

Community Cohesion Policy



THE MARSH ACADEMY

Context

1. Section 21(4) of the Education Act 2002 (as inserted by section 38 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) states that:

‘The governing body of a maintained school shall, in discharging their functions relating to the conduct of the school;

- (a) promote the well-being of students at the school, and
- (b) in the case of a school in England, promote community cohesion.’

2. This duty came into effect on 1 September 2007. From 1 September 2008, HMCI has a duty under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 (as inserted by section 154 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) to report on the contribution made by schools to community cohesion.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has published *Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion* to support schools in implementing the duty – see DCSF website.

Introduction

The curriculum of the academy should promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of our students and of society, and prepare our students 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 our increasingly diverse local communities, it is more important than ever that our academy plays a full part in promoting community cohesion. Our academy should 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 which is diverse in terms of culture, faith, language and ethnicity.

Whilst our academy is characterised by ethnic, cultural, faith and linguistic identity, we still have a responsibility to ensure that our students learn about an even wider cultural and community heritage, especially the wider community of Kent, the UK and the global community.

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

We believe that it is the duty of our academy to address issues of ‘how we live together’ and ‘dealing with difference’, however controversial and difficult they might sometimes seem. We also need to work in partnership with the local community, the local authority, other external agencies, and the Police to ensure that our students are appropriately informed and kept safe.

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 our academy's perspective

For our academy, the term 'community' has a number of dimensions including:

- the academy community – the students it serves, and their roles within the school, their families and the school's staff;
- the community within which the academy is located – the academy in its geographical community and the people who live or work in that area;
- the community of the United Kingdom - all schools are by definition part of this community;
- the global community – formed by the EU, the Commonwealth, and countries beyond these groups with whom we could establish international links.

In addition, schools themselves create communities – for example, the networks formed by schools in development groups (e.g. Extended Schools, Parent Forum and IAG Steering Groups).

What do we need to consider in promoting community cohesion?

When seeking to develop, we need to consider what activities already take place within our academy and what might be arranged in cooperation with other schools and our partnerships and links in the wider community to promote deeper cohesion.

Teaching, Learning and the Curriculum

We need to ensure that we provide:

- lessons across the curriculum that explicitly promote common values and help students to value differences and to challenge prejudice and stereotyping – for example, opportunities in lessons for students to discuss issues of identity and diversity, and what it means 'to live together in the UK'.
- a programme of curriculum-based activities whereby students' understanding of community and diversity is enriched through visits and meetings with members of different communities.
- support for students 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 students (and their families) in the governance and organisation of the academy in a way that teaches them to participate in and make a difference in the academy, in their local community and beyond.
- opportunities for discussing issues of identity and diversity across the curriculum.
- an international dimension to our curriculum planning and delivery.

Examples from our academy include:

- Our school has a varied and relevant curriculum that develops students' understanding of community and diversity is enriched through visits to / by members of different communities and/or cultures.
- We deliver the entitlement to Religious Education, which develops knowledge, attitude and skills in many of the areas at the heart of effective community cohesion.
- Lessons across the curriculum that promote common values and help students to value differences and challenge prejudice and stereotyping e.g. PSHEE and Citizenship curricula and Emotional Literacy delivered through our tutor time.
- Support for any students for whom English is an additional language to enable them to achieve at the highest possible level in English.
- We have brought in an international perspective to our curriculum with particular regard to Modern Foreign Languages.

Equity and Excellence

Here, this policy should be read in conjunction with our Equalities Cohesion Policy. Our school has a commitment to securing high standards of attainment for all students from all ethnic backgrounds and of different socio-economic statuses, ensuring that all students are treated with respect and supported to achieve their full potential.

The academy tracking systems enable us to evaluate progress of different groups and to tackle underperformance by any particular group.

Our academy monitors incidents of prejudice, bullying and harassment.

Our academy admissions criteria emphasises the importance of admission arrangements that promote community cohesion and social equity.

Examples from our academy include:

- A focus on securing high standards of attainment for all students from all ethnic backgrounds and of different socio-economic status. Tracking and closing the gap between identified groups.
- Developing personalisation in targeting progress of work.
- The development of able, gifted and talented students within the school as well as having effective procedures to support those with additional educational needs.
- Equal opportunities and race equality policies are in place.
- Close monitoring of any new arrivals.
- Effective approaches in place to deal with incidents of prejudice, bullying and harassment.
- Admission arrangements that promote community cohesion and social equity.
- Monitoring our behaviour policies so that no groups suffer prejudice.

Engagement and Ethos

We continually seek to broaden the ways that we work in partnership with other schools. We look locally and further afield, and the means of developing the relationship may be through exchange visits, collaborative curriculum projects, or through the internet. Sharing facilities (through Extended Schools projects and our other associations) also provides a means for students to interact, as do opportunities for meaningful intercultural activities, such as those found in Sport, Modern Foreign Languages and Drama. Good partnership activities with the local and wider community include:

- Working together with community representatives, bringing them into the academy to work with the students.
- Ensuring that the student voice is heard and able to effect local change.
- The mutual benefits realised in our respective relationships with The Folkestone School for Girls and Tonbridge School.
- Maintaining strong links and multi-agency working between the school and other local agencies, such as the youth support service, Connexions, the police and other social care and health professionals.
- Engagement with parents through a Parent Forum, e-safety information evenings, open evenings, curriculum and options evenings, review days, opportunities for parent courses and family learning.
- Provision and signposting of extended services, and in particular bringing parents together from different backgrounds through Parent Forum and community use of facilities for activities that take place during out-of-school hours, including adult and family learning, ICT-events and use of the Leisure Centre.

Examples from our academy include:

The school community

- A school ethos established with clear aims, objectives and rules that underpin everyday practice e.g. no bullying, teasing or racist comments are tolerated.
- INSET and partnership arrangements in place offering support, sharing good practice and offering students opportunities to meet and learn from other students from different backgrounds.
- Trips to hear and use of visiting speakers to talk about living in different communities and using their skills to promote learning.
- School councils take into account student views.
- Regular participation in Citizenship and Enterprise initiatives.
- The academy is seeking to achieve the International Schools Award to develop community cohesion and to develop a greater international dimension to the curriculum.
- We promote and draw upon a number of local, cultural events and invite organisations to provide speakers for assemblies or as stimulus to learning in the classroom.

The area in which the school is located

- Shared use of local facilities to provide a means for students to interact. Phase 2 is promoted within the school and offers local young people free time opportunities and some certificated activities.
- Local children of primary age have access to our Leisure Centre outside of the school day within our Extended Schools offering.
- We have strong links with our local Police Community Liaison Officer.
- We have established links with the churches of both New Romney and Lydd.
- Working with community representatives, for example bringing community representatives into school to work with students, e.g. local vicars and councillors.
- Strong links and multi-agency working practice developed between the school and other local agencies.
- Engagement with parents through Parent Forum an events mentioned above.
- Provision of extended services and community use of facilities for activities that take place in and out of school hours, including sports, as listed above.

The UK community

- Curriculum in place for children to take into account how different communities may live e.g. rural, suburban, urban through communication with other schools and case studies.
- Ensuring that students are aware of national and local events that affect people's lives, most likely through assemblies and tutor time.
- Learning about how different communities celebrate different festivals within Britain, e.g. Eid-Al-Addha, Ramadan, Eid-Al-Fitr, Diwali, Chinese New Year, Christmas, Harvest, Passover, Baisakhi.
- We prepare our students for active Citizenship in the academy and community through discrete GCSE and A Level course offer, as well as through Mini-School and council activities. The academy supports the Kent Youth County Council elections and currently has two KYC Councillors in its number.

The global community

- Children raise funds to support Build A School in Africa & Comic Relief projects abroad, to name but two.
- Citizenship and RE curricula inform students of worldwide ways of living
- Charity events set up to support children around the world; children learn why they are raising funds e.g. Non-uniform days, Remembrance Day, Red Nose Day, etc.

The Role of Governors

Our Governing Body is legally responsible for ensuring the promotion of social cohesions and the Executive Principal is responsible for ensuring that the duties are fulfilled within the academy.

On a regular basis our governors will consider:

- The academy's impact on the community.
- How our school uses its own data around bullying and racist incidents to inform provision and school development.
- How we help to bring students and parents together.
- How representative our governing body is of the local community and students' backgrounds.
- What our academy can do to create an ethos of inclusion in which divisions and non-acceptance of others are removed.
- Any social problems which might impact adversely upon the academy.

Monitoring Community Cohesion at The Marsh Academy

The academy staff and governors will regularly review activities to ensure that Community Cohesion is further developed and refined. Evidence of social cohesion activity will be kept on file.

Links with other academy policies and documents:

- Equalities & Community Cohesion Policy
- Race Equality Policy
- PSHCEE Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy

Our network of partners in this area of academy life includes:

- The Folkestone School for Girls
- Tonbridge School
- Connexions
- KCC – Extended Schools
- LCSP
- The Police through the Community Support Officer
- Shepway Primary Headteachers
- Creative Foundation
- Vicars of New Romney and Lydd churches

Websites of interest

http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/ask8/ask8_whole_school_com_cohesion.cfm

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/Communitycohesion/communitycohesionresourcepack/>

www.ofsted.org.uk

www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/extendedschools

www.teachernet.gov.uk/extendedschools

<http://www.schoolslinkingnetwork.org.uk/default.aspx>