

St Martins C of E Primary School

Policy for Community Cohesion

Definition of 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.

Rationale – why do we need a policy for Community Cohesion?

We recognise that our school serves and represents a diverse community. We need to develop higher social skills, aspirations and understanding so as to better appreciate diversity in race, gender, class & religion.

In our own and neighbouring communities rising gang culture, local rivalries & religious tension all pose real and imminent threats to social cohesion.

Aims and objectives

The development of community cohesion is the attempt to build communities with four key characteristics:

- A common vision and sense of belonging
- The valuing of diversity
- Similar life opportunities for all
- Strong and positive relationships developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the school, our neighbourhood and bordering neighbourhoods.

As a result, all children will:

- Work collaboratively with other children, adults and groups for the greater good
- Challenge stereotypes
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect

Synopsis of Community Cohesion work

To provide a range of activities within the school, with other schools and with parents & the local community through:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Equity and excellence
3. Engagement, ethos and extended services
4. Bringing together the work of Local Schools, Extended Services, Sandwell Children and Young Persons Plan and Every Child Matters agenda to benefit our community.

The following policy pages add detail of how we build on existing good practice to develop community cohesion.

1. Our duty

As a School we have a duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups. We are 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. We recognize that our School, by nature of its location, serves a multicultural population. For this reason we attempt to provide opportunities to access and reflect on the diversity that is present.

2. 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. Community Cohesion work at St Martins C of E Primary 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.

Our approach to community cohesion takes into account the tensions and problems stemming from societal factors outside of our control which we recognize we 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. Consequently we take into account these factors and recognize the need for the involvement of local partners and other organisations.

3. How do we as a school contribute towards community cohesion?

As a school we promote equality of opportunity and inclusion for different groups of pupils within the school. Alongside this we focus on inequalities and strive to develop a strong respect for diversity, we also promote shared values and encourage our children to actively engage with others to understand what they all hold in common.

We are responsible for equipping our children with the skills, understanding and tolerance needed to live and thrive alongside people from many different backgrounds.

We do so by:

- Establishing links with other schools, groups of children and community groups
- Sharing a **common vision** of tolerance and belonging through praise, reinforcement of school rules, PSHE work, assembly themes and pastoral targets
- Providing life opportunities beyond the scope of existing expectations such as visits to Coventry University (G & T day), access to a broad range of creative and performing arts and careers education
- Sharing and celebrating the contribution of individuals (both children and parents) from many different cultures and communities
- Recognizing that people hold different ambitions, aspirations, beliefs and life experiences
- Educating our children and informing our parents through a '**sense of belonging**' to their individual rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn.
- Creating a strong sense of trust in our school to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests
- Providing **life opportunities** by focusing on the progress and attainment of individuals and vulnerable groups and setting targets so as to enable every child to achieve their potential

This work can be grouped under the three following headings

Teaching, learning and curriculum

This entails 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. This is underpinned by PSHE schemes, focus days, specialist assemblies and the rigorous application of zero tolerance to racial, cultural or socio-economic intolerance.

We use the curriculum and teaching and learning techniques as a tool in building community cohesion to provide:

- 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 Religious Education (RE) and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE).
- 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.
- Focus Days that highlight the positive aspects of other cultures as well as our own.

Equity and excellence

To ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible, we strive to remove barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities and work to eliminate variations in outcomes for different groups.

This is made possible by:

- Evaluating progress and attainment by analysing assessment data to keep track of the relative performance of different groups and then instigating intervention strategies to tackle underperformance of any particular group.
- The purposeful and manageable use of data that allows us to focus on the underachievement of individuals and set realistic challenges through target setting and progress reviews.
- Supporting those individuals or groups who are secluded or in danger of exclusion through the support work of our support staff.
- Zero tolerance to incidents of prejudice, racial or social discrimination, bullying or harassment.
- Effective use of behaviour policies and implementation of discipline sanctions.
- Listening to the pupil voice (School Council, parent questionnaires, pupil questionnaires)

Engagement and extended services

We provide a range of means for children, young people, their friends and families to interact with people from different backgrounds. We strive to build positive relations with all members of the community, including links with different schools and use the provision of extended services to provide 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.

School to school collaboration makes it possible to:

- Benefit from partnership arrangements that allow us to share good practice
- Develop multi-national links and raise interest levels of children, parents and governors
- Share use of school facilities (joint CPD, shared extended service activities etc) and expertise of staff.

School collaboration with parents and the community makes it possible to:

- Work together with community representatives (assembly visitors, Resident's Association. Guest speakers etc)
- Provide local engagement through links with community groups and organisations (Church Links, Resident's Association, AA Walters, Tipton Toddlers, Sure Start, ESOL classes etc) enabling them to play a role in the school and encouraging pupils and parents to make a positive contribution in the local area (bulb planting, poster campaigns, litter campaigns, designing play areas etc)
- Ensure that the pupil voice is heard and able to effect change: by involvement of pupils in the 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.
- Maintain strong links and multi-agency work between the school and other local agencies, such as the youth support service, the police, different religious groups and social care and health professionals such as the School Health Team
- Develop links with work placed learning providers (schools and colleges) and other employers.
- Involve children in voluntary community based activities
- Engage 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. Eg, ESOL, Maths Support, Language Support)

Extended services

We will have in place a core offer of extended services. This includes: a varied menu of activities including study support (homework and holiday revision activities); parenting support; swift and easy referral to specialist health and social care services; and opening up their facilities to the wider community.

We already meet the core offer and have done so in such a way which is supportive of the duty to promote community cohesion by:

- Consulting with pupils, parents, families and the wider community about the activities and services we 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

- Providing support for all parents through providing information, advice, and evidence based parenting programmes which are designed to meet the needs of different groups.

The role of the Community Cohesion Group (SLT), Monitoring and Review

The Community Cohesion group monitors our engagement in and work towards Community Cohesion. The work of this team also involves supporting colleagues in the teaching of community cohesion and providing the appropriate CPD for individuals and groups (in consultation with the CPD leader), being informed about current developments in the initiative, and providing a strategic lead and direction for community cohesion in the school. They also provides updates for governors of the school's approach to community cohesion and cross references its work to the activities of Extended Services.