

Inspecting maintained schools' duty to promote community cohesion: guidance for inspectors



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Introduction

1. 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.'

2. This duty came into effect on 1 September 2007. From 1 September 2008, HMCI has a duty under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as inserted by section 154 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) to report on the contribution made by schools to community cohesion.
3. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) published *Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion*¹ to support schools in implementing the duty. This extract from the DCSF guidance defines community cohesion in the context of schools as follows:

'What is 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 community².

Community from a school's perspective

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

- the ***school community*** – the children and young people it serves, their parents, carers and families, the school's staff and governing body, and 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 or 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

¹ <http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00598-2007&>

² Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, speaking in Parliament on 2 November 2006. Based on the Government and the Local Government Association's definition first published in *Guidance on Community Cohesion*, LGA, 2002 and resulting from the Cattle Report in 2001.

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- the ***global community*** – formed by EU and international links.

In addition, schools themselves create communities – for example, the networks formed by similar or different types of schools, by schools that are part of the specialist schools network, or by schools that work collaboratively in clusters or in other models of partnership.

How does a school contribute towards community cohesion?

All schools, whatever the mix of pupils they serve, are responsible for equipping those pupils to live and thrive alongside people from many different backgrounds. For some schools with diverse pupil populations, existing activities and work aimed at supporting pupils from different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds to learn with, from and about each other, will already be contributing towards community cohesion. For other schools where the pupil population is less diverse or predominantly of one socioeconomic, ethnic, religious or non-religious background, more will need to be done to provide opportunities for interaction between children and young people from different backgrounds.

Just as each school is different, each school will make an important but different contribution to community cohesion. Each will therefore need to develop an approach reflecting:

- the nature of the school's population – whether it serves pupils drawn predominantly from one or a small number of religions or beliefs, ethnic or socio-economic groups or from a broader cross-section of the population, or whether it selects by ability from across a wider area.
- the location of the school – for instance whether it serves a rural or urban area and the level of ethnic, socio-economic, religious or non-religious diversity in that area.

An effective approach to community cohesion will consider these factors alongside the levels of community where action can take place – within the school itself, the geographical community or the wider national and global communities – to determine the school's contribution to community cohesion accordingly.

Broadly, schools' contribution to community cohesion can be grouped under the three following headings:

- ***Teaching, learning and curriculum*** – 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 – for example through the new 'Identity and Diversity: living together in the UK' strand within citizenship education.
- ***Equity and excellence*** – to ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible, striving to remove barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities and working to eliminate variations in outcomes for different groups.

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- **Engagement and extended services** – to provide reasonable means for children, young people, their friends and families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations, including: links with different schools and communities; the provision of extended services; and 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.’

Guidance for inspectors

4. The guidance given here is more detailed than would normally be the case for a single judgement – this is because the work will be relatively new to both schools and inspectors. It is expected that in the future this guidance will be slimmed down and incorporated into *Using the evaluation schedule – guidance for inspectors of schools*.
5. Inspectors will report on schools’ duty to promote community cohesion by a new judgement in the leadership and management section of the inspection report: **How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?**
6. Preparation for the inspection is likely to include analysing the SEF and RAISEonline for data about the school community and the community within which it is located.
 - The RAISEonline chart ‘Basic characteristics of your school’ will show the school deprivation indicator, the level of free school meals and the proportion of pupils who do not have English as their first language – but these figures do not show the extent of variation which is crucial in considering these issues.
 - The RAISEonline chart of basic characteristics by National Curriculum year group will show how the school community changes year by year – an inspection trail might identify some of these variations and see how the school is responding to them.
 - The RAISEonline ethnicity chart provides some more detailed information, but the SEF may be more up-to-date.
 - The RAISEonline census information chart may be helpful if the vast majority of pupils are from one ward – but link this to the school’s deprivation indicator.
 - Information about the achievements of different pupil groups in the SEF and RAISEonline may raise questions about equity of provision.
7. The views of pupils and their knowledge and understanding about their community and the way the school promotes cohesion within it, form an essential part of the evidence base for the judgement on how well the school contributes to community cohesion. Inspectors will need to explore within discussions with pupils how effective they feel the school’s work has been in this respect by assessing their knowledge and views of the

diversity of their local and national communities. It is essential to ascertain pupils' views on how well they get on with different groups within the school and local communities, and what the school has done to promote good relationships and mutual understanding.

8. When evaluating each of the following, inspectors should assess how effectively the school is contributing to community cohesion through the quality of its provision, its promotion of equity and excellence, and the engagement of its pupils:
- **How effective is the school in identifying what needs to be done to promote community cohesion, in particular taking into account the needs of the communities it serves?** *Include the extent to which the school is aware of the implications of community cohesion for the school and the curriculum as well as the needs and cohesiveness of learners and their families from different ethnic, religious, non-religious and socio-economic groups. Evaluate how the school has identified these needs. For example, has the school worked effectively in partnership with other agencies to identify the language needs of its community?*
 - **What is the school doing to promote the engagement of all pupils in its own community, particularly of hard to reach groups such as those for whom English is an additional language or are from more socio-economically deprived groups, or, in rural schools, those who live in isolated areas?** *Following on from the first bullet, do the school's actions for these groups link with the needs identified by the school? Inspectors might take a look at specific groups within the context of the particular community, considering how the school is providing for these groups in its teaching and curriculum, and evaluating its effectiveness; for example, through increased contact with their parents/carers. Are these groups represented on the governing body? If not, can the school convincingly explain why not? How does the school seek and use their views? What is the school doing to promote their engagement in the community through extended services which build positive interaction, excellence for all and equity of learner outcomes?*
 - **How effective is the school in contributing to community cohesion within the community in which it is located?** *Following on from the first bullet, inspectors should consider how representative of the local community the school is (including ethnicity, religious, non-religious and socio-economic aspects), and what it has done to promote cohesion with those groups who may not be prominently represented within its own school community, including its links with other schools with a contrasting pupil*

population. How effective are learners' opportunities to meet and work with representatives of other communities?

- **How effective is the school in contributing to the cohesiveness of the wider community through developing learners' understanding of the UK community, for example by promoting common identity and values, the appreciation and valuing of diversity, the awareness of human rights, and the skills for participating in society?** *This aspect will also involve bringing together evidence across the inspection – for example about the curriculum, teaching, ethos and the school's citizenship, PSHE, RE and SMSC provision.*

- **How effective is the school in contributing to the cohesiveness of the wider community through developing learners' understanding of other communities both in Europe and globally?** *Inspectors should consider the school's use of the curriculum, teaching, learning and extra-curricular activities in raising pupils' understanding of others' lives and in appreciating diversity. For example, schools may have developed innovative links with schools abroad, but should be able to demonstrate how this has a beneficial impact for all pupils.*

- **How does the school know whether its strategy is successful?** *Evaluate how well it understands its own performance in, for example, promoting achievement for all groups, as well as their personal development and well-being – therefore part of this aspect will involve bringing together evidence from other aspects of the inspection.*

How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?

Description	Characteristics
Outstanding (1)	The school's contribution to community cohesion is at least good in all major respects; it cannot be graded outstanding if the promotion of equalities and elimination of discrimination are judged less than good. The school's contribution is exemplary in significant elements, as shown by clear strengths in the school community itself and in its role with partners in the wider community. Overall, the school can demonstrate through accurate self-evaluation that it has made an important and beneficial contribution to cohesion through: its outstanding provision which leads to high levels of understanding of others and valuing of diversity among pupils; its ethos and promotion of equality; the participation and positive interaction between groups of pupils, parents/carers and staff.

<p>Good (2)</p>	<p>The school's contribution to community cohesion is good in most respects. The school has a clear understanding of what is required to promote community cohesion, based on a sound analysis of its own community and learners' needs. There is an effective strategy for engaging with the local community. Learners have regular opportunities to participate in the community and are active in working with others from different ethnic, religious, non-religious and socio-economic backgrounds. The school's teaching and curriculum are used effectively to increase pupils' understanding of the UK and global communities, help pupils learn about and understand others, value diversity and promote shared values. Positive interactions between all learners and staff are successfully encouraged. The school is effective in ensuring equal opportunities for all to succeed by removing barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities, and eliminating variations in outcomes for different groups. The school evaluates its contribution to community cohesion effectively to inform its planning.</p>
<p>Satisfactory (3)</p>	<p>The school's contribution to community cohesion is not inadequate in any major respect, and may be good in some respects. However it may be inconsistent, with stronger links being forged with some community groups compared with others; it cannot be graded satisfactory if the promotion of equalities and elimination of discrimination are inadequate.</p>
<p>Inadequate (4)</p>	<p>The school's contribution to community cohesion is ineffective. <i>School leaders lack a clear understanding of the duty, a soundly based knowledge of the needs of the school's local community through incisive analysis, or a strategy for contributing effectively to community cohesion.</i> Too little is done by the school through teaching, learning and the curriculum to promote respect and understanding, or encourage meaningful interaction between different groups of pupils and staff; for example, teachers do little to encourage pupils to work or play in mixed groups in lessons or the playground. Partnership working is weak and inconsistent so that many learners are not engaged with the community. <i>As a result,</i> the school's work does not take into account the full range of ethnic, religious, non-religious and socio-economic diversity in local and national communities; learners lack understanding of others or the common values they might share. <i>Pupils show a lack of respect for each other, or do not mix well at school either socially or in their work. Too many pupils are not accessing and participating in opportunities as well as others, for reasons that the school has not tackled.</i></p>