



IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Friday 23 November 2007

## PRESS RELEASE

### Schools learn to challenge segregation and promote harmony

A major national conference is being held to support schools to promote integration and harmony. A new *Duty to Promote Community Cohesion* came into effect on 1 September 2007. It places a central emphasis on the role that schools can play in promoting a shared sense of belonging for both their pupils and members of their wider local communities.

#### CHAIR

Dr Samir Shah OBE

#### TRUSTEES

Aaqil Ahmed  
Dr Claire Alexander  
Barbara Cohen  
Shaheed Fatima  
Dr Kate Gavron  
Farzana Hakim  
Clive Jones CBE  
Hitesh Patel  
Dr Richard Stone  
Seamus Taylor

As the guidance to schools which was published in July 2007 notes:

*Through their ethos and curriculum schools can promote discussion of a common sense of identity and support diversity, showing pupils how different communities can be united by shared values and common experiences (DCSF/CLG 2007)*

On Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November, the Runnymede Trust will be hosting this major national conference at the Barbican Centre, London. It will bring together teachers, practitioners and policymakers from schools, local authorities, voluntary and community based organisations, to encourage debate and explore good practice about the impact that this duty will have upon schools.

As Michelynn Lafleche, Director of the Runnymede Trust notes:

*It is more important than ever that people from different ethnic backgrounds are provided with opportunities to interact, share experiences and learn from each other. Schools are a significant venue for all these activities to occur, and form just a part of broader attempts to create a fair and just society for all*

The event has been sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), as part of the government's recognition that schools need guidance and support if they are to play their role in promoting community cohesion.

Alongside presentations from young people, teachers, community-based organisations and Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, speeches will be delivered at the event by both Parmjit Dhanda MP, Minister for Community Cohesion in the Department for Communities and Local Government:

*I am delighted to be attending this conference which is bringing together the key players in promoting a shared sense of identity and belonging in our schools and their communities. The Government's vision is one of cohesive communities in which the diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued. Our recent response to the report from the Commission on Integration and Cohesion set out a comprehensive set of measures to tackle the new issues we face and promote integration and develop strong, resilient communities.*

and by Jim Knight MP, Minister for Schools and Learning, DCSF who says:

*Promoting community cohesion means that schools can become real dynamos of change within their communities, inside and outside the school gates. Educating our young people about the world we live in is key to ensuring they develop into tolerant and informed adults, suitably equipped to live and work in our increasingly diverse society. Most schools are already actively involved in their community, and this conference is the latest step we are taking to offer schools support and guidance to fulfil this new duty.*

END

## Notes to Editors

1. Runnymede is an independent policy research organisation focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society. Founded as a Charitable Education Trust, Runnymede has a long track record in policy research, working in collaboration with eminent thinkers and policymakers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. For further information visit [www.runnymedetrust.org](http://www.runnymedetrust.org)
2. The **Promoting Community Cohesion Through Schools** conference is being held at the Barbican Conference Centre, Silk Street, London EC2Y 8DS on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November from 9am – 4.45pm. Main speeches at the event will be delivered by **Jim Knight MP**, Minister for Schools and Learning, Department for Children, Schools and Families; **Parmjit Dhanda MP**, Minister for Community Cohesion, Department for Communities and Local Government and **Trevor Phillips**, Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Other speakers include **Baroness Sayeeda Warsi**, Shadow Minister for Community Cohesion & Vice Chairman, Conservative Party, **Andrew Stunell MP**, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Liberal Democrats Party; **Sir Keith Ajegbo**, Lead Associate for Education, Institute of Community Cohesion, **Raja Miah MBE**, Director of Peacemaker and **Sarfraz Manzoor**, Writer and Journalist.
3. The conference is sponsored by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and is being conducted as part of a programme of general support for schools by the DCSF and the Institute of Community Cohesion.
4. Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Senior Research & Policy Analyst and Rob Berkeley, Deputy Director of Runnymede are available for interviews. To arrange an interview, or attend the conference, please contact Debbie Weekes-Bernard on 020 7377 9222 (office hours) or Rob Berkeley on 07764 935 770 (out of office hours)