



A Community Cohesion **Checklist** For Swindon Schools

Community Directorate
Swindon Borough Council
May 08

A Cohesion Checklist

The opportunity to promote community cohesion offers enormous opportunities and benefits to schools. Most schools will already be addressing many facets of community cohesion and there are some great examples of good practice in the Swindon area. As there is no set pattern or definite way in which schools have to promote community cohesion there is a great opportunity to explore what works in your school. Approaches and issues will vary according to each school and each area. This flexibility also allows you to adapt your approach in response to changes and issues emerging in your local and school communities.

This guide has been designed to provide a checklist and guidance for anyone seeking to develop a response to community cohesion with suggestions on approaches to take and signposting to other sources of information.

The questions will support the development of work that will link to Ofsted inspection. For more detailed guidance with closer links to the kinds of questions that will be part of Ofsted inspection, see the *Information Pack for School Governors* at www.swindon.gov.uk and follow links to Community and Living.

✿ Introduction

Since September 2007 all schools have a duty to promote community cohesion. While this requirement is new, experience shows that most schools are already addressing key elements of community cohesion through their day-to-day activities for example, in teaching, schemes like eco-schools and through being an important hub in a local neighbourhood.

The benefits of addressing community cohesion are clear – better relationships between students, genuine equity in the opportunities offered to everyone, improved connections between parents/carers and the local community, reducing the gap between highest and lowest achievement in school and delivering against the Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes. The ECM outcomes are key markers of what successful community cohesion will look like. If children and young people feel safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, achieve economic well being and are healthy, we are collectively taking steps towards achieving and sustaining community cohesion.

This checklist seeks to give some pointers to help Swindon schools and should complement but not replace guidance from the Department for Children, schools and families (DCSF) and Institute of Community Cohesion, when that is made available (advertised launch date end of May 2008).

For general information about community cohesion contact the Community Support Team, Community Services, Swindon Borough Council, tel: 01793 466418, email: pharrison@swindon.gov.uk

We've divided the checklist as follows with three key sections:

- ✿ **Section 1- Background**
- ✿ **Section 2 – Getting Started**
- ✿ **Section 3 – Making a Difference**

✿ Section One - Background:

The Duty:

Section 21 (4) of the Education Act 2002 (as inserted by Section 38 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) states that:

'The governing body of a maintained school shall, in discharging their functions relating to the conduct of the school –

- (a) promote the well-being of pupils at the school, and
- (b) in the case of a school in England, promote community cohesion'

This duty came into effect on 1 September 2007 and from 1 September 2008, HMCI has a duty under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 to report on the contribution made by schools to community cohesion.

What is meant by community cohesion?

You can create your own definition or vision. One working definition* is

- 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
- a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and the wider community

* based on guidance from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion.

Key Principles:

- ✿ Belonging
- ✿ valuing diversity
- ✿ equity
- ✿ strong and positive relationships

How does a school contribute to community cohesion?

All schools will already be undertaking work and activities that contribute to community cohesion. Locally in Swindon there are many examples of projects and initiatives that make positive connections with community cohesion.

We need schools to take a key role as schools have a unique and vital set of relationships which give them a powerful position to make a difference to this agenda. Some of this will rely on existing activity whilst some areas will require a new approach.

There are strong links between community cohesion and the National Framework for Sustainable Schools, Eco School Programme, Healthy Schools Status, KS1 and KS2 Citizenship and Geography and the Every Child Matters Outcomes.

✿ Section 2- Getting started:

Question	Guidance	Yes	No	If No, what can you do . . .
1. Does your school have one lead person who is responsible for promoting the community cohesion activities in your school?	It is likely that as part of the Ofsted process, you will be asked <i>How well does your school contribute to community cohesion?</i> If you have a nominated person to lead on cohesion, this will enable you to be better prepared in providing evidence to support your evaluation.			Identify a curriculum lead, member of administration staff or an enthusiastic governor. The key thing to remember is that this person is the focal point for knowing what work has contributed to community cohesion. He or she shouldn't be left to carry out all the work in isolation.
2. Do you deliver the duty across the four dimensions of community?	Each school should collate evidence that demonstrates how it connects with the four dimensions of community (DCSF Guidance) ✱ the school community, ✱ the neighbourhood community, ✱ the community of Britain, and, ✱ the global community			Schools communicate and connect with people and communities every day. The Lead Person or a key member of staff could collate the letters, posters, web pages, reports, events, curriculum plans and surveys as and when they happen.
3. Does your school have a working group of people support the lead person and monitor progress?	Understanding the connections across the Every Child Matters Outcomes, Equalities work and other initiatives in the context of community cohesion will need a wider group of people. Establishing that group will show that the school has a real awareness of the duty.			The cluster could work together to maximise use of resources, share events and provide support. If the cohesion work is embedded into existing agendas it will be less onerous.
4. Do you know the local community?	Each school should have a good awareness of the demographics of the local community. This can be drawn from anecdotal and statistical sources. It is important to know how representative of the local community is the school, and what contacts are made with groups/communities that are not well represented within the school community. It is also a way to use resources that are available locally.			Neighbourhood and Ward profiles are available for Swindon. http://www.swindon.gov.uk/community/community-needsprofilestats.htm or www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk . For community group information, social capital audit results or contacts, the Council's Community Directorate can assist. Tel: 01793 466468 or email: kdaley@swindon.gov.uk .
5. Have you carried out a review of community cohesion?	A community cohesion review will demonstrate that your school is already undertaking many of the activities that relate to community cohesion. The review can also support you to evidence how you are delivering against equality and diversity and the ECM Outcomes.			There are no hard and fast ways of carrying out this review. The key is to make sure that, wherever possible, your answers are backed up by real evidence. A review of existing equalities documents may prove that steps to promote cohesion are already embedded.

✿ Section 3 - Making a difference:

Question	Guidance	Yes	No	If No, what can you do . . .
6. Do you have an action plan to help you promote community cohesion and fill any gaps identified in your review?	<p>Again, there are no firm rules for how to present an action plan. What you may find is that the issues of diversity, equality and cohesion are so closely linked that your school may just wish to develop one plan that addresses all three strands. You could also opt to add to an existing plan rather than create a new one.</p> <p>A key outcome from the plan will be demonstrating that you are considering how <u>effective</u> the school is at delivering cohesion and can become the key document to support inspection of the duty.</p>			<p>Schools can determine what they want an action plan for and what it should achieve. It should be school/area specific but can be relevant to others schools or across the cluster. The action plan can be short, medium and/or long term. Measuring success/impact is key. Support/templates are available and will be online: http://www.swindon.gov.uk/community/community-communitygrants-communitycohesion.htm</p>
7. Have you linked your community cohesion action plan into those of other schools in your extended schools cluster?	<p>Schools could consider taking a cluster approach to a cohesion action plan. This would enable effective use of resources, shared publicity and engagement and provide opportunities for a coherent plan of activity across all key stages in the cluster. Each cluster could develop an overarching action plan to pull individual school plans together and ensure there is good practice and continuity across all key stages.</p>			<p>Some school clusters will have overlapping geography in terms of its local community, and as such, can share needs analysis in terms of understanding and connecting with the local community. Some schools will have a school community from a non geographic specific location. For these schools, a school specific plan may be more effective.</p>
8. Are you collecting evidence to demonstrate that you are actively promoting community cohesion and implementing your action plan?	<p>Keeping an action plan <i>alive</i> is a real challenge. An action plan should change and adapt according to local changes in local circumstances and emerging issues. Work that is ongoing in other areas of school activity should provide a core supply of real activity. E.g. school promotions, eco schools, healthy schools status, citizenship, parent involvement opportunities</p>			<p>A cluster co-ordinator or cluster lead, or the lead person for cohesion can keep cohesion on key agendas. Programmed training for governors and school staff can also support delivery.</p>
9. How are you celebrating diversity and promoting a common identify e.g. Britishness?	<p>A new area of cohesion is about promoting integration and cohesiveness in terms of what it means to be British. Schools will need to demonstrate that they address and promote this alongside promoting and valuing diversity, culture and heritage.</p>			<p>This will involve bringing evidence together from across school activity, for example, evidence from schemes of work, teaching, ethos and school's PSHE, RE and citizenship, core skills around appreciation of difference, friendship and bullying.</p>

Ideas for Evidence:

Evidence could be sorted into groups such as the four geographical dimensions (★ the school community, ★ the neighbourhood community, ★ the community of Britain, and, ★ the global community)

and/or

★ Teaching, learning and curriculum ★ Equity and excellence ★ Engagement and ethos

1. An analysis of your school community, your neighbourhood and the local area. Information about the last two on this list can be obtained by going to <http://www.swindon.gov.uk/community/community-needsprofilestats.htm> or www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk Plans such as the Children and Young Persons Plan can also be a helpful resource for local priorities.
2. Connections with local communities eg facility hire, learning sessions, local surveys, volunteering, attendance at local meetings and opportunities to interact with your neighbours through fetes, concerts, etc.
3. Evidence of how the school promotes a common identity, appreciates and values diversity, human rights and democracy e.g. curriculum projects, connections with diverse communities – celebrations, talks in schools, equality policy, recruitment, governors.
4. A record of outreach activity which promotes learning or positive experiences to wider communities e.g. work with parents and governors, training or celebration opportunities, positive dialogue, coffee mornings etc.
5. A record of activity that targets individuals, communities or other areas of need e.g. family learning sessions, targeted support or promoting access to behaviour support.
6. Samples of communication materials that demonstrate your commitment to community cohesion e.g. newsletters, email alerts, web information, news releases and media cuttings.
7. Examples of positive behaviour mechanisms e.g. circle time, anti bullying work, peer support, pro social behaviour, reward systems etc.
8. Examples of pupil voice e.g. school council/committees, student newsletters, student led groups.
9. Evidence of targeted support or communication with disadvantaged communities