

William Gilpin CE VA Primary School Community Cohesion Policy

Introduction

At William Gilpin CE VA School, we place a strong emphasis on promoting the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of our pupils and of society and preparing our pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

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 increasingly diverse local communities, we feel it is more important than ever that all schools play a full part in promoting community cohesion. Our school aims to be a thriving, cohesive community, but it also has a vital part to play in building a more cohesive society.

Every school - whatever its intake and wherever it is located - is responsible for educating children and young people who will live and work in a country and world which is diverse in terms of culture, faith, ethnicity and social backgrounds. The staff and pupil populations of some schools reflect this diversity, allowing pupils to mix with those from different backgrounds.

At William Gilpin, our school population is predominantly from one or a small number of faiths, ethnic or socio-economic groups and therefore does not reflect this diversity and consequently throughout the school, through the learning environment, the curriculum, learning opportunities, we place a strong emphasis on providing pupils with the opportunity to learn about and from those from different backgrounds. Our use of the International Primary Curriculum and the links we are beginning to make with schools internationally support our drive to develop children's 'international mindedness'. Alongside this, we are proactive in encouraging children to reflect on the independence and interdependence of different communities at local, national and global level.

Through our ethos and curriculum, we aim to promote a common sense of identity but we also 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 to address issues of 'how we live together' and 'dealing with difference' however controversial and difficult this 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 our school, the term 'community' has a number of dimensions including:

- The school community – the pupils we serve, their families and the school's staff.
- The community within which the school is located – the school in its geographical community of Boldre and the people who live or work in this area.
- The community of Britain - all schools are by definition part of this community.
- The global community – formed by EU and international links.

In addition, as a school we create our own communities – for example, the diocesan networks formed by church schools in the area, or the local Priestlands Pyramid of Schools.

What do we do to promote community cohesion?

At William Gilpin, we believe that we are responsible for equipping our pupils, whatever mix they are to live and thrive alongside people from many different backgrounds. We know that schools with divisions within the community are less likely to perform well. We recognise that as our pupil population is less diverse and predominantly of one faith, serving a rural area and therefore, we need to do more to provide opportunities for interaction between pupils from different backgrounds.

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

Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

At William Gilpin, we aim to teach pupils to understand others, to promote common 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.

We already

- Place emphasis on high standards of teaching and curriculum provision that support high standards of attainment, promote common values and build pupils' understanding of the diversity that surround them, recognising similarities and appreciating different cultures, faiths, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. Opportunities for discussing issues of identity and diversity are fully integrated across the curriculum.
- Make use of a programme of curriculum based activities whereby pupils' understanding of community and diversity is enriched through learning themes within the International Primary Curriculum.
- Plan and arrange visits from members of different communities and cultures.
- Have a link with a school in Sri Lanka.
- An effective voice and involvement of pupils in the organisation of the school in a way that teaches them to participate in and make a difference in school, in their local community and beyond.

We need to ensure that:

- Lessons across the curriculum continue to help pupils to value differences and to challenge prejudice and stereotyping – for example, opportunities to challenge stereotype attitudes towards boys and girls.
- We continue to further develop links with schools internationally.

Equity and excellence

At William Gilpin, we aim 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.

We already

- Use the school tracking systems to enable us to evaluate progress of different groups and to tackle underperformance by any particular group.
- 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.
- Monitor incidents of prejudice, bullying and harassment.
- Have school admissions criteria emphasising the importance of admission arrangements that promote community cohesion and social equity.

We will continue to

- Review our equal opportunities policy and provision.

Engagement and Ethos

At William Gilpin, we aim 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.

We already

- Maintain strong links and multi-agency working between the school and other local agencies, the police and social care and health professionals.
- Engage with parents through curriculum workshops, questionnaires and family liaison work.
- Work in partnership with other schools.
- Support community cohesion by promoting the well-being of children contributing towards the Every Child Matters outcomes of 'making a positive contribution', 'enjoy and achieve' and 'achieving economic well-being'.

We will continue to

- Enhance and make use of existing local and wider community partnerships, particularly in relation to the provision of extended services.

This policy will be reviewed in the Spring Term 2015 or in the light of new guidance.

Signed:

Date: