

Policy: **Community Cohesion**



Legal Background

Under the Education Act 2002, Section 78, schools had a duty to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different groups. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 inserted a new section 21(5) to this act, introducing a duty on the governing bodies of maintained schools to promote community cohesion. The Equality Act 2010 defines nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender, gender identity, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership status.

Although the Education Act 2011 removed the need for community cohesion to be inspected and reported on by Ofsted it is important to note that community cohesion will remain within the scope of inspection. In addition, the duty on schools to promote community cohesion remains in place. The 2011 Bill sets out two particular considerations and these are the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students and how well we meet the needs of the range of students at the College. Both will underpin Ofsted's reporting on the four core judgment areas of Students' Achievement; Quality of Teaching; Leadership and Management; and Students' Behaviour and Safety and both are highly relevant to community cohesion and equality of opportunity for students.

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.

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion defines the above highlighted phrases as follows:

- **Common vision** – *“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.”*
- **Sense of belonging** – *“There is a strong sense of an individual's rights and responsibilities when living in a particular place – people know what everyone expects of them, and what they can expect in turn”, also “There is a strong sense of trust in institutions locally to act fairly in arbitrating between different interests and for their role and justifications to be subject to public scrutiny”.*
- **Life opportunities** – *“Creating opportunities for students' achievement and enabling every child and young person to achieve their potential”.*

Barriers to building community cohesion

The barriers to building cohesion often stem from mistrust of different groups, particularly those new to the local community, a perception that local authorities are giving others special treatment, and a lack of spaces for meaningful interaction.

Cohesion is therefore about how to avoid the corrosive effects of intolerance and harassment: how to build a mutual civility among different groups, and to ensure respect for diversity alongside a commitment to common and shared bonds. The coalition published a “Prevent Strategy” in 2011 designed to promote tolerance and integration and challenge extremism and radicalisation and this has been used as reference where appropriate in revising this policy.

“Community” from our College’s perspective

The “community” can be defined as our College itself, the community which the College serves (our designated area), the Sidmouth Learning Community of local schools, the UK community or the global community of our whole world. This policy outlines the areas of the College’s work which seeks to promote an attitude of understanding and respect across all of these definitions of community.

Our local community, both within the College and the geographic locality, is largely white, British and Christian or secular. However, our role as a promoter of understanding and tolerance is just as important as a school located in a more ethnically or religiously diverse community.

Promoting Community Cohesion through teaching, learning and the Curriculum

In meeting our duty to promote Community Cohesion, we will strive to ensure that all learners will enjoy opportunities to:

- Learn about the Rights of the Child and the responsibilities that these rights imply
- Develop pride in their own identity and to learn about and develop respect for the identities of other learners, of groups in the local community, of groups in the wider UK and in the wider world based on ethnicity, socio-economic circumstances, gender, lifestyle, disability, sexual identity, age, faith and world view
- Develop a strong understanding and appreciation of what all human beings hold in common as well as respect for differences
- Develop a positive vision of a diverse, just and equitable society
- Learn about their own community, UK society including communities which contrast with their own and global society, including the challenges faced by the whole global community
- Learn about the major world faith traditions as well as non-religious moral world views, including the commonalities across faiths and world views as well as the diversity within individual faith traditions
- Develop skills of critical thinking including the ability to recognise and challenge myths and stereotypes about people and places and to appreciate how people may see things from different viewpoints
- Enjoy at first hand cultural experiences that reflect and celebrate the diversity within UK society
- To learn about how inward and outward migration have shaped UK society and how movement of people has been an enduring feature of human history
- Develop the ability to empathise with the feelings and experiences of others, including those from different backgrounds from themselves

We will continue to strive to establish a learning environment in which all learners:

- Enjoy the right to full, active participation knowing that their views and ideas are taken very seriously and where their voice is heard
- Feel safe, valued and respected and develop a strong, positive sense of belonging
- Have frequent opportunities to collaborate with others, sharing experiences, ideas and perspectives
- Develop skills of mediation and conflict-resolution
- Develop the skills of democratic decision-making

We seek to provide a curriculum which helps students 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 avoid racial, religious or gender stereotypes. We believe that every child should be able to achieve their full potential, regardless of their ethnicity, religion or any physical impairment.

The following documents illustrate further our approach:

- SEN/D and Equal Opportunities Policies
- Disability Equality Policy and Scheme
- Subject specific policies.

Promoting Community Cohesion through Equity and Excellence

We will continue to strive to ensure that all learners develop their abilities and talents to the full and enjoy equality of opportunity to participate fully in the life of the College. To this end, we will:

- Regularly monitor and evaluate the academic, personal and social development of each child and of all the diverse groups that are represented in the school, including those for whom English is an Additional Language, taking effective steps where necessary to address any differences in outcomes across groups
- Use assemblies, classroom time and meetings of staff and governors to maintain a high profile for our commitment to equality of opportunity and social inclusion
- Ensure that all sections of the school community, including parents, are aware of our commitment to equity for all, of our procedures for promoting these principles and for dealing with infringements; this involves ensuring that all sections of the school community have confidence in our arrangements for tackling all forms of bigotry, racial and other prejudice, discrimination, bullying and harassment
- Regularly monitor patterns of discipline, including any exclusions by student group and take any action necessary to ensure equity and inclusion
- Promote the value of linguistic diversity and celebrate the diverse language skills of the College community, including heritage languages
- Take steps to enable students to encounter a range of positive role models including those that do not conform to stereotypes of age, gender, ethnicity, disability and social class

Promoting Community Cohesion through our College Ethos and Values

As a comprehensive secondary school we do not discriminate between learners in any way and offer places through the coordinated admissions scheme.

We have developed many strategies and policies to ensure that students and all other stakeholders treat each other with consideration and understanding. The following documents further illustrate our approach:

- Conduct and behaviour policy
- Disability Discrimination Policy and Scheme
- Equality policies

Sidmouth College is a 'Rights Respecting School' where we regularly, through our PSHE (PD) programme, refer to the universal moral values set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This gives us a strong set of shared moral values which are introduced to and developed with all sections of our school community. The UNCRC provides everyone with a common language and moral framework for considering the consequences of many of our actions for the rights of others and for our own rights. This gives us all a firm basis for promoting equality and community cohesion and for respecting and celebrating diversity. We also encourage all members of our school community to see themselves as active global citizens who challenge injustice wherever they meet it and take action for a just and sustainable world.

Promoting Community Cohesion through Wider Engagement

Sidmouth College strives to provide opportunities that bring learners into contact with the community.

Our Youth Theatre, sporting activities, performing and creative faculty outreach and Careers and Personal Development community activities are but a few examples of the wealth of community focused engagement.

Our status as an 'Investor in Careers' demonstrates the strength of community engagement in this area.

Our College Student Council promotes the philosophy of citizenship, public service, and of representing the views of others fairly and without prejudice.

Our students take part in many co-operative activities with other local schools and the local community, such as joint trips and visits and music/arts events, Carols, concerts, visits to local residential homes for the elderly, supporting the Sidmouth Memory Cafe and many more.

The College is fully committed to promoting cohesion within the local community and wider UK and global society. Therefore, we will:

- Communicate our core values and vision of inclusion and equality to the whole College community and the wider local community
- Ensure that as a school we have full and accurate knowledge of the backgrounds of our children and their families and of the main socio-economic features of our local community and its relationship with wider UK society, using this knowledge to inform our provision
- Ensure that all students have opportunities to engage with members of their local community, from contrasting parts of the UK and from countries around the world; at each level, reflecting the diversity of these communities
- Ensure that the College is aware of changing patterns of migration into and from the local community and take steps to engage with and support groups that are new to the community

- Take rigorous steps to ensure that all parents and carers regard the College as open, welcoming and accessible and explore all possible ways of engaging all parents and carers and involving them in the life of the College

Monitoring

The Principal will monitor the application of this policy through a self-evaluation process and report to the Governing Body.

Our process of monitoring and evaluation will include:

- Analysis of data on students' academic achievement
- Review of students' personal and social development
- Analysis of students' involvement and participation in voluntary activities
- Analysis of parents' and carers' involvement, participation and attendance at events including meetings to review student progress
- Updating our information on the socio-economic features of our local community
- Student-led questionnaires and group interviews
- Questionnaire to parents and carers
- Student interviews and student voice
- Ongoing review of the curriculum
- Report to governors through reference to associated aspects of this policy

Summary

Sidmouth College makes a significant contribution to the wider local community, and by means of the approaches identified above, seeks to provide students with an open and unprejudiced view of the world, and develop their own character and sense of place within their community. Staff and Governors strive to provide a learning environment which maximises the qualities of trust and tolerance which our students are encouraged to take with them as they move on through their education and beyond.

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