

# Sheffield City Council People's Portfolio Lifelong Learning Skills and Communities

## Guidance for Schools on Community Cohesion



## What is meant by Community Cohesion?

Community Cohesion is about recognising, supporting and valuing diversity. It is about creating an environment where there is mutual respect and appreciation of the similarities and differences that make people unique.

Community Cohesion is what needs to be promoted in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together.

This is based on three fundamental principles:

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly

It is also based on promoting three key ways of living together;

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging for all communities,
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools, colleges and within neighbourhoods

## What the Equality Act 2010, says about Community Cohesion?

- Equality Act 2010 replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act.
- Applies to all public sector organisations such as Police, Health and Schools etc.
- The General Duty has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
  - ❖ Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
  - ❖ Advance Equality of opportunity
  - ❖ Foster Good Relations
  - ❖ Requires Organisations to produce equality objectives

Community Cohesion comes under 'foster good relations'

## What does this mean for schools?

For schools the term 'Community' has a number of dimensions including:

- **The school community:** the children and young people, their parents, carers and families, the school's staff and governing body, community users of the school's facilities and services;
- **The community within which the school is located:** the school in its geographical community and the people who live and work in that area. This applies not just to the immediate neighbourhood but also to the city or local authority area within which a school is located.

- **The UK community:** all schools are by definition part of this community.
- **The Global community:** formed by the EU and international links

### Will Ofsted Inspectors grade schools for Community Cohesion?

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 introduced a duty on all maintained schools in England to promote Community Cohesion. However the requirement for inspectors to grade schools on their statutory duty to promote community cohesion was dropped. Nevertheless research suggests that interventions in the classroom can make a real difference to this agenda.

Community Cohesion is a core part of what education is. Whether or not schools have a formal duty to promote community cohesion, every school needs to prepare its pupils to grow up in the world we live in. Respecting, valuing and interacting with people from different backgrounds and cultures are important parts of the preparation that schools need to give their pupils.

If a school is to successfully fulfil its Equality duty, promoting Community Cohesion is a key requirement. Schools should focus on faith, ethnicity and culture, and socio-economic factors but also demonstrate:

- that it understands the context of its own community;
- that it has planned and taken an appropriate set of actions;
- and that there is evidence of the impact of these actions.

The three core questions that schools need to ask themselves such as:

1. What do we you know about the context of our school in respect of Community Cohesion?
2. Have we planned and taken an appropriate set of actions to promote Community Cohesion?
3. What impact are we having?

### What do schools need to do to promote Community Cohesion?

Community Cohesion can be promoted through all aspects of school life in:

- **Teaching and learning;** teaching pupils to understand others, and promoting discussion and debate about common values and diversity.
- **Equity and excellence:** removing barriers to access and participation, and offering equal opportunities to all pupils to succeed at the highest level possible.
- **Engagement and ethos:** providing opportunities for children, young people and their families to interact with others from different backgrounds.

As a starting point, schools build Community Cohesion by promoting equality of opportunity and inclusion for different groups of pupils within a school. But alongside this focus on promoting equality and a strong respect for diversity, they also have a role in promoting shared values and encourage their pupils to actively engage with others to understand what they have in common.

For schools where the pupil population is less diverse or predominantly of one socio-economic, ethnic, religious, or non-religious background more will need to be done to provide opportunities for interaction between children from different backgrounds.

## Cohesion Sheffield

**The Vision:** Making our city a place where everyone feels welcome and valued, in a community where everyone is treated with dignity & respect.

**Cohesion Sheffield** is the backbone organisation, set up to ensure delivery of the Citywide **Cohesion Strategic Framework for Action**. It was developed and exists as a collaboration between partners. The lead partners in the co-production are Sheffield Cohesion Advisory Group (CAG) and Sheffield City Council (SCC) but importantly, it applies to and is supported across **all sectors, private, public, voluntary and faith**.

The Strategic Framework was created to help **guide organisations**, businesses, groups, and communities to sign up to **cohesion commitments** through the development of their own **action plans** for a cohesive city. Cohesion Sheffield is there to assist organisations in developing and implementing these action plans through guidance and support. **Cohesion Advisors** are available to assist organisations in writing cohesion action plans.

Cohesion Sheffield is part of a **wider programme of work** for participants, organisations and partners, designed to achieve the following outcomes:

### **Short term outcomes (1-2 years)**

- An increased sense of urgency and concern for a cohesive city
- Establishment of Cohesion Sheffield leading to support of ongoing initiatives and enabling new ones, through direct support in writing and implementing action plans for cohesion

### **Medium term outcomes (2-4 years)**

- Successful coproduction across sectors
- Emergence of 'young leaders' able to take cohesion-minded action into the next stage.
- Significant progress in social attitudes (in some areas) towards marginalised and stigmatised groups.

