NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

Community cohesion: advice for schools

equality matters

Contents

	Page
The Equality Act 2010	4
Defining community cohesion	4
Maintained schools and community cohesion	5
Academies and community cohesion	5
Inspection and community cohesion	6
Promoting community cohesion	7
Community cohesion and the curriculum	12
Sources of further information and support	15

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 provides protection against discrimination to those with a protected characteristic.[1] It also places a duty on public authorities (which includes schools and academies) to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations between different groups.

Promoting community cohesion is about much more than eliminating discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations between groups. However, communities will not be cohesive where discrimination and inequalities exist. Therefore, action to eliminate discrimination and advance equality should be an integral part of work to promote community cohesion.

Defining community cohesion

There is no one agreed definition of community cohesion. However, definitions focus on the relationship between the individual, their community and wider society. They also focus on providing opportunities for people to interact, work together, develop positive relationships and make a contribution to their community. Further, they emphasise the importance of a common vision, shared values based on democracy, equality, diversity, tolerance, fairness and justice and creating a sense of belonging.

The Centre for Social Relations (CSR) identifies six key facets of cohesion:

1. Interaction between individuals, communities and wider society to promote trust and common understanding.
2. Active citizenship: participation in civil society, in public institutions, the workplace and in political life.
3. Equality of access with evidence of progress towards equality of outcome across society.
4. A society at ease with itself, with a real sense of security, welcome and belonging.
5. Respect for the rule of law and the liberal values that underpin society.
6. The possession of civil, political and social rights and responsibilities.

[1] Protected characteristics apply to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

These six facets provide a useful framework that schools can use to develop their work to promote community cohesion, although the NASUWT believes that two of the facets require qualification.

The reference to equality of access with progress to equality of outcome across society is important. However, the NASUWT believes that equality of outcome will only be achieved if individuals and communities are empowered. This means that there is also a need to address the relationships between individuals and groups within institutions and society. Unions have a critical role to play in empowering both individuals and groups and the NASUWT is committed to supporting teachers and school leaders to promote community cohesion.

'Respect for the rule of law and the liberal values that underpin society' could be interpreted as meaning that those who promote racist and other discriminatory views should be allowed to express those views. The NASUWT rejects this interpretation and is very clear that racist and fascist groups such as the British National Party (BNP) and the English Defence League (EDL) should not have the right to express such views. Individuals who associate themselves with racist and fascist organisations such as the BNP and the EDL should have no place in the teaching profession. The NASUWT believes that 'liberal values' must be defined within a framework of equality and respect.

Schools have a critical contribution to make to community cohesion and many schools will have established approaches to promote this. This advice:

- outlines the requirements placed on schools;
- sets out a framework that schools can use to develop and review their work on community cohesion; and
- provides links to sources of information, publications and resources that might help schools to promote community cohesion.

Maintained schools and community cohesion

Maintained schools must promote community cohesion.[2]

Academies and community cohesion

One of the general conditions of grant for every academy is that *'the school will be at the heart of its community, promoting community cohesion and sharing facilities with other schools and the wider community'*.[3]

[2] Education and Inspections Act 2006.

[3] *Academy Model Funding Agreement,* downloaded from the DfE website, August 2016.

Inspection and community cohesion

The Ofsted inspection framework makes clear that schools should provide pupils with a wide range of opportunities and experiences, including opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills to make an effective contribution to society, engage critically with issues relating to equality and justice and take part in activities that contribute to community and social cohesion.

Inspectors must:

- take account of the performance and progress of different groups of pupils, including pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, looked-after children, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds, boys and girls;
- evaluate and report on the effectiveness of a school's actions to prevent and tackle all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination, including the steps that the school takes to prevent and tackle prejudice-related bullying and harassment;
- evaluate and report on the extent to which pupils are able to understand and respond to risk, including risk associated with knives and gangs, and extremism.

Promoting community cohesion

Establish what is meant by 'community'

An important starting point for a school's work on community cohesion is to understand the community it serves. There are a number of dimensions for schools to consider when thinking about their 'community':

- the school community, which includes pupils, staff, governors, parents/carers and users of the school's facilities and services;
- school communities, which includes partnerships, networks and clusters of schools;
- the local community, which includes the immediate neighbourhood, the town or city and the local authority where the school is located;
- the UK community; and
- the global community.

