide a means for children, young people and their families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations, including links with different schools and communities locally, across the country and internationally.

Consultation question: Do you agree that this broadly describes a school’s contribution towards community cohesion?

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. 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 some of the work and activities that support community cohesion can also contribute towards the Every Child Matters outcomes of ‘making a positive contribution’, ‘enjoy and achieve’ and ‘achieving economic well-being’.

**Teaching, learning and curriculum**

An effective school will have a high standard of teaching and curriculum provision that supports high standards of attainment, promotes common values and builds pupils’ understanding of the diversity that surrounds them, recognising similarities and appreciating different cultures, faiths, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. Opportunities for discussing issues of identity and diversity will be integrated across the curriculum.

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:

- Lessons across the curriculum that promote common values and help pupils to value differences and to challenge prejudice and stereotyping – for example, opportunities in citizenship classes for pupils to discuss issues of identity and diversity and what it means ‘to live together in the UK’.
- A programme of curriculum based activities whereby pupils’ understanding of community and diversity is enriched through fieldwork, visits and meetings with members of different communities.
- Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) to enable them to achieve at the highest possible level in English.
- An effective voice and involvement of pupils in the governance and organisation of the school in a way that teaches them to participate in and make a difference in school, in their local community and beyond.

*Equity and excellence*
Schools should have a focus on securing high standards of attainment for all pupils from all ethnic backgrounds and of different socio-economic statuses, 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. In line with existing duties, all schools should have effective approaches in place to deal with incidents of prejudice, 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.

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/](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 ethos**

**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 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 – and also EU or international links. The best examples are built into existing schemes of work and grounded in the curriculum with pupils working together on a joint project or activity. The shared use of facilities also provides a means for pupils to interact, as do opportunities for meaningful intercultural activities such as sport and drama. In developing partnership arrangements, schools need to handle the engagement appropriately to ensure that pupils are able to meet and interact in the right environment.

**School to parents and the community:** Good partnership activities with 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, ensuring that the pupil voice is heard and able to effect change.
- Maintaining strong links and multi-agency working between the school and other local agencies, such as the youth support service, the police and social care and health professionals.
- Placements for pupils in voluntary community based activities.
- Engagement with parents through coffee mornings, curriculum evenings, parent and child courses and family liaison work.
- Provision of extended services, and in particular bringing parents together from different backgrounds through parenting and family support and community use of facilities for activities that take place out of school hours, including adult and family learning, ICT and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes.

The duty to promote community cohesion is explicitly placed on the governing bodies of schools. Within each school, it is for the governing body to discharge this function as part of its leadership and management role, leading the school and
involving the pupils in the promotion of community cohesion.

**Consultation question:** Are there any other considerations for schools in fulfilling their duty to promote community cohesion?

4. **Good practice**

The final guidance for schools on the duty to promote community cohesion will be published in July 2007, informed by responses to this consultation. Alongside this final guidance we will publish case studies demonstrating good practice across a range of different schools. In particular we are looking for examples of schools that take a broad approach to promoting community cohesion that encompasses teaching, learning and curriculum, equity and excellence, and engagement and ethos.

**Consultation question:** Would it be helpful to include case studies in the final version of the guidance and do you have a good example of a school that is successful in promoting community cohesion? Please send us any such examples.

5. **Next steps and further sources of support for schools**

The consultation on this draft guidance will run until 3 July 2007. Ofsted will issue its own guidance to inspectors and will give details of this and any other developments in Inspection Matters, which is published on the Ofsted website, and in Ofsted News (currently known as Ofsted Direct), its regular bulletin for schools.

We are keen to hear from schools about the support that they need in implementing the duty and would welcome further information through this consultation.

**Consultation question:** Are there any further sources of information that would be useful for schools to implement the new duty?

**Consultation question:** What training, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and workforce development programmes for community cohesion would schools find useful to support their staff?
Annex A

Policy and legislation

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to the Education Act 2002 which introduces a duty on the governing bodies of maintained schools to promote community cohesion. The duty comes into force on 1 September 2007. Alongside this, Ofsted will from September include schools’ contributions to promoting community cohesion in their inspections.

Other legislation relevant to community cohesion includes:
- Equality Act 2006; and
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Alongside the legislative framework, there is a range of community cohesion guidance including:
- Community Cohesion Education Standards for Schools, September 2004
- Community Cohesion – an action guide, LGA guidance for local authorities, 2004
- Community Cohesion: Seven Steps – A Practitioners Toolkit, Home Office and ODPM, March 2005
- Commission in Integration and Cohesion, Interim Statement, February 2007
- Building a Picture of Community Cohesion, July 2003
- 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

Information on extended schools partnerships and networks at:
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/extendedschools
www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools