



EMBARGOED UNTIL: 00:00 Thursday 4 December 2008

Teachers need more support to promote cohesion in schools

A survey of teachers and local authorities has highlighted the need for more support for schools to help them meet their duty to promote cohesion. A major conference held by Runnymedeⁱ and CRESJ and addressed by the Minister of State for Schools and Learners, will examine how schools can promote cohesion, race equality and children's well being.

Runnymede carried out an online survey gathering responses from around the country about how the new duty to promote cohesion has affected those who work in local authorities and schools. The duty, introduced in September 2007, requires schools to work with others in their neighbourhoods to enable young people to interact across race and faith backgrounds. Analysis of over 150 detailed responses highlighted that;

- Teachers were keen for more opportunities to learn from each other about what works
- There was uncertainty about the impact of cohesion activities and measurement of their success
- Concern was expressed about the financial support necessary to meet schools' aspirations to fulfil their cohesion duty
- Some schools have still not undertaken any discernible action on promoting community cohesion
- Problems remain in the under-reporting of racist incidents
- Work with parents on cohesion issues was identified as important but underdeveloped

Nonetheless, respondents could point to wide range of activity that schools *have* been able to undertake and new relationships that have been set up in response to the new duty. These have included twinning projects, interfaith events, participation in activities for Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month, interaction with elderly groups, and a 'What its like to be a Muslim in Halifax day'!

The Runnymede/CRESJ conference will address these issues, bringing together a wide range of expertise to look at many facets of school life and how they can be used to promote cohesion, equality and well-being. The conference will include a presentation from Sarah McCarthy Fry MP, Minister for Schools and Families. Others speakers include Sir Keith Ajegbo, Diane Abbott MP and Professor Heidi Mirza.

A new resource for Black and minority ethnic parents/carers will also be launched at the conference. **'Tell Me What I Need to Know'**ⁱⁱ is an online resource which aims to give BME parents and schools support in improving their relationship so that children benefit.



NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The conference will start at 9.30am at the Institute of Education, London University, Bedford Way, WC1H 0AL. The community cohesion survey will be used by the Director of Runnymede as the basis for her opening speech.
2. Rob Berkeley, Deputy Director of Runnymede is available for interviews and comment. To arrange an interview, please contact 020 7377 9222 during office hours. Outside of office hours, contact Rob Berkeley on 07764 935 770.

ⁱ The Runnymede Education conference is being held in partnership with the Centre for Rights, Equalities and Social Justice (CRESJ) at the Institute of Education, University of London. This one-day national conference will draw together teachers, practitioners and policy-makers from schools, local authorities, voluntary and community organisations and other related sectors to stimulate ideas and practice on the role of schools to promote race equality, community cohesion and well-being. It will highlight the policies and initiatives that support the implementation of these duties and share good practice to ensure schools challenge discrimination and promote inclusion across all school life. Visit www.runnymedetrust.org for further details.

ⁱⁱ 'Tell Me What I Need to Know' can be accessed via www.realhistories.org.uk