Schools need to operate across each of these dimensions, but can begin by focusing on their contribution to the local community. In areas where the community is less diverse, schools will need to explore and secure opportunities to enable pupils to interact with people from other backgrounds. Moving forward, all schools will need to identify ways in which pupils might engage with other communities within the UK and globally.

Assess how well the school's aims, values and ethos support community cohesion

If the school is to promote community cohesion effectively, the values and principles that underpin community cohesion need to be embedded through all areas of school life. Promoting community cohesion should be a strategic management responsibility. School leaders need to think about what sort of community the school is seeking to create and assess the extent to which the school's aims, values and ethos reflect and help to promote community cohesion.

Establish what the school is already doing and how effectively this contributes to community cohesion

This might include an assessment of work set out in the School Improvement Plan and an examination of actions and activities included in the school's self-evaluation. Schools should look at the work they are doing to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity as this work is likely to be relevant to work to promote community cohesion.

The school will need to examine data on the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils, the number and nature of any bullying and prejudice-related incidents and pupil behaviour, including rates of exclusion. It will also need to examine other information such as that relating to the curriculum.

It will be important to consider what the evidence says about the school and the cohesiveness of the school community. It will also be important to consider whether actions to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and promote community cohesion are being identified and addressed appropriately through the main planning and decision-making arrangement. The school will then need to establish what more should be done to close gaps, address issues and promote community cohesion.

Have a clear plan outlining how the school will take forward its work on community cohesion

The school should have a plan for taking its work on community cohesion forward. The school's community cohesion objectives and priorities should be included in the School Improvement Plan. It will be particularly important to think about how the school's work to promote community cohesion is developed and sustained over time.

Streamline systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of policies

The school should monitor and evaluate how effectively its policies contribute to promoting community cohesion. Equalities legislation means that schools are required to collect and publish information about pupils and other 'service' users, including information about inequalities. They are also required to prepare and publish specific and measurable equality objectives. The school's data systems should enable the school to collect data, set equality objectives, and monitor and evaluate the impact of these objectives in eliminating inequalities, advancing equality for different groups of pupils and staff and promoting community cohesion.

It is essential that monitoring systems avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and minimise workload burdens on staff. Data should be collected for a clear purpose. The school should deploy appropriately qualified support staff to collect and analyse data and, where possible, use technology to support collection and analyses. The school will need to be able to show how it has identified and taken action to meet the needs of particular groups of learners through the use of school level data.

Ensure that the school has clear policies and procedures for preventing and tackling discrimination, harassment and prejudice-related bullying and that these policies and procedures are being implemented effectively

A school will not be able to contribute effectively to community cohesion if its pupils or staff experience harassment, bullying or discrimination. Therefore, the school should have clear policies and procedures to prevent and tackle all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination. All staff and pupils should know about the policies and procedures and understand their rights and responsibilities.

The school should record incidents of prejudice-related harassment and bullying so that issues and trends can be identified. Schools that have an integrated information management system will be better placed to monitor and track these issues.

Clarify who will be responsible for the various aspects of the school's work on community cohesion and how they should be involved

It is important to identify who will lead on different areas of work and clarify areas that are the responsibility of all staff or groups of staff. The schools should ensure that they identify and draw on the particular interests, knowledge and expertise of staff. This is most likely to happen if teachers and support staff are actively engaged in the discussions and decisions about community policy and practice. However, it is also vital that individual staff are not placed under any pressure to assume particular responsibilities for community cohesion; for example, because they are from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background or a particular faith group.

The school should ensure that roles and responsibilities are delegated appropriately. For example, some work on community cohesion should be organised and delivered by appropriately deployed and qualified support staff (e.g. consulting with parents and pupils and the community; data collection and analysis; liaison with other agencies). External bodies may also have a role to play in supporting the school's work.

