



C of E Primary School

Community Cohesion

A Policy Statement January 2011

Background

The Education Act 2002 placed a duty on governing bodies of a maintained school such that

‘.....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.’

The duty came into effect on 1st September 2007 and since 1st September 2008 HMCI reports on the contribution that schools make to community cohesion.

What is community cohesion?

Two definitions are helpful when looking at the policy implication for Surrey Hill C of E primary school.

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. *Guidance on community cohesion, DCSF 2006*

A cohesive society is one in which the statistical chance of any member of a society gaining access to a service, acquiring a job or achieving educational success is not related to his or her race, faith or cultural background – only to his or her talent, ambition or desire’. *Institute of community cohesion.*

Community from a school’s perspective

For schools the term community has a number of dimensions which governors have a duty to understand and ensure that the school is responding accordingly to these dimensions.

- 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; and
- The global community – formed by EU and international links.
- The communities the schools themselves create – 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.

In order to successfully fulfil the duty to promote community cohesion at Surrey Hill's Church of England Primary School we consider the three strands of faith, ethnicity and culture, and socio-economic factors and seek to demonstrate:

- that we understand the context of our own community;
- that we plan and take appropriate actions;
- and that these actions have had an evident impact.

We consider the above in the context of the three following headings:

- Teaching, learning and curriculum
- Equity and excellence
- Engagement and extended services

The governing body undertakes an audit of the above every two years. As the school is newly formed the first audit will be undertaken in autumn 2011.

The context of our community

Surrey Hills Church of England Primary school is a new school formed following the amalgamation of two Surrey First Schools; Abinger Common First School and Westcott Church of England First School. The school has two sites, one based in Abinger Common which serves children aged 4-8 years and the second in Westcott which serves children from 4-11 years. Children at Abinger Common site transfer to Westcott at the end of Year 3.

Both sites of the school are based within rural communities and children from several village communities attend both sites; there are few children who attend the schools from town communities such as Dorking.

From the Raise Online (2009) we know that:

- Both sites of our school have lower than the national average in relation to the numbers of children who qualify for free school meals
- Both sites of our school have lower than the national average number of children whose English is not a first language
- Both sites of our school have more children classified as white British, 85.7% at Abinger and 93.2% at Westcott as compared to the national average of 74.1%.
- Both sites of our school have less children who have special educational needs, although Westcott has the equivalent number who have a statement as the national average.
- Both sites of our school are judged to have a deprivation level lower than the national average. (0.05 v 0.24).
- Our school is a faith school where admissions criteria favour children who have affinity to the Churches within the rural communities outlined in the Admissions Policy.

Within the school community

Teaching, learning and curriculum

Teaching, learning and curriculum at Surrey Hills School has clear policies in place in relation to inclusion and racial discrimination. Many aspects of the broader curriculum are aimed at 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.

We believe that we have a strong sense of community on the two sites of the school with children across the age groups working together and with older children taking responsibility for the welfare of younger children. As a new school there are clear plans in place to ensure that the sense of community extends across both sites so that one cohesion school exists; this is already occurring through the establishment of a school choir but will continue over time as a result of shared activities such as sports mornings, shared assemblies.

Within the curriculum children are exposed to diversity through activities such as school plays which focus on different cultures and countries, through external musicians and artists of different ethnicities and cultures visiting the school and through individual children and families sharing diversity in their lives, be of in relation to faith or culture. As a Church of England School, religious worship is taught within this context but children are encouraged to learn about and to understand different faiths.

Examples of events that have been planned which we believe have impacted upon community cohesion are: visits to the Woking Mosque and Synagogue in Weybridge, Fair Trade Week, African Culture days and Africa Revival Assemblies.

Equity and excellence

Our aim is 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. The five areas of Every Child Matters underpin the work of the school, and are shown in graphic form around the school so that every member of the school community is aware of them. Stretching targets are set for all children, and the achievements of all are valued; this included both academic achievements and wider ranging ones outside school, which are displayed for all to see. This can be evidenced through the monitoring undertaken by governors and reported through the curriculum committee.

Engagement and extended services

Surrey Hills School provides a Breakfast Club on the Abinger Common site and an After School club on the Westcott Site. A holiday play scheme runs on the Westcott site during the main school holidays.

The local communities

Surrey Hills School aims to provide the means for children, young people, their friends and families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations including building links with the local communities, with different schools and communities and providing 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. The school views itself as being at the heart of the local communities in which it is placed and the activities reflect this view. Examples of this within the school are:

- School visitors which include those from local communities e.g. School Nurse, Firemen, Lucy and her Guide Dog
- School events to which the communities are invited e.g. Rose Queen
- Village events which the school contributes to e.g. Medieval Fayre, Easter flower delivery to old and vulnerable, annual tea party for the elderly, Westcott in Bloom
- School assemblies held within the Parish church e.g. Harvest, Easter and Christingle services
- Use of village sports facilities
- Regular news page from the Head Teacher in Parish magazines
- Taking part in the Leith Hill Music Festival
- Involvement of the village in the development of the Westcott site, both through consultation such as that in relation to the use of the sports field, to fundraising events.
- Combined Parish Newsletters from the five churches

The UK and global community

The school curriculum covers aspects of life both within the UK and overseas. Through the Dorking Schools' Partnership and Dorking Confederation there are links with other schools in the area, and shared activities such as Arts Week and Governors are involved in these activities. The Dorking School Partnership Governor Forum has been chaired by Governors from Abinger Common and Westcott and our school has therefore taken a role in leading this forum. As the school grows, these links will be developed further through shared sports events. There are plans to use the School Linking project to form a link with a school in a city setting whose profile is different from our school in order to offer a broaden experience for the children in the school. Visitors with disabilities come into the school to talk to the children and share their experiences.

There are links with the global community through our establishment of a relationship with a school in Uganda – the children at Abinger Common prior to amalgamation raised over £500 in May 2008 to assist a Ugandan school, and through the Deputy Head Teacher Surrey Hills is forging links with a school in India. In addition there are plans to link the newly amalgamated Surrey Hills School with schools of the same name around the globe, including schools in Africa, the USA and Australia.

As Governors of a new and developing school within a rural setting the governors and staff of Surrey Hills Church of England Primary school are fully committed to ensuring the children within our school are exposed to learn about, understand and accept difference and diversity within society and leave the school equipped to relate to all people and to have a vision for themselves and belief in themselves which encompasses a desire to achieve whatever their abilities or talents.

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- A combined Parish update on family services.

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