

FAQs about community cohesion

What is a definition of community cohesion for schools?

- Community cohesion means 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.

Definition of 'community'

- The school community: children and young people, their parents, carers and families, school staff, the governing body, local community users of facilities
- The community within which the school is located
- The UK community
- The global community

Schools where community cohesion is strong:

- Share a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities
- Positively value and appreciate the diversity of people's backgrounds
- Provide similar life opportunities for those from different backgrounds
- Build strong and positive relationships between people of different backgrounds in school and within neighbourhood.

(From DCSF Guidance on Community Cohesion 2007)

What are schools' legal responsibilities?

The Education and Inspections Act 2002 was amended in 2006 to contain a new section introducing a duty on the governing bodies of maintained schools to promote community cohesion. The duty came into force on **1 September 2007**. From September 2008, OfSTED will cover schools' contributions to promoting community cohesion in their inspections.

Is community cohesion part of the single equalities duty?

No, but it might help schools to view community cohesion as an integral part of any equalities review undertaken. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is charged with addressing the causes and effects of inequalities, prejudice and discrimination, promoting and protecting human rights. Although the legal requirements

at present cover **race, disability and gender**, and will soon include sexual orientation, age and faith, promotion of **community cohesion** will inevitably be at the heart of this work.

‘An integrated approach to equalities and cohesion, focussed on outcomes, will assist schools in seeing these two areas as complimentary, closely linked and essential to raising standards’ ([www.teachernet/communitycohesion](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion/communitycohesionresources/rcepack/intro/))

Do we need a community cohesion policy and action plan?

Under the duty to promote community cohesion there is no legal requirement to produce a separate plan or policy. However:

Good schools have been working towards community cohesion for many years and this should be evidenced in their SEF and in policies and plans

Where does community cohesion fit into the school’s plans?

It should fit within the following three broad perspectives:

Teaching and learning and the curriculum

- Helping children and young people to understand and value diversity whilst promoting shared values, awareness of human rights and how to promote and defend them
- Developing skills of participation, responsible action

Equity and Excellence

- Equal opportunities for all to achieve at the highest level possible.
- Removing barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities.
- Working to eliminate variations in outcomes for different groups

Engagement and Extended Services

- Providing reasonable means for children, young people, their families and the wider community to meet and interact with people from different groups and build positive relationships

(From:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion/communitycohesionresources/rcepack/intro/>)

This can be done through:

- workforce development: towards a workforce which reflects the community it serves
- development of and response to consultation –staff, pupils, parents, community
- development of personalised learning
- the new Citizenship curriculum strands, e.g. ‘Identity and Diversity’

- the RE curriculum: ‘effective RE can address the prejudices brought about by a shallow knowledge of world religions and provides pupils with a safe forum for the discussion of controversial issues’. (From: *Institute of Community Cohesion: useful links for schools, 2008*)
- drama and role play activities
- refugee week activities
- anti-bullying work
- anti-racist work
- school council activities
- volunteering opportunities with local communities, such as refugees, elders, disabled people
- mentoring and buddying schemes
- linking with local mother tongue and supplementary schools
- working with parents and communities with English as an additional language
- working with parents and communities who are not engaged with school, e.g parents with EAL, refugees, fathers
- promoting ESOL and family learning
- making school premises available to local community and faith groups
- linking with other schools both here and overseas

How can we show evidence that we promote community cohesion when we review our policies and plans? Some questions to consider

- What are the outcomes for learners?
- How do we recognise and celebrate difference?
- What can we say about attitudes, relationships and cohesion?
- What are the benefits for the workforce of promoting community cohesion?
- How and whom are we consulting and what are we doing with the results?
- What are the benefits of promoting community cohesion to the local community and wider society?
- Where can we find actions to promote community cohesion in our planning and how will we know if they have been successful?

What will OfSTED be looking for?

- the school’s effectiveness in serving the needs and promoting the cohesiveness of its own community
- the school’s actions to promote engagement of hard to reach groups
- the promotion of common identity and values, valuing diversity and awareness of human rights
- the contribution to the cohesiveness of the wider community
- the school’s effectiveness in promoting community cohesion through its educational provision.

How will they do this?

- By discussing the community issues relevant to the individual school context
- By discussing the strategies the school has adopted to address those issues
- By examining how the school knows whether its strategies are having an impact in promoting community cohesion

(From Supplementary Guidance for Inspectors: inspecting community cohesion, July 2008)

How does the duty to promote community cohesion relate to personalised learning?

‘personalised learning and teaching means taking a highly structured and responsive approach to each child's and young person's learning, in order that all are able to progress, achieve and participate. It means strengthening the link between learning and teaching by engaging pupils - and their parents - as partners in learning.’

(Standards Site: personalized learning 2008)

How does the duty relate to Every Child Matters and the Children and Young People's Plan?

There is a very strong link, particularly in the areas of parental involvement and safeguarding children

‘Some children, such as children living in deprived areas, looked after children, disabled children, migrant children and unaccompanied asylum seeking children are more vulnerable to harm than others’

Principles behind the Children and Young People's Plan:

- Government doesn't bring up children – parents do. We need to do more to back parents and families
- All children have the potential to succeed
- Children need to enjoy childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life
- Services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families
- It is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later

(www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)