



Wise Owl Trust

Community Cohesion Policy

Version 1

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Community Cohesion Policy

There is a duty for schools to promote community cohesion under the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Introduction

The curriculum of The Wise Owl Trust should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of our pupils and of society and prepare our pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life. This is taught through our bespoke RESPECT curriculum that has been written by our Trust in response to contextual needs.

We already consider this part of our role, and already work in ways which promote community cohesion. As migration and economic change alter the shape of our increasingly diverse local communities, it is more important than ever that all schools and academies play a full part in promoting community cohesion. Each academy within the Wise Owl Trust have a thriving, cohesive community, but also has a vital part to play in building a more cohesive society.

Every school or academy - whatever its intake and wherever it is located - is responsible for educating children and young people who will live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of culture, faith, ethnicity and social backgrounds. The staff and pupil populations of some schools and academies reflect this diversity, allowing pupils to mix with those from different backgrounds. Academies within the Wise Owl Trust link with each other and organisations in order to further the learning opportunities of our pupils, giving them the opportunity to learn alongside and from children from different backgrounds

We wish to show that through our ethos and curriculum we can promote a common sense of identity and support diversity, showing pupils how different communities can be united by common experiences and values.

We believe that it is the duty of all schools and academies to address issues of 'how we live together' and 'dealing with difference' however controversial and difficult they might sometimes seem.

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 community.

Community from a school's perspective

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

- The school community – the pupils it serves, their families and the school's/academies staff;
- The community within which the school/academy is located – the school/academy in its geographical community and the people who live or work in that area;

- The community of Britain - all schools and academies are by definition part of this community;



- The global community– formed by EU and international links.

In addition, The Wise Owl Trust has created further communities with their cluster of individual academies and through links with high schools.

What can we do to promote cohesion?

How does our academy contribute towards community cohesion?

All schools and academies, whatever the mix of pupils they serve, are responsible for equipping those pupils to live and thrive alongside people from many different backgrounds. However schools or academies that are driven by divisions are less likely to perform well.

For some schools or academies 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 and academies where the pupil population is less diverse or predominantly of one faith, socioeconomic or ethnic group more will need to be done to provide opportunities for interaction between pupils from different backgrounds.

Just as each school/academy is different, their contribution to community cohesion will be different and will need to develop by reflecting:

- the nature of their population – whether it serves pupils drawn predominantly from one or a small number of faiths, 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 or academy – for instance whether it serves a rural or urban area and the level of ethnic, faith and socio-economic diversity in that area.

In the light of the new duty we need to consider how different aspects of our work already support integration and community harmony; to take stock of what has worked well so far. We also need to consider where there may be scope to improve their existing work through a more explicit focus on the impact of their activities on community cohesion.

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

- Teaching, learning and curriculum – to teach pupils to understand others, to promote British values and to value diversity, to promote awareness of human rights and of the responsibility to uphold and defend them, and to develop the skills of participation and responsible action.
- Equality and excellence – to ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible, removing barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities and eliminating variations in outcomes for different groups
- Engagement and ethos – to provide a means for children, young people and their families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations, including links with different schools and communities locally, across the country and internationally.

What do we need to consider in promoting community cohesion?



We need to consider what activities already take place within the Wise Owl Trust and our academies and what might be arranged in co-operation with other schools.

Teaching, learning and curriculum

- An effective school or academy will have a high standard of teaching and curriculum provision that supports high standards of attainment, promotes common values and builds pupils' understanding of the diversity that surrounds them, recognising similarities and appreciating different cultures, faiths, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. Opportunities for discussing issues of identity and diversity will be integrated across the curriculum.
- We need to ensure that:
 - Lessons across the curriculum promote British values and help pupils to value differences and to challenge prejudice and stereotyping. For example, opportunities through the RESPECT curriculum for pupils to discuss issues of identity and diversity and what it means 'to live together in the UK'.
 - A programme of curriculum based activities whereby pupils' understanding of community and diversity is enriched through visits and meetings with members of different communities.
 - Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) to enable them to achieve at the highest possible level in English.
 - An effective voice and involvement of pupils in the governance and organisation of our academies in a way that teaches them to participate in and make a difference in school, in their local community and beyond

Equality and excellence

- We should continue to focus on securing high standards of attainment for all pupils from all ethnic backgrounds and of different socio-economic statuses, ensuring that pupils are treated with respect and supported to achieve their full potential.
- Our tracking systems will enable us to evaluate progress of different groups and to tackle underperformance by any particular group.
- We need to redouble our efforts to monitor incidents of prejudice, bullying and harassment. Monitoring of whether pupils from particular groups are more likely to be excluded or disciplined than others should be accompanied by appropriate behavior policy in place to deal with this.
- Our admissions criteria emphasises the importance of admission arrangements that promote community cohesion and social equality.

Engagement and ethos

- We shall seek to broaden the ways that we work in partnership with other schools and academies. We shall look either locally or further afield and the means of developing the relationship may be through the internet.
- Sharing facilities also provides a means for pupils to interact, as do opportunities for meaningful intercultural activities such as sport and drama.
- Good partnership activities with the local and wider community might include:
 - Working together with community representatives, for example through mentoring schemes or bringing community representatives into our academies to work with the pupils, ensuring that the pupil voice is heard and able to effect change



- Maintaining strong links and multi-agency working between ourselves and other local agencies, such as the youth support service, the police and children services and health professionals.
- Engagement with parents through coffee mornings, parent evenings, parent and child courses and our Family Workers and Attendance Officers.
- Provision of extended services, and in particular bringing parents together from different backgrounds through parenting and family support and community use of facilities for activities that take place out of school hours.

Website of interest

- The Specialist Schools network, led by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, with advice and information available at: www.localschoolsnetwork.org.uk/