Identify external sources of practical help and support

The school should consider how external services and partnerships might help it to develop their relationships with families and the wider community. It should consider what could be done to improve links with different groups of parents, pupils and different groups within the

community. This should not require complex arrangements for consultation. The school should utilise and, where appropriate, develop their existing consultation and participation arrangements to ensure that the views of parents, pupils and local communities are considered.

There is a need to take account of the views of different sections of the school workforce, including staff from BME backgrounds, and disabled staff. The school should consult and involve recognised school workforce unions in discussions and decisions about work within the community.

School leaders will need to ensure that arrangements are in place to maintain links with others and to enable teachers to both work effectively with and support their colleagues. School leaders will also need to ensure that teachers have the time to work collaboratively and cooperatively when they plan, prepare and assess.

Establish links and partnerships with other schools locally, nationally and internationally

There are many benefits from linking and working collaboratively and cooperatively with other schools. For example, links and partnerships can provide opportunities to pool ideas and resources, including knowledge and expertise. They also provide opportunities for pupils to interact and work with children from different backgrounds to their own. Some schools have established links with schools in other countries, including links with schools in poor countries that have very few resources. Such links may provide substantial opportunities and benefits for both schools. However, there are also substantial risks involved in establishing such links. For example, there is a danger that the links could reinforce pupils' perceptions and stereotypes about people in poorer countries. There is also a danger that the relationship between the schools is unequal with the school in England, being seen as the source of knowledge, expertise and money. The school will need to ensure that relationships between link or partner schools are mutually beneficial and achieve equity.

It must not be assumed that the school is contributing to community cohesion simply because it is working with other schools. Whether the school is contributing to community cohesion will depend on the purpose and nature of these links; for example, whether they provide opportunities for interaction between pupils from different backgrounds (especially in respect of ethnic, religious and socio-economic diversity), whether the relationships are mutually supportive, and whether the links lead to work that benefits pupils in each school and/or the wider community. It is vital

that all schools in the link/partnership contribute equally to discussions and decisions about the purpose and nature of the relationship and the educational and other benefits to be gained from the relationship.

Ensure that all teachers and support staff have access to relevant training, professional development and support

Teachers and support staff may have particular skills, expertise and interests that will help a school to promote community cohesion. It will be important to identify and draw on this resource. For example, teachers and support staff may be able to share their knowledge and expertise with other staff within the school. They might also offer information and advice that informs how community cohesion is addressed within the School Improvement Plan.

If staff do not have the skills, knowledge and confidence to challenge discrimination and explore issues relating to equality, diversity and community cohesion, this will undermine the school's work to promote community cohesion. Therefore, all staff should receive support and training, and have access to development opportunities to enable them to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence. This could be a useful focus for individual planning and review as part of teacher and headteacher performance management. The school should also establish how other schools and organisations can contribute to staff training and development and provide ongoing support to staff.

Community cohesion and the Prevent strategy

The Prevent strategy is a central element of the UK's approach to counter-terrorism and anti-extremism. The legislation underpinning this strategy places a duty on schools and colleges to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.'

The Prevent duty gives rise to important considerations for schools in relation to their work to promote community cohesion. However, the NASUWT remains clear that the existence of the Prevent duty must not be used as a pretext for neglect of schools' responsibilities with regard to community cohesion. Further information from the NASUWT on the Prevent duty and the ways in which schools develop positive approaches to the curriculum in the context of Prevent can be accessed at www.nasuwt.org.uk/Prevent.

Community cohesion and the curriculum

Curriculum design and planning

Those responsible for planning and designing the school curriculum need to establish a framework that will enable community cohesion objectives and activities to be identified and picked up across the curriculum in a way that is both meaningful and sustainable. It will be important to consider how different subjects or departments could use the learning experiences that are led by another department or relate to other areas of the curriculum.

Some schools address community cohesion through the Rights Respecting Schools Award or through work on the global dimension or sustainability. These approaches encourage schools to think about cross-curriculum themes in a coherent and strategic way. This should help to minimise the risk of 'initiatives overload' and avoid excessive workload. Using a recognised approach also means that schools are able to draw on a range of resources, knowledge and expertise. Whatever approach the school chooses to adopt, it is essential that community cohesion is addressed strategically and that community cohesion objectives are integrated across the curriculum.

The school should consider whether its approach to curriculum design enables teachers to plan and prepare appropriate learning experiences. It may need to provide time and opportunities for teachers from different areas to work together to plan lessons jointly. A common approach to planning that is brief, simple to use and recognises that teachers should be trusted to exercise professional judgement is vital.

Interacting with others, building trust and respect and active citizenship

The school will need to consider how the curriculum can provide opportunities for pupils to gain experience and participate in learning that develops their knowledge and understanding of the contribution of different cultures and societies.

The school should help pupils to understand and appreciate their own culture and backgrounds. It should enable them to meet and work with people from backgrounds that are different from their own. If pupils are to build trust and common understanding, they need to be able to understand the ways in which they are similar to people from different backgrounds, and understand and respect the differences, including the

different contributions that others can make. The curriculum should provide opportunities for pupils to gain experiences that will help to develop this understanding. The school could approach this issue in many different ways. For example, it might provide opportunities for pupils to meet and participate in activities with pupils from different religious, cultural, ethnic or socio-economic backgrounds, or of different abilities or different ages. This could involve pupils within the school or from another school or schools.

Visits can provide opportunities for pupils to meet and interact with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

The school could include curriculum enrichment activities, such as the visual arts, music, dance, theatre and costume design or visits to places of worship, to provide opportunities for pupils to gain some knowledge of other cultures and backgrounds and enable them to meet people from different backgrounds.

The school might use fieldwork or projects to encourage pupils to engage with important issues affecting the community or society more generally. Pupils might be encouraged to think critically about issues affecting the community or society and become involved in social or political matters to challenge local, national or international policies and practice. For example, they might lobby councillors or politicians about the need for change, locally, nationally or internationally, about issues that they or the local community have identified.

Enabling pupils to meet and talk to people from different backgrounds provides a useful starting point for building trust and common understanding, but pupils are unlikely to build trust and gain a common understanding from simply meeting and talking with others. The school must also address the other 'facets' that underpin community cohesion and design learning experiences that enable pupils to become active citizens. The school might want to use some of the resources and sources of support listed at the end of this booklet to establish how this might be done most effectively.

Equality of access, equality of outcome, rights and responsibilities

Equality of access, equality of outcome, rights and responsibilities are whole school issues, not simply matters for the curriculum. For example, they link to the school's ethos, to issues related to behaviour, wellbeing and safety, and to the school's relationship with parents and the wider community. Therefore, they should be incorporated into school policies,

procedures and systems. It will be important to establish how the school might use these existing policies, procedures and systems to support its work to address community cohesion through the curriculum.

The school environment must be one where prejudice, bullying and harassment are not tolerated; where incidents are dealt with promptly, consistently and fairly; and where equality, justice and tolerance are both promoted and practised across the school. The curriculum will play a critical role in raising pupils' awareness of the school's policies and procedures and their rights and responsibilities in relation to such policies. If the school is seen as a 'safe haven' or model of good practice, then it will be much easier to explore and address similar issues that relate to life outside of school. Those responsible for designing the curriculum will need to ensure that the curriculum addresses these issues in relation to the school community and society more generally.

Focusing on the wider aims of education and the commitment to advancing equality, the school should look at how well the curriculum prepares pupils for the future so that they are successful learners, confident individuals, and responsible citizens who make a positive and effective contribution to society. This might include looking at how the curriculum could be used to challenge pupils' stereotypes and encourage them to think about non-traditional educational and career paths.

The school should consider how links with external organisations and the wider community might be utilised. Partner organisations may provide significant opportunities to develop the curriculum in new and innovative ways that are supportive of the objective of community cohesion.

Sources of further information and support

Islamophobia: Advice for Schools and Colleges

A booklet which explores the problem of Islamophobia and provides advice and guidance on what schools and colleges can do to tackle it. www.nasuwt.org.uk/Islamophobia.

Tackling Homophobic Bullying

The booklet examines the problem of homophobia in schools and outlines strategies to prevent homophobia and create a positive culture in schools. www.nasuwt.org.uk/consum/groups/public/@equalityandtraining/documents/nas_webcontent/nasuwt_015041.pdf

Preventing and Tackling Prejudice-related Bullying

Explains the different forms of prejudice-related bullying and outlines the steps that schools can take to prevent and tackle such bullying. www.nasuwt.org.uk/consum/groups/public/@equalityandtraining/documents/nas_webcontent/nasuwt_015078.pdf.

Serious about…race equality? The impact of the Government's education policy

A booklet that provides facts about government approaches to race equality, focusing on the impact of Coalition Government policies on race equality. www.nasuwt.org.uk/consum/groups/public/@journalist/documents/nas_download/nasuwt_012496.pdf

Prevent strategy advice for teachers and school leaders

Information, advice and guidance on the Prevent duty in England and Wales. www.nasuwt.org.uk/prevent.

Universal values: responding holistically to the requirement to promote Fundamental British Values

Guidance produced by EqualiTeach CIC in partnership with the NASUWT with the aim of equipping schools to respond in a cohesive fashion to the new requirement to actively promote Fundamental British Values.
www.nasuwt.org.uk/consum/groups/public/@equalityandtraining/documents/nas_download/nasuwt_015516.pdf.

Other publications and resources

The resources listed below include web-based material and guidance documents that can be downloaded from the relevant websites.

British Council Schools Online global learning resources

The British Council Schools Online global learning website contains resources that have been produced by schools that have participated in British Council programmes. Schools can use the website to find links to other schools. The website also includes links to resources produced by other organisations that promote global learning: schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/find-classroom-resources/choose-resource/search.

Civic Voices

Civic Voices is a project that encourages young people living in areas of the world with a history of conflict to develop a sense of civic responsibility. There are web-based classroom resources related to human rights, freedom, conflict and peace. The resource has been developed by a number of organisations internationally, including the NASUWT. The website includes videos and material relating to Northern Ireland in the UK: www.civicvoices.org.

Community Cohesion in Action, QCDA

The former Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) produced guidance for schools on how to build community cohesion across the curriculum. This includes practical guidance on curriculum design, practical activities and case studies to illustrate how schools have approached community cohesion. The QCDA no longer exists but information from their website can be downloaded from the National Archive: www.globalfootprints.org/files/zones/teach/Key%20GL%20Documents/QCDAcommunitycohesion.pdf.

Centre for Social Relations resources and case studies

The Centre for Social Relations' website includes a wide range of information related to community cohesion research, policy and practice. This includes case studies of work that schools have done to address community cohesion: www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/trust-peace-social-relations.

Schools Linking

The Schools Linking Network (SLN) provides guidance and support to schools on equality, diversity, identity and community cohesion. SLN provides training and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes. Its website includes case studies and resources: www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk/.

Think Global

Think Global is a membership organisation that works to educate and engage people on global issues. Its members include schools, global partnership and development Education Centres, and other organisations and individuals including the NASUWT. Think Global runs a global dimensions website for schools. The website contains more than 1,000 reviewed books, films and resources that support global learning. The Think Global website also provides details of local Development Education Centres across the UK: www.think-global.org.uk/.

Unicef Rights Respecting Schools Award

Unicef's Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA) recognises achievement in putting the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) at the heart of a school's planning, policies, practice and ethos. The Award is built around a set of standards, and participating schools can access training and support intended to help schools work in a unified way on issues related to community cohesion, the global dimension, sustainable development and social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL): www.unicef.org.uk/rrsa.

Useful websites

The following websites provide information and resources that teachers and schools can use to address issues related to equality, diversity and community cohesion.

Anne Frank Trust: www.annefrank.org.uk.

Anti-Bullying Alliance: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk.

Citizenship Foundation: www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk.

The Council for Subject Associations (CfSA): www.subjectassociation.org.uk.

Equality and Human Rights Commission: www.equalityhumanrights.com.

e-Twinning: www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm.

End Violence Against Women: www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk.

Global Gateway: www.globalgateway.org.

Holocaust Education Trust: www.het.org.uk.

Searchlight: www.searchlightmagazine.com.

Unite Against Fascism: www.uaf.org.uk.

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