### **Longer term outcome (15 years)**

- Making our city a place where everyone feels welcome and valued, in a community where everyone is treated with dignity & respect.

For more information contact: Panni Loh, Development Co-ordinator:  
Tel: 0114 2536600 or email: ploh@cohesionsheffield.co.u

The following is a step-by-step guide to assist schools in carrying out Community Cohesion work.

### Step One



Nominate a person (preferably senior with knowledge of key issues) to lead on cohesion. This person is the focal point but must **not** work in isolation. They should have regular meetings to update headteacher, senior leaders and governing body. Ideally a school governor with responsibility for Equality and Cohesion should be nominated

### Step two



Lead person pulls together any information, data or research that is already available in relation to the school for example pupil, teacher, school staff and governor diversity profile, attainment results, exclusion data and demographics of the local community. Find out about local community groups, local faith organisations, TARA's, Local voluntary and community organisations, community language schools and faith out of school clubs and activities. Keep this information on hand to refer to and understand the bigger picture.

### Step three



Start by referring to the school's vision, values and ethos. Has the school a welcoming atmosphere, does it feel inclusive with, for example, multi-ethnic displays that promote all cultural values? If not can this be changed?

### Step four



Produce an Equality/Community Cohesion action plan and focus on the outcomes. Think about how you intend to measure equality and cohesion and t the evidence you need to gather. Start by including the following headings on the Equality Cohesion action plan: Teaching and Learning, Equity and Excellence and Engagement and Ethos

### Step five



#### Teaching and Learning

Work with headteacher/teacher to develop a curriculum which values diversity and the rights of the individual, respecting difference and promoting commonalties. Ofsted will need know how the school goes about promoting 'British Values'. This could be facilitated in RE, history, art, citizenship, geography, literature, PSHE,

facilitating debate clubs. To get further help on how to do this visit:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk>

**Possible evidence:** Community Cohesion is part of the curriculum, respect for all is held in high esteem. Staff and governors feel at ease when challenging offensive or inappropriate behaviour.

Further support from Huda Ahmed. [Huda.ahmed@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:Huda.ahmed@sheffield.gov.uk) tel 0114 2296131  
Mobile 07814872475

### Step six



#### Equity and Excellence

Develop a facilitated structure for open discussions on, for example, the significance and principles of equality and fairness.

- Promote awareness on how justice and human rights apply to daily life and the wider and global community.
- Conduct open safe debate in assemblies, group workshops either in the classroom or outside of school activities, school council, mentoring, parent forum, governors meeting, and teacher and staff meetings.
- Promote joint activities with neighbouring schools, sports, theatre production, cultural evenings, and celebration of important dates and joint parent activities.

To get further information visit :

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/your-rights/> or

<http://www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/AboutUs/Services/SupportingSchools>

**Possible evidence:** Equality/cohesion awareness is raised amongst teaching and non-teaching staff and governors, behaviour policy is adhered to and school data shows that Racist/homophobic /bullying incidences are low and / or decreasing.

There is a structure for pupil voice and learners believe in democracy.

### Step Seven



#### Engagement and Ethos

- Work with the schools' extended services, Sheffield Children's University, local community and relevant agencies to organise joint activities and shared events.
- Create opportunities for different groups( for example mixed gender , age or backgrounds) to share facilities and work together; for example mentoring projects reading schemes, young people offering ICT support, community placement schemes, young volunteers leading out of hours activities, the use of drama.
- Set up parent coffee mornings and build up to a parent forum with regular meetings and discussions. Talk about the barriers to learning, focus on the solutions and build positive relationships.
- Develop activities that skills the parent to support their child such as family learning or English language classes and general information about the education system.
- Build links with faith organisations/faith schools/ community language schools, study support and promote more joint working.
- Invite inspirational speakers and young role models to the school.
- Work with neighbouring schools, parents and governors to share good practice and assist parents to organise joint events with parents from neighbouring

schools such as international day events, sports events

To get further information on community language schools/faith /community groups contact Huda Ahmed. [Huda.ahmed@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:Huda.ahmed@sheffield.gov.uk) further information and knowledge about Sheffield's diverse communities visit the following web page: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/your-city-council/sheffield-profile/community-knowledge-profiles.html>

**Possible evidence:** All members of the community feel welcomed, safe in the school and valued and respected by the people there. School demonstrates wide and comprehensive understanding of community; Community groups and parents and young people contribute to school visioning