

Community Cohesion Duty

1. School Ethos, Vision, Values and Duties

Brimsham Green School welcomes the duty to promote community cohesion. In doing so we complement and strengthen our existing work in other areas such as the Every Child Matter agenda, SEAL developments, PSHE and Citizenship. The definition below describes a school and broader community which equates closely to our own vision for Brimsham Green. Specifically, some of the stated aims of our Humanities College specialism include: enhancing community involvement; acquiring important life skills; and helping youngsters to develop a sense of place, and to understand and appreciate different cultures and beliefs.

1.1 Definitions: What do we understand by “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.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion offers helpful expansion of this definition by suggesting that a **cohesive community** as one where: “There is a clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country.” This recognises the contribution made by individuals within any community and the fact that people will naturally hold different ambitions, aspirations, beliefs and life experiences. But importantly, it places a strong emphasis on how they will also share important characteristics and experiences with those from their own and different communities. Individuals who feel a **Sense of belonging** will have a strong sense of their rights and responsibilities within their community (people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in return) as well as a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests.

1.2 What does community mean from the school’s point of view?

For Brimsham Green School, “community” has a number of important 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 Yate, Chipping Sodbury and their associated villages, and to South Gloucestershire as a whole.
- The UK community
- The global community, formed by EU and international links.

2. The school's role in promoting community cohesion

The school firmly believes that creating a cohesive community as defined in 1.1 above is an ideal worth working towards, but is realistic enough to recognise that there will also be barriers to overcome. The corrosive effects of the intolerance, mistrust and harassment which can exist between different groups must be overcome, and allowances made for the socio-economic characteristics of the school's community. Whilst its students are drawn from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, Brimsham Green is located in a predominantly mono-cultural, white British community in a semi-rural setting on the edge of a large city, where members of other ethnic and religious groups are in a distinct minority. This suggests particular priorities and approaches to community cohesion.

Our starting point is to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion for different groups of pupils within a school. Alongside this we aim to encourage a strong respect for diversity, promote shared values and encourage our pupils to actively engage with others in order to understand what they all hold in common.

2.1 How can Brimsham Green School contribute towards community cohesion?

Broadly, there are three main ways through which the school can contribute to improved community cohesion. These are:

- **Teaching, learning and curriculum** - Providing an excellent and stimulating curriculum which provides young people with the knowledge, skills and values which will help them 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.
- **Equity and excellence** - Ensuring 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.
- **Engagement, extended services and community links** - Providing reasonable means for young people, their friends and families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations: including links with different schools and communities and the provision of extended service with 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.

Whilst we believe that the school is a key and influential contributor to the local community, it should also be acknowledged that all schools face tensions and problems stemming from societal factors outside of their control and which they may not be able to solve. In addition, external factors shape the lives of pupils, including their parents or carers, families and the wider community, and responsibility for community cohesion lies with them too. Any approach to community cohesion needs to take into account these factors and requires the involvement of local partners and other organisations.

2.2 What has been achieved so far?

An audit of current school provision indicates that a great deal has already been achieved. Grouped under the above three headings, these can be summarised as:

Teaching, Learning & Curriculum

- The school places a clear emphasis on the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Since the arrival of a new Head Teacher in September 2008 this has been even more clearly focused, with AFL, group work, discussion work, coursework, etc all re-examined.
- The curriculum has evolved to include a wider range of courses tailored to meet the expressed or perceived needs of students.
- We have a well developed and constantly evolving PSHE curriculum in which timetabled, tutor-led lessons are complimented by regular off-timetable days. These are led by groups of interested staff and community members, and address a wide range of topics relevant to community cohesion such as global awareness, UK awareness, crime reduction, friendship and anti-bullying work, learning to learn and more.
- Our citizenship programme is well established but under constant review. The revised secondary curriculum for citizenship education (introduced from September 2008) includes the new strand “Identity and Diversity: Living together in the UK” which will allow students more opportunities to learn about national, regional, ethnic and religious cultures, the connections between them and between the UK and the wider world and explore the concept of community cohesion and the different forces that bring about change in communities over time.
- Humanities in KS3 and citizenship in KS4 have introduced new elements of work which consider responses to new members of the community, for example those from Eastern Europe and new EU countries
- We introduced the secondary SEAL agenda into Year 7 during 2007, and are currently developing it within Year 8. We believe that SEAL approaches offer huge benefits and link closely to other key parts of the school’s agenda, such as ECM, Healthy Schools, and improved academic outcomes. The self awareness, interpersonal and group work skills promoted by SEAL are critical in enabling community cohesion.
- A significant element of our Humanities College work has been focussed on the local and wider community.
- Students have regularly involved with elections for the UK Youth Parliament, and have become active members of the Yate Youth Council.
- We offer a lively Religious Studies element within lower school humanities, together with full and short courses at GCSE. We have recently targeted developing links with the Bristol Muslim community and challenging stereotypes.
- We offer a wide and rich variety of trips, field work visits and visits from outside speakers which enable students to visit places of worship, and meetings with members of different communities and develop a sense of place within their own local community and the region.
- Many of the above offer opportunities to promote shared values and help pupils to value differences and to challenge prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping.

- We have given a great deal of thought to the delivery of social, moral, spiritual and cultural education and have worked closely with the local SACRE in developing our approach. A full audit has taken place on two occasions and opportunities for the delivery of SMSCA identified across the curriculum.
- Many of our assemblies and off-timetable enrichment days involve members of the local and wider community

Equity and Excellence

The school is committed to securing high standards of attainment for all pupils from all ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic groups, genders, abilities and interests, and to ensuring that pupils are treated with respect and supported to achieve their full potential.

We have in place robust policies and procedures on equalities, disability equality, accessibility, anti-bullying, safeguarding, looked after children, attendance, behaviour and admissions, which are reviewed on a regular basis.

The effective use of data is essential in monitoring the academic progress of individuals against their targets, and in tracking the relative performance of different groups. It is important to understand whether there is a pattern of underperformance or misbehaviour among particular groups in order to plan appropriate intervention.

For this reason the school places a priority on the further improvement of data at all levels, so that students, staff and parents where they are, what they should aim to achieve and how to do so.

Engagement, Extended services and Community Links:

The school already offers a wide range of extended services and community links, which include:

Engagement

- An active school council which enables student voice to be heard and for students to have an influence on the governance and organisation of the school. Recent major inputs have included the design of a “good lesson” framework, the recasting of student Rights and Responsibilities, a change of the school uniform and a review of the rewards and consequences “ladder” system.
- A School Council Blog which enables all students to comment on school issues on line
- Regular questionnaires, interviews and “student voice” exercises on a range of topics.
- Students involved in the Yate Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament.
- Questionnaires to parents.
- The formation of a parents consultative group, who meet to discuss issues of interest or to advise/comment on proposed changes or developments within the school.
- An expanded web site.
- High attendance at parents evenings and parental information workshops.

- We enjoy close and productive links with a range of support agencies – Social Services, Education Welfare, CAMHS, Connexions, Young Carers, Behaviour Support Team, School Health Nurses, Educational Psychology, the local “Bullywatch” group etc - and by working co-operatively are able to information, advice, parenting support and other links to support both students and their parents.
- We have taken care, though the appointment of a Behaviour & Inclusion Support co-ordinator, Student Support Co-ordinators, and a School Counsellor, to extend the range of staff within the school who are available to support students and parents, and to offer the widest possible selection of “routes to assistance” which they may choose.
- We enjoy excellent links with employers and colleges. Employers work closely with us to provide work experience placements, mock interviews and a stimulating enterprise day. Our flexible curriculum and Work2Learn provision, ensure that we work closely with the LA, colleges and other providers to offer a wide and appropriate variety of routes for students.

Extended Services

- A Youth Wing which operates on site four nights per week. Although most of the attendees are Brimsham Green students, the club is open to all young people in the area and the membership is steadily becoming more widespread. The Wednesday night session is for young people with learning difficulties.
- The School’s Study Centre remains open and hosts a study club on weekday evenings.
- The school’s extensive indoor and outdoor sporting facilities are shared with the Yate Outdoor Sports Centre.(YOSC) All facilities are used by the community during the weekend and evenings, and there is an active management committee composed of representatives from the school, YOSC, Town Council, user groups and community.
- On Saturdays we host the Yate Music Centre for young musicians from across the community.
- The University of the Third Age uses our facilities on several evenings each week, offering a wide range of classes together with a film club and a book group.

Community Links

- Through their General Studies programme, sixth formers are engaged in a range of community-based activities. These include running a regular “Wednesday Club” for retired people, (now in its 25th year), assisting in local primary and special schools and providing literacy support for lower school students.
- Students research, write, edit and lay out a community newspaper “Our Voice” which is printed and distributed as part of the local evening newspaper “The Gazette”.
- We enjoy close and active links with the Yate Heritage Centre, to tremendous mutual benefit. Students have become involved with oral history research, local history projects, which have added to their appreciation of the history and diversity of their community. The Centre has offered the school valuable curriculum support and has assisted with visiting groups of foreign students and adults.

- The art department has forged close links with the local community. It has recently co-operated with the local Heritage Centre in mounting an exhibition of A level art work, as well as providing stunning large scale Christmas decorations which were displayed in Yate shopping centre. There are also close links with primary schools, and joint extension projects have been offered (e.g. animation workshops with visiting artist for Iron Acton School and BGS students)
- Extra curricular music is a strong feature of the school. Our Concert Band and other musicians are well-known in the community and in great demand to perform at community events, local primary schools, etc. The band undertakes a two week tour to Europe every other year. We believe that music is a great force for community cohesion, bringing together diverse range of young people, staff and parents in a common cause.
- We have close contacts with Yate Town Council, and both the Yate - Bad Salzdetfurth and Yate - Geneiri Twinning committees. This has led to a high level of co-operation and mixing both in relation with exchange visits to both Germany and Gambia.
- We have recently developed a close link with the Hosanna Primary School in Kampala. Staff exchanges have taken place in both directions, the project has now been formalised, students have been engaged in much related educational work and fund raising, and there are plans afoot to take a group of students out to Uganda as soon as possible. Since a local church is also involved in the Hosanna link, students are also being introduced to another form of co-operation within the local community.
- In addition to the above, we are also involved in a Comenius Project linking us with schools in Germany and Poland, and students and staff have been moving between the three schools regularly over the past few years.
- We have regular student exchanges with our twin school in Bad Salzdetfurth, Germany, and frequent cultural trips to France. Sixth formers have also undertaken tours of the WW1 battlefields and have visited former concentration camps in connection with work on the Holocaust.
- Brimsham Green was awarded International School Status during 2008. We believe that our international links are a vital component in promoting community cohesion.
- Both the School Health Nurse and Community Police Officer offer regular drop in sessions for students and are available to support parents on request.
- We work closely with our local partner primary schools. Regular meetings of the “Beegees” group are held to discuss matters of mutual interest and plan co-operative work. This is, of course, enhanced by our Humanities college status.
- We operate a “Link” Sixth Form in co-operation with two neighbouring secondary schools. As well as the co-operation between the school staff, we believe that students benefit from travelling and mixing with their peers from other schools, as it begins to introduce them to education beyond their own school setting.
- The school has a long tradition of charity fundraising for both local and national charities which are largely identified and chosen by the students.
- A Fair Trade group has operated within the school for several years, with students running a fair trade tea shop at parents evenings and a fair trade tuck shop.

3. The Future

Although Section 2 above indicates that the school is already doing a great deal to promote community cohesion, there is always more that can be done.

Priorities for the year ahead, which have been identified elsewhere in the school's Development/Improvement planning are:

- Further improving student voice and engagement through more systematic and regular student voice surveys and increasing the profile of the school council.
- Further improving links with parents, especially more hard to reach groups.
- Further development of the SEAL agenda
- Introduction of an improved electronic behaviour tracking and monitoring system to allow the faster and more accurate analysis of trends and patterns.

4. Other Relevant Policies and Procedures.

This document should be read in conjunction with other key policies and procedures:

- Equalities policy
- Behaviour policy and procedures.
- Anti-bullying policy
- Child Protection policy
- Gifted and talented policy
- SEAL audits and documentation.
- South Gloucestershire's Children & Young People's Plan

Reviewed and updated January 2009

Next review: Spring 2010

Signed: _____