

PROMOTING COMMUNITY COHESION

National Context

It remains the legal duty of the Governing Body to promote community cohesion, particularly in light of recent Government focus on 'British values' and the Prevent Duty. The term 'cohesion' in this context means avoidance of the effects of intolerance or harassment, promoting mutual civility and a respect for diversity. It therefore encompasses promoting good relations between pupils from different races, faiths/beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds.

At St Bernard's, we recognise we have a key part to play in promoting community cohesion through our approach to:

- Teaching and learning
 - Teaching students to understand others.
 - Promoting discussion and debate about common values and diversity.
- Equity and excellence
 - Removing barriers to access and participation.
 - Offering equal opportunities to all students to succeed at the highest level possible.
- Engagement and ethos
 - Providing opportunities for children, young people and their families to interact with others from different backgrounds.

We ensure that our Admissions Policy is fully compliant with the School Admissions Code and take care not to present ourselves in a way that might deter parents from particular communities.

School Context

As a Catholic School, we recognise ourselves as a community of Christians. In the words of our Mission Statement: "At St Bernard's School, students are educated in a nurturing community where each person is loved and valued". We are part of the Church, and as such we are part of a larger community which includes all people and we endeavour to share our values with them: "we strive to be of service to others and uphold the Christian values of love, forgiveness and compassion that Jesus taught us."

The Governing Body is committed to promoting community cohesion and discharges its responsibility by encouraging all staff members to be proactive and by involving students in the promotion of community cohesion.

We value 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 work place, in schools and in the wider community.

For us, community has a number of dimensions including:

- the School Community – the students it serves, their families and the school's staff and Governors;
- the Diocesan Community – the school working with other Catholic schools, particularly those in the Diocese of Northampton;

- the Bernardine Community – with convents and schools established by the Bernardine sisters.
- the community within which the school is located - the school in its geographical community and the people who live and work in that area;
- the network community - the school working with other schools and establishments in the area;
- the community of Britain – all schools are by definition part of this community;
- the global community – formed by International links;

Procedures

While focusing on British values and being aware of the school's duties under the 'Prevent' strategy aimed at anti-terrorism, the Governors' aim is to build a school which tries to promote good relations between pupils from different races, faiths/beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds. The school aims to avoid the effects of intolerance or harassment, thereby promoting mutual civility and a respect for diversity and community cohesion.

An integral part of our self-evaluation and improvement planning is building on our best practice in promoting community cohesion. We are committed to considering where there may be scope to improve our existing work in three specific areas:

1. Teaching, Learning and Curriculum

- we teach students to understand others.
- we promote British values, common values and value diversity.
- we promote awareness of human rights and of the responsibility to uphold and defend them.
- we develop the skills of participation and responsible action.
- we are mindful of our duties to prevent political indoctrination and try to offer a balanced presentation of political issues, particularly in regard to the need to prevent pupils from being drawn towards terrorism or extremism which can create an atmosphere conducive to views which terrorists exploit.

As an effective school we have high quality teaching and curriculum provision that supports high standards of attainment, promotes British values and common values and builds students' understanding of the diversity that surrounds them, recognising similarities and appreciating different cultures, faiths, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds.

Integrated across our curriculum are opportunities for discussing issues of identity and diversity.

Strategies

As a tool in building community cohesion, we provide:

- lessons across the curriculum that promote British values and common values and help students to value differences and to challenge prejudice and stereotyping – for example opportunities in citizenship based classes and tutorials 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 educational visits, and visits and meetings with members of different communities.

- support for pupils who struggle with literacy, or for whom English is an additional language, to enable them to achieve at the highest possible level in English.
- an effective student voice and involvement of students in the functioning and organisation of school in a way that teaches them to participate in and make a difference in school, their parishes, their local community and beyond.

2. Equity and Excellence

- we strive to ensure equal opportunities for all to succeed at the highest level possible.
- we seek to remove barriers to access and participation in learning and wider activities.
- we aim to eliminate variations in outcomes for different groups.

Our focus is on securing high standards of attainment for all students from all ethnic backgrounds and of different socio-economic status, ensuring that students are treated with respect and supported to reach their full potential.

3. Engagement and Ethos

- we are committed to providing a means for children, young people and their families to interact with people from different backgrounds and build positive relations.
- we will link with different schools and communities locally, across the country and internationally.

We value partnership arrangements that enable the sharing of good practice and offer students the opportunity to meet and learn from other young people from different backgrounds.

Our partnership opportunities include:

- promoting links with different types of school, including where appropriate the shared use of facilities.
- promoting international links (for example, in South Africa).
- working together with community representatives.
- maintaining strong links and multi-agency working between school and other local agencies.
- liaison with voluntary community-based activities.
- engagement with parents through curriculum evenings, family liaison work, extra-curricular performances, Liturgies and the work of the PTA.
- provision of extended services, in particular through community use of our facilities for activities that take place out of school hours.

Monitoring and evaluation

We evaluate progress in the following ways:

- by analysing assessment results to keep track of the relative performance of the different groups.
- by using the outcomes of analysis to tackle underperformance by any particular group.

- by analysing the delivery of the curriculum and its effects on the pupils' relations between different races, faiths/beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds and the reduction in intolerance or harassment.
- by evaluating the effectiveness of links and partnerships with local, national and international groups.

We monitor the impact of our strategy in the following ways:

- by monitoring the effectiveness of our approaches in dealing with incidents of prejudice, bullying and harassment.
- by monitoring whether students from particular groups are more likely to be excluded or disciplined than others.
- by monitoring the content of the curriculum, including the citizenship curriculum and Prevent curriculum.
- by monitoring and improving on partnership opportunities wherever possible.

We monitor the effectiveness of this policy by considering the outcomes of the analyses undertaken and the Headteacher will report to the Governing Body annually on these outcomes so that action may be taken to improve the policy. Any changes in Government legislation which impact upon this policy will be addressed.

References

Policy and Legislation

This document should be read in conjunction with the following policies: Equality Policy, ICT Acceptable Usage policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the following Education updates: Community Cohesion (May 2010), Changes to Ofsted from January 2012 (November 2011), British Values (January 2015i) and the Prevent Duty (September 2015i). There is no current policy guidance from DFE since the former guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion (2007) has been archived.

Other Legislation relevant to community cohesion includes:

- Equality Act 2010; and
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Agreed by the Catholic Life of the School Committee 6th May 2020

Next review: Spring 